

NEWS TODAY

India Expands the World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in the Cooperative Sector

Under the pilot phase of initiative, storage units with capacity of **9,750 metric tonnes** have been successfully constructed at **Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** in 11 states.

- Encouraged by success of the pilot phase, government has **identified Over 500 additional PACS** to enhance **storage infrastructure at grassroots level**.

About World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Cooperation.
- **Purpose:** Establish **decentralized storage facilities at PACS level**, alongside other **agricultural infrastructure**, like, warehouses, processing units etc through **convergence of existing schemes** i.e., Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure Scheme etc.
- **Implementing Agencies:** **National Cooperative Development Corporation, NABARD, Food Corporation of India, Central Warehousing Corporation, etc.**
- **Benefits to PACS:** **PACS can avail subsidies & interest subvention** benefits for construction of agri infrastructure.

Significance

- **Food Security:** Decentralized storage will **reduce food grain wastage**, enhancing national food security.
 - ⊕ **Total Food Grain Production in India is 311 MMT & total storage Capacity is 145 MMT, signifying 47% shortfalls (2021).**
- **Access to credit:** Farmers will be able to **store their produce in godown** constructed at PACS & avail **bridge finance for next cycle of crop**.
- **Income Security:** Enable farmers to store their produce & **sell when better prices prevail in market**, or **sell to PACS at Minimum Support Price**.

Other initiatives to strengthen storage capacity

- **National Cold Chain Development Scheme (NCCD):** Cold chain storage for perishable agricultural commodities.
- **Grameen Bhandaran Yojana:** Supports rural godowns with subsidies to address storage gaps in villages.
- **Other: Private Entrepreneur Guarantee (PEG) scheme, PM Kisan Sampada Yojana etc.**

India achieves a landmark milestone in advancing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) under the Digital Agriculture Mission.

Gujarat became the first State in the country to **generate Farmer IDs for 25%** of the targeted number of farmers in the State.

- **Madhya Pradesh (9%), Maharashtra (2%),** and other states like **Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Rajasthan** have also initiated the process of generating farmer IDs.

About the Farmer ID

- A Farmer ID is a unique digital identity of farmers based on Aadhaar, linked dynamically to the State's land records system.
 - ⊕ This means the Farmer ID gets automatically updated with the changes in the land record details of an individual farmer.
- **The Farmer ID, along with the crop sown data being captured digitally under the Digital Agriculture Mission, is intended to provide the following farmer-centric benefits:**
 - ⊕ Simplified and seamless access to Government schemes.
 - ⊕ Streamlined paperless and contactless crop loans and credit that can be processed within an hour.
 - ⊕ Personalised agricultural extension services tailored to the farmer's need.
 - ⊕ Direct and transparent benefit transfers.
 - ⊕ Enhanced market connectivity & improved financial inclusion.
- This breakthrough **represents a significant step** towards creating a **comprehensive standards-driven digital agriculture ecosystem** as a part of the **'Agri Stack initiative'**.






About Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)

- DAM is designed as an **umbrella scheme** to support various **digital agriculture initiatives**. These include:
 - ⊕ Creating Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), implementing the Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES), and supporting IT initiatives by the Central Government, State Governments, etc.
- **The scheme is built on two foundational pillars:**
 - ⊕ **Agri Stack:** Comprising Farmers' Registry, Geo-referenced village maps & Crop Sown Registry.
 - ⊕ **Krishi Decision Support System:** Integrates remote sensing data into a comprehensive geospatial system to provide real-time information.

French Government Collapses in No-confidence Vote

The French government recently collapsed after the French Prime Minister was ousted in a no-confidence vote.

Contrasting Features of Indian and French Polity

Contrasting Features of Indian and French Polity		
 Federalism	India is federal in structure with unitary features.	France is a unitary State organised on a decentralized basis.
 Form of Government	Parliamentary System: The president is ceremonial head of state & Prime minister is head of government.	Semi-Presidential System: The President (directly elected) holds substantial power and a Prime minister manages day-to-day affairs.
 President	The President is elected indirectly for a 5 year term without any cap on number of terms.	The President is elected by universal direct suffrage & five-year term is renewable only once.
 Secularism	Indian secularism is characterized by positive secularism , which emphasizes equal respect for all religions . It allows for principled state intervention in all religions.	Enforces a strict separation between church & state , reflecting a more rigid approach to secularism that prohibits any state involvement in religious matters.
 Referendum	Indian Constitution does not explicitly provide for referendums.	French Constitution explicitly provides for referendums.

Similarities between Indian & French polity includes **written constitution, Bicameral Parliament, independent judiciary etc.**

Forest Rights under FRA, 2006 Approved to tribal in Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)

The **District Level committee** approved **Community & individual rights** under **Forest Rights Act, 2006**, to Nagaroothu I, Nagaroothu II, & Chinnarpathi tribal settlements in ATR, Tamilnadu.

About Forest Rights Act, 2006

- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition Of Forest Rights) Act**, popularly known as FRA was enacted in 2006.
- **Objective:** To **undo historical injustice** occurred to forest dwelling communities; ensure their **livelihood & food security** etc.

Key Features

➤ Forest Rights Recognized Under FRA:

- ⊕ **Individual Rights:** Rights of Self-cultivation & Habitation, In-situ rehabilitation etc.
- ⊕ **Community Rights:** **Grazing, Fishing** & access to Water bodies in forests, right to **intellectual property & traditional knowledge**, right to **protect traditional customary rights** etc.
- **Eligibility:** Rights can be claimed by any member or community that has for **at least three generations (75 years) before the 13th day of December 2005** lived in the forest.
- **Critical wildlife habitats:** it provides that **critical wildlife habitats** of National Parks & Sanctuaries must remain inviolate for wildlife conservation.

Authorities for vesting forest rights

- **Gram Sabha:** Authority to **initiate process** for determining nature & extent of individual/community forest rights.
- **Sub-Divisional Level Committee:** constituted by state government examines resolution passed by Gram Sabha.
- **District Level Committee:** Final approval of forest rights.

Challenges (Xaxa Committee)

- **Arbitrary Claim Rejections, No Deadlines for Claims,** Rights of those displaced by development projects remain unaddressed etc.

Union Minister of Railways introduced the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in Lok Sabha

This Bill seeks to repeal the 1905 Act and integrate its provisions related to the Railway Board into the 1989 Act, thereby giving it a statutory status.

➤ The Indian Railway Board Act, 1905 provides that the central government may invest its powers and functions with respect to railways in the Railway Board.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- Constitution of a body to be known as the Railway Board.
 - ⊕ The central government will prescribe the number of members of the Board, the qualifications, experience, terms and conditions of service, and manner of appointment for the Chairman and members of the Board.
 - ⊕ It'll act as the apex decision-making body for Indian Railways, ensuring efficient management and policy implementation.
- Greater autonomy to Zones: To improve operational efficiencies and decentralise powers.
- Independent Regulator: Establish an independent regulator to oversee various aspects of Indian Railways, including tariffs, safety, and private sector participation.
- However, the bill retains the current organisational structure of the Indian Railways.

Potential impacts:

- The functioning and independence of Railway Board will be enhanced with this Bill.
- Decentralization and empowerment of railway zones can lead to faster decision-making.
- Independent regulator can promote transparency & accountability in the railway sector.
- Pave the way for increased private sector participation, which could lead to higher fares & reduced government subsidies.



Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into India cross 1 trillion US Dollar milestone (Between 2000-2024 period)

According to the Commerce and Industry Ministry, since 2014, India has attracted a cumulative FDI inflow of USD of approx. 667 billion (2014-24), registering an increase of 119 per cent over the preceding decade (2004-14).

Key Highlights

- Major Source Countries: Mauritius: (25%) of total FDI inflows; Singapore (24%); USA: 10% Other Key Sources: Netherlands, Japan, UK, UAE, Germany, Cyprus & Cayman Islands
- Key Sectors Attracting FDI: Services sector (16% of total FDI inflows); Computer software and hardware (15%); Trading (7%); Telecommunications (6%).

About FDI: It means investment through capital instruments by a person resident outside India in an unlisted Indian company; or in ten per cent or more of the post issue paid-up equity capital on a fully diluted basis of a listed Indian company.

➤ It is largely non debt creating capital flow.

Significance:

- FDI allows the transfer of technology—particularly in the form of new varieties of capital inputs—that cannot be achieved through financial investments or trade in goods and services.
- Recipients of FDI often gain employee training in the course of operating the new businesses, which contributes to human capital development in the host country.
- Profits generated by FDI contribute to corporate tax revenues in the host country.
- FDI helps maintain a stable Balance of Payment and support the value of the rupee.

Govt policies boosting foreign investments in India

- Most sectors except certain strategically important sectors, are open for 100% FDI under the automatic route.
 - ⊕ Almost 90% of the FDI inflow is received under the automatic route.
- More than 42,000 compliances have been reduced and more than 3,800 provisions have been decriminalized. E.g., Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has developed the National Single Window System (NSWS) portal as a one-stop for taking all the regulatory approvals and services in the country.

Also In News



Asian Development Bank (ADB)

India and ADB signed a \$50 million loan to enhance water security in Meghalaya.

About Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Established: In 1966 to promote economic development in Asia and Pacific.
- Headquarter: Mandaluyong, Philippines.
- Objective: Envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
- Membership: 69 members; 49 from Asia-Pacific (including India) & 19 from other regions.
- Functions:
 - ⊕ Provides loans, grants, and technical assistance to member countries.
 - ⊕ Focuses on sectors like infrastructure, education, health, and climate resilience.



Angami Naga Tribe

The Angami Naga tribe participated in 'Stone Pulling Ceremony' as part of Nagaland's Hornbill Festival.

Angami Naga Tribe

- Habitat: They primarily reside in Kohima and Dimapur districts of Nagaland.
 - ⊕ Their Villages are organized into Khels (Thinuo) based on clan divisions.
- Language: Tenyidie, written in Roman script (Tibeto-Burman origin).
- Festival: Sekrenyi, a prominent harvest celebration integral to Angami culture.
- Traditional attire: Lorumhoushu, Lohe, Ratapfe, and Kilt.
- Religion: Predominantly Christian.
- Historical Event: Angami Rebellion (1879) against British imperialism is a notable chapter in their history.

World Meditation Day

The UN declares **December 21** as **World Meditation Day**.

About World Meditation Day

- **Resolution introduced by Liechtenstein & co-sponsored by India, was unanimously adopted by 193-member United Nations General Assembly.**
- **Aim:** It is aimed at comprehensive human well-being, including mental, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions.

Significance of December 21:

- **Winter Solstice:** Marks the beginning of **Uttarayana (auspicious time for inner reflection)** in Indian tradition.
- **Complementary Date:** Falls exactly six months after June 21, celebrated as the **International Day of Yoga (Summer Solstice)**.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

EPFO wins **International Social Security Association's (ISSA) 'Good Practice Award'** for Asia and Pacific.

About EPFO

- **Genesis:** **Employees' Provident Funds Ordinance, 1951** established EPFO. It was replaced by **Employees' Provident Funds Act of 1952**.
 - ⊕ The act is now referred as **Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952**
- **Nodal Ministry:** **Ministry of Labour & Employment.**
- **Mission:** To extend the Reach & Quality of Publicly Managed Old-Age Income Security Programs.
- EPFO administers the following 3 schemes
 - ⊕ **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme 1952,**
 - ⊕ **Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) 1995 and**
 - ⊕ **Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) Scheme 1976.**

International Energy Agency (IEA)

The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** hosted the '**Global Conference on Energy & AI**'.

About IEA

- **HQ:** Paris, France.
- **Established:** In 1974 in response to the 1973 oil crisis.
- **Objective:** To promote energy security among member countries and Focus on sustainable energy policies, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.
- **Members:** Comprises **32 member countries, 13 association countries (India is associate member since 2017) & 4 accession countries.**
- **Requirement to Join:**
 - ⊕ Membership in the OECD is a prerequisite.
 - ⊕ Commitment to **shared energy goals**, including maintaining **emergency oil reserves equivalent to 90 days** of net imports.
- **Important Reports:** World Energy Outlook, Global EV Outlook etc.

Markhor

In Rare Appearance, **Markhor** Spotted In Kashmir.

About Markhor

- It is **World's largest wild goat.**
- **Habitat:** **Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan.**
 - ⊕ In India it is found only in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- **Status :**
 - ⊕ **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I**
 - ⊕ **IUCN Red List: Near Threatened**
 - ⊕ **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species:Appendix I**
- **Conservation Efforts :**
 - ⊕ **Global: UNGA proclaimed 24 May the International Day of the Markhor, starting in 2024.**
 - ⊕ **India: Kashmir Markhor Recovery Project (Wildlife Trust of India), J&K notified Tattakuti wildlife sanctuary for the markhor.**

Andromeda Galaxy

Indian Institute of Astrophysics astronomers spot ultraviolet emissions from novae in Andromeda galaxy for the first time.

- They used **AstroSat data** of Andromeda galaxy to spot the emission.

About Andromeda Galaxy (Messier 31)

- It is the **nearest major galaxy to the Milky Way.**
- It is **Spiral Galaxy** approximately **2.5 million light-years** away from earth.
- M31 is located in **constellation Andromeda.**

AstroSat Mission

- **First dedicated Indian astronomy mission** aimed at studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical and UV spectral bands simultaneously.
- It enables the **simultaneous multi-wavelength observations** of various astronomical objects with a single satellite.

Tungsten

The **Ministry of Mines** granted **tungsten mining rights to Hindustan Zinc Limited**, sparking strong opposition from the public, environmentalists, and politicians due to **concerns over the biodiversity-rich heritage area in Melur.**

About Tungsten

- **Appearance:** A shiny, silvery-white metal.
- **Properties:** highest melting point of all metals;
- **Principal tungsten-containing ores:** Are **scheelite and wolframite.**
- **Uses:** Filaments of light bulbs, arc-welding electrodes, Tungsten carbide as a new 'painless' dental drill which spins at ultra-high speeds.
- **Issues:** Not very energy efficient; they produce much more heat than light.
- **As per Second Schedule of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957, Tungsten is a major mineral.**

Place in News Norway (Capital: Oslo)

India, Norway discuss investments under European Free Trade Association (EFTA) pact

Political features:

- **Location:** **Northern Europe** and occupies the western half of the **Scandinavian peninsula.**
- **Bordering nations:** **Sweden, Finland, and Russia.**
- **Bordering water bodies:** **Barents Sea (north), the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea (west), and Skagerrak (Skager Strait) (south).**

Geographical features:

- **About two-thirds of Norway is mountainous, and much off its indented coastline lie, carved by deep glacial fjords.**
- **Fjords:** fjords/fjords: Very deep glacial troughs filled with sea water and making up shorelines (in high latitudes). E.g. Sogn (Sogne) Fjord etc.
- Numerous extensive areas **called peneplains**, whose relief has been **largely eroded away**, also were formed.
 - ⊕ Peneplain is gently undulating, almost featureless plain that is produced by fluvial erosion.
- The **Norwegian Current carries relatively warm water northward along the coast of Norway.**

