

Important Issues of the Day

Top Chinese General is a US Spy | Pg1

Europe & India to Work Together | Pg1

Conclusion of talks on FTA | Pg1

**India to Expand its Hypersonic
Arsenal | Pg12**

**India has most Road Accidents in the
World**

Living Project Renewed by “WE the people”

- Recent Republic Day witnessed a significant milestone in India-EU relations, marking the visit of European leaders as Chief Guests for India's 77th Republic Day.
- It highlights a shift from a purely trade-based relationship to a **comprehensive strategic partnership**.

Europe & India to work together to shape a new global order: EU chief

Key outcomes include 5-year comprehensive strategic agenda, mobility pact

Subhrajit Roy
New Delhi, January 26

NEW Delhi hosted leaders from the European Union on the occasion of India's 77th Republic Day celebrations, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said as successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure.

European Council President Antonio Luis Santos Costa and von der Leyen were chief guests at the Republic Day function on Monday, marking President Droupadi Murmu for hosting them, von der Leyen said, "Europe and India are the world's largest democracies, committed to working together to shape a new global order. This is why we are here to take our partnership to new heights."

As the two European leaders chair the EU-India Summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, the key outcomes include announcements about a 'comprehensive strategic agenda for 2026-2030', conclusion of a Free Trade

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President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi with European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Republic Day parade on Monday. TASHITOBGAL [FULL COVERAGE, PAGES 4, 5](#)



“The US and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies.”

U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, IN HIS R-DAY GREETINGS TO INDIA

CRUZ SAYS NAVARRO, VANCE AND TRUMP RESISTING INDIA DEAL, P6

Conclusion of talks on FTA set to be announced today; pact later this year

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, January 26

COMMERCE SECRETARY Rakesh Agarwal said on Monday that official-level negotiations are being wrapped up and both sides are set to announce the successful conclusion of talks on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on Tuesday.

This assumes significance as the trade deal has been dec-

ades in the making — the talks first started in 2007 but were abandoned in 2013 due to differences in market access for automobiles.

While the two sides are expected to announce the conclusion of negotiations at the India-EU Summit here on Tuesday, the formal signing would take place later this year after legal scrubbing of the agreement is completed.

"After subsuming a few chapters, India and the EU have completed talks on 21 chapters. While the legal scrubbing of the deal would take four to five months, the trade deal will come into effect by early next year after being ratified by the European Parliament," an official said.

The trade agreement is expected to be among the most comprehensive deals that India

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Context of the Visit

- **Chief Guests:**
 - European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**
 - European Council President **Antonio Costa**
- **Symbolic Importance:**
 - This is the first time EU leadership has been collectively honored at this level, signaling a "**new global order**" where **India and Europe** act as two of the **world's largest democracies**.



Key Outcomes and Agreements

Strategic Agenda (2026-2030):

- A five-year roadmap to guide cooperation in **technology, climate, and security**.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA):

- It now moves to "legal scrubbing" and parliamentary approvals, with a goal to be **operational by late 2026**.

Security and Defence Partnership:

- A new pact to strengthen cooperation in **maritime security, cyber-security, and counter-terrorism**.

Mobility and Talent Pact:

- A framework to facilitate the **movement of Indian students and highly skilled** professionals to **Europe**.

Connectivity:

- Renewed momentum for the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** to improve transport and energy links.

Different views on some issues, but finding common ground on global stability:

Issue	India's Position	EU's Position
Russia-Ukraine War	Views it as a European security crisis rather than a global one. Maintains a policy of " strategic autonomy ," refusing to join sanctions or condemn Russia directly.	Views it as an existential threat to the global rules-based order . Has heavily sanctioned Russia and pushed for a full, unconditional ceasefire.
Gaza Conflict	Balances its support for a two-state solution with its strong strategic and counter-terrorism ties with Israel. Avoids aggressive rhetoric against Israel.	While divided internally , the EU leadership leans toward stronger calls for meaningful negotiations and human rights protections in Palestinian territories.
Security Priorities	Primary concern is continental security (border issues with China/Pakistan) and the Indian Ocean.	Primary concern is European stability and "de-risking" its economy from total dependence on non-democratic states.

Different views on some issues, but finding common ground on global stability:

Regional Security:

- Discussions covered **Russia's war in Ukraine**, the **conflict in Gaza**, and the need for a "**free and prosperous Indo-Pacific**."

Diplomatic Balancing:

- Prime Minister Modi continues to **balance India's stance on the Ukraine** conflict while **pressing the EU for stronger positions** regarding stability in **South Asia** .

Research & Innovation:

- India is looking to join **Horizon Europe**, the world's largest research and innovation program, to collaborate on cutting-edge technology.

Q1. With reference to the Horizon Europe initiative, consider the following statements:

1. It is the European Union's flagship research and innovation program succeeding the Horizon 2020 framework.
2. The program is structured around four distinct pillars, with the fourth pillar dedicated exclusively to Space Exploration.
3. Under the current Co-Funding Mechanism (CFM), Indian researchers are directly funded by the European Commission's central budget.
4. The program features five "Moonshot" missions, including one dedicated to making 100 cities climate-neutral by 2030.
5. During the 2026 Summit, India and the EU initiated exploratory talks for India's formal "Association" status with the program.

How many of the above statements are correct?

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

1. It was officially launched during the G20 Summit held in New Delhi in 2023.
2. The corridor consists of two separate segments: the Eastern Corridor and the Northern Corridor.
3. The transit route is designed as an exclusively overland rail network to completely avoid the risks associated with maritime sea lanes.
4. Apart from transport, the project integrates a digital cable network and a pipeline for clean hydrogen export.
5. Once operational, it is expected to reduce the transit time for trade between India and Europe by approximately 30%.

How many of the above statements are correct?

Horizon Europe

- The world's largest trans-national research & innovation program.
- **Budget:** Approx. **€95.5 Billion** for a 7-year period.
- Has a **Three Pillar Structure** and **Five Moonshot Missions**

Pillar I: Excellent Science –

- Focuses on fundamental research (includes the **European Research Council** and **Marie Skłodowska-Curie** fellowships).

Pillar II: Global Challenges & Industrial Competitiveness –

- Climate, Health, Digital, and Energy.
- **India's primary area of interest.**

Pillar III: Innovative Europe –

- Aims to make Europe a frontrunner in market-creating innovation (includes the **European Innovation Council**).

Five "Moonshot" Missions

It features five time-bound missions for 2030:

Climate Adaptation, Conquering Cancer, Restoring Oceans, Climate-Neutral Cities, and Soil Health.

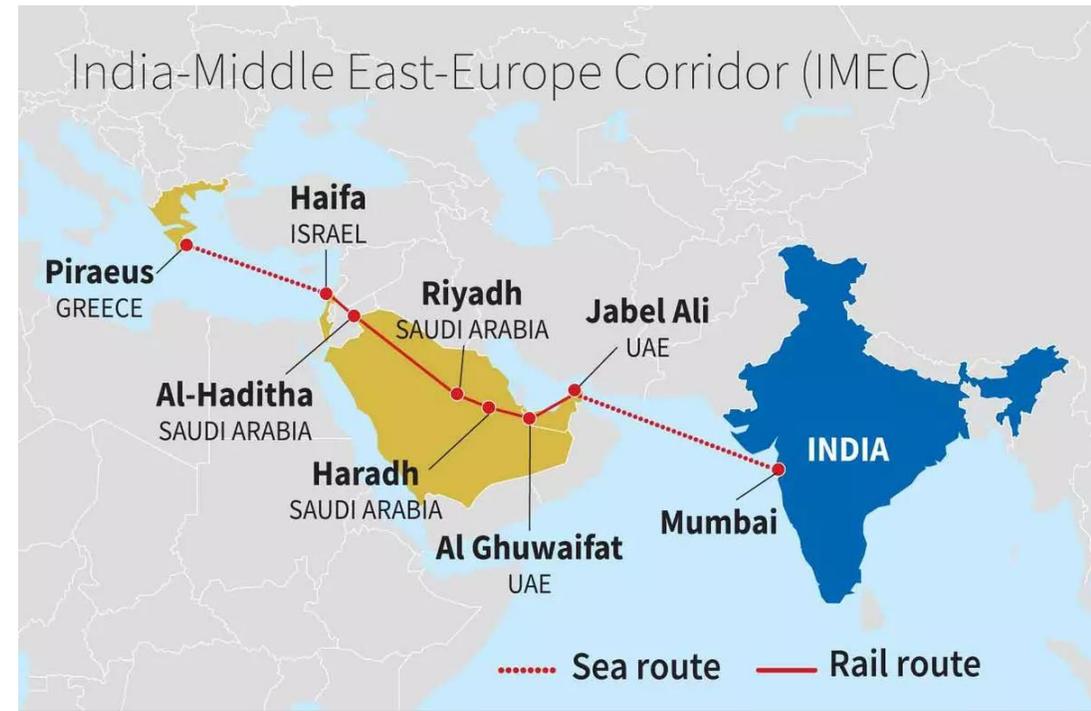
India's Association

Co-Funding Mechanism (CFM): While India is not automatically funded by the EU, researchers participate via a CFM funded by Indian agencies like **DST** or **DBT**.

Association Talks: Recent 2026 summit outcomes show India exploring **official "Association"** status to deepen this high-tech collaboration.

India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor

- Announced at **G20 New Delhi (2023)**; involves India, USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, EU, France, Germany, and Italy.
- Comprises two segments
 - **Eastern Corridor** (India to Arabian Gulf via sea)
 - **Northern Corridor** (Gulf to Europe via rail and sea).
- **Objective:** Integrates railways and ship-to-rail transit to reduce trade time by **40%** and costs by **30%** compared to the Suez Canal.



India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor

Beyond Transport:

- Includes **Electricity cables** (Green Hydrogen export), **High-speed data cables**, and pipelines.

Geopolitics:

- Viewed as a "Green & Digital" alternative to China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Strategic Hubs:

- Connects major ports like **Mundra/JNPT** (India), **Fujairah/Jebel Ali** (UAE), **Haifa** (Israel), and **Piraeus** (Greece).

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Conclusion of FTA Talks

- There is a major breakthrough in the **India-European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** negotiations, which have been decades in the making.

Conclusion of talks on FTA set to be announced today; pact later this year

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, January 26

COMMERCE SECRETARY Rakesh Agarwal said on Monday that official-level negotiations are being wrapped up and both sides are set to announce the successful conclusion of talks on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on Tuesday.

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Key Highlights of the Deal

- **Timeline:**
 - After nearly **20 years** of stop-and-start negotiations (**beginning in 2007**), official-level talks on **21 chapters** have **finally concluded**.
- **Next Steps:**
 - The deal undergoes "**legal scrubbing**" (verification) for **4–5 months**, with a **formal signing later this year** and implementation by **early next year**.
- **Market Access:**
 - **India's gains:**
 - Boost for **labor-intensive sectors** like textiles, footwear, marine products, and leather.
 - **EU's gains:**
 - Better **access to India's automobile and alcoholic beverage sectors**.

Strategic and Economic Drivers

US Tariff Challenges:

- Indian exporters (especially in **apparel**) face **high US tariffs**.
- This FTA provides a **vital "market diversification"** strategy to **reduce dependence** on the US.

The "China Factor":

- Both India and the EU seek to **reduce their supply chain reliance on China**, particularly in **critical technologies** and the **solar energy sector**, to ensure economic security.

Geopolitical Shifts:

- **Changing global trade dynamics** and **shifting American trade policies** have pushed both partners to seek more stable, comprehensive bilateral agreements.

Mains Question

Q. The successful conclusion of negotiations for the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) marks a significant shift in India's trade diplomacy. Discuss the strategic and economic significance of this agreement for India.

(10 Marks, 150 Words)

The Current Purge

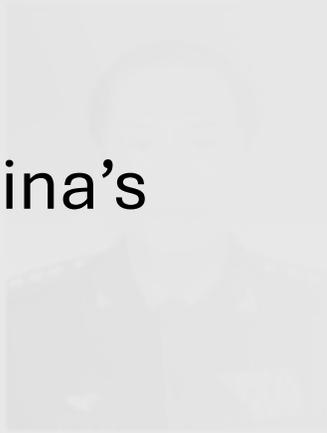
- The Central Military Commission (CMC) is responsible for China's military and defense policy.
- Historically a seven-member body, it has been reduced to just **two active members**: President **Xi Jinping** and Vice Chairman **Zhang Shengmin**.



CMC Vice Chairman



Xi Jinping 习近平
CCP General Secretary
State Chairman
CMC Chairman



CMC Vice Chairman



Li Shangfu 李尚福

Member

Regional Defense



Liu Zhenli 刘振立

CMC Member

Chief of the CMC Joint



Miao Hua 苗华

CMC Member

Director of the CMC Political

Key Figure Targeted:

- General **Zhang Youxia**, the Vice Chairman of the CMC. He was **China's top-ranking career military officer** and a **close personal ally** of Xi Jinping.
- **Other Removals:** General **Liu Zhenli** (Chief of Joint Staff) is also under investigation. This follows the **2023-2024 dismissals of former Defense Ministers Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe**.



Reasons Behind the Investigation

Corruption:

- High-level **bribery regarding military promotions and defense contracts** remains a persistent issue in the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

National Security Leaks:

- Reports suggest allegations of "**leaking information**" about China's **nuclear weapons programs** to **foreign entities** (specifically the US).

Political Loyalty:

- Some experts believe the **purge is a move to eliminate "political cliques"** or **individuals** who might eventually **challenge Xi's absolute authority**.

Significance of the Development

Seniority:

- Zhang Youxia was not just a general; he was a **veteran of the 1979 Vietnam War and a member** of the powerful **Politburo**.
- His removal shows that **no one is "untouchable."**

Institutional Weakness:

- The CMC is now at its **lowest strength in decades**. This creates a **vacuum in military expertise and administrative continuity**.

Timing:

- These changes come ahead of the **2027 Party Congress**, where Xi may seek to install a **new, younger set of loyalists to consolidate power** for a fourth term.

The instability within the PLA leadership has broader consequences for regional security:

Military Readiness:

- Constant **purges of experienced commanders** can **damage morale** and **hinder long-term military planning**.

Focus on Taiwan and South China Sea:

- Inefficiencies in **war planning** are **costly for China's ambitions**. However, a "**loyalist**" military might also be more willing to carry out **aggressive orders from the top leadership**.

Foreign Policy:

- It signals to the **world that Xi Jinping is prioritizing domestic political control** and "**internal cleansing**" over military stability.

Q3. Regarding the Central Military Commission (CMC) of China, which of the following statements is correct based on recent developments?

A. Membership in the CMC is strictly limited to career military officers with no civilian presence.

B. The body has recently seen a significant reduction in active high-ranking.

C. It is a purely advisory body with no command authority over the People's Liberation Army.

D. The CMC operates independently of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo.

Q4. The removal of General Zhang Youxia is considered particularly significant in Chinese politics because:

A. He was the first civilian to ever hold a Vice Chairman position.

B. His removal marks the end of China's nuclear weapons program.

C. He represents the 'old guard' with deep personal and historical ties to the current President.

D. He was the primary advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan issue.

India to expand Hypersonic Arsenal

- The **Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LR-AShM)** is a sophisticated, home-grown weapon system designed by the **DRDO**
- It aims to secure India's maritime boundaries.
- It marks India's entry into the elite group of nations possessing **hypersonic** technology.

• DEFENCE

India to expand its hypersonic arsenal with LR-AShM missile



TASHI TOBGYAL

DRDO's Long Range-Anti Ship Missile during the R-Day parade.

Sushant Kulkarni

Key Features of LR-AShM

- It is a **Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV)**.
- It travels at speeds starting at **Mach 10** (10 times the speed of sound) and maintains an **average speed of Mach 5**.
- The missile can **strike targets up to 1,500 km away**. Advanced versions with ranges up to **3,500 km** are being developed.

Key Features of LR-AShM

Propulsion:

- It uses a **two-stage solid propellant** rocket motor to reach high speeds before the **glide vehicle separates**.

Manoeuvrability:

- Unlike traditional missiles that follow a fixed path, the LR-AShM **can change its course in mid-flight**.

Stealth:

- By flying at low altitudes with extreme speed, it remains almost **invisible to enemy radars**.

Strategic Significance

Maritime Deterrence:

- It is a "**carrier killer**" designed to neutralize large warships and aircraft carriers.

Sea Denial:

- This capability allows India to prevent adversaries from using specific maritime areas for military or commercial purposes.

Quick Response:

- The missile can cover its full 1,500 km range in just **15 minutes**, leaving very little time for the enemy to react.

Self-Reliance:

- Developed indigenously, it supports the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative and reduces dependence on foreign defense technology.

Understanding Hypersonic Technology

- Hypersonic weapons travel at speeds of **Mach 5 or higher**. There are two main types:

Feature	Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (LR-AShM)	Hypersonic Cruise Missile
Launch	Launched by a rocket booster.	Powered by an engine throughout.
Flight	Glides through the atmosphere after separation.	Flies within the atmosphere using air-breathing engines.
Engine	No engine during the glide phase.	Uses Scramjet engines for sustained flight.

Science Corner: Scramjet Engines

- While the LR-AShM is a glide vehicle, DRDO is also working on **Hypersonic Cruise Missiles** using Scramjet technology.

Definition:

- A Scramjet (Supersonic Combustion Ramjet) is an engine that breathes air from the atmosphere.

Efficiency:

- It uses the missile's high speed to compress incoming air, meaning it has **no moving parts** like fans or compressors.

Requirement:

- It only works at speeds above Mach 3; therefore, it requires a rocket boost to start.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LR-AShM) developed by DRDO:

1. It is a Hypersonic Cruise Missile that uses Scramjet engines to maintain a constant speed of Mach 10 throughout its flight.
2. The missile follows a quasi-ballistic trajectory, performing multiple "skips" and unpowered maneuvers within the atmosphere.
3. It features a two-stage solid propulsion system where the first stage separates after providing the initial boost.
4. Its low-altitude flight path and high speed make it nearly impossible for enemy ship-borne radars to detect and intercept.
5. With a current range of 1,500 km, it can strike a target in the Indian Ocean Region within approximately 15 minutes.

How many of the statements given above are correct?