

# NEWS TODAY

## World Food Programme (WFP) Released 'Global Outlook for 2025' Report

It provides updates on **global food security** & highlights solutions WFP can offer to respond to crises, and tackle root causes of hunger.

### Key Highlights

- **Global Hunger Crisis:** An estimated **343 million people** across 74 countries are **acutely food insecure**, with **1.9 million people on the brink of hunger**.
- **Key Factors:** **Armed violence** is a key driver in 14 out of 16 hunger hotspots like Sudan, Gaza, etc. Other factors includes **food inflation, extreme weather events** etc.
  - ⊕ **65 % of acutely food-insecure people live in fragile/conflict-affected situations.**
- **Funding Requirement:** **WFP requires US\$16.9 billion** to provide critical assistance to 123 million of most vulnerable people facing food insecurity worldwide.
- **India Specific:**
  - ⊕ **India is home to a quarter of all undernourished people worldwide.**
    - ◆ Around **21.25%** of population lives on less than **US\$1.90 a day**.
  - ⊕ **38% of children** aged 6-59 months grappling with **chronic malnutrition**.

### About WFP (HQ: Rome)

- The **WFP** is the **largest humanitarian agency** saving lives in **emergencies** & using assistance to **help communities become self-sufficient and resilient to shocks**.
- WFP was established in **1961** by **United Nations General Assembly & Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**.
- It has a **presence in over 120 countries**.
- **Funding:** Voluntary donations from governments, corporates and private donors.
- WFP is awarded **Nobel Peace Prize in 2020**.

### WFP's Approach to Combating Hunger

- **Investing in local nutritious food solutions, fortification & social protection systems**, to reduce needs in long term.
- **Empowering vulnerable communities** to withstand shocks through improved livelihoods, climate protection etc.
- **Other:** Increasing **institutional capacity at local level, address gender inequalities affecting food insecurities** etc.

## International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) highlighted role of Nuclear Techniques

IAEA emphasized that nuclear techniques are driving innovative solutions to global challenges.

### Key Applications of Nuclear Techniques in Different Spheres

- **Medical:** Used in diagnosis and therapy.
  - ⊕ An **X ray based diagnostic tool** pivotal for the timely detection and treatment of breast tumours.
  - ⊕ **Radioactive iodine (I-131)** is used to treat thyroid cancer and other conditions affecting the thyroid gland.
- **Energy:** Nuclear energy produces about 10% of the world's electricity (International Energy Agency (IEA)).
- **Agriculture:**
  - ⊕ **Fallout radionuclide (FRN) technique:** Analyzes soil radionuclide concentrations to measure erosion patterns.
  - ⊕ **Radioimmunoassay (RIA) technology:** Detects hormone levels in animals enabling precise timing for artificial insemination, etc.
- **Environment:**
  - ⊕ **Isotope hydrology** uses both stable and radioactive isotopes to follow the movements of the water in the hydrologic cycle.
  - ⊕ **Isotopic techniques** are helping in monitoring extreme weather events.
- **Industry:** **Tracers** are used in expensive industrial equipment to obtain information that makes it possible to extend its operative life.
- **Other:**
  - ⊕ **Food Safety**, E.g. Food irradiation, it is the process of exposing foodstuffs to gamma rays to kill bacteria that can cause food-borne disease, and to increase shelf life.
  - ⊕ **Radioisotope thermal generators (RTGs)** are used in space missions.

### Key Initiatives Taken to promote Nuclear Techniques

- Global**
  - **Atoms4Food initiative:** Launched by **IAEA and FAO**, supports countries to use innovative nuclear techniques in enhancing agricultural productivity, reducing food losses.
  - **International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor:** Being built in France, it will be the largest Tokamak device to test magnetic confinement to produce fusion energy.
- India**
  - **Provisions for multiproduct food irradiation** units under the India's **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY)**.
  - **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)** develops high yielding seed varieties by inducing mutations using Gamma radiation

## Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports India's Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Programme (CPP)

India and the ADB signed a \$98 million loan agreement for developing regulatory framework and institutional systems to effectively implement the CPP for horticulture.

### About CPP

- **Genesis:** Approved under the **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**.
  - ⊕ MIDH is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, etc.
- **Purpose:** Provide farmers access to virus-free, high-quality planting material, leading to increased crop yields.
- **Key Components**
  - ⊕ 9 world class **state-of-the-art Clean Plant Centers (CPCs)** equipped with advanced diagnostic therapeutics and tissue culture labs.
  - ⊕ **Certification Framework**, supported by a regulatory framework under the **Seeds Act 1966**.
  - ⊕ Support for large-scale nurseries for the development of infrastructure.
- **Implementing Agencies:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare through the **National Horticulture Board (NHB)** and the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research**.
  - ⊕ It will be **implemented from 2024 to 2030** with 50% assistance from ADB.

### Other Key Initiatives for Horticulture Sector

- **Coordinated programme on Horticulture Assessment and Management using geoinformatics (CHAMAN)**, develop and firm up scientific methodology for estimation of area and production under horticulture crops.
- **Kisan Rail services**, for transporting perishables including fruits and vegetables.
- **Capital Investment Subsidy Scheme** by NHB, etc.

#### India's horticulture sector at a glance

- Contributes about 33% of the gross value to the **agricultural GDP** and **covers 18%** of agricultural land.
- Contributes over Rs. 4 lakh crore annually in agricultural exports.
- India is the **second-largest producer** of vegetables and fruits in the world (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO))

## Judiciary has more than 5,600 vacancies across courts

As per **Ministry of Law** there are more than **5,600 vacancies in the judiciary** from lower courts to Supreme Court (SC).

- There are currently 2 vacancies in SC, 364 in high courts (HC), & 5245 in district courts.

### Reasons

- **Periodic Vacancies:** Due to **retirement, resignation, demise, elevation of judges, increase in sanctioned strength** of courts.
- **Time Consuming Collegium Process:** It involves a continuous & **collaborative process between Executive & Judiciary** which requires **consultation & approval from various authorities**.
  - ⊕ Appointment of HC judges is governed by **Articles 217 & 224** of constitution.
- **Other: Delays in examination process** regarding judicial appointments at lower courts, low salaries, & workload, can deter talented lawyers from joining the judiciary.

### Impact

- **Justice Delayed:** Over **19,500 & 27 lakh cases are pending in SC & HC** respectively.
  - ⊕ Other reasons for pending cases include **inadequate infrastructure, frequent adjournments, absence of strict timelines** etc.
- **Low judge-to-population ratio leads to the huge work stress** on judicial officers, making them prone to making mistakes.
  - ⊕ In 2002, a direction was passed in **All India Judges Association case** that by 2007, judge-to-population ratio in trial judiciary should be 50 per million.
    - ◆ However, even in 2024, this ratio is not even 25 per million.

#### Way Forward

- **Revisiting National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) framework** could provide a balanced approach to judicial appointments, ensuring both independence and accountability.
- **All India Judicial Service (AIJS):** A centralized recruitment process for district and subordinate courts, similar to the civil services, could attract more talent and ensure uniformity.
  - ⊕ Article 312 of the Constitution deals with the creation of All-India Services.
- **Other: Streamlining appointment process**, Conducting periodic assessments of judicial strength etc.

## Centre Approves 3,296 crore under SASCI Scheme for Boosting Tourist Infrastructure

40 projects across 23 states have been identified under **Special Assistance to States/Union Territories for Capital Investment (SASCI)** scheme, to develop iconic tourist centers to global standards.

### About SASCI Scheme

- **Aim:** To infuse **long term interest free loans** for a period of **50 years to States** for comprehensively develop iconic tourist centers in the country, branding, and marketing them at global scale.
- It envisages the **local economy growth** and creates employment opportunities through sustainable tourism projects.

### India's Tourism Sector

- **Status:** India ranked **39th among 119 countries** according to **Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024** report published by **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
  - ⊕ India recorded **9.52 million Foreign Tourist Arrivals** in 2023, reflecting a **47.9% increase** compared to 2022.
- **Significance:**
  - ⊕ **Contribution in GDP:** It contributed **5%** to India's gross domestic product (GDP) during 2022-23.
  - ⊕ **Employment:** In 2022-23, **76.17 million direct & indirect jobs** were created due to tourism.
  - ⊕ **Foreign Exchange Earnings:** India earned over **₹2.3 lakh crore** in 2023 through tourism.
- **Future Outlook:** By 2028, **India's tourism and hospitality industry is projected to generate revenue of over \$59 Bn.**

### Initiatives taken to promote tourism in India

- **National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY):** A central sector scheme launched in 2015, to preserve & rejuvenate rich cultural heritage of the country.
- **National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD):** Aims to **integrate pilgrimage destinations in a prioritized, planned and sustainable manner** to provide a complete religious tourism experience.
- **Dekho Apna Desh initiative (2020):** To encourage domestic tourism.

## Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas highlighted achievement of Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

Ministry informed that Ethanol blending rate has increased from 1.53% in 2013-14 to an estimated 14.60% in 2023-24.

### About EBP Programme

- **Objective:** Launched in 2003 to promote blending of ethanol in petrol.
- **Target:** 20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2025-26, advanced from the initial timeline of 2030.
- **Initiatives facilitating EBP Programme**
  - ⊕ **National Policy on Biofuels (2018)**
  - ⊕ **Ethanol Interest Subvention Schemes (EISS)** launched to foster the establishment of **Dedicated Ethanol Plants (DEPs)**.
  - ⊕ **Reduction in GST** on ethanol meant for EBP Programme from 18% to 5%.
  - ⊕ **Re-introduction of Administered Price Mechanism.**
  - ⊕ Amendment to **Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951** for smooth movement of ethanol across country.

### Key Benefits of the EB

- **Foreign Exchange Savings:** Rs 1.08 trillion saved since 2014 due to reduced reliance on imported crude oil with 18.5 million tonnes of crude oil substituted with ethanol.
- **Environment Sustainability:** 55.7 million metric tonnes of carbon emissions reduced.
- **Resolving Key Issues of Sugar Industries:** Ethanol production helped sugar factories to reduce its surplus sugar inventory and generate revenue early to clear the dues of cane farmers.

### What is Ethanol?

- Ethanol (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH), considered a renewable fuel, is an anhydrous ethyl alcohol produced from sugarcane, maize, wheat, and other crops with high starch content.
- Ethanol can be mixed with Petrol to form **different blends**, reducing emissions and improving engine performance.
  - ⊕ **E.g. E20** (petrol blended with 20 per cent ethanol), **E100** (93-93.5 per cent ethanol blended with 5 per cent petrol and 1.5 per cent co-solvent)
  - ⊕ **Flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs)** are designed to operate on different blends of ethanol, up to E100.

## Also in News



### Notifiable Disease

Ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) has designated snakebite cases and deaths as a 'notifiable disease'.

- Earlier, Ministry launched the **National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE)** to halve snakebite-related deaths and disabilities by 2030

### What are notifiable diseases?

- It is **any disease** that is required by law to be reported to government authorities.
  - ⊕ Responsibility of notifying any disease and the implementation lies with the **state government**.
  - ⊕ The collation of information **allows the authorities to monitor the disease**, and provides early warning of possible outbreaks.
- **Other notified diseases:** AIDS, hepatitis, dengue, etc. **WHO's International Health Regulations**, require disease reporting to the WHO.



### United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

India has been re-elected to **U.N. Peacebuilding Commission for 2025-2026**.

### About U.N. Peacebuilding Commission

- **Genesis:** Established in 2005, it is an intergovernmental advisory body that **supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries**.
- **Composition: 31 Member States**, elected from General Assembly, Security Council, & Economic and Social Council.
  - ⊕ Top financial contributing countries & troop-contributing countries to United Nations system are also members.
- **Mandate:** To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources, advise on strategies for **post-conflict peacebuilding & ensure recovery from conflict**.
- India is **among largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN Peacekeeping**.





### Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)

The **Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)** increased by 3.1% in October 2024 compared to October 2023.

#### About ICI

- The ICI measures combined & individual performance of production of **eight core industries** viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement & Electricity.
- ⊕ The Eight Core Industries comprise **40.27%** of the weight of items included in **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.
- The **Office of Economic Adviser**, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is responsible for Compiling and releasing monthly ICI.



### Cascais Declaration

The 10th Global Forum of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) adopted **Cascais Declaration** in Portugal.

- UNOAC was established in **2005** to serve as a **soft-power political tool** of UNs Secretary-General for **conflict prevention & conflict resolution**.

#### Key Highlights

- **Objective:** To promote principles of **tolerance** and **peaceful existence** and build bridges between cultures.
- **Key Highlights:**
  - ⊕ Recognized potential of **artificial intelligence** as a tool to promote intercultural & interreligious dialogue.
    - ◆ E.g., combat misinformation, hate speech etc.
  - ⊕ Acknowledged the **central role of inclusive, quality & transformative education** in promoting dialogue, peace & human rights.



### Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

Recently, the **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991** was in news due to filing of appeal to survey certain religious places.

#### About Place of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

- It **prohibits conversion of any place of worship** and to provide for the **maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship** as it existed on the **15th day of August, 1947**.
- **Exemptions:**
  - ⊕ Any place of worship referred to as an ancient and historical monument or an archaeological site or remains covered by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**.
  - ⊕ Erstwhile Ayodhya Land dispute.



### Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)

**Indian astronauts** who have been selected for the upcoming **Axiom-4 mission** to the International Space Station (ISS) have completed the initial phase of training.

#### Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)

- Ax-4 is the **fourth private astronaut mission** to the **International Space Station**.
- ⊕ It will launch to the orbiting laboratory on a **Dragon spacecraft** aboard a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**.
- **Axiom Mission** is jointly co-ordinated by the **NASA** and a **private US company Axiom Space**.
- ⊕ Ax-1 was the **first all-private mission**, launched in 2022.



### Ramappa Temple

Centre approves loans for development of Ramappa Circuit under the SASCI scheme.

#### About Ramappa Temple

- Also known as **Kakatiya Rudreshwara Temple**, it is located in Telangana. It is an **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- It is the **main Shiva temple** in a walled complex built during the **Kakatiya period (1123–1323 CE)** under rulers **Rudradeva** and **Recharla Rudra**.
- The temple is constructed with **sandstone**, featuring decorated **beams** and **pillars** made of carved granite and dolerite.
- It has a distinctive, **pyramidal Vimana** (horizontally stepped tower) made of lightweight, **porous 'floating bricks'**, which reduces the weight of the roof.
- Kakatiyas adopted **Chalukyan Style of Vesara Architecture**.



### Rule 267

The **Rajya Sabha Chairman** expressed concerns about frequent use of Rule 267.

#### About Rule 267

- Rule 267, part of the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) allows for the **suspension of rules on the day's agenda to debate an urgent matter** with the Chairman's approval.
- Under the rule, **Rajya Sabha MPs can give a written notice** to suspend all listed business and discuss an issue of importance the country is facing.

## Place in News



### Bosnia and Herzegovina (Capital: Sarajevo)

- India-Bosnia and Herzegovina held 4th Foreign Office Consultations in Sarajevo.

#### Political Features

- **Location:** It is situated in the **western Balkan Peninsula of Europe**.
- **Bordering Nations:** It is bordered on the north, west, and south by Croatia, on the east by Serbia, on the southeast by Montenegro.
- **Maritime Boundary:** Adriatic Sea in the Southwest.

#### Geographical Features:

- **Climate:** temperate continental climate, alpine, Mediterranean climate.
- **Highest Peak:** Maglic Mountain
- **Major Mountain Range:** Dinaric Alps
- **Major Rivers:** Sava River and Neretva River



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



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