

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

>> 21 JULY 2025

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. BIS Mandates Hallmarking for 9-Karat Gold Jewellery Starting July 2025 Under New Amendment.



On July 18, 2025, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MoCAF&PD), mandated hallmarking for 9-karat gold jewellery by issuing Amendment No. 2 under the BIS Act, 2016, effective July 2025.

- The new rule is implemented through BIS Amendment No. 2, under the BIS Act, 2016, which regulates standards for gold jewellery and artefacts in India. The hallmarking ensures consumer protection by certifying purity, fineness, and authenticity through standardised markings and traceability.

- As per the latest mandate, 9-karat (375 ppt) gold has been officially included in the list of hallmarkable grades. This brings the total number of BIS-approved purity grades to eight, including 24K (999 ppt), 24KS (995 ppt), 23K (958 ppt), 22K (916 ppt), 20K (833 ppt), 18K (750 ppt), and 14K (585 ppt).

- According to the updated regulations, gold watches, pens, and legal-tender coins are excluded from hallmarking requirements. Only

gold coins of 24KF (Karat Gold - Flat) or 24KS (Karat Gold - Struck) purity are allowed, and these must be manufactured exclusively by mints or BIS-approved refineries.

Key Points:-

(i) The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MoCAF&PD), has mandated hallmarking for 9-karat gold jewellery from July 2025. This enhances purity assurance through AHCs (Assaying & Hallmarking Centres), strengthens consumer trust, and expands BIS's mandatory framework to 361 districts across India.

(ii) Non-compliance with the new guidelines can attract penalties under the BIS Act, 2016, including up to two years' imprisonment or fines ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh, or ten times the value of the unverified gold article. To support enforcement, over 40 crore jewellery items now carry a 6-digit Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID), which can be verified via the BIS Care App.

(iii) Gold bar certification now requires refineries to be accredited by either the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) or India's National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). This aligns BIS hallmarking practices with international standards to enhance transparency, traceability, and consumer confidence in gold quality.

2. Tamil Nadu Day 2025 Celebrated on 18th July to Commemorate Renaming of Madras State.



On 18th July 2025, the Government of Tamil Nadu celebrated Tamil Nadu Day to mark the historic decision in 1967 by then Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai, who proposed renaming Madras State as Tamil Nadu—meaning “Land of Tamils”—a landmark move affirming Tamil identity, culture, and regional pride.

- **The proposal to rename Madras State was officially approved by the Parliament of India following C.N. Annadurai’s recommendation. The move was widely recognized as a milestone in asserting linguistic and cultural pride, marking Tamil Nadu’s place as a state rooted in its Tamil heritage.**

Key Points:-

(i) Originally, Madras State came into existence on 1st November 1956 during the States Reorganisation Act, which reorganized Indian states based on linguistic lines. It included parts of the present-day Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala.

(ii) In 2022, the DMK-led government under Chief Minister M.K. Stalin declared 18th July as the official Tamil Nadu Day, overturning an earlier decision by the AIADMK government, which had chosen 1st November for the observance. The change

aimed to highlight the significance of Tamil identity over administrative reorganization.

3. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Maharashtra CM Inaugurate First IICT Campus at NFDC Complex, Mumbai.



On July 18, 2025, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (in charge of Information & Broadcasting; Electronics & IT; Railways) and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis jointly inaugurated India’s first Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) campus at the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) complex on Pedder Road, Mumbai.

- **Minister Vaishnaw highlighted that the ₹400 crore IICT campus—developed on the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi—is modeled after IITs and IIMs. It offers state-of-the-art classrooms, media labs, post-production suites, and specialized zones for animation, VFX, gaming, comics, and extended reality (XR).**

- **He emphasised IICT’s industry partnerships with global tech giants such as Google, Meta, NVIDIA, Microsoft, Apple, Adobe, WPP, and an academic MoU with York University, adding that agreements with four more foreign universities are underway. The campus will welcome its**

inaugural batch of 300 students in September 2025.

- CM Fadnavis underlined the state's ambition to position Mumbai as the creative economy capital of India, announcing a ₹150 crore Maharashtra fund to support the WAVES Summit initiatives. He noted the WAVES Index's valuation growth from ₹93,000 crore to ₹1 lakh crore, reinforcing Mumbai's creative sector potential.

Key Points:-

(i) The event also saw the unveiling of the IICT logo, the launch of 17 creative-tech courses, and the inauguration of the Bharat Pavilion at Gulshan Mahal within the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC).

(ii) Additionally, an MoU was signed between Prasar Bharati and Maharashtra Film, Stage & Cultural Development Corporation Ltd. to establish an integrated Film & TV hub.

(iii) Looking ahead, a full-scale IICT campus is planned on a 10-acre plot at Film City, Goregaon, with land provided by the Maharashtra government. This next-phase campus aims to be one of India's finest creative-technology Institutes, reinforcing the government's push for skill-based innovation.

4. PM Modi Launches ₹12,600 Crore Development Projects in Bihar and West Bengal, Boosting Infrastructure, Rail, IT & Energy Sectors.



On July 18, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Motihari (Bihar) and Durgapur (West Bengal) to inaugurate and lay foundation stones for development projects worth a combined ₹12,600 crore, spanning infrastructure, railways, IT, energy, fisheries, and more.

- During the Motihari visit, PM Modi inaugurated and initiated projects totaling ₹7,200 crore, including automatic signaling systems (e.g., Samastipur–Bachhwara), doubling of rail lines (Darbhanga–Thalwara, Samastipur–Rambhadrapur, and Darbhanga–Narkatiaganj worth ₹4,080 crore), four new Amrit Bharat Express trains (like Malda Town–Gomti Nagar; Bapudham Motihari–Anand Vihar), and upgrades to NH-319 and Ara bypass roads.

- He launched new Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) facilities in Darbhanga and a cutting-edge incubation centre at Patna's STPI. Additional rural development initiatives included fish hatcheries and infrastructure under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

- At Motihari, PM Modi announced ₹160 crore under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana–Gramin (PMAY-G) for housing and released ₹400 crore to nearly 61,500 women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) via the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–

NRLM. Bihar CM Nitish Kumar praised the launch of 125 free electricity units per household and the creation of the Makhana Board.

Key Points:-

(i) At Durgapur, PM Modi dedicated projects worth ₹5,400 crore, including a ₹1,950 crore City Gas Distribution Project by BPCL in Bankura and Purulia, ₹1,457 crore Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) retrofits at Durgapur Steel Thermal and Raghunathpur Power Stations, the doubling of Purulia–Kotshila rail line (₹390 crore), and twin road overbridges under Setu Bharatam.

(ii) Addressing rallies in both states, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi positioned Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) governance style as a contrast to rival parties—criticizing the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC or TMC) in West Bengal (WB) and commending Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's inclusive development under the Janata Dal (United) or JD(U). The visits also served as key events in the run-up to the Bihar Legislative Assembly elections and the upcoming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha campaigns in West Bengal.

(iii) PM Modi described the moment as a turning point for Eastern India, noting its transformation into a growth engine. Investment in rail, road, energy, IT, and fisheries supports a broader vision of 'Viksit Bharat', while strengthening regional connectivity through projects like the Amrit Bharat Express and expressways.



On 11 July 2025, Maharashtra became the first Indian state to grant agricultural status to livestock and poultry farming. This landmark decision, approved by the state cabinet led by Animal Husbandry Minister Pankaja Munde, aims to ensure equitable subsidies and financial benefits for rural households dependent on animal husbandry-based livelihoods.

- The policy formally includes dairy, goat rearing, piggery, and poultry under agriculture. Eligibility criteria include broiler farms with up to 25,000 birds, layer farms with 50,000, hatcheries with 45,000 capacity, dairy units with 100 animals, goat/sheep farms with 500, and pig farms with 200—covering small and medium-scale livestock farmers.

- An estimated 76.41 lakh livestock-rearing families across Maharashtra are set to benefit. The recognition will help generate ₹7,700 crore annually through increased productivity and access to structured support, while legitimizing thousands of informal livestock units operating in rural areas lacking official recognition and institutional benefits.

Key Points:-

(i) Animal husbandry contributes 24% to Maharashtra's Gross State Domestic

5. Maharashtra Becomes First Indian State to Grant Agricultural Status to Livestock & Poultry Farming.

Product (GSDP), double the 12% from crop agriculture. Aligning livestock farming with agriculture status recognizes its economic importance and employment potential, especially for landless and marginal farmers in rural and peri-urban regions across the state.

(ii) Eligible farmers will now receive electricity at agricultural tariff rates and qualify for solar subsidy schemes and the Panjabrao Deshmukh Interest Subsidy Scheme, offering 4% interest relief on loans. Taxes from gram panchayats will be rationalized, ensuring uniformity across all formally recognized animal farming units.

(iii) This reform aligns with NITI Aayog's 2021 recommendations advocating structured livestock sector reforms to reduce rural distress and boost productivity. Maharashtra aims to stimulate private investment, foster rural innovation, and create Tier-2 and Tier-3 employment, encouraging other Indian states to adopt similar inclusive agriculture policies.

In July 2025, Switzerland officially ratified the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), completing the process among all four EFTA nations and paving the way for its implementation.

- The ratification by Switzerland marks the final step in bringing the TEPA into full effect, as the other EFTA member countries—Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein—had already completed their approvals. With this, the agreement is on track to come into force in October 2025, creating new trade and investment opportunities.

- The TEPA represents India's first-ever free trade agreement with a European trade bloc. Signed on March 10, 2024, in New Delhi after 15 years of negotiations, the agreement covers a wide range of trade, investment, and cooperation areas between India and EFTA nations.

- One of the central goals of the agreement is to eliminate trade barriers and promote the flow of goods and services. It also emphasizes enhancing market access, sustainable development, investment facilitation, and technological collaboration between the participating countries.

Key Points:-

(i) A key economic impact projected under TEPA is an investment commitment of USD 100 billion from EFTA countries to India over the next 15 years.

(ii) The agreement consists of 14 chapters addressing vital issues such as intellectual property, rules of origin, dispute resolution, and sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

(iii) Switzerland, EFTA's largest investor in India, has significantly increased its

INTERNATIONAL

1. Switzerland Finalizes Ratification of Landmark India-EFTA Trade Agreement.



economic footprint. Swiss investment in India grew from CHF 515 million (approx. ₹5,935 crore) in 2000 to CHF 10 billion (approx. ₹1.07 lakh crore) by 2024, with over 330 Swiss companies active in diverse Indian sectors like engineering, pharma, and services.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. The Wealth Company Gets SEBI Nod to Enter ₹74.41 Trillion Indian Mutual Fund Sector.



On July 18, 2025, The Wealth Company Asset Management Holdings Private Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Pantomath Group, received final regulatory approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch its mutual fund operations.

- With this approval, the company marks its official entry into India's thriving mutual fund (MF) industry under the brand name The Wealth Company Mutual Fund (MF).
- The approval positions The Wealth Company MF as the youngest Asset Management Company (AMC) in India's growing mutual fund space. This achievement reflects SEBI's continued support for increasing participation and competition in the mutual fund landscape,

where close to 50 AMCs are already operational as of July 2025.

Key Points:-

- The Wealth Company MF is set to leverage its parent group Pantomath's established expertise in financial services, promising a disciplined and research-driven investment strategy. This is expected to cater not only to urban investors but also expand access to wealth creation tools in Tier 3 and smaller towns, supporting broader financial inclusion.
- India's mutual fund sector, now valued at over ₹74.41 trillion, has seen robust growth driven by retail investor participation, SIP flows, and rising financial literacy. The entry of new players like The Wealth Company MF is anticipated to increase competition and product diversity, benefiting investors across segments.
- The company's leadership has indicated a clear focus on inclusive economic growth, aligning with the government's goal of expanding formal financial participation. Its business strategy will include digital-first platforms, education initiatives, and customized offerings designed for underpenetrated markets.

2. Aurum PropTech Becomes India's First to Launch Listed SM-REIT Platform with SEBI Approval.



In July 2025, Aurum PropTech Limited, part of the Aurum Ventures group, received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch India's first listed Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trust (SM-REIT), named AMSA SM REIT Investment Trust.

- The regulatory approval was granted through a formal SEBI registration certificate issued on July 18, 2025, marking Aurum as the country's first publicly listed company to operate an SM-REIT platform under the newly introduced SEBI framework. This milestone opens up fractional real estate investing for Indian retail investors.
- Aurum's AMSA SM REIT will allow individual investors to participate in rent-generating premium commercial real estate—such as office buildings, co-working spaces, and retail outlets—via units listed and traded on stock exchanges, similar to mutual funds or REITs.

Key Points:-

(i) The SM-REIT model is structured to cater specifically to completed and income-generating real estate projects. This ensures low-risk exposure and stable rental returns, making it a more secure and regulated route for retail-level participation in commercial property investments.

(ii) SEBI's guidelines for SM-REITs mandate transparency, regular valuation, and compliance with disclosure norms. These norms aim to promote investor confidence and institutional-grade governance in the fractional real estate investment space.

(iii) With this launch, Aurum PropTech pioneers a transformative shift in the Indian real estate sector, democratizing access to institutional-quality commercial assets for small investors. It also aligns with SEBI's broader vision to deepen capital markets and introduce newer asset classes for retail participation.

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

1. JFSL and Allianz Form 50:50 Reinsurance Joint Venture to Strengthen India's Insurance Sector.



In July 2025, Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), signed a binding agreement with Allianz Group, through its fully owned subsidiary Allianz Europe B.V., to establish a 50:50 domestic reinsurance joint venture (JV) aimed at supporting India's growing insurance ecosystem.

- This reinsurance JV is positioned to contribute significantly to India's long-term insurance vision

under the national mission of 'Insurance for All by 2047'. It aims to strengthen the country's risk management infrastructure and increase the accessibility of insurance products across varied sectors and demographics.

- The partnership brings together the global reinsurance expertise of Allianz and the domestic financial strength and digital capabilities of JFSL, ensuring a robust framework for offering innovative, technology-driven reinsurance solutions to Indian insurers.

Key Points:-

(i) The reinsurance JV will help primary insurers in India manage risk more efficiently by providing enhanced underwriting capabilities, higher risk capacity, and competitive reinsurance pricing. This will support a more resilient and diversified insurance market in the country.

(ii) In addition to the reinsurance JV, the two firms have also signed a non-binding agreement to form 50:50 joint ventures for general and life insurance businesses in India, demonstrating a broader commitment to long-term collaboration across the Indian insurance value chain.

MOUs and Agreement

1. NIEPID and Jai Vakeel Foundation Partner to Launch Uniform Curriculum for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (CwID).



In July 2025, the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (Divyangjan) (NIEPID), under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE), signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Jai Vakeel Foundation (JVF) in Mumbai, Maharashtra. This collaboration aims to introduce a standardized and structured education model for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (CwID) nationwide.

- The MoU was signed in the presence of Rajesh Agarwal, Secretary of DEPwD (MSJE), and forms part of the rollout of the "DISHA Abhiyan"—a curriculum and implementation framework developed by Jai Vakeel Foundation. This model has been endorsed by NIEPID and is designed to bring consistency and quality to the education of CwIDs across schools and learning centres in India.

- The NIEPID DISHA Curriculum, now officially adopted, is a multi-layered educational model that includes a research-backed multisensory curriculum, a digital platform, and an educator training framework. Certified by NIEPID in 2019, the framework integrates an Assessment Checklist for Individualized Education Plans

(IEPs), providing customized learning pathways based on each child's developmental needs.

- This collaboration brings together NIEPID's technical and research expertise with the field-based implementation strengths of Jai Vakeel Foundation. Together, they aim to create a scalable and uniform curriculum model that is tailored specifically to address the unique learning needs of CwIDs in both urban and rural settings across India.

Key Points:-

(i) Under this partnership, critical resources developed by JVF—including the NIEPID DISHA Assessment Checklist, the Multisensory Curriculum, the NIEPID DISHA Digital Portal, and a structured Teacher Training Program—will be made available to special schools, inclusive education centres, and rehabilitation organizations throughout the country.

(ii) The initiative supports India's commitment to inclusive education and aligns with global frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, it furthers SDG 4 (Quality Education) by ensuring accessible learning tools, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by promoting equity for children with intellectual disabilities in the national education system.

(iii) The DISHA Abhiyan initiative will not only improve the quality and uniformity of CwID education but also build a national network of trained educators, digitized lesson delivery, and consistent assessment tools. It represents a forward step in integrating inclusive education with national policy frameworks under MSJE and marks a shift toward evidence-based interventions in the special education sector.

2. UAE-India CEPA Council Signs MoU with BHU's Atal Incubation Centre to Boost Bilateral Startup Ecosystem

CEPA COUNCIL OF UAE SIGNS MOU WITH BHU'S ATAL ATAL INCUBATION CENTRE TO BOOST STARTUP TIES

In July 2025, the CEPA Council of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Atal Incubation Centre – Mahamana Foundation for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, BHU.

In July 2025, the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) Council, also known as UICC, signed a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Atal Incubation Centre – Mahamana Foundation for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Institute of Management, Banaras Hindu University (AIC-MFIE-IM-BHU), located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

- The MoU aims to strengthen startup and innovation collaboration between the United Arab Emirates and India, especially in emerging innovation hubs in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

- The MoU was officially signed between Ahmed Aljneibi, Director of the UICC, and Professor P.V. Rajeev, the Professor-in-Charge of AIC-MFIE-IM-BHU. This partnership reflects both countries' commitment to building sustainable innovation ecosystems and fostering cross-border entrepreneurship by connecting incubators, mentors, and capital.

- Through this agreement, over 110 startups currently incubated at AIC-BHU will gain institutional exposure and cross-national

collaboration opportunities in key growth sectors. These include healthcare, agricultural technology (agri-tech), clean energy, logistics, and other areas aligned with sustainable development goals and startup-friendly industries.

Key Points:-

(i) A major highlight of this partnership is its integration into the UAE-India Start-Up Series, a strategic initiative to bridge Indian startups with UAE's fast-growing innovation landscape. Startups selected under this initiative will benefit from fast-track business licensing in the UAE, access to local mentorship, investor networks, and incubation support through UICC's ecosystem.

(ii) The MoU also establishes a framework for knowledge exchange, innovation-driven institutional linkages, and cross-border funding opportunities. Both institutions will work to organize joint startup expos, hackathons, investor connects, and capacity-building programs for student entrepreneurs and early-stage founders.

(iii) This initiative aligns with the broader CEPA agreement signed between India and the UAE in 2022, which has accelerated economic partnerships across trade, services, and investment. The UICC-AIC-BHU collaboration now represents a startup-focused milestone under CEPA, targeting inclusive growth beyond metropolitan regions.

AWARDS

1. Telangana's Bhadradi Kothagudem District Wins Two National GIS Awards for Open-Source Innovation.



In July 2025, Telangana's Bhadradi Kothagudem district achieved national recognition by securing both the 'National Geospatial Practitioner Award' and the 'Open Source GIS Cohort Award'.

- The awards were presented for the district's pioneering application of Geographic Information System (GIS) in improving public services through open-source technologies, under the 'Open Source GIS Day' event hosted by IIT Bombay, Maharashtra.

- The recognition was given to Bhadradi Kothagudem District Collector Jitesh V. Patil, in the presence of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr. A.S. Kiran Kumar, for successfully deploying GIS in government initiatives that impacted multiple sectors of public administration.

- The awards were part of the National Geospatial Awards 2025 (Edition Q2) organized jointly by IIT Bombay's Free and Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE) team and the Ministry of Education (MoE). These awards aim to honour effective GIS-based solutions implemented using free and open-source platforms to improve governance and service delivery.

Key Points:-

(i) Bhadradri Kothagudem was specifically commended for its extensive use of GIS in sectors such as disaster risk management, inter-departmental coordination, water resource tracking, agricultural mapping, and rural development planning. The implementation helped improve the efficiency of local government operations and decision-making.

(ii) The event also featured recognition for institutions like Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University (SKLTHU), which received the Best University Award for its contribution to geospatial education, and the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), which was honoured for its research on marine GIS applications under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

(iii) These awards underscore the growing importance of open-source geospatial technology in transforming public service delivery and democratizing data access. Telangana's success story, particularly from Bhadradri Kothagudem, serves as a model for other districts aiming to adopt cost-effective, scalable GIS tools for multi-sector governance improvements.



On July 16, 2025, the ICAR-Sugarcane Breeding Institute (ICAR-SBI), based in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, was awarded the prestigious 'Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Puraskar 2025' for their innovation in agricultural technology. The award recognized their development of a low-cost, real-time Soil Moisture Indicator (SMI) that significantly enhances irrigation efficiency and crop yield across various regions.

- The award was presented by Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), under the category 'Innovation & Technology in Agriculture & Allied Sciences'. The ceremony was held during the 97th Foundation Day of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in New Delhi and was attended by Minister of State Bhagirat Chaudhary.

- The five-member scientist team from ICAR-SBI who developed the device included Dr. K. Hari, Dr. D. Puthira Prathap, Dr. P. Murali, Dr. A. Rameshsundar, and Dr. B. Singaravelu. Their innovation focuses on using electrical conductivity to measure soil moisture, helping farmers make informed irrigation decisions and improving water-use efficiency.

- The Soil Moisture Indicator (SMI) was successfully tested across Tamil Nadu, showing a

2. ICAR-SBI Team Wins National Award for Soil Moisture Indicator Innovation.

15% reduction in irrigation water use and a significant yield improvement in sugarcane, increasing productivity from 55.8 to 60.4 tonnes per acre. The device, priced at approximately ₹2,000, is considered affordable and user-friendly for smallholder farmers.

Key Points:-

(i) This innovation was developed under the Farmers' Participatory Action Research Project, funded by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and coordinated with support from the Central Water Commission. The technology has demonstrated success in a variety of crops including brinjal, pomegranate, tomato, and groundnut, showing potential for wider adoption.

(ii) The team also developed a digital Android-compatible version of the tool named Digital Soil Moisture Sensor (DSMS), launched under a public-private partnership model. This version is expected to scale up accessibility and data-driven decision-making for farmers in remote areas.

(iii) The Soil Moisture Indicator has already been implemented across nine states, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh. It was also promoted under the National Doubling Farmers' Income Strategy and introduced in several rural regions via the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan for grassroots-level dissemination.

DEFENCE

1. INS Sandhayak Docks in Malaysia to Boost Maritime Cooperation.



INS Sandhayak, India's indigenously built Survey Vessel (Large) (SVL), made its maiden hydrographic mission to Malaysia from July 16–19, 2025, docking at Port Klang. This marks the first-ever visit by an Indian hydrographic ship, strengthening bilateral maritime and technical cooperation in Southeast Asia.

- INS Sandhayak's visit emphasized hydrographic cooperation between India and Malaysia through joint technical exchanges, including the sharing of survey technologies and hydrographic data. It strengthened institutional ties between the Indian Navy Hydrographic Department (INHD) and Malaysia's National Hydrographic Centre under the Indian Navy's broader diplomatic outreach.

- Commissioned in February 2024, INS Sandhayak is the lead ship of the Sandhayak-class SVL (Survey Vessel – Large) series built by GRSE – Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited, Kolkata. It supports coastal and deep-sea surveys, oceanographic research, Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, disaster support, and has onboard hospital and helicopter landing capabilities.

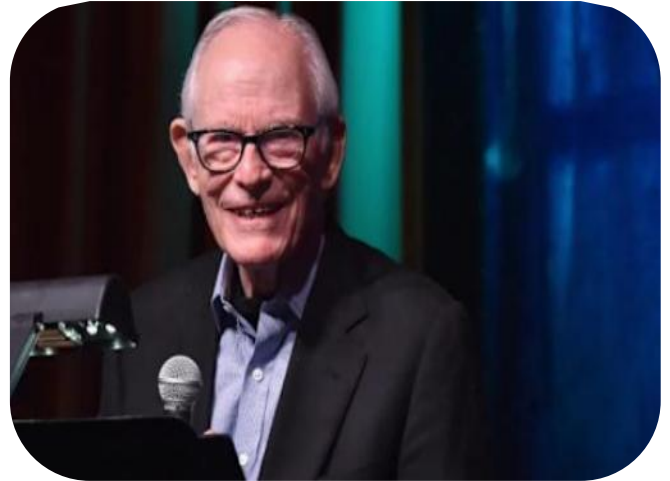
Key Points:-

(i) The vessel displaces approximately 3,300

tonnes, measures 110 meters in length, and cruises at 16 knots (maximum 18+ knots), with an endurance of 6,500 nautical miles. It is equipped with Multibeam Echo Sounders (MBES), Side-Scan Sonars, Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS), and digital data processing systems.

(ii) The mission aligns with India's "MAHASAGAR" (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) framework. The ship hosted onboard receptions, crew exchanges, and academic outreach for Malaysian cadets, emphasizing naval diplomacy and strengthening links between the Indian Navy and Malaysian maritime forces.

(iii) This first-of-its-kind visit reinforces India's growing strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific under the Act East Policy. It supports the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) initiative by showcasing indigenous maritime capabilities and enhancing India's leadership in regional hydrographic cooperation.



On July 17, 2025, celebrated American lyricist Alan Jay Bergman died at the age of 99 in Los Angeles. Born September 11, 1925, in Brooklyn, he left behind a legacy of award-winning songs co-written with his wife, Marilyn.

- For over six decades, Alan partnered with his wife Marilyn Bergman, collaborating with composers like Michel Legrand, Marvin Hamlisch, Quincy Jones, and Dave Grusin. Their lyrics were brought to life by legends such as Barbra Streisand, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Ray Charles, and Neil Diamond.

- The husband-and-wife lyricist duo, Alan and Marilyn Bergman, earned remarkable recognition at the Academy Awards with three Oscar wins across different decades. In 1969, they won the Oscar for Best Original Song for "The Windmills of Your Mind," a collaboration with composer Michel Legrand featured in the film *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

- Their second Oscar came in 1974 for the emotionally resonant song "The Way We Were," composed by Marvin Hamlisch and featured in the film of the same name. In 1984, they secured their third Academy Award for Best Original Song Score for *Yentl*, once again working alongside Michel Legrand."

OBITUARY

1. Oscar-Winning Lyricist Alan Bergman Passes Away at 99.

Key Points:-

(i) Beyond Oscars, Alan and Marilyn bagged four Emmy Awards for their work in television (e.g., Sybil and A Ticket to Dream) and received a Grammy Trustees Award in 1997 for lifetime achievement in music.

(ii) Born in Brooklyn in 1925, Alan studied music at UNC and later UCLA. He met Marilyn in the late 1950s, marrying in 1958. They were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1980. Alan continued writing and releasing music—his vocal album 'Lyrically, Alan Bergman' appeared in 2007.

(iii) Alan is survived by his daughter Julie and granddaughter. He passed at home with his daughter by his side, after months of respiratory illness, but continued songwriting until the end.

Static GK

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| Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) | Director General (DG) : Pramod Kumar Tiwari | Headquarters: New Delhi |
| Switzerland | President: Karin Keller-Sutter | Capital: Bern |
| Tamil Nadu | Chief minister: M K Stalin | Governor: R. N. Ravi |
| Telangana | Chief minister: Revanth Reddy | Governor: Jishnu Dev Varma |
| Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) | Union Minister : Ashwini Vaishnaw | Headquarters: New Delhi |
| Bihar | Chief minister: Nitish Kumar | Governor: Arif Mohammad Khan |
| National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID) | Director : Dr. B.V. Ram Kumar | Headquarters : Secunderabad, Telangana |
| SEBI | Chairperson: Tuhin Kanta Pandey | Headquarter : Mumbai |

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| Jio Financial Services | CEO: Hitesh Kumar Sethia | Headquarter : Mumbai |
| UAE | Currency: United Arab Emirates Dirham | President: Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan |
| Maharashtra | Chief minister: Devendra Fadnavis | Governor: C. P. Radhakrishnan |
| Malaysia | Prime minister: Anwar Ibrahim | Capital: Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur |