

# Daily Current Affairs



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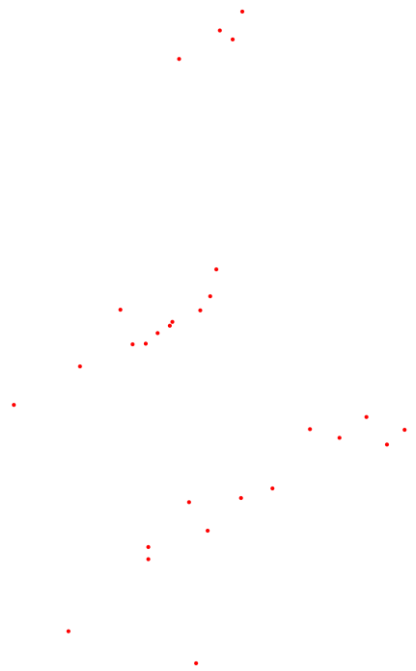
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10 MCQ QUIZ



10 MCQ from the session

- What is the main objective of the media monitoring centre approved by the Maharashtra government?
- महाराष्ट्र सरकार द्वारा अनुमोदित मीडिया निगरानी केंद्र का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. To control media reporting / मीडिया रिपोर्टिंग को नियंत्रित करना  
B. To ensure accurate dissemination of government-related news / सरकार से संबंधित समाचारों का सटीक प्रसार सुनिश्चित करना  
C. To promote positive news about the government / सरकार के बारे में सकारात्मक समाचारों को बढ़ावा देना  
D. To monitor international news coverage / अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समाचार कवरेज की निगरानी करना

- Which entity will oversee the operations of the media monitoring centre?
- मीडिया निगरानी केंद्र के संचालन की देखरेख कौन करेगा?
- A. Press Information Bureau (PIB) / प्रेस सूचना ब्यूरो (PIB)  
B. Directorate General of Information and Public Relations (DGIPR) / सूचना और जनसंपर्क महानिदेशालय (DGIPR)  
C. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting / सूचना एवं प्रसारण मंत्रालय  
D. Election Commission of India / भारत निर्वाचन आयोग

- Under which initiative were two major ropeway projects in Uttarakhand approved?
- उत्तराखंड में दो प्रमुख रोपवे परियोजनाओं को किस पहल के तहत मंजूरी दी गई?
- A. Bharatmala Pariyojana / भारतमाला परियोजना
- B. Parvatmala Pariyojana / पर्वतमाला परियोजना
- C. Sagarmala Pariyojana / सागरमाला परियोजना
- D. National Ropeway Mission / राष्ट्रीय रोपवे मिशन

- What is the main aim of the Parvatmala Pariyojana?
- पर्वतमाला परियोजना का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. To build highways in mountainous areas / पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में राजमार्गों का निर्माण करना
- B. To develop ropeway connectivity in hilly areas / पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में रोपवे कनेक्टिविटी विकसित करना
- C. To promote rural development / ग्रामीण विकास को बढ़ावा देना
- D. To construct railway tunnels in high-altitude regions / ऊँचाई वाले क्षेत्रों में रेलवे सुरंगों का निर्माण करना



- Which organization recently launched "Mission 300" to improve electricity access in Africa?
- अफ्रीका में बिजली पहुंच में सुधार के लिए हाल ही में "मिशन 300" किस संगठन ने शुरू किया?
- A. United Nations (UN) / संयुक्त राष्ट्र (UN)
- B. World Bank and African Development Bank / विश्व बैंक और अफ्रीकी विकास बैंक
- C. International Monetary Fund (IMF) / अंतर्राष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (IMF)
- D. International Energy Agency (IEA) / अंतर्राष्ट्रीय ऊर्जा एजेंसी (IEA)

- What is the primary goal of Mission 300?
- मिशन 300 का मुख्य लक्ष्य क्या है?
- A. To connect 300 million people in Africa with electricity by 2030 / 2030 तक अफ्रीका में 300 मिलियन लोगों को बिजली से जोड़ना
- B. To promote green hydrogen technology in developing countries / विकासशील देशों में ग्रीन हाइड्रोजन प्रौद्योगिकी को बढ़ावा देना
- C. To provide funding for clean water projects in Africa / अफ्रीका में स्वच्छ जल परियोजनाओं के लिए वित्तपोषण प्रदान करना
- D. To enhance rural internet connectivity / ग्रामीण इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी में सुधार करना

- What does "carbon intensity" measure in a country?
- किसी देश में "कार्बन तीव्रता" क्या मापती है?
- A. Total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from industries / उद्योगों से कुल CO<sub>2</sub> उत्सर्जन
- B. Amount of carbon emitted per unit of GDP growth / जीडीपी वृद्धि की प्रति इकाई उत्सर्जित कार्बन की मात्रा
- C. Energy consumption of a country / किसी देश की ऊर्जा खपत
- D. Level of carbon sequestration in forests / वनों में कार्बन अवशोषण का स्तर

- Which country is facing its worst forest fire in three decades?
- कौन सा देश तीन दशकों में अपनी सबसे बड़ी जंगल की आग का सामना कर रहा है?
- A. United States / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका
- B. Australia / ऑस्ट्रेलिया
- C. Japan / जापान
- D. Brazil / ब्राजील

- What is Starlink, and why has India not approved it?
- Starlink क्या है, और भारत ने इसे क्यों अनुमोदित नहीं किया?
- A. It is a cryptocurrency; India banned it due to financial risks / यह एक क्रिप्टोकॉरेंसी है; भारत ने वित्तीय जोखिमों के कारण इसे प्रतिबंधित कर दिया
- B. It is a satellite internet service; India has security and pricing concerns / यह एक सैटेलाइट इंटरनेट सेवा है; भारत को सुरक्षा और मूल्य निर्धारण से संबंधित चिंताएँ हैं
- C. It is a global financial network; India prefers its own banking systems / यह एक वैश्विक वित्तीय नेटवर्क है; भारत अपने स्वयं के बैंकिंग सिस्टम को प्राथमिकता देता है
- D. It is a military intelligence system; India has strategic concerns / यह एक सैन्य खुफिया प्रणाली है; भारत को रणनीतिक चिंताएँ हैं

- Which country has the fastest police cars, including Lamborghinis, Ferraris, and Bugattis?
- किस देश के पास सबसे तेज पुलिस कारें हैं, जिनमें लैम्बॉर्गिनी, फेरारी और बुगाटी शामिल हैं?
- A. United States / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका
- B. Germany / जर्मनी
- C. United Arab Emirates (UAE) / संयुक्त अरब अमीरात (UAE)
- D. Italy / इटली

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### INSIDE

**EC to fix duplicate voter ID numbers issue in 3 months**

**NEW DELHI**  
Amid the controversy over duplicate voter ID Card numbers issued to some electors, the Election Commission on Friday said it would resolve the matter in the next three months by ensuring a unique national EPIC number to all voters. » PAGE 3

**India conveys its concern to U.K. on security failure**

**NEW DELHI**  
India conveyed "deep concern" to the British government over security provided to external Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, after a Khulistan protester was able to get close to his car in London, the External Affairs Ministry said, criticising the U.K. for "indifference" to the situation. » PAGE 4

**'Xi-Modi meet made positive strides in ties'**

**BEIJING**  
The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kazan last year strengthened India-China ties, emphasising cooperation and mutual support, marking a positive stride after standoff in Eastern Ladakh, said Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday. » PAGE 4

**Railways plans a slew of measures to control crowd**

**NEW DELHI**  
Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw chaired a high-level meeting in New Delhi on Friday to discuss crowd control at railway stations. After the meet officials said, a decision was taken to construct permanent waiting areas outside 60 stations. » PAGE 5

## Peace march plan revives tension in Manipur

**The Hindu Bureau GURUWANT**  
A peace march proposed on Saturday, aimed to coincide with the Centre's deadline for the start of "free movement" on the highways, has put Manipur on the boil again.  
Security has been heightened in the State's tribal-dominated Imphal Valley and the surrounding hills inhabited mostly by the tribal Kuki-Zo communities, ahead of a potentially volatile "march to the hills" planned by the Federation of Civil Societies (FOCS).  
The valley-based umbrella...

## Join Joint Action Committee on delimitation, Stalin tells CMs

CM seeks representatives from Odisha, Punjab, and Bengal, plus southern States; first meeting set for March 22 in Chennai to 'chart course forward'; we must 'examine the constitutional, legal, and political dimensions of this challenge,' says Stalin

**The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI**  
Drumming up support from Chief Ministers and former Chief Ministers of States likely to be affected by the delimitation process, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin invited them to join a Joint Action Committee (JAC), in a letter on Friday. Despite the gravity of the issue, the Centre has provided "neither clarity nor any concrete commitment" to address States' concerns, Mr. Stalin said.

Besides the southern States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, Mr. Stalin also hoped to include Odisha, Punjab, and West Bengal in the JAC. As an "initial step towards unified action", the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister proposed an inaugural meeting in Chennai on March 22 to "chart our collective course forward."  
"I believe this issue transcends individual State concerns — it strikes at the heart of our federal principles. Together, we must examine the constitutional, legal, and political dimensions of this challenge. We must jointly develop alternatives that preserve our current representation in percentage terms



M.K. STALIN  
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

leadership and collaboration, rising above political differences, and standing up for our collective good. What is at stake is not any abstract principle. It is our States' ability to secure rightful resources for development, to influence crucial policies, and to ensure our economic priorities receive due attention in the national agenda," Mr. Stalin said.  
Recalling an all-party meeting recently held in Chennai, he said the attendees had resolved to stand united in defence of "our constitutional rights, demanding a fair delimitation."

They had also resolved to form a JAC and reach out to all States which "potentially face the same threat," he said.  
Post 2026, the situation may become drastically skewed if the delimitation exercise is based on the next Census, Mr. Stalin argued. "Those States which controlled their population and achieved superior governance indicators will face an unjust punishment — reduced representation in the very forum where national policies are determined."

"Must not be penalised" Once implemented, this democratic imbalance could persist for decades, leaving these States with diminished capacity to advocate for their people's interests and influence crucial national decisions, he said. "For such States are not against delimitation itself. What we oppose is its swamping by States that fulfilled their national duties, thus punishing progress, he clarified. Citing reports that

are being considered for the delimitation exercise, both based on population, Mr. Stalin said: "In both scenarios, all the States that have successfully implemented measures stand to lose significantly if the exercise is based on the post-2026 population. We should not be thus penalised for effectively controlling population growth and upholding national development goals."

In the first case, the existing 543 seats could be redistributed among the States, and in the second case, the total number of seats could be increased beyond 600, he said, citing reports.  
"If the government has provided neither clarity nor a concrete commitment to priorities with strengthening Tamil as a mother tongue," he said, "I will follow a 'pro rata' basis, without explaining the reasons behind such course calculation as well as raising an empty rhetoric that no State will face a decrease in its seats," he underlined.

## Teach engineering, medicine in Tamil, Shah urges Stalin

**B. Kolappan THAKKOLAM**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday urged Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to impart medical and engineering education in Tamil.  
Addressing the 56th CISE Raising Day at the newly named Rajaditya Cholan Recruits Training Centre (RTC) here in Ranipet district of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Shah said various States had offered courses in their regional language. His suggestion comes amid Mr. Stalin's allegation that the Union government was trying to impose Hindi in the southern States through the National Education Policy.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister too should take steps to teach medical and technical courses in Tamil. It will benefit Tamil medium students along with strengthening Tamil as a mother tongue, he said. Incidentally, Tamil Nadu had introduced Tamil medium B.E./Tech courses in 2010 under the Karunanidhi government. Praising Tamil Nadu, Mr. Shah said whether it was "administrative re-



Amit Shah

forms, achieving spiritual heights, strengthening Indian culture in every field. "In line with this, it has been decided to name the CISE Regional Training Centre in Thakkolam after the great warrior of the Chola dynasty, Rajaditya Chola," he said.  
The Minister said that earlier there was no provision for writing recruitment examinations for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in regional languages, but now the youth could write examinations in Tamil and other languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

### Back to school



Prayer time: Students pray as they returned to their school after winter break in Budgam district of Jammu & Kashmir. IMRAN NESSAR

## Zelensky renews his call for aerial truce as Russians launch massive air strike

**Agence France-Presse KYIV**

Russia launched a "massive" drone and missile attack on Ukrainian energy facilities on Friday, as President Volodymyr Zelensky renewed calls for a mutual halt to aerial attacks on critical infrastructure.

The call from Mr. Zelensky to halt aerial bombardments on energy facilities builds on growing rhetoric from Kyiv, Washington, and Moscow on halting the war, now in its fourth year.  
The Ukrainian leader said the next steps to establishing real peace should be stopping both Russian and Ukrainian aerial and naval attacks.

"Ukraine is ready to go the way of peace, and it is Ukraine that wants peace from the very first second of this war. The task is to force Russia to stop the war," he wrote in a post on social media.

"Precision strike" The Russian Defence Ministry confirmed on Friday it had carried out "precision strikes on energy facilities, claiming they support the Ukrainian military."  
Russia is "targeting facilities in the Ukrainian military-industrial complex," Russian spokesman



A firefighter extinguishes a burning car at a site of a Russian strike in Kharkiv on Friday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. AFP

son Dmitry Peskov said. The Ukrainian Air Force said Russia had launched at least 58 missiles and more than 200 drones, damaging energy facilities across the country from Kharkiv in the east to Ternopil in the west.

Firefighters were battling a blaze on streets lined with debris in the Kharkiv region, images released by the emergency services showed.  
The Kremlin responded to earlier calls by Mr. Zelensky for a halt to aerial attacks by ruling out any temporary ceasefire in Ukraine.  
Mr. Zelensky's allies abroad have voiced support for his Friday proposal and on Friday Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who recently hosted the Ukrainian leader, also gave it his backing.  
"We support the idea of

establishing a ceasefire as soon as possible and stopping attacks in the air and at sea as a confidence-building measure between the parties," Mr. Erdogan told an online meeting.

"Talks back on track" Washington said talks with Kyiv were back on track to secure a ceasefire with Moscow. The U.S. and Ukrainian officials were expected to meet Tuesday in Saudi Arabia, a senior Kyiv official said, with Mr. Zelensky voicing hope for a "meaningful meeting."  
Mr. Zelensky himself will travel to Saudi Arabia on Monday for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.  
U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said he would speak to Ukrainian negotiators about an "initial ceasefire" with Russia and a "framework" for a longer agreement.

Diversify now India needs to expand its trading base to overcome global headwinds

February's sharp rise in the monthly services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), to 59, has provided a welcome boost to economists and policymakers, following the rise in GDP growth numbers, released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) for the December quarter of the current fiscal (Q3FY25). The strong rebound in the services PMI, up from 56.5 in January, which marked a 25-month low, helped offset the decline in the manufacturing PMI, which fell to a 14-month low of 56.3 in February. A PMI reading above 50 signals expansion, while anything below 50 indicates contraction. The PMI survey, conducted every month by IHS Global across over 40 countries, is a key indicator of economic momentum. The fact that manufacturing and services — sectors that have accounted for about 80% of India's GDP since 2010 — remain in expansion mode is positive. This resilience persists despite capital outflows from Indian markets, suggesting that the country's fundamentals remain strong. A more telling indicator of long-term economic strength is the quarterly earnings of the SENSEX, India's benchmark index comprising 30 of the most valued and actively traded companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The Q3FY25 results point to solid net profit growth for nearly all firms. However, looming risks remain. The threat of reciprocal tariffs announced by United States President Donald Trump, and set to take effect on April 2, poses a challenge for the manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, the services sector is facing a different set of challenges, including artificial intelligence (AI)-driven solutions. While the NSO reported 6.2% real GDP growth for Q3FY25, top executives from India's leading IT firms have, at an industry event in Mumbai, cautioned that growth in the sector could be as low as 5.1% in FY25, up from 3.8% in FY24. Although this may seem concerning for an industry that has enjoyed a 16% compounded annual growth rate for nearly 25 years, it still represents an increase of \$29 billion, bringing the sector's expected value to \$283 billion in FY25. In its 2025 Strategic Review report, NASSCOM has identified geopolitical upheavals and rising tariffs as key challenges. But business leaders at the event attributed much of the slowdown to the disruptive impact of AI, which is reducing earnings from new contracts and reshaping hiring and training practices. India's services and manufacturing sectors face a triple challenge: rapid technological transformation, increasing global protectionism, and the potential for a U.S. recession. This could have significant repercussions for India, given that the U.S. remains its largest trading partner. To navigate these headwinds, India must urgently diversify its trading base.

Himalayan tragedy Impact of natural disasters, which are not very predictable, can be controlled

Earlier this week, Indian Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police teams rescued 23 workers who were stuck in a rubble of snow and ice, following an avalanche in Mana village, Uttarakhand. Eight workers died in the disaster, which occurred at a Border Roads Organisation construction site that had housed 54 labourers in eight containers. To say that the rescue operation was arduous would be an understatement. The rescue teams worked in a near-continuous 60-hour shift amidst heavy snowfall at an elevation of 10,500 feet above mean sea level. With the roads blocked by the snow, helicopters were used to evacuate these workers to the Joshi Nath Army Hospital — five helicopters from the Indian Army, two from the Indian Air Force and one civilian copter. Along with the physical effort expended in the extraction, the rescue operation involved a drone-based detection system to detect the containers that were buried under several feet of snow, ice and rock. Avalanches in the Himalayan States, like the one in Mana, which is among the last outposts in Indian territory and close to the border with China, are not uncommon. Villagers here have historically been "winter-migrants", which means that during the winter months the village is deserted. Coinciding with the ritual closing of the Badrinath temple in November, there is migration to villages lower down, such as Gopeshwar and Jyotirmath, for the winter, with residents returning only when the temple reopens in April or May. This is part of traditional wisdom and has a lot to do with the historical experience of the upriver Himalayan stretches being prone to avalanches. While these practices may have saved the resident villagers, it still raises the question as to whether the workers — several of them migrants — were adequately aware of the risks of their enterprise. Given the strategic location of the village and the need to develop improved roads for civilian and military access, there will always be a sizeable number of people engaged in activity in regions that are inherently inhospitable and risk-prone. Once disaster strikes, efforts focus on the rescue operation, and once they conclude, there is little reflection on whether preventive measures could have been taken. Avalanches cannot be predicted with precision, but steps can be taken to design construction sites that are safer to live in and can improve the odds of survival. There is much to learn from the way bomb shelters are designed or how research stations at Antarctica are designed. All of this requires a greater sensitivity to workers who toil amidst hazards and not merely label these tragedies as inevitable consequences of natural disasters.

On International Women's Day, commentaries on some of the key issues in the gender space, in the print and online editions

Inclusion in public spaces from fear to freedom

India is often considered to be one of the most unsafe countries for women, a reality that demands urgent and deliberate change. India was ranked 128 among 177 countries rated in Women, Peace and Security Index 2023. While deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that lead to violence cannot be dismantled overnight, meaningful progress can be made by changing the everyday barriers that women face. On International Women's Day today, it is crucial to reflect on a fundamental but an often-ignored issue — the accessibility of public spaces for women. While the topic is deeply studied and researched in the academic world, very little has changed practically. For instance, how many women do we see on roads when compared to men at any given point of time? Which are the spaces where they are more visible? And which are the areas which they completely avoid? How freely can women walk on the streets? Or do women consciously regulate their body language to conform to the male gaze?

**Gendered spatial control** It is important to understand them because public spaces serve as arenas where socio-economic life thrives and evolves through mutual interactions and collective experiences, shaping community identities and social dynamics. It is where people cultivate political identities, build livelihoods, and actively engage in community life. By critically examining participating in the everyday nuances of public spaces, individuals get more integrated into societal processes. Moreover, a key indicator of a place's safety is the presence of women freely choosing to relax and enjoy themselves there. What impacts women's mobilities? Studies indicate that public spaces are both gendered and political where a majority of women are mostly confined to the private and domestic sphere. This is where spatial control takes place in many ways. According to National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) data (2015-16), 54% of Indian women had the freedom to visit markets alone, while 50% could access health-care facilities independently, and 48% were permitted to travel outside their village or community unaccompanied.

Also, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2023-24 indicates that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women is 35.6%. Even though it has risen significantly over the years, unfortunately, this highlights that more



Anshu Chaudhary is a research scholar at BITS Pilani, Rajasthan

than half the female population remains outside the workforce. Therefore, while a majority of women are confined to private spaces, there is a small number of women who are using public spaces. However, for working women, public spaces primarily serve as transitional zones, facilitating their commute between home and workplace. These spaces are not meant for leisure or recreation. Consequently, women's engagement with public spaces is purpose-driven and not reclaiming spaces with the same ease as men, fostering autonomy rather than restriction. For this, women should have more conversations about this problem, take out time to go around and "hang out" and have fun in public spaces. Normalising a woman's use of public space for leisure can contribute to this shift.



Policy level changes

At the policy level, the government can drive change by reimagining public space planning and design. This includes improving street lighting, ensuring safe and accessible public toilets, installing shared, equitable environments. Simply put, without urgency, without having to conform to the male gaze, they assert their right to belong, transforming public spaces into shared, equitable environments. Simply put, spaces should be able to just exist in public spaces.

The Issue of safety

During such instances, the issue of women's safety becomes a pressing concern. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that violence against women has not been completely eradicated. Many face threats even within their homes which is considered to be a comparatively safer space. In open spaces, the risk of violence from strangers is high. This has reinforced the belief that women need protection, ultimately restricting their freedom. As a result, women are largely found in curated spaces such as malls, cafes, and parks, where the perception of violence is perceived to be lower. But what about women on footpaths, bus stations, or narrow streets — just a group of girls sitting around and having fun?

Street harassment where women are the participants is not a normal sight. Everyday public spaces — those that men navigate freely — can be unwelcoming to women. Public spaces that women cannot simply exist in these spaces without discomfort or fear raise a critical question: What is fundamentally flawed in the design of public spaces that prevents women

from fully claiming and navigating them as their own? It is here that the community and the government can be great enablers. As a society, we must acknowledge and accept the fact that public spaces offer a sense of freedom. Yet, this very freedom often translates to a loss of control for families over women's mobility. Risk is inevitable but avoiding public spaces is not the solution. Men are subjected to street violence as well, even though their nature of vulnerability is different from that of women. Women need to reclaim their spaces with the same ease as men, fostering autonomy rather than restriction. For this, women should have more conversations about this problem, take out time to go around and "hang out" and have fun in public spaces. Normalising a woman's use of public space for leisure can contribute to this shift.

Public spaces, which are arenas where socio-economic life thrives need to be reshaped where women feel safe and welcome

An equitable future for women in science, in India

Women in science navigate a minefield of challenges that often start early. Educational barriers, such as limited access to quality schools and gendered societal norms, can discourage girls from pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For those who persist and are fortunate to get past these early hurdles, gender expectations frequently demand that they prioritise family over careers, severely jeopardising professional growth. Gender stereotypes can further restrict opportunities affecting hiring, promotions and funding. Harassment and discrimination in academic settings add another dimension of hostility that push many women out of the field.



Anita Shet is Professor of Intellectual Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**A study of STEM scientists** Globally, as well as in India, we see similar patterns. A study of STEM scientists across 38 countries reveals higher attrition rates for women, driven by non-inclusive workplaces, work-life balance struggles, and limited access to high-impact research.

These barriers slow career progression and reduce access to senior roles and professional networks, increasing dropout rates. The postdoc-to-faculty transition is especially challenging for women, with familial responsibilities, low confidence, and a lack of female role models cited as key factors, as highlighted by research from the National Institutes of Health. These barriers compel us to consider why it is vital to prioritise the retention of women in science. Diverse teams drive creativity and innovation, leading to breakthroughs by integrating multiple perspectives. More women in science also results in role models for future generations, inspiring girls to pursue STEM. Promoting equity ensures that women can contribute fully to scientific progress, enriching our technological workforce. This conversation has progressed little over the centuries. The "Matilda Effect" — named after 19th-century feminist Matilda Joselyn Gage — describes the tendency to downplay or overlook women's scientific contributions in favour of their male colleagues, highlighting the



Kamini Wallia is a Senior Scientist at the Council of Medical Research

With India contributing to push boundaries of scientific and technological advancement, it must ensure the full inclusion of women in this journey

historic struggle for proper recognition of women's innovations. Nearly 200 years later, gender inequality in STEM persists. Jacob Clark Bickelstaff's "leaky pipeline" metaphor describes women dropping out of STEM due to biased pedagogy, a lack of role models, and hostile workplaces. Critiques are somewhat simplistic, this model does not consider systemic power dynamics. Recent "Chutes and Ladders" model focuses on broader structural and environmental barriers, highlighting how mentorship, access to knowledge, and career disruptions disproportionately hinder women. Mentorship and discrimination in academic settings add another dimension of hostility that push many women out of the field.

**A survey across India** Globally, as well as in India, we see similar patterns. A study of STEM scientists across 38 countries reveals higher attrition rates for women, driven by non-inclusive workplaces, work-life balance struggles, and limited access to high-impact research. These barriers slow career progression and reduce access to senior roles and professional networks, increasing dropout rates. The postdoc-to-faculty transition is especially challenging for women, with familial responsibilities, low confidence, and a lack of female role models cited as key factors, as highlighted by research from the National Institutes of Health. These barriers compel us to consider why it is vital to prioritise the retention of women in science. Diverse teams drive creativity and innovation, leading to breakthroughs by integrating multiple perspectives. More women in science also results in role models for future generations, inspiring girls to pursue STEM. Promoting equity ensures that women can contribute fully to scientific progress, enriching our technological workforce. This conversation has progressed little over the centuries. The "Matilda Effect" — named after 19th-century feminist Matilda Joselyn Gage — describes the tendency to downplay or overlook women's scientific contributions in favour of their male colleagues, highlighting the

recognition of both triumphs and obstacles is crucial. Showcasing successful women in science challenges stereotypes, inspires the next generation, and reinforces the need for greater visibility and representation. At the same time, calling out setbacks, as exemplified by BiasWatchIndia, can drive incremental progress by exposing gender inequalities in academia. Finally, a nuanced approach across career stages is crucial, eliminating age restrictions on grants, fostering mentorship networks, supporting career re-entry after a break for family or personal reasons, and amplifying senior women's voices in leadership and decision-making.

**Interventions** The Indian government has taken significant steps to advance gender equity in science and technology. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) launched the Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATD) pilot in 2020 to foster an inclusive environment for women and gender-diverse individuals in STEM, supporting participation-boosting initiatives such as the Women in Science and Engineering Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through mentoring (WISER-KIRAN), and the Women Scientists Scheme (WOS) programmes.

Noteworthy efforts include the Department of Biotechnology's Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation (BioCare) programme, which supports women scientists returning to research after career breaks. Additionally, the Indian Council of Medical Research spearheads several programmes promoting women's health and training for women scientists. While these initiatives reflect progress, they must scale into broader reforms to ensure that women scientists are recognised, empowered, and valued.

As India continues to push the boundaries of scientific and technological advancement, the full inclusion of women in this journey is not only a matter of fairness but also an example of true progress that can set a powerful example for the world to emulate.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Trump and MAGA** U.S. President Donald Trump follows a narrow and unorthodox way of administration. Many of his policies are totally impractical. He cannot alter the entire world and run America. His tantrums against Canada, proposed annexation of Greenland, and tariff war

with China and Europe are some of the policies which follow a narrow and unorthodox way of administration. Many of his policies are totally impractical. He cannot alter the entire world and run America. His tantrums against Canada, proposed annexation of Greenland, and tariff war

Americans voted for him and not Mr. Musk. **T. Anand Raj, Chennai** Mr. Trump's imposition of tariffs followed by quick withdrawal shows his hesitancy as well as an attempt to shake up the system. His MAGA frenzy and vindictive attitudes

need to soften. Though his attempts to end wars are laudable and his actions will hurt American people. **Rajaro Kumar, Bengaluru** **Three languages** Language is always an emotive issue and the Union government should

understand the implications of forcing students in South India to study three languages under the central Education Policy. States should be given more freedom in formulating higher education policies. Even if three languages are to be studied, the condition should be that the third language should

be an Indian language should be scrapped. The BJP State unit should convince its central leadership on the need to understand the feelings of people of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Karnataka. Letters emailed to letter@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

# Inclusion in public spaces — from fear to freedom

India is often considered to be one of the most unsafe countries for women, a reality that demands urgent and deliberate change. India was ranked 128 among 177 countries rated in Women, Peace and Security Index 2023. While deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that lead to violence cannot be dismantled overnight, meaningful progress can be made by challenging the everyday barriers that women face. On International Women's Day today, it is crucial to reflect on a fundamental but an often-ignored issue – the accessibility of public spaces for women.

While the topic is deeply studied and researched in the academic world, very little has changed practically. For instance, how many women do we see on roads when compared to men at any given point of time? Which are the spaces where they are more visible? And which are the areas which they completely avoid? How freely can women walk on the streets? Or do women consciously regulate their body language to conform to the male gaze?

## Gendered spatial control

It is important to understand them because public spaces serve as arenas where socio-economic life thrives and evolves through mutual interactions and collective experiences, shaping community identities and social dynamics. It is where people cultivate political identities, build livelihoods, and actively engage in community life. By enthusiastically participating in the everyday nuances of public spaces, individuals get more integrated into societal processes. Moreover, a key indicator of a place's safety is the presence of women freely choosing to relax and enjoy themselves there.

What impacts women's mobilities? Studies indicate that public spaces are both gendered and political where a majority of women are mostly confined to the private and domestic sphere. This gendered spatial control takes place in many ways. According to National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) data (2015-16), 54% of Indian women had the freedom to visit markets alone, while 50% could access health-care facilities independently, and 48% were permitted to travel outside their village or community unaccompanied.

Also, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2023-24 indicates that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women is 35.6%. Even though it has risen significantly over the years, unfortunately, this highlights that more



**Aswathy Chandragiri**

is a research scholar at BITS Pilani, Rajasthan

Public spaces, which are arenas where socio-economic life thrives, need to be reshaped where women feel safe and welcome

than half the female population remains outside the workforce. Therefore, while a majority of women are confined to private spaces, there is a rising number of women who are using public spaces.

However, for working women, public spaces primarily serve as transitional zones, facilitating their commute between home and workplace. These spaces are rarely utilised for leisure or recreation. Consequently, women's engagement with public spaces is purpose-driven and time-bound, reinforcing spatial restrictions that limit their presence to functional necessities rather than unrestricted social participation.

A space is truly safe and inclusive when women can navigate it freely and without hesitation. As argued in 'Why Loiter?' (Phadke, Ranade, Khan, 2011), reclaiming public spaces is not just about necessity but also about leisure and uninhibited presence. When women can move without a purpose, without urgency, without having to conform to the male gaze, they assert their right to belong, transforming public spaces into shared, equitable environments. Simply put, women should be able to just exist in public spaces.

## The issue of safety

During such instances, the issue of women's safety becomes a pressing concern. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that violence against women is not confined to public spaces as many face threats even within their homes which is considered to be a comparatively safer space. In open spaces, the risk of gendered violence from multiple strangers is high. This has reinforced the belief that women need protection, ultimately restricting their autonomy. As a result, women are largely found in curated spaces such as malls, theatres, and cafes, where the likelihood of violence is perceived to be lower. But what about women on footpaths, bus stations, or narrow streets – just a group of girls sitting around and having fun?

Street amusement where women are the participants is not a normal sight. Everyday public spaces – those that men navigate freely – continue to be unwelcoming to women. The fact that women cannot simply exist in these spaces without discomfort or fear raises a critical question. What is fundamentally flawed in the design of public spaces that prevents women

from fully claiming and navigating them as their own? It is here that the community and the government can be great enablers. As a society, we must acknowledge and accept the fact that public spaces offer a sense of freedom. Yet, this very freedom often translates to a loss of control for families over women's mobility. Risk is inevitable but avoiding public spaces is not the solution. Men are subjected to street violence as well, even though their nature of vulnerability is different from that of women. Women need to reclaim these spaces with the same ease as men, fostering autonomy rather than restriction. For this, women should have more conversations about this problem, take out time to go around and 'hang out' and have fun in public spaces. Normalising a woman's use of public space for leisure can contribute to this shift.

## Policy level changes

At the policy level, the government can drive change by reimagining public space planning and design. This includes improving street lighting, ensuring safe and accessible public toilets, installing

street furniture such as benches, and creating more recreational spaces tailored for women. Another critical area requiring government intervention is strengthening public safety through stringent laws and their effective enforcement to address crimes against women in public spaces. How many men are actually punished for gender-based violence in public spaces? How many secure bail, only to repeat their crimes? The low conviction rate remains a glaring issue that must be addressed. Even today, women are often blamed for being in the "wrong place at the wrong time", shifting the focus from the perpetrator to the victim. Society places the burden of safety on women while simultaneously excusing or downplaying the actions of offenders. This not only fosters a culture of impunity but also reinforces a gendered fear that serves as a tool for patriarchal control.

So, by consciously reshaping public spaces, we can create environments where women feel safe and truly welcome. While centuries of patriarchy cannot be dismantled overnight, meaningful change begins with small, everyday actions. From the built environment of public space to societal attitudes, every shift, no matter how gradual, brings us closer to an inclusive society where women can navigate and own public spaces freely, without fear or restriction.



- **Inclusion in Public Spaces – From Fear to Freedom**
- **India is ranked among the most unsafe countries for women, emphasizing the need for change.**
- **Public spaces play a crucial role in gender inclusivity and socio-economic mobility.**
- **A major concern is gendered spatial control, where women's mobility is restricted due to societal norms.**

- **Safety concerns limit women's freedom to navigate public spaces, restricting their economic and social participation.**
- **The article highlights that improving public spaces can lead to greater gender inclusivity and economic empowerment.**
- **Government policies, better urban planning, and inclusive infrastructure can help bridge this gap.**

- **A. Social Aspects (सामाजिक पहलू)**
- **Women's restricted mobility affects their participation in workplaces, education, and social life.**
- **Gender biases in public spaces reinforce patriarchal norms, discouraging women from claiming equal rights.**
- **Harassment and safety concerns contribute to fear, making women hesitant to travel or use public spaces freely.**
- **A safe and inclusive public environment can empower women, enhancing their confidence and participation in society.**

- **. Economic Aspects (आर्थिक पहलू)**
- **Restricted access to public spaces reduces women's workforce participation, limiting economic growth.**
- **Women who cannot safely travel to work or educational institutions face financial dependence and lower income potential.**
- **Better infrastructure and safety measures in public areas can boost female employment and entrepreneurship.**
- **Investment in gender-friendly urban planning can enhance tourism, commerce, and overall economic prosperity.**



- **. Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पहलू)**
- **Government intervention is crucial to ensure gender-friendly urban policies and safety measures.**
- **Legislation for public safety and stricter action against harassment can promote women's security.**
- **Implementation of gender-sensitive urban planning can lead to inclusive growth and equality.**
- **Advocacy groups and policy think tanks can push for reforms in gender inclusivity in public infrastructure.**

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# Boost value addition in spices to achieve \$10-bn export target by 2030: WSO

**Mini Tejaswi**  
BENGALURU

Regardless of being the largest producer and exporter of diverse varieties of spices in the world, India's share in the global seasoning market, pegged at \$14 billion in 2024, is only a paltry 0.7%, against China's 12% and U.S.'s 11%, said Ramkumar Menon, chairman, The World Spice Organisation (WSO).

India currently exports 1.5 million tonne of spices of all kinds worth \$4.5 billion, commanding a quarter of the global spice market valued at \$20 billion.

Mr. Menon said currently only 48% of India's spice exports were value-added products while the remaining bulk hits the markets as culinary whole spices.

To achieve the Spices Board of India's export target of \$10 billion by 2030, the country's share in value-added spices should rise up to 70%, he opined.

"Seasoning is a huge market. Despite India being the largest producer and exporter of spices, our current share in seasoning is really low, and we have a huge opportunity to grow in this segment," he said.

Mr. Menon further said, it was also critical for the Indian spice sector to explore the nutraceutical and pharmaceutical value of spices in a big way.

## 'Tap nutraceuticals'

"We should explore the nutraceutical and pharmaceutical scope of our spices in a major way. This is another way of value adding by finding newer ways of useful consumption for our spices. Several spices



**Spice it up:** Only 48% of spice exports were value-added products while the rest hit the market as culinary whole spices. THE HINDU

are already being used by Ayurveda and other schools of medicine," he pointed out.

Mr. Menon added that some 85% of the spices grown in India are consumed domestically. Although India leads the world in spice production, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil and China are also active players in the global spice markets. Africa has also entered spice production in recent years.

## Emerging producers

On the importance of increasing spice production within the country, he observed that other than the traditional spice-growing States in the country, the North Eastern region, Odisha and Jharkhand were emerging as sizable producers of various spices.

"India has 15 different agro-climatic zones and this helps us grow a wide variety of spices, almost in all States," he said.

"Export possibilities are huge. To cash in on this, we have to first increase our production. We also have to find ways to bring down cost of production and increase focus on qual-

ity and scale our share in value added spices," he added.

WSO, a platform that unites all stakeholders in the spice industry comprising farmers, processors, academics, and end-users, is working closely with several farmer producer organisations (FPOs) to boost production, exports and value addition. FPOs are sensitised on safety, quality and sustainability in spice cultivation by training farmers on quality control issues and teaching them the importance of growing spices while limiting pesticide use.

## Pest management

Spice farmers are also trained in integrated pest management, water management and hygiene practices around handling, processing and packaging.

He also emphasised on the need for developing high-yielding and climate-resistant varieties of spices in the country, adding organisations such as Indian Council of Agricultural Research and National Research Centre on Seed Spices have been already working on these fronts.

- **Boost Value Addition in Spices to Achieve \$10-Billion Export Target by 2030: WSO**
- **India is the world's largest producer and exporter of spices but has a low share (0.7%) in the global seasoning market, compared to China (12%) and the U.S. (11%).**
- **India exports 1.5 million tonnes of spices worth \$4.5 billion, contributing to 25% of the global spice market valued at \$20 billion.**

- **Only 48% of India's spice exports are value-added products, while the rest are whole spices.**
- **To meet the Spices Board of India's target of \$10 billion in exports by 2030, value-added spices need to rise to 70%.**
- **Nutraceutical and pharmaceutical use of spices needs to be explored for increasing global demand.**
- **India has 15 agro-climatic zones, which help in spice diversity, but Northeast states (Odisha, Jharkhand) are emerging as new spice-producing regions.**

- **Farmers need better pest management and integrated agricultural practices to maintain quality.**
- **Export-oriented Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are being trained to boost quality, safety, and international market access.**

- **Social Aspects (सामाजिक पहलू)**
- **Spice farming supports millions of rural families in India, contributing to employment and livelihood.**
- **Value addition in spices can enhance the role of small farmers, especially in the Northeastern and tribal regions.**
- **Traditional knowledge of Ayurveda and medicinal uses of spices should be preserved and promoted globally.**
- **Improving working conditions for spice farmers, reducing health hazards from pesticide use, and ensuring fair wages are crucial.**

- **Economic Aspects (आर्थिक पहलू)**
- **India's spice industry has the potential to double its export revenue, improving foreign exchange earnings.**
- **Value-added spice products can fetch higher prices globally, increasing farmers' incomes.**
- **Diversification into nutraceutical and pharmaceutical markets can open new revenue streams.**
- **Encouraging organic and pesticide-free spice production can increase India's competitiveness.**
- **Training and capacity building for spice farmers can lead to better quality standards and international recognition.**



- **Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पहलू)**
- **Government policies should incentivize value addition in spices to boost exports.**
- **The Spices Board of India should facilitate research and development in high-yield spice varieties.**
- **Bilateral trade agreements can help open new markets for Indian spices.**
- **Regulatory measures should ensure compliance with international food safety standards.**
- **Schemes like 'One District, One Product' (ODOP) can be leveraged to promote regional spice varieties.**

## *Trump effect*



**Tariff wars:** The price of petrol is displayed at a petrol station in Chicago, Illinois. Gas prices are expected to rise in several regions of the United States that rely on Canadian oil after the Trump administration implemented a 10% tariff on all Canadian oil products. The U.S. imports about 4 million barrels of oil a day from Canada. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

# Why Vanuatu boasts one of the most popular ‘golden passport’ schemes

**ARJUN SENGUPTA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

FORMER IPL chief Lalit Modi has applied to surrender his passport to the Indian High Commission in London, and acquired the citizenship of Vanuatu, a tiny island nation in the South Pacific, the Ministry of External Affairs confirmed on Friday.

Vanuatu has a popular citizenship by investment (CBI) or “golden passport” program, which allows wealthy individuals to purchase its passport.

## Buying citizenship

CBI or economic citizenship allows indi-

viduals to acquire citizenship in a country by making significant financial contributions to its economy. Countries around the world offer foreigners citizenship to attract investment and stimulate economic growth.

Malta, Turkey, Montenegro, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Egypt also have CBI programs.

**EXPLAINED  
GLOBAL**

## Vanuatu’s program

According to the website of investment migration firm Global Residence Index, “Vanuatu’s citizenship by investment program is the fastest and most simple citizenship program available... Very few documents are required, and all documentation can be provided digitally”, meaning the applicant does not even have



to set foot in the country to become a citizen.

The cost of Vanuatu citizenship ranges from \$135,500 to \$155,500 (Rs 1.18 cr to 1.35 cr), with options to also purchase citizenship for a family of four. Processing times vary from 30 to 60 days after the filing of the application. *The BBC* reported in 2019 that passport sales account for roughly 30% of the country’s revenue.

## Specific advantages

Aside from the ease and speed of the process, Vanuatu’s program provides some specific benefits.

■ As of 2025, a Vanuatu passport allows visa-free entry to 113 countries. The Henley Passport Index ranks the Vanuatu passport as the 51st strongest in the world (out of 199 countries), ahead of Saudi Arabia (57), China (59), and Indonesia (64). India ranks 80th.

Vanuatu’s passport was even stronger until March 2022 when the European Council temporarily suspended its visa-free access to the European Union due to security concerns around the golden passport scheme. The suspension was made permanent in February 2023.

■ Vanuatu is, for all intents and purposes,

a tax haven. It is a zero-tax jurisdiction that is free of personal income tax, capital gains tax, inheritance tax, and wealth tax. While Vanuatu does charge indirect taxes such as VAT, as well as tax on property transactions, rates are typically lower than other countries in the South Pacific. It also has lax reporting requirements, which make it a “strategic jurisdiction” for tax purposes.

For what remains a very poor country, with a per capita GDP (current US\$) of only 3,515.2 (World Bank, 2023), there is a major financial incentive to be a tax haven. Offshore financial services is one of the biggest revenue-generators for the country.

## Scandals in recent years

In recent years, Vanuatu has faced mul-

iple corruption scandals and allegations that its citizenship scheme and tax laws are being used by global criminal syndicates.

Analysing more than 2,000 golden passports issued in 2020, *The Guardian* reported that among those granted citizenship were “a Syrian businessman with US sanctions against his businesses, a suspected North Korean politician, an Italian businessman accused of extorting the Vatican, a former member of a notorious Australian motorcycle gang, and South African brothers accused of a \$3.6bn cryptocurrency heist”.

“Experts have warned the scheme is ripe for exploitation, creating a back door for access to the EU and UK... Vanuatu’s taxation laws make the country an attractive site for money laundering,” UK daily said.

- **Why Vanuatu Boasts One of the Most Popular 'Golden Passport' Schemes**
- **Vanuatu offers a "golden passport" program, allowing individuals to acquire citizenship through investment.**
- **Former IPL chief Lalit Modi has applied for Vanuatu citizenship, surrendering his Indian passport.**

- **The program is attractive because it does not require physical residency and offers a fast, digital-based application process.**
- **The cost of Vanuatu citizenship ranges between \$135,500 and \$155,500 (₹1.18 crore to ₹1.35 crore), with a family package option.**
- **Vanuatu's passport allows visa-free travel to 113 countries, ranking 51st globally.**
- **The country offers tax-free benefits, including no personal income tax, capital gains tax, or inheritance tax.**

- **It is considered a tax haven, attracting offshore investments, contributing to nearly 30% of Vanuatu's revenue.**
- **The program has faced scrutiny over allegations of money laundering and misuse by criminals.**

- **Social Aspects (सामाजिक पहलू)**
- **The program attracts wealthy individuals, leading to concerns about inequality in global citizenship access.**
- **Local Vanuatu citizens may not directly benefit from this scheme, as most applicants are foreign investors.**
- **Some applicants use the passport to escape legal scrutiny in their home countries, raising ethical concerns.**
- **Potential misuse by criminals and money launderers threatens social stability.**

- **Economic Aspects (आर्थिक पहलू)**
- **Golden passports contribute nearly 30% of Vanuatu's total revenue, making it a crucial economic policy.**
- **Tax-free incentives attract foreign investment, boosting offshore banking and financial services.**
- **However, over-reliance on citizenship sales poses economic risks if international regulations change.**
- **The scheme has led to a rise in real estate and luxury investments in Vanuatu, impacting local affordability.**



- **Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पहलू)**
- **The European Union (EU) suspended Vanuatu's visa-free access due to concerns about the misuse of its citizenship program.**
- **Many countries, including India, do not permit dual citizenship, making passport surrender necessary.**
- **Vanuatu's government faces international pressure to regulate its program and prevent abuse.**
- **\*\*There are growing global discussions on banning or tightening regulations on**

# Pranav Venkatesh, 18-year-old from Chennai, is crowned World Junior Chess Champion

**AMIT KAMATH**

MUMBAI, MARCH 7

AFTER D GUKESH, India has another 18-year-old world champion on the 64 squares. Grandmaster Pranav Venkatesh became the World Junior Chess Champion 2025 in the open section in Petrovac, Montenegro, on Friday. The teenager from Chennai left behind a field of 157 players — including 12 grandmasters — from 63 countries in the

open section to claim the trophy.

Pranav's crowning moment came with a draw against Matic Lavrencic, which saw him end the event with a score of 9 out of a possible 11 points.

Pranav is thus the seventh world junior champion from India, if both the open and girls categories are considered. Viswanathan Anand was India's first world junior chess champion, winning the crown in 1987.

Between Anand and Pranav, there were Koneru Humpy



**Topped a field that had over 150 players.** *Lennart Ootes/FIDE*

(world junior girls champion in 2001), Pentala Harikrishna

(2004), Abhijeet Gupta (2008), Harika Dronavalli (world junior girls champion in 2008) and Divya Deshmukh (world junior girls champion in 2024).

Just like illustrious predecessors Gukesh and Praggnanadhaa, Pranav is a product of the Vellamal Institute in Chennai and is a fellow at the Westbridge Anand Chess Academy (WACA), pioneered by Anand, the five-time world champion.

Since the pandemic, the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



# Accelerating Action: International Women's Day 2025

*IWD 2025 theme, "Accelerate Action," reinforces the urgency of moving beyond conversations to take tangible steps for dismantling systemic barriers and biases that hinder women's progress.*



# Accelerating Action: International Women's Day 2025

*IWD 2025 theme, "Accelerate Action," reinforces the urgency of moving beyond conversations to take tangible steps for dismantling systemic barriers and biases that hinder women's progress.*

<b>First Observed</b>	1909 (United States), 1911 (Europe)
<b>Recognized by UN</b>	1977
<b>Theme for 2025</b>	"Accelerate Action"
<b>Purpose</b>	To celebrate women's achievements and promote gender equality
<b>Official Colors</b>	Purple (justice), Green (hope), White (purity)
<b>Significance</b>	Raising awareness of women's rights, gender equality, and empowerment
<b>Type of Observance</b>	Global event with rallies, discussions, and celebrations
<b>Countries with Public Holiday</b>	Russia, China (for women), Armenia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Cuba, and others
<b>Common Activities</b>	Rallies, conferences, award ceremonies, social media campaigns, corporate initiatives
<b>Hashtags &amp; Campaigns</b>	#IWD2025, #AccelerateAction, #GenderEquality

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- The Indian Constitution guarantees **gender equality** through provisions in its **Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy**. **Article 14** ensures equality before the law, while **Article 15** prohibits discrimination based on sex. **Article 51(a)(e)** encourages citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity. The Directive Principles, particularly **Articles 39** and **42**, emphasize equal livelihood opportunities, equal pay, and maternity relief.

-

- India is a signatory to **international treaties** such as:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2003)
- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

## Female - Male Faculty Ratio

The number of female per 100 male faculty





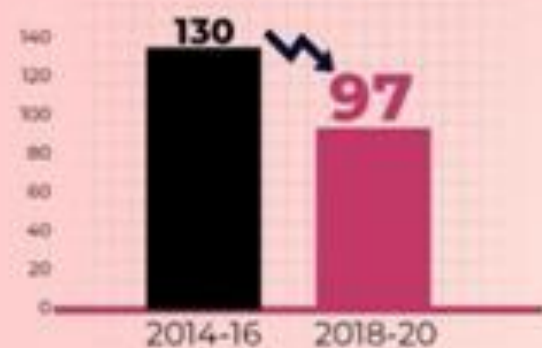
# Women in STEM



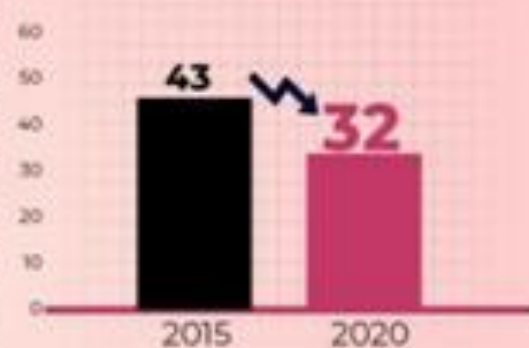
**42.57% (41.9 lakh)  
of total STEM enrolment**



## Improved Maternal Health



Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)



Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)

Life expectancy for  
women increased  
to 71.4 years (2016-20),  
expected to reach  
74.7 years by 2031-36.



# Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

*Self-employment:*

A new foundation for development

Increase in loan limit



Loans of up to

**₹20 lakh**



- **Women Entrepreneurs in Startups**

- 10% of funds in the Small Industries Development Bank of India reserved for women-led startups

- **Employment and Leadership**

- **Women in Armed Forces:** Entry into NDA, combat roles, and Sainik Schools.
- **Civil Aviation:** India has over 15% women pilots, higher than the global average of 5%.
- **Working Women's Hostels (Sakhi Niwas):** 523 hostels benefiting 26,306 women.

## • **Key Legal Frameworks**

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018:** Enhanced penalties for crimes against women.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.**
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.**
- **POCSO Act, 2012:** Strengthened laws against child abuse.
- **Ban on Triple Talaq (2019):** Criminalizing instant divorce practices.
- **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Penalizes dowry-related offenses.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Protects minors from forced marriages.

- **Nirbhaya Fund Projects (₹11,298 crore allocated)**

- **One Stop Centres (OSCs):** 802 centers functional, assisting over 1 million women.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - 112):** 38.34 crore calls handled.
- **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs):** 750 operational courts, 408 exclusively for POCSO cases.
- **Cyber Crime Helpline (1930)** and cyber forensic labs for digital safety.
- **Safe City Projects:** Implemented in 8 cities to enhance women's safety.
- **14,658 Women Help Desks in Police Stations,** 13,743 headed by women.

# USAID Funding Cuts and Their Impact on India

## USAID INDIA PROJECTS UNDER THREAT

### HEALTH

**Momentum 3B for Overcoming Entrenched Obstacles in Routine Immunization**  
**GOAL:** Strengthen immunisation programs, remove bottlenecks in planning, delivery, demand, uptake of immunisation services.  
**FUNDING:** \$20,596,671  
**SCHEDULED END:** June 2026

**Reaching Impact, Saturation and Epidemic Control (RISE)**  
**GOAL:** Five-year PEPFAR-USAID-funded project to reduce new HIV infections, HIV-related morbidity & mortality.  
**FUNDING:** \$7,163,483  
**SCHEDULED END:** December 2025

**Suwasi: Support To Water and Sanitation in India**  
**GOAL:** Support sustainable sanitation and safe drinking water in pursuit of sustainable development goals.  
**FUNDING:** \$4,050,001  
**SCHEDULED END:** March 2026

### ENVIRONMENT

**Strengthening Landscape Management and Conservation**  
**GOAL:** Five-year program that supports Government of India, other

stakeholders in protecting landscapes, improving biodiversity conservation.

**FUNDING:** \$2,695,142  
**SCHEDULED END:** April 2028  
**Cleaner Air and Better Health**

**GOAL:** Improve air quality and reduce air pollution exposure in selected Indian locations.  
**FUNDING:** \$1,500,000  
**SCHEDULED END:** October 2026

### BASIC EDUCATION

**Scaling up Early Learning**  
**GOAL:** Facilitate creation of reading rooms to improve basic education.  
**FUNDING:** \$2,115,879  
**SCHEDULED END:** September 2025

**Udyami: Building Resilience of Women Micro-entrepreneurs**  
**FUNDING:** \$3,000,000  
**SCHEDULED END:** November 2027

### ENERGY

**South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP)**  
**GOAL:** Improve access to affordable, secure, reliable and sustainable energy in South Asia.  
**FUNDING:** \$5,196,278  
**SCHEDULED END:** September 2028

### BUSINESS

**O-RAN Research Labs**  
**GOAL:** To explore creation of a tech platform for secure and trustworthy alternate 5G O-RAN; part of US efforts to facilitate "free and open Indo-Pacific".  
**FUNDING:** \$3,300,000  
**SCHEDULED END:** September 2025

### GOVT & CIVIL SOCIETY

**Central Tibetan Administration Capacity Building & Sustainability Initiative**  
**GOAL:** Strengthen Central Tibetan Administration for delivering services to Tibetans and achieving community self-reliance.  
**FUNDING:** \$2,898,081  
**SCHEDULED END:** August 2026

### OTHER SOCIAL STRUCTURE

**Development Partnership Activity for Indo Pacific Region**  
**GOAL:** USAID-Indian development agencies' partnership to provide technical assistance to Indo-Pacific countries in energy, natural resource management, digital tech, connectivity, trade and competitiveness.  
**FUNDING:** \$1,676,960 (2024), \$962,488 (2023), \$881,455 (2022)  
**SCHEDULED END:** August 2025



- **What is it About?**

- 1. USAID's Financial Contribution** – India received **\$228 million in 2022**, ranking USAID **fourth among global donors**.
- 2. Health & Population Programs** – Funding focused on **TB, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, and Covid-19**, with **\$180 million allocated in 2022**.
- 3. Environmental & Technological Aid** – USAID invested **\$17.12 million in 2024** for clean air, water, and sustainable development projects.

- 1. Executive Order on Aid Reduction** – The U.S. government reassessed **5,800 foreign aid projects**, retaining only **500** to cut spending.
- 2. Legal Battles Over Funding Cuts** – A U.S. Federal Court stay on **February 13, 2025**, was **overturned by the Supreme Court on March 5, 2025**.
- 3. Impact on NGOs & Public Health** – Programs like **Breaking the Barriers (TB awareness in India)** and **HIV/AIDS prevention under PEPFAR** face discontinuation.

-

# SC on Misuse of CAMPA Funds

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India sought a response from the Uttarakhand Chief Secretary regarding **allegations of misuse of Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds.**

-

- **CAMPA**

- The Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016, and its accompanying rules, notified in 2018.
- It aims to compensate for the loss of forest ecosystems due to forest land diversion for non-forest use.
- The Act establishes two special interest-bearing funds:
  - the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund (National Fund) managed by the Central Government through the National CAMPA, and
  - the State Compensatory Afforestation Fund (State Fund) managed by the respective State Governments/UT Administrations through State CAMPA.
-

- **Purpose**

- The funds are used for compensatory afforestation, restoring degraded forests, improving wildlife habitats, and enriching biodiversity.
- The funds are non-lapsable and earn interest at a rate declared by the Central Government annually.

# Golden Dome

- The “Golden Dome” is an advanced missile defense system announced by U.S. President Donald Trump during his recent address to Congress.
- **About**
- **Inspired by:** Israel’s Iron Dome, which is effective against short-range rocket threats.
- **Objective:** To provide nationwide missile defense against:
  - Ballistic Missiles
  - Hypersonic Missiles
  - Cruise Missiles



# Bangu Valley

- J&K govt. to promote Bangus Valley near LoC as an ecotourism destination.
- **About**
- Situated in Kupwara district, Jammu and Kashmir, India.
- Lies in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas.
- Encompasses Lashadthura and Boud-Bangus meadows, forming a twin valley system.
- Holds cultural importance for Gujjar and Bakarwal nomadic tribes.
-

# India Emerges as world's 3rd Largest Biofuel Producer

- According to the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, India has emerged as the world's **third-largest biofuel producer**.
  - India has achieved **19.6%** ethanol blending in petrol as of January and is on track to reach **20%**, five years ahead of its original **2030** target.

- **What are Biofuels?**

- Biofuels are alternative fuels made from plant and plant-derived resources.
  - **Example:** Bioethanol, Biodiesel, Green diesel, Biogas etc.
- **Generations of Biofuels:** Biofuels can be categorized into different generations based on the feedstocks used and the processes involved in their production.

- **First Generation:** They are made from food crops like corn, sugarcane, wheat, and vegetable oils.
- **Second Generation:** They are made from biomass extracted from **agricultural waste or waste plant** material like non-food feedstocks corn stover.
- **Third Generation:** These are often derived from **algae** and other microorganisms.
- **Fourth Generation:** They are made from **genetically modified species** crops. These include synthetic biology and microorganisms engineered to produce specific biofuels

## Key Facts

- India has also become the **fourth-largest** in the world in **LNG terminal capacity**, ensuring stable energy supplies.
- The country holds the **fourth-largest** global refining capacity and ranks as the **seventh-largest** exporter of refined petroleum products.
- **The United States** is the leading biofuel producer in the world



10 MCQ from the session



- Which region is emerging as a new spice-producing hub in India?
- भारत में कौन सा क्षेत्र एक नया मसाला उत्पादक केंद्र के रूप में उभर रहा है?
- A. Western Ghats / पश्चिमी घाट
- B. Northeast India (Odisha, Jharkhand) / पूर्वोत्तर भारत (ओडिशा, झारखंड)
- C. Rajasthan and Gujarat / राजस्थान और गुजरात
- D. Andaman and Nicobar Islands / अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीप

- **What is the target set by the Spices Board of India for spice exports by 2030?**
- **भारतीय मसाला बोर्ड ने 2030 तक मसाला निर्यात के लिए क्या लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया है?**
- **A. \$5 billion / \$5 अरब**
- **B. \$7.5 billion / \$7.5 अरब**
- **C. \$10 billion / \$10 अरब**
- **D. \$15 billion / \$15 अरब**

- Which international treaty focuses on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women?
- कौन सी अंतरराष्ट्रीय संधि महिलाओं के खिलाफ सभी प्रकार के भेदभाव को समाप्त करने पर केंद्रित है?
- A. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)  
B. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)  
C. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)  
D. United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2003)

- What is the rank of India in the world's biofuel production?
- जैव ईंधन उत्पादन में भारत की वैश्विक रैंक क्या है?
- A. 1st / प्रथम
- B. 2nd / द्वितीय
- C. 3rd / तृतीय
- D. 4th / चतुर्थ

- **What is the significance of the "Golden Dome" project announced by the U.S.?**
- **अमेरिका द्वारा घोषित "गोल्डन डोम" परियोजना का क्या महत्व है?**
- **A. A new trade agreement between the U.S. and Middle Eastern countries**
- **B. An advanced missile defense system inspired by Israel's Iron Dome**
- **C. A satellite surveillance system for space exploration**
- **D. A global initiative for cyber security protection**

- Why has Vanuatu's "Golden Passport" program attracted global attention?
- वानुआतु के "गोल्डन पासपोर्ट" कार्यक्रम ने वैश्विक ध्यान क्यों आकर्षित किया है?
- A. It provides citizenship without residency requirements / यह बिना निवास की आवश्यकता के नागरिकता प्रदान करता है
- B. It grants visa-free travel to 200+ countries / यह 200+ देशों में वीजा-मुक्त यात्रा की अनुमति देता है
- C. It offers dual citizenship with India / यह भारत के साथ दोहरी नागरिकता प्रदान करता है
- D. It allows tax-free investments worldwide / यह वैश्विक स्तर पर कर-मुक्त निवेश की अनुमति देता है

- What is the primary use of CAMPA funds in India?
- भारत में CAMPA निधियों का मुख्य उपयोग क्या है?
- A. Compensating farmers for crop damage / फसल क्षति के लिए किसानों को मुआवजा देना
- B. Forest conservation and afforestation / वन संरक्षण और वनीकरण
- C. Disaster relief and rehabilitation / आपदा राहत और पुनर्वास
- D. Promoting tourism in protected forest areas / संरक्षित वन क्षेत्रों में पर्यटन को बढ़ावा देना

- **What percentage of India's spice exports currently consists of value-added products?**
- **भारत के मसाला निर्यात में वर्तमान में मूल्य संवर्धित उत्पादों का कितना प्रतिशत शामिल है?**
- **A. 30%**
- **B. 48%**
- **C. 60%**
- **D. 72%**



- Which country has one of the fastest police forces, featuring supercars like Lamborghinis, Ferraris, and Bugattis?
- किस देश के पास सबसे तेज पुलिस बलों में से एक है, जिसमें लैम्बॉर्गिनी, फेरारी और बुगाटी जैसी सुपरकारें शामिल हैं?
- A. United States / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका  
B. Germany / जर्मनी  
C. United Arab Emirates (UAE) / संयुक्त अरब अमीरात (UAE)  
D. Japan / जापान

80/100

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167A

Ch 4

Ch 4


40

6-60

2

\_\_\_\_\_ police force has some of the fastest and most expensive supercars, including Lamborghinis, Ferraris, Bugattis, and Aston Martins.



A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, some in the foreground and some blurred in the background. The lighting is soft and moody, with a blueish tint. In the top left corner, there is a solid orange horizontal bar and a cluster of small, glowing red dots. The text 'Thank you guys.' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, sans-serif font, with a thin white horizontal line underneath it.

Thank you  
guys.

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