

**Motivation gets you
going, but discipline
keeps you growing.**

John C. Maxwell

Important Issues of the Day

- **Tobacco tax – Page No. 1, GS 3,4**
- **Mob violence – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **The water divide – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **Mandating student presence – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **Climate- resilient agriculture – Text and Context**
- **Sudarshan Chakra – Page No. 12, Prelims**
- **Bomb Cyclone – Prelims Fact**
- **Baltic Sea – Places in News**

Centre's tobacco tax rejig to take effect from Feb. 1

Finance Ministry announces end of GST compensation cess; beedis in 18% slab, other tobacco products in 40% bracket as govt. bids to 'ensure that real cigarette prices rise faster than incomes'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Union Finance Ministry on Thursday issued a series of notifications that will give effect to the new taxation regime for tobacco products from February 1. The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025, passed in the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament, specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products.

Excise duty on cigarette
The Ministry also notified that provisions of the Health Security *se* National Security Act, 2025, which intends to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1.

In an accompanying

Tax reset

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025 specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products

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- All other tobacco products have been moved to the **40%** slab



FAQ note, the Ministry explained that under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, the excise duty on cigarettes had so far been rendered a nominal amount of a "fraction of a paisa" per cigarette stick, and the GST compensation cess rate on tobacco products had not been increased since it was implemented in July 2017.

"For India, affordability has either stagnated or increased in the past decade, meaning cigarettes have not become more expensive relative to consumers' purchasing power," the note said. "This is contrary to global public health guidance, which emphasises annual increases in specific excise duties to ensure that real cigarette prices

rise faster than incomes."

At the same time, the Ministry notified February 1 as the date from which the GST compensation cess would cease to exist. The cess was originally introduced for a period of five years to compensate States for any loss arising out of the implementation of GST.

Tax slabs

The Finance Ministry also notified the new GST rates for tobacco products. Beedis have been moved to the 18% category from the now-defunct 28% slab. All other tobacco products have been moved to the 40% slab. These new rates will be effective from February 1.

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CAMEL

SINCE 1913

LIGHTS



CHEKISH SIZ VA
ATROFDAGILARNING
SALOMATLIGIGA
JIDDIY ZARAR
YETKAZADI



WILLS

Classic

IMPECCABLE TOBACCOS

*Refined
Taste*



SMOKING KILLS



WILLS

Classic

IMPECCABLE TOBACCOS

*Balanced
Taste*

SMOKING KILLS



**Tobacco
causes
cancer**

CAMEL

SINCE



CHEKISH
YURAK-TO
KASALLIKL
O'PKA RA
OLIB KEL



WILLS

Classic



WILLS

NAVY CUT



Tax reset

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- **Tobacco use is known to be a major risk factor for several non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and chronic lung diseases. Nearly 27% of all cancers in India are due to tobacco usage.**
- **India adopted the tobacco control provisions under WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).**

Which among the following steps is most likely to be taken at the time of an economic recession?

- (a) Cut in tax rates accompanied by increase in interest rate**
- (b) Increase in expenditure on public projects**
- (c) Increase in tax rates accompanied by reduction of interest rate**
- (d) Reduction of expenditure on public project**

Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:

- Replaced the Cigarettes Act of 1975 (largely limited to statutory warnings- 'Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health' to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It did not include non-cigarettes).
- The 2003 Act also included cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.
- National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), 2008.

Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2020:

- It was mandated that the specified health warning shall cover at least 85% of the principal display area of the package.
- Of this, 60% shall cover pictorial health warning and 25% shall cover textual health warning.

mCessation Programme:

- **It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation.**
- **India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government's Digital India initiative.**
- **It uses two-way messaging between the individual seeking to quit tobacco use and programme specialists providing them dynamic support.**
- **Prevention and Control of Pollution Act of 1981- Recognized smoking as an air pollutant.**
- **Cable Television Networks Amendment Act of 2000- Prohibited the transmission of advertisements on tobacco and liquor in India.**
- **The Government of India has issued regulations under the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006 which lay down that tobacco or nicotine cannot be used as ingredients in food products.**
- **31st May is observed as 'World No Tobacco Day' every year to spread awareness about the deadly effects of tobacco consumption.**

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CESS AND SURCHARGE

CESS

Levied for a specific purpose



All taxpayers or on specific goods/services

Must be used only for the specified purpose



No

Calculation base
On tax amount or taxable value

Example
Health & Education Cess (4%)



SURCHARGE

Levied on high-income taxpayers



Only when income exceeds a threshold

Can be used for any purpose



Yes

Calculation base
On tax liability

10% on income tax above ₹ 50 lakh

Quick Fact: Both cess and surcharge are collected by the Central Government. States have no claim.

What is/are the most likely advantages of implementing 'Goods and Services Tax (GST)'?

- 1. It will replace multiple taxes collected by multiple authorities and will thus create a single market in India.**
- 2. It will drastically reduce the 'Current Account Deficit' of India and will enable it to increase its foreign exchange reserves.**
- 3. It will enormously increase the growth and size of economy of India and will enable it to overtake China in the near future.**

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Mains Question

- **Tobacco consumption is a major public health concern in India.**
Discuss the health impacts of tobacco use and examine the steps taken by the government to control tobacco consumption.
(250 words / 15 marks)
- **तंबाकू सेवन भारत में एक प्रमुख सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य चुनौती है।**
तंबाकू सेवन से होने वाले स्वास्थ्य प्रभावों पर चर्चा कीजिए तथा तंबाकू की खपत को नियंत्रित करने हेतु सरकार द्वारा उठाए गए कदमों का परीक्षण कीजिए।
(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

Mob rule

The bogey of infiltration is resulting in hate crimes across India

In the closing weeks of 2025, a series of violent incidents across India exposed a disturbing pattern of mob violence directed at migrants who were labelled foreigners – Bangladeshis and Chinese – by their attackers. In these cases, the three victims were Indian citizens from various parts of the country. Suspicion based on language, region, appearance or presumed nationality is escalating into mob violence in different regions. This is extremely worrying and the police must act strictly. The political leadership in States and the Centre must make it clear that such violence is unacceptable. In Palakkad district, Kerala, Ram Narayan Baghel, a 31-year-old migrant worker from Chhattisgarh was lynched by a mob on December 17. Baghel was accused of theft and repeatedly questioned about his identity, with his attackers allegedly asking him whether he was “Bangladeshi” before beating him to death. Kerala is heavily dependent on migrant labour, and prides itself on its high levels of education and law and order. The lynching is a blot on its reputation. On December 24, in Sambalpur in Odisha, a young migrant worker from West Bengal was beaten to death by a mob that accused him of being a “Bangladeshi”. Juel Sheikh, a daily wage labourer, was confronted at a tea stall by unidentified persons who demanded his identity documents and accused him of being an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant. Two days later, in another incident from Odisha, a Bengali-speaking street vendor from West Bengal was assaulted.

In Tamil Nadu, a man from Odisha was attacked while travelling on a train, in Tiruvallur district, by juveniles armed with machetes and sickles. The assault was filmed and circulated on social media. In Dehradun, on December 28, Anjel Chakma, a 22-year-old student from Tripura, was stabbed by a group that had allegedly hurled racial slurs at him and his brother. He died in hospital later. People from the northeastern States are often treated as perpetual outsiders in other parts of India; Chakma was called “Chinese” by his attackers. These are not isolated incidents: they occur amid numerous other cases of mob intimidation, sometimes targeting worshippers of minority communities, at other times, even young students celebrating a friend’s birthday. The police in the States have responded to these horrible crimes by making some arrests, but that is not sufficient. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has turned its incendiary campaign against “illegal infiltration” from Bangladesh as a central plank in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Assam and West Bengal. It is no coincidence that mobs across the country feel emboldened to raise this bogey at random against helpless people. The BJP should realise the dangers of its campaign and restrain itself.

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- **In these cases, the three victims were Indian citizens from various parts of the country.**
- **Suspicion based on language, region, appearance or presumed nationality is escalating into mob violence in different regions.**
- **People from the northeastern States are often treated as perpetual outsiders in other parts of India; Chakma was called “Chinese” by his attackers.**

- **Mob Lynching is a collective violence where a group unlawfully punishes individuals based on perceived wrongdoing, bypassing legal procedures.**
- **Cow Vigilantism is a violence in the name of cow protection, threatening secularism and social harmony, often driven by suspicion.**
- **Perceived Threat to Culture or Identity: Lynching occurs when individuals or groups are seen as threatening cultural, religious, or traditional values.**
- **Common triggers include inter-caste/inter-religious relationships, food habits, or customs perceived as challenging societal norms.**
- **Rumors: Fake news and rumors, often spread via social media and word of mouth, can incite mob violence.**
- **Socio-Political Tensions**

Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:

- **Section 103(2): Mob Lynching as Murder**
- **When a group of 5 or more persons acting in concert commits murder on grounds like race, caste, community, sex, place of birth, language, or personal belief.**
- **Punishment: Death penalty or life imprisonment along with a fine.**

- **Section 117(4): Grievous Hurt by a Mob**
- **When a group of 5 or more persons acting in concert causes grievous hurt on similar discriminatory grounds.**
- **Punishment: Imprisonment up to 7 years and fine.**

- **SC Directions in Tehseen Poonawalla Case, 2018:**
- **SC strongly condemned mob violence, stating that no individual or group can take the law into their own hands.**
- **The Court warned that unchecked lynching could become "the new normal" and emphasized that mob justice has no place in a civilized society.**

Mains Question

- **Mob lynching has emerged as a serious threat to the rule of law and constitutional values in India.**
Discuss the causes of mob lynching and examine the measures taken by the government and society to prevent such incidents.
(250 words / 15 marks)
- **भीड़ द्वारा की जाने वाली हिंसा (Mob Lynching) कानून के शासन और संवैधानिक मूल्यों के लिए गंभीर चुनौती बन चुकी है।**
भारत में माँब लिंचिंग के कारणों पर चर्चा कीजिए तथा इससे निपटने के लिए सरकार और समाज द्वारा उठाए गए कदमों का परीक्षण कीजिए।
(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

The water divide

The quality of piped water supply must be checked at delivery point

An indicator of public health is the well-being of the poorer sections of the people. Health, education, infrastructure, clean air and clean water all fall under basic needs, and various institutions should be busy working round the clock to improve lives. On most of these counts, however, India appears to be falling short, with the latest being the tragedy unfolding in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. At least four people, including a baby (official toll; unofficial is 14), have lost their lives after drinking municipality-supplied water, with more than 2,000 people falling ill. Over 200 people are in hospital and 32 are in the ICU. It is a development steeped in irony because Indore has been voted India's cleanest city for several years in a row for its exemplary waste segregation and management practice among other cleanliness measures it undertook. As has become the unfortunate norm after every mishap, the blame game began swiftly with authorities pinning it on tardy progress on installing a fresh supply line. A committee is to investigate the issue, but things should not have been allowed to precipitate such a deathly crisis in the first place. This is the second instance of a water issue in the State in the past two months. In November, students at the Vellore Institute of Technology campus near Bhopal vehemently protested against contaminated water supply after many of them began contracting jaundice.

It is a shame that despite progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission, water woes continue. The National Family Health Survey data show that despite a rural-urban divide, 96% of households use an improved source of drinking water. A municipal supply is always considered to be a safe and "improved source", and if checks and balances were in place, the authorities at Indore would have spotted the contamination and let people know of the dangers. Giving access to water is meaningless unless the quality of the supply is assured. There needs to be better enforcement of water guidelines and other environmental laws at all levels. Air pollution is already wreaking havoc on citizens' health; unsafe drinking water should not be added to the list. The incidents in Madhya Pradesh should be taken as a wake-up call for India's water management. With a population that is close to 147 crore, India's water-borne disease burden is also high. All States should immediately check water supply sources for chemical and sewage contaminants. Old infrastructure including pipes must be repaired or replaced. There should be strict enforcement of policy and monitoring of practice along with awareness campaigns. Indore and many more cities in India have to clean up their act, or risk more deaths.

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- **Health, education, infrastructure, clean air and clean water all fall under basic needs, and various institutions should be busy working round the clock to improve lives.**
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- **Air pollution is already wreaking havoc on citizens' health; unsafe drinking water should not be added to the list.**
- **With a population that is close to 147 crore, India's water-borne disease burden is also high.**
- **All States should immediately check water supply sources for chemical and sewage contaminants.**

Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: According to the United Nations 'World Water Development Report, 2022'. India extracts more than a quarter of the world's groundwater withdrawal each year.

Statement-II: India needs to extract more than a quarter of the world's groundwater each year to satisfy the drinking water and sanitation needs of almost 18% of world's population living in its territory.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I**
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I**
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect**
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct**

With reference to 'Water Credit', consider the following statements:

- 1. It puts microfinance tools to work in the water and sanitation sector.**
- 2. It is a global initiative launched under the aegis of the World Health Organization and the World Bank.**
- 3. It aims to enable the poor people to meet their water needs without depending on subsidies.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Mains Question

- *India is increasingly facing a 'water divide', marked by unequal access to safe and adequate water across regions and social groups. Discuss the causes of this water divide in India and examine its socio-economic and environmental implications. Suggest measures to ensure equitable and sustainable water access.(250 words | 15 marks)*
- *भारत में 'जल विभाजन' (Water Divide) की समस्या दिन-प्रतिदिन गहराती जा रही है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और सामाजिक वर्गों के बीच सुरक्षित एवं पर्याप्त जल तक पहुँच में असमानता देखी जा रही है। भारत में इस जल विभाजन के कारणों पर चर्चा कीजिए तथा इसके सामाजिक-आर्थिक और पर्यावरणीय प्रभावों का विश्लेषण कीजिए। साथ ही, समान और सतत जल उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित करने हेतु उपाय सुझाइए।(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)*

Mandating student presence, erasing learning

Page No. 8, GS 2

The Delhi High Court's affirmation that law students may sit for examinations without satisfying rigid attendance thresholds has provoked predictable anxiety among administrators still tethered to an older, bureaucratized conception of education. But the ruling, far from eroding academic seriousness, restores a truth that Indian universities have resisted for decades, a truth that learning cannot be secured through surveillance. Compulsory attendance belongs to a paternalistic era that believed that students must be prodded into intellectual life rather than invited into it. A university worthy of its name should cultivate curiosity, not compliance.

The obsession with a student's presence

I say this not only as a critic of the managerial culture that has consumed our campuses, but as someone who has spent more than 40 years in the classroom. In all those years, I rarely took attendance and almost never prevented a student from taking an examination. I believed, and still believe, that coercion produces neither seriousness nor scholarship. If students do not wish to attend a class, the proper response is not punishment but introspection. A teacher must ask the harder question: what did I fail to offer that could have made this hour indispensable to them? Attendance is not a measure of learning; at best it is a measure of obedience.

The obsession with physical presence, understandably, flourishes where the classroom has been reduced to the perfunctory transfer of "yellowing" notes, the rote delivery of prefabricated knowledge that students could obtain faster and more efficiently through digital means. The ruling disrupts this apathy. It forces institutions of law to confront a truth long evaded, that a classroom that enforces attendance is already pedagogically bankrupt. This ruling of the High Court, I hope, will go a long way in changing the attendance norms across the country in all universities of higher learning.

Paulo Freire saw this with a clarity that remains electrifying. For him, education was never the mechanical depositing of information but a dialogic encounter, an awakening of consciousness through questioning, debate, and the shared labour of inquiry. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a seminal classic, students are not passive vessels receiving knowledge but beings who "name the world" and interpret through thought, and critical imagination.

For instance, my strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of desire. I remember speaking with Sir Isaiah Berlin, the renowned historian of ideas, over lunch in Oxford many years ago, and he confessed, with characteristic generosity, how rigorously he prepared his notes, outlines, marginalia, a meticulously constructed road map of ideas, jokes, narrative turns, and emotional crescendos. His lectures captivated not by accident but because they were acts of



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craftsmanship. Students came not out of duty but anticipation.

I carried that ethic into my own teaching. I never entered a lecture room unprepared, often working late into the night before class. And like Sir Berlin, I believed that the teacher's labour should disappear into the pleasure of learning, an effort made invisible but unmistakable in its effect. I was not alone in thinking this way. Terry Eagleton's lectures overflowed not because he demanded attendance but because his ideas were intensely incendiary. Germaine Greer filled halls because she brought intellectual rebellion to the podium. The Cambridge historian, Professor Sir Christopher Bayly, spoke history as if it were happening in the present tense. Frank Kermode, the influential literary critic, lectured after dinner with a glass of wine in hand, and this atmosphere of informal brilliance made literature feel even more urgent. None of them needed the threat of consequences to fill a classroom. They made absence unthinkable. This is what the Indian university has forgotten.

Classroom experiences

My strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of desire. I recall an afternoon when I took my students to a ridge overlooking the valley to read Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." I wanted them to encounter the poem not as a museum piece but as a living meditation on memory and perception. The students dispersed under the pines and wild grass where, suddenly, Wordsworth's idea of nature as "nurse", "guide" and "guardian of my heart" felt neither archaic nor maudlin but provocatively contemporary. I asked a single question: What does it mean for nature to educate us? What followed was not conventional interpretation but a collective reflection on how landscape shapes consciousness. The poem seemed to open of its own accord, demanding a point of view, rather than receiving it.

A similar transformation occurred when we carried Thoreau's Walden to the edge of a wooded trail. The students sat on stones and fallen branches, thumbing through a text, interpreting individually and not merely toeing the line. Thoreau's claim that most lives are lived in "quiet desperation" kindled an unexpected debate about our own system, its addiction to metrics, its reduction of intellectual life to attendance charts, its inability to recognise solitude, reflection, or slowness as virtues. Reading outdoors, my classroom dissolved, and what emerged instead was inquiry in its most rudimentary form.

The ruling, perhaps inadvertently, moves us closer to this ideal. In an era where digital resources, Artificial Intelligence tools, and open-access archives place vast knowledge at students' fingertips, the insistence on physical presence feels not only antiquated but also pedagogically unimaginative. The finest universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, MIT and others, do not treat attendance as the

measure of commitment. They assume maturity, always trusting a student's intellectual autonomy. Their confidence lies in the quality of their teaching, not in the surveillance of their students.

The sorry state of the Indian university

In this context, the Indian university has been reduced to a mere shell of its former self, suffocated by bureaucratic rigidity and administrative overreach. The Centre's increasing control has transformed campuses into intellectual vassals, where curricula are scrutinised, dissent is silenced, and administrative positions are filled by those who prioritise loyalty over scholarly merit. Within this stifling paradigm, mandatory attendance policies serve as a tool of pedagogical pacification, undermining student autonomy and intellectual curiosity.

A university that prioritises attendance over engagement ultimately betrays its fundamental purpose to nurture critical thinkers who can challenge and transform society. This is why the attendance debate is not administrative but philosophical, asking whether we trust students as thinking beings, or whether we regard them as wards of the institution. Coercion, indeed, is always the refuge of a pedagogy that has lost confidence.

The High Court ruling opens up a transformative possibility for rethinking the very fabric of teaching across higher education. By removing the coercive element of compulsory attendance, educators will be compelled to innovate and reimagine their pedagogical approaches. An empty classroom can be a catalyst for introspection, prompting teachers to craft learning spaces that are intellectually compelling and inherently engaging. Peer dynamics also undergo a paradigmatic shift, where the shame lies not in absence but in being disconnected from a class that has garnered admiration and enthusiasm from other students. This reorients the incentive structure, shifting the locus of motivation from external compulsion to intrinsic curiosity.

Learning, in this context, is reconceptualised as a dynamic and evolving process, marked by its restlessness and vital nature. It thrives on contradiction, dialogue, imagination and risk-taking. The true university is built on this refusal of stasis, its purpose not to disseminate information but to facilitate discovery. The future of education hinges on recognising and embracing this fundamental distinction.

The ruling therefore, serves as a testament to the inherent tension between freedom and coercion in the pursuit of knowledge. By decoupling attendance from examination eligibility, the Court has highlighted the futility of attempting to legislate intellectual engagement. True learning cannot be mandated. It can only be cultivated through the creation of spaces that foster intellectual curiosity and freedom. The university's future depends on its ability to navigate this fundamental distinction.

Indian universities must confront a truth that they evade — a classroom where attendance is enforced is pedagogically bankrupt

- **The Delhi High Court's affirmation that law students may sit for examinations without satisfying rigid attendance thresholds has provoked predictable anxiety among administrators still tethered to an older, bureaucratized conception of education.**
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Why does India need climate-resilient agriculture?

What makes a coherent national climate-resilient agriculture roadmap necessary?

Shambhavi Naik

The story so far:

Climate change is real, and for India to continue meeting domestic food demands, agriculture needs to cope with the increasing unpredictability of the weather, declining soil health, and growing air pollution.

What is climate-resilient agriculture?

Climate-resilient agriculture uses a range of biotechnology and complementary technologies to guide farming practices and reduce dependence on chemical inputs, while maintaining or improving productivity. These tools include biofertilizers and biopesticides, and soil-microbiome analyses. Genome-edited crops can be developed to withstand drought, heat, salinity, or pest pressures. In parallel, AI-driven analytics can integrate multiple environmental and agronomic variables to generate locally tailored farming strategies.

Why does India need CRA?

India is an agricultural nation with a rapidly growing population, which places increasing pressure on the need for more reliable farm productivity. Yet around 51% of India's net sown area is rainfed, and this land produces nearly 40% of the country's food, making it especially vulnerable to climate variability. Conventional farming methods alone may not withstand the rising stresses of climate change. Climate-resilient agriculture offers a suite of technologies that can enhance productivity while protecting environmental health.

Where does India stand today?

In 2011, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched a flagship network project 'National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture'. For enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of farmers to climate variability, location-specific climate resilient technologies such as system of rice intensification, aerobic rice, direct

seeding of rice, zero till wheat sowing, cultivation of climate resilient varieties tolerant to extreme weather conditions, in-situ incorporation of rice residues, etc., have been demonstrated under the project in 448 climate-resilient villages. The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture has been formulated to enhance agricultural productivity, especially in rainfed areas, focusing on integrated farming, water use efficiency, soil health management, and synergising resource conservation.

More recently, the BioE3 policy also positioned CRA as a key thematic area for the development of biotechnology-led solutions. Several technologies relevant to CRA are already commercialised.

Leading companies supply bio-inputs that improve soil health and reduce chemical dependence. India also has an expanding digital agriculture sector, with agritech startups offering AI-enabled advisories, precision irrigation, crop-health monitoring, and yield prediction tools.

What is the way forward?

India faces several risks in scaling CRA, including low adoption among small and marginal farmers due to limited access, awareness, and affordability, and quality inconsistencies in biofertilizers and biopesticides that undermine trust in biological alternatives. The rollout of climate-resilient seeds remains slow, with the adoption of new tools such as gene editing still emerging and uneven distribution across States. Further, the digital divide limits the reach of precision agriculture and AI-based decision tools. These challenges are compounded by ongoing soil degradation, water scarcity, and accelerating climate volatility, which may outpace current adaptation efforts. Fragmented policy coordination further risks slowing progress.

The way forward requires accelerating the development and deployment of climate-tolerant and genome-edited crops, strengthening quality standards and supply chains for biofertilizers and biopesticides, and provision of digital tools and climate advisories to support adoption by small landholders. Financial incentives, climate insurance, and credit access are essential to support farmers during the transition. Above all, India needs a coherent national CRA roadmap under the BioE3 framework, aligning biotechnology, climate adaptation, and policies to deliver resilience at scale. *Shambhavi Naik is chairperson, Takshashila Institution's Health & Life Sciences Policy*

THE GIST

▼
Climate-resilient agriculture uses biotechnology, biofertilizers, biopesticides, genome-edited crops, and AI-driven tools to enhance farm productivity while reducing dependence on chemical inputs.

▼
Scaling CRA in India requires a coherent national roadmap under the BioE3 framework, stronger adoption among small and marginal farmers, quality bio-inputs, climate-tolerant seeds, and digital tools to deliver resilience at scale.

- **Climate change is real, and for India to continue meeting domestic food demands, agriculture needs to cope with the increasing unpredictability of the weather, declining soil health, and growing air pollution.**
- **Climate-resilient agriculture uses a range of biotechnology and complementary technologies to guide farming practices and reduce dependence on chemical inputs, while maintaining or improving productivity.**
- **These tools include biofertilizers and biopesticides, and soil-microbiome analyses. Genome-edited crops can be developed to withstand drought, heat, salinity, or pest pressures.**
- **In parallel, AI-driven analytics can integrate multiple environmental and agronomic variables to generate locally tailored farming strategies.**

- **India is an agricultural nation with a rapidly growing population, which places increasing pressure on the need for more reliable farm productivity.**
- **Yet around 51% of India's net sown area is rainfed, and this land produces nearly 40% of the country's food, making it especially vulnerable to climate variability.**
- **Conventional farming methods alone may not withstand the rising stresses of climate change.**
- **Climate-resilient agriculture offers a suite of technologies that can enhance productivity while protecting environmental health.**
- **In 2011, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched a flagship network project 'National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture'.**

- **For enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of farmers to climate variability, location-specific climate resilient technologies such as system of rice intensification, aerobic rice, direct seeding of rice, zero till wheat sowing, cultivation of climate resilient varieties tolerant to extreme weather conditions, in-situ incorporation of rice residues, etc., have been demonstrated under the project in 448 climate-resilient villages.**
- **The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture has been formulated to enhance agricultural productivity, especially in rainfed areas, focusing on integrated farming, water use efficiency, soil health management, and synergising resource conservation.**

Which one of the following is the correct description of “100 Million Farmers”?

- (a) It is a platform for accelerating the transition towards food and water Systems that are net-zero (carbon), nature-positive and that aims to increase farmer resilience.**
- (b) It is an international alliance and a network of individuals and farming organisations interested in supporting and Strengthening the development of the organic animal husbandry.**
- (c) It is a digital platform fully integrated with service providers and built on blockchain that lets buyers, sellers and third parties trade fertilizers quickly and securely.**
- (d) It is a platform with the mission of encouraging the farmers to form Farmer Product Organisations or Agribusiness Consortiums, thus facilitating the access to global open markets to sell their products.**

Consider the following pairs:

I. International Year of the Woman Farmer: 2026

II. International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism: 2027

III. International Year of Peace and Trust: 2025

IV. International Year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence: 2029

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All the four

Mains Question

- **Climate-resilient agriculture has become essential for ensuring food security and farmers' livelihoods in the face of climate change.**
Discuss the need for climate-resilient agriculture in India and examine the strategies adopted to make Indian agriculture resilient to climate variability.
(250 words / 15 marks)
- **जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रभावों के संदर्भ में खाद्य सुरक्षा और किसानों की आजीविका सुनिश्चित करने के लिए जलवायु-सहिष्णु (Climate-Resilient) कृषि अत्यंत आवश्यक हो गई है।**
भारत में जलवायु-सहिष्णु कृषि की आवश्यकता पर चर्चा कीजिए तथा भारतीय कृषि को जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रति अधिक सक्षम बनाने हेतु अपनाई गई रणनीतियों का परीक्षण कीजिए।
(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

DRDO will play key role in India's air defence: Rajnath

Organisation will equip critical installations across the nation with advanced air defence systems for comprehensive aerial protection, under the Sudarshan Chakra initiative, says Defence Minister

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) would play a pivotal role in the creation of Sudarshan Chakra, an ambitious air defence initiative announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day 2025 address from the Red Fort.

Mr. Singh was addressing scientists and senior officials during his visit to the DRDO headquarters in New Delhi on the occasion of the organisation's 68th Foundation Day. Under the Sudarshan Chakra initiative, the DRDO will equip critical installations across the country with advanced air defence systems for comprehensive aerial protection over the next decade.

Highlighting the lessons from Operation Sindoor, the Minister said modern warfare underscored the importance of robust and reliable air defence capabilities. The DRDO would



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with DRDO Chairman Samir V. Kamat at the DRDO headquarters in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

achieve the objectives of the Sudarshan Chakra initiative with dedication and urgency, strengthening India's preparedness against evolving aerial threats, he said.

Weapon systems developed by the DRDO played a decisive role during Operation Sindoor, he said, underlining the organisation's professionalism and commitment to safeguarding national interests. Commending the DRDO for significantly bolstering India's indigenous defence capabilities, he said the state-of-the-art technolo-

gies and equipment supplied to the armed forces performed seamlessly during the operation. He noted that their reliable performance boosted the morale of soldiers and demonstrated the growing maturity of India's defence research ecosystem.

Mr. Singh praised the DRDO not only as a technology creator but also as a trust builder, stating that the organisation had emerged as a symbol of hope, certainty, and belief for the nation. He acknowledged the DRDO's expanding collaboration with

the private sector, academia, start-ups, and micro, small and medium enterprises, which has contributed to the creation of a synergistic and vibrant defence ecosystem.

Visible improvements across processes – from procurement and project management to industry engagement – had made systems faster, easier, and more reliable, he said.

Calling upon the DRDO to remain aligned with the rapidly evolving global technological landscape, Mr. Singh urged the organisation to continue focusing on innovation, deep tech, and next generation technologies.

Emphasising the need for continuous learning and development, he said technology scanning, capability assessment, and future readiness were essential to ensure India remains prepared for emerging warfare domains.

During the visit, Samir V. Kamat, Chairman of the DRDO, briefed the Minister on the organisation's achievements in 2025, ongoing R&D activities, and reforms planned for 2026.

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) would play a pivotal role in the creation of **Sudarshan Chakra**, an ambitious air defence initiative announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day 2025 address from the Red Fort.
- A national security mission aimed at creating an advanced, multi-layered shield around critical installations across India.
- Inspired by the mythological Sudarshan Chakra of Lord Krishna, blending cultural ethos with modern strategic defence.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Defence.

What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)", sometimes seen in the news?

(a) An Israeli radar system

(b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme

(c) An American anti-missile system

(d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

- **Patriot Missile System (United States):** It is widely deployed for missile interception and aerial threat neutralization.
- It is used by the U.S., Germany, Japan, and Saudi Arabia for high-altitude defense.
- **Iron Dome (Israel):** It is designed for short-range missile interception, particularly effective against rocket attacks.
- It is used extensively by Israel to protect urban areas and military installations.
- **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) – United States:** It is a high-altitude missile defense system capable of intercepting ballistic missiles in their terminal phase.
- It is deployed by the U.S., South Korea, and Japan for regional security.

Bomb Cyclone



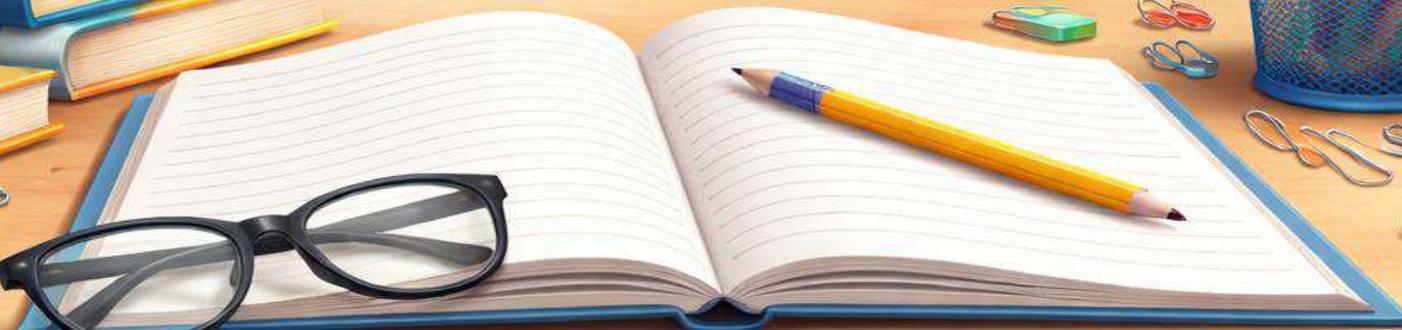
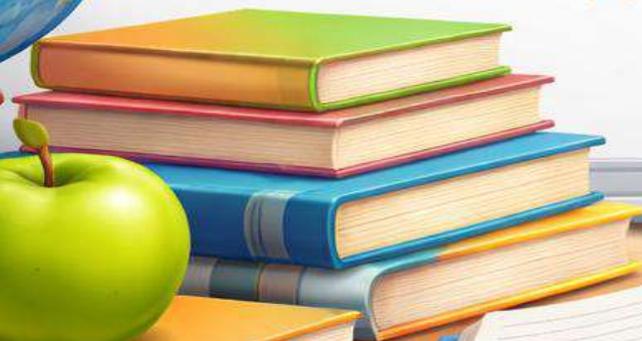
- **A bomb cyclone is a powerful mid-latitude weather system that undergoes explosive cyclogenesis, marked by an exceptionally rapid fall in central air pressure within 24 hours, resulting in severe and wide-ranging weather impacts.**
- **Bomb cyclones form when cold, dense polar air collides with warm, moisture-rich air, typically over oceans where sharp temperature contrasts provide abundant latent heat energy.**
- **The rapid upward movement of warm air lowers surface pressure sharply, drawing surrounding air inward at high speeds and causing the storm to intensify explosively.**
- **Rapid pressure fall: A defining characteristic is a pressure drop of 24 millibars or more in 24 hours, reflecting extreme atmospheric instability rather than gradual storm development.**
- **Extreme weather: The intense pressure gradient generates blizzards, freezing rain, flooding rainfall and hurricane-force winds, often producing life-threatening whiteout conditions.**

- **Sharp temperature swings:** The advancing cold front can cause abrupt temperature drops of 40–50°F within hours, severely stressing human health, transport systems, and energy demand.
- **Large spatial impact:** Bomb cyclones span hundreds of kilometres, simultaneously disrupting aviation, road transport, shipping routes and electricity networks across multiple regions.
- **Significance:**
 - **By combining snowstorms, high winds, flooding rain and ice, bomb cyclones magnify disaster impacts beyond the capacity of single-hazard preparedness systems.**
 - **Airports, power grids, ports and supply chains are highly exposed because rapid storm intensification leaves little time for protective shutdowns or rerouting.**

Baltic Sea



Thank You!



ABCs

