WHO Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use 2000–2024

Key Highlights

- **Decline in Global Tobacco Use:** The global prevalence of current tobacco use among adults significantly dropped from **26.2%** (2010) **to 19.5%** (2024).
  - Despite this reduction, **1 in 5 adult's** worldwide remains hooked on tobacco.
- **Rising Popularity of E-Cigarettes:** More than 100 million people worldwide use e-cigarettes.

India's Progress and Status

- **Tobacco Use in India (2024):** In 2024, India accounted for approximately **243.48 million** tobacco users aged 15 and older.
- **India on Track to Meet WHO NCD Target:** India's expected relative reduction in tobacco use prevalence between 2010 and 2025 is substantially high, projected at **43%.**
  - **WHO NCD Target** to achieve a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025.

India's Steps to Curb Tobacco Use

- **Cigarettes & Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:** Prohibits smoking in public places; ban on sale of tobacco products to minors, etc.
- **Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2022:** Provided images for display on package with health warnings.
- **National Tobacco Control Programme:** To create awareness & reduce the production and supply of tobacco products.
- **Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019.**

> **About Tobacco (Nicotiana tabacum)**
> - **Origin:** South America.
> - **Climatic Conditions:**
>   - **Climate:** Grown under a **wide range of climates** but requires a **frost-free period of 90 to 120 days.**
>   - **Temperature:** 20°C–30°C ideal for growth.
>   - **Rainfall:** Minimum 500 mm.
>   - **Soil:** Well-drained sandy loam or alluvial soils with good fertility.
> - **India's Status:** 2nd largest producer (after China) as well as **2nd largest exporter** (after Brazil).
> - **Major Producing States:** Gujarat (30% production), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, UP and Bihar.

"Market Study on Artificial Intelligence and Competition": A study by CCI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has released a study examining AI's significant impact on India's market dynamics, competition, and regulatory framework.

Global and Indian AI Market Growth

- **Global:** AI market is projected to rise **25-fold** from **USD 189 billion (2023) to USD 4.8 trillion (2033) (UNCTAD).**
- **India:** AI market is expected to grow **25–35% annually** to reach **USD 17–22 billion by 2027 (BCG–NASSCOM).**

Primary Competition Issues in the AI Era

- **Algorithmic Unilateral Conduct (Abuse of Dominance):** Big firms may use algorithms for self-preferencing, predatory pricing.
  - Moreover, **control of vast, high-quality datasets and expensive computational infrastructure by a few large firms entrenches their market power** and stifles competition from new entrants.
- **Pricing Practices and Discrimination:** AI-driven pricing (such as **dynamic, personalized and targeted pricing)** leverages advanced analytics to tailor prices based on a consumer's **estimated willingness to pay.** It may raise concerns about the potential **exploitation of vulnerable segments.**
- **Algorithmic Coordinated Conduct (Collusion): E.g.,** AI algorithms can independently coordinate pricing, market allocation, or bidding without human agreement through self-learning methods. This will make detection of market collusion tougher.

Initiatives to be taken by Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- **Regulatory Capacity Building:** Strengthen its technical capabilities and infrastructure, and establish a **Think Tank of experts on digital markets and AI.**
- **Inter-regulatory Coordination:** Promote coordination with other government departments and regulators, potentially through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).
- **International Cooperation:** Engage with international competition authorities and multilateral platforms like the OECD to align on enforcement strategies.

> **International Regulatory Approaches**
> - **United States:** Relies on existing antitrust laws and sector-specific regulations.
> - **European Union:** Has adopted the landmark AI Act, which uses a risk-based approach to regulate AI systems.
> - **United Kingdom:** Enacted **Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers (DMCC) Act 2024,** which establishes a regime for firms with "Strategic Market Status" to ensure fair competition.

The State of Social Justice: A work in progress: Report released by ILO

The report precedes the **Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha (November 2025)**, marking the **30th anniversary of the 1995 Copenhagen Summit on Social Development.**

Key Highlights Of The Report.

- **Progress:** Extreme poverty fell from **39% to 10%** of the world's population.
  - Also, for the first time, **>50% of the world population** is covered by some **social protection scheme** (since 2023).
- **Deficits:** Progress in reducing inequality has stalled.
  - **71% of a person's earnings** is **determined** exclusively by the circumstances of their **birth.**
  - **Trust in institutions has been declining worldwide since 1982.**
- **Risks:** Profound societal transformations **(environmental, digital, demographic)** threaten to deepen inequality unless deliberate policies intervene.

Adapting Institutions for Social Justice

- **Reapply and Adapt Labour Institutions:**
  - **Update Core Frameworks:** social protection, labour protections, active labour market policies to address environmental, digital, and demographic transitions.
  - Ensure robust social dialogue to involve social partners in shaping policies.
- **Amplify the Social Dimension:**
  - Integrate labour policies across finance, industry, health, and environmental planning.
  - Move beyond narrow frameworks to embed social considerations throughout policymaking.
- **Break Silos and Leverage Global Cooperation:**
  - Promote collaboration among government ministries, international institutions, and social partners.
  - Use instruments like the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Second World Summit for Social Development to strengthen coordinated, holistic responses.

> **What Is Social Justice?**
> - **Definition:** The goal that **every individual has the right to pursue material prosperity and spiritual growth** in an environment of freedom, respect, economic stability, and equal chances.
> - **Pillars:** ILO's vision of social justice is built on four core pillars:
>   - **Fundamental human rights and capabilities**
>   - **Equal access to opportunities**
>   - **Fair distribution**
>   - **Fair transitions**

Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launches multiple initiatives at Wildlife Week 2025

These initiatives directly take forward the vision articulated during the **7th Meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).**

- **It includes 5 initiatives launched for Species Conservation and Conflict Management:-**

Initiatives	Details
Project Dolphin (Phase-II): Implementation of the Action Plan to strengthen conservation measures **for both riverine and marine cetaceans** across India.	• India is home **to** freshwater dolphins such as **Ganges** (National Aquatic Animal of India) and **Indus water dolphins.** • **Protection Status(Both): Endangered (IUCN)** and **Schedule I(WPA, 1972).**
Project Sloth Bear : Launch of the national implementation framework for the conservation of the Sloth Bear.	• **Mainly found in India, Nepal and Srilanka.** • **Protection Status: Vulnerable (IUCN)** and Schedule I (WPA1972) • They primarily eat termites and ants. • **Unlike other bear species,** they carry their cubs on their backs.
Project Gharial: Launch of the implementation action plan for the conservation of Gharials.	• **Mainly found in Nepal and India.** • **Protection Status : Critically Endangered (IUCN)** and **Schedule I** (WPA1972). • **Males** develop a bulbous growth at the tip of their snout, called a **"ghara".** • It has several functions, including acting as a **vocal resonator.**
Tigers Outside Tiger Reserve: A project to address conflicts involving tigers outside protected areas, employing a landscape approach, technological interventions, capacity building, and community support.	• **Found** in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. • **Protection Status:** Endangered (IUCN), Schedule I (WPA1972) • Their individually unique stripes make each tiger identifiable.
Centre of Excellence for Human–Wildlife Conflict Management (CoE-HWC)	• **Establishment of a dedicated national center at SACON** to support policy, research, and field-based mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts.

E-governance in India

E-governance in India has evolved from a backend administrative mechanism into a transformative force, reshaping the way the state interacts with its citizens.

What is E-Governance?

- **Definition:** E-governance is the **use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)** to enhance public services, improve government operations, and promote citizen participation.
- **Historical Context:**
  - In its initial phase (1980–2000), technology served as a **supporting tool** for administrative processes.
  - The establishment of the **National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1976** laid the foundation of India's digitization journey.
- Currently, India ranks **97th** the **E-Government Development Index 2024.**

Transformative Role of E-Governance in India

- **Enhancing Citizen Access:** Digital platforms like **e-Seva & DigiLocker** providing citizens with easy access to government services from anywhere.
- **Promoting Transparency & Accountability:** Initiatives like **Bhoomi (digital land records)** & **Direct Benefit Transfers** reducing corruption and leakages in welfare schemes.
- **Streamlining Administrative Efficiency:** Automation and integration through **National e-Governance Plan (NeGP),** & Common Service Centres have sped up decision-making & improved service delivery.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Programs like **JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile)** and **UPI** widening financial inclusion.
- **Rural Empowerment:** Initiatives like **Gyandoot** and **PMGDISHA** (digital literacy) bring technology to rural areas, helping citizens participate in governance.
- **Enabling Innovation & Interoperability:** Platforms like **India Stack** and **GeM (Government e-Marketplace)** foster innovation, data interoperability, and seamless service delivery across sectors.

Challenges

- 🌐 Digital Divide
- 🔒 Data Privacy & Surveillance Risks
- 🖥 Exclusion Errors
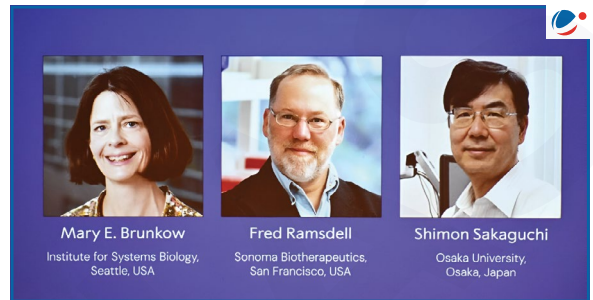- 🏛 Limited Institutional Capacity
- 👥 Over–platformisation

Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to **Mary E. Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell** (USA) and **Shimon Sakaguchi** (Japan) for their discoveries on peripheral immune tolerance.

Key Highlights of the Research

- **Focus Area:**
  - The research centers on the **peripheral immune system,** which includes immune components outside the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord).
  - Understanding this system is essential for to understand on how immune systems work in determining what should be attacked or protected.

Mary E. Brunkow
Institute for Systems Biology, Seattle, USA

Fred Ramsdell
Sonoma Biotherapeutics, San Francisco, USA

Shimon Sakaguchi
Osaka University, Osaka, Japan

- **Discovery of Regulatory T (Treg) Cells:**
  - **T-cells** are immune cells that defend the body from pathogens, with different T-cells performing specialized functions identified by surface proteins.
  - In **1995, Shimon Sakaguchi** discovered a new class called **regulatory T-cells,** which calm the immune system and prevent it from attacking the host, a mechanism known as **peripheral tolerance.**
- **FOXP3 Gene and Autoimmunity:**
  - **Brunkow and Ramsdell** advanced the field by studying **scurfy mice,** which develop severe autoimmune disease.
  - In **2001,** they identified the **FOXP3 gene** as responsible for autoimmunity in these mice and in the human disorder **IPEX.**
  - This discovery enabled Sakaguchi to demonstrate that the FOXP3 gene controls the development of regulatory T-cells.

Significance

- **Cancer therapies:** Tumors can recruit T-cells to evade immunity thus; immunotherapies aim to inhibit T-cell activity to improve treatment effectiveness.
- **Autoimmune & transplant care:** Trials aim to enhance Treg formation to treat autoimmune diseases or prevent organ rejection.
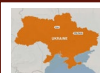
Also In News

🆃🅰🆇 Securities Transaction Tax

The Supreme Court has agreed to examine the constitutional validity of the Securities Transaction Tax.

About Securities Transaction Tax

- It is a **direct tax levied on transactions of securities** conducted through a **recognized Stock exchange in India.**
- Introduced under the **Finance Act, 2004.**
- **Aim:** To **curb tax evasion** in the securities market.

Kharkiv and Poltava regions

Recently Russia launched massive strikes on **Ukrainian** gas sites in the **Kharkiv and Poltava regions.**

- Other regions such as **Donetsk, Luhansk, Sumy, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Dnipro Zaporizhzhia Chernihiv,** etc were also affected.
  - **Zaporizhzhia** is of particular concern as it is the site of a **nuclear power plant.**

Blizzard

Recently, a sudden blizzard trapped many trekkers and climbers in remote campsites in Tibet.

About Blizzard

- Blizzards are dangerous winter storms that are a combination of blowing snow and wind resulting in very low visibilities.
- **Development:** They often develop on the northwest side of an intense storm system.
  - The difference between the lower pressure in the storm and the higher pressure to the west creates a tight pressure gradient, which results in very strong winds
- **Impact:** They can cause **car accidents (due to** low visibility conditions), **frostbite, hypothermia. etc.**

Typhoon Matmo

China's Yunnan and Guangdong province has recently been affected by **Typhoon Matmo.**

About Typhoon

- A typhoon is a **tropical cyclone** occurring in **western Pacific Ocean.**
  - Tropical cyclones are rapidly rotating storms that are non-frontal low-pressure system originating over tropical oceans.
- They are known as Cyclones (Indian Ocean), Hurricanes (Atlantic), and Willy-willies (Western Australia).
- **Favourable Conditions:** Sea surface with temperature higher than 27° C; Presence of Coriolis force; Small variations in vertical wind speed & a pre-existing weak low-pressure area.

World Para Athletics

India won a **record 22 medals including 6 Gold,** marking its best-ever performance at World Para-Athletics Championships 2025.

- India (fourth Asian nation) hosted the World Para Athletics Championships for the **first time in 2025.**

About World Para Athletics

- Para athletics is the biggest sport within the Paralympic Movement.
- The first Para athletics competition was held in 1952.
- Governed by the **International Paralympic Committee (IPC), it** includes a wide range of competitions:
  - **Paralympic Games:** Held every four years.
  - **World Para Athletics Championships:** Held biennially.
  - **World Para Athletics Grand Prix:** Held annually in different cities since 2013.

UNESCO

About UNESCO (Estd:1946, HQ: Paris)

- **Member States:** 194
- **Objective:** It is a **specialized agency dedicated to strengthening shared humanity** through the promotion of education, science, culture, and communication.
- **Governance Structure:** The General Conference, the Secretariat and the Executive Board.
- **Appointment:** The Director-General is nominated by the **Executive Board and appointed by the General Conference.**
  - Appointed initially **for four years, and may be re-appointed** for a further **four-year term.**
- **Key Publications of UNESCO :** Global Education Monitoring Report, United Nations World Water Development Report, Global Ocean Science Report.

Al Hol

Recently, the High-Level International Conference on the Repatriation of Persons from Al Hol was organised by the government of Iraq with the technical support of the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT).

About Al Hol

- Al Hol is a refugee camp located in **Northeast Syria.**
- It houses Syrians, Iraqi refugees and other individuals of different nationalities from the third countries.

Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)

According to the study by **Climate Analytics, the Asian push for carbon capture, storage could add 25 billion tonnes of emissions by 2050.**

About Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)

- It refers to technologies that **capture the carbon dioxide (CO_2) with the aim of storing it safely underground** (sequestration) for permanent isolation.
- **Working:**
  - **Capture Phase:** CO_2 is **separated and purified from industrial emissions** or the atmosphere.
  - **Transport Phase: Purified CO_2 is compressed, dehydrated,** and moved via pipelines, ships, or tanks.
  - **Storage Phase:** CO_2 **is injected into deep underground rock formations** for permanent storage.
- **Benefits:** Significant potential for reducing CO_2 emissions, reduce global warming.

Place in News   📰 Qatar (Capital: Doha)

India has expanded its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services to Qatar.

Political Features

- Located in **West Asia on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.**
- **Bordering Country: Saudi Arabia.**
- **Bordering Water Bodies: Persian Gulf, Gulf of Bahrain.**

Geographical Features

- **Sand dunes and salt flats (Sabkhahs)** form the chief topographical features.
- Possesses the **world's third-largest natural gas reserves** and is one of the **world's largest exporters of natural gas.**

| AHMEDABAD | BENGALURU | BHOPAL | CHANDIGARH | DELHI | GUWAHATI | HYDERABAD | JAIPUR | JODHPUR | LUCKNOW | PRAYAGRAJ | PUNE | RANCHI |