

NEWS TODAY

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI has cut repo rate by 25 bps to 6.25%

MPC has cut policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) nearly after a five-year gap.

Other important decisions

- To continue a 'neutral' monetary policy stance.
 - ⊕ A neutral stance indicates that the RBI maintains flexibility in adjusting policy rates based on prevailing economic conditions.
- GDP growth for FY '26 projected at 6.7%.
- Food inflation pressures are likely to see significant "softening", Core inflation expected to rise but remain moderate.

Rationale for MPC decisions

- Inflation has declined and growth is expected to recover from the low of Q2:2024-25.
- Excessive volatility in global financial markets and
- Continued uncertainties about global trade policies coupled with adverse weather events.

About Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)

- It is a monetary policy tool used by central banks to manage liquidity in the banking system. It includes repo and reverse repo rates.
 - ⊕ The repo rate is the interest rate at which the central bank lends money to banks, while the reverse repo rate is the rate at which banks can park their surplus funds with the central bank.

About Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- Under Section 45ZB of the amended (in 2016) RBI Act, 1934, the Central Government has accordingly constituted the MPC of RBI.
- Consists of six members:
 - ⊕ Three Members from RBI and
 - ⊕ Three are appointed by the Central Government (hold office for four years or until further orders).
- The committee determines the Policy Rate required to achieve the inflation target (i.e. 4 per cent within a band of +/- 2 per cent).

Over 15,000 Indian migrants deported from the U.S. since 2009: Minister of External Affairs

Hotspots states of Illegal Immigration in India include Gujarat, Punjab, and Haryana.

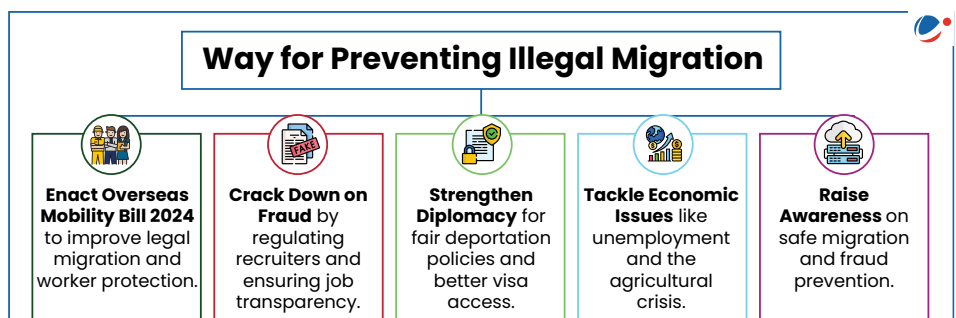
- Such migrants mostly use the "dunki routes (donkey routes)" to reach the U.S., passing through Latin American countries.
 - ⊕ Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guyana have visas on arrival for Indian citizens while Brazil and Venezuela, give tourist visas to Indians easily.
- Additionally, a migrant's journey is often determined by the human trafficking networks to which their agent is connected.

Reasons for Illegal Migration

- **Better Opportunities:** Low wages in India push migrants to seek higher pay in the U.S.
- **Limited Legal Routes:** Slow, uncertain visa processes force people to take illegal paths.
- **Success Culture:** Societal pressure in some communities (like Patels in Gujarat) leads families to sell land or take loans to migrate.

Consequences of Such Migration

- Migrants risk robbery, assault, and even rape, with crimes often unreported.
- The journey takes 8-10 days if successful; dead migrants' bodies cannot be sent home.
- Strong demand has led to a thriving human smuggling network.
 - ⊕ Agents and Human smugglers charge exorbitant fee, promising jobs and legal status.



India Achieves Historic Milestone of 100 GW Installed Solar Power Capacity: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

This achievement (refer to the infographics) is a significant step toward realizing its ambitious target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030.

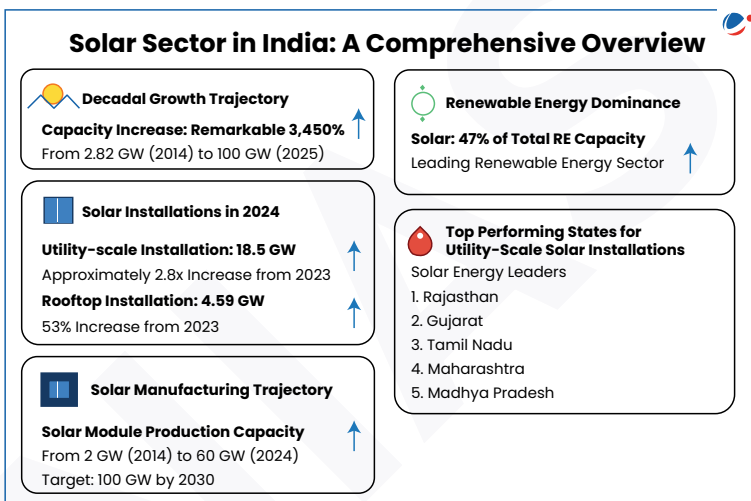
Significance of Solar Energy for India

- **Future Energy Needs:** India's energy use is 3 times the **global average** and will drive **25% of global demand growth** in 20 years. Solar boosts **self-sufficiency while reducing environmental impact**.
- **Emission Targets:** Under the updated **Nationally Determined Contributions**, India aims to cut **emissions intensity by 45%** and achieve **50% non-fossil fuel capacity** by 2030.
- **Water Security:** Unlike coal, solar **doesn't rely on water**, helping tackle water scarcity.
- **Rural Electrification:** Supports **off-grid power generation** with **fast capacity expansion**, benefiting remote areas.

Initiatives to Promote Solar Energy

- **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana:** Aims to provide solar power to 1 crore households by March 2027.
- **Solar Parks Scheme:** Offers ready infrastructure for developers with statutory clearances.
- **100% FDI:** Allows full foreign investment under the automatic route.
- **Green Term Ahead Market (GTAM):** Enables solar energy trading through exchanges.

More action is needed to tackle issues like **high installation costs, land acquisition challenges, grid instability, heat waves, and reliance on imported solar panels**.



Union Budget 2025: Developing 50 Top Tourist Destinations in 'Challenge Mode'

These destinations will be developed in partnership with states to elevate **tourism infrastructure, improve ease of travel, and strengthen connectivity to key sites**.

- States will be required to provide **land for critical infrastructure**, which will be classified under the **Infrastructure Harmonized Master List (HML)**.

Key Focus of Budget

- **Employment-Led Growth:** Skill development programs, MUDRA loans for homestays, improved travel and connectivity to tourist spots.
- **Spiritual Tourism:** Focus on pilgrimage and heritage tourism, especially Buddhist sites.
- **Medical Tourism:** Promote "**Heal in India**" initiative to boost India's global healthcare position.
- **Gyan Bharatam Mission:** Documentation and conservation of India's manuscript heritage.

Contribution of Tourism Sector:

- Accounted for **5% of GDP in FY23**. The sector also created **7.6 crore jobs during the same period**.
- India received **1.8 per cent of world tourism receipts** and attained a rank of **14th worldwide in world tourism receipts during 2023**.

Measures taken by govt

- **Infrastructure Development:** Swadesh Darshan 2.0, PRASHAD Scheme, RCS-UDAN for regional connectivity.
- **Policy & Legal:** National Tourism Policy, E-Visa for multiple categories.
- **Thematic Tourism:** Promoting wellness, culinary, rural, and eco-tourism.
- **NIDHI (National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry):** Digital system for ease of business in hospitality & tourism.






Cabinet approved Restructuring the Skill India Programme and Extension of Tenure Till 2026

Skill India Programme was launched in 2015 under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

- It aimed to train **40 crore** people by 2022 in various skills with the following key initiatives:
 - National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)
 - National Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (2015)
 - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
 - Skill Loan Scheme

Restructured Skill India Programme

- It Combines **three key schemes** that have benefitted over **2.27 crore** people, under **one Central Sector Scheme**.
- 3 Key components**

 <p>PMKVY 4.0</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides NSQF-aligned skill training through Short-Term Training & Recognition of Prior Learning. Focus on international mobility and upskilling workers. Focus on emerging technologies and future skills by introducing 400+ new courses in AI, 5G, Cybersecurity, Green Hydrogen, Drones, etc. Target beneficiary: 15-59 years of age.
 <p>Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps seamless transition from education to work ensuring apprentices gain industry-specific skills through real-world exposure Funds 25% of stipend (up to ₹1,500/month per apprentice) to support both apprentices and establishments Target beneficiary: 14-35 years of age
 <p>Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based, Flexible, low-cost, doorstep vocational training for women, rural youth, etc. Promotes health, hygiene, financial literacy, gender equality & education. Linked with PM JANMAN, ULLAS, and other govt initiatives. Target beneficiary: 15-45 years of age.

Cabinet extended tenure of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis(NCSK) for three years

NCSK was first established as a statutory commission in 1994 by the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993**.

- However, with **lapsing of the act in 2004**, the commission is acting as a **Non-Statutory body** under **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment(MoSJE)**.
- Its **tenure is extended** from time to time through **Government Resolutions**.

Mandate of NCSK

- Recommend central government for programmes** towards elimination of inequalities in status of Safai Karmacharis etc.
- Evaluate the schemes** implemented for socio-economic rehabilitation of sanitation workers.
- Under Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, NCSK monitors the implementation; enquires into complaints related to contravention; advise the government for **effective implementation**; and take suo-motu notice for **non-implementation of any provisions of the act**.
- Others: Monitor the working conditions** (health safety & wages); **make reports to governments** on any issue concerning the sanitation workers etc.

Issues faced by Sanitation workers:

- Hazardous working conditions** which lead to **skin & respiratory problems** such as eczema, scaly dermatitis etc;
- Social stigma** as many workers primarily hail from **marginalized communities face systemic exclusion and lack of social security net**.

Other Initiatives taken for welfare of sanitation workers

- National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) scheme:** A **joint initiative** by MoSJE & Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
 - It aims to **prevent hazardous cleaning & promote safe cleaning practices** through trained and certified sanitation workers.
- Under **Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 guidelines**, MoHUA focuses on the welfare of sanitation workers urging Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to promote their occupational safety.

Also In News



Algorithmic Trading

SEBI proposed **Retail Algo Trading Framework**.

- Algo trading **automates buy/sell orders** using preset conditions for precise execution.
- Erstwhile, only **institutional investors** were allowed to use it via **Direct Market Access (DMA)**.

Key highlights of Regulatory Framework

- Categorization of Algorithms**
 - White-box:** Logic is disclosed and replicable i.e. Execution Algos
 - Black-box:** Algos where the **logic is not known to the user** and is not replicable
- Trading Limits for Retail Traders:** Retail traders must follow exchange-set limits (yet to be decided).
- Registration of Algo Providers:** Algo providers are not regulated by SEBI, but must **register with exchanges and partner with a broker** to sell algos.



National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

NCST has asked **Telangana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha** to gather data on tribals displaced from **Chhattisgarh** due to **Maoist violence**.

About NCST

- Genesis:** Established under Article 338A of the Constitution (inserted through **89th Amendment Act, 2003**).
- Composition:** Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Members (each having a 3-year term).
 - Chairperson's rank** is equivalent to **Union Cabinet Minister, Vice-Chairperson's a Minister of State** and **other Members' ranks of a Secretary of Centre**.
- Key Functions:**
 - Monitor safeguards** for **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.
 - Investigate complaints** on deprivation of ST rights.
 - Advise on socio-economic development plans** for STs.
- Powers:** Functions as a **Civil Court**.

Swavalambini

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog launched Swavalambini.

About Swavalambini

- A Women Entrepreneurship Programme for **Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram**.
- Aimed at empowering female students in select Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the northeast by equipping them with the **essential entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship they need to succeed in their entrepreneurial journey**.
- It also provides six months of **mentorship and handholding support** to help participants translate their ideas into sustainable prospects.

Bird Flu (Avian Influenza)

Recently, a 2nd **genotype (genotype D1.1) spillover of bird flu virus** has been detected among dairy cattle in US.

- Until now, **all Bird Flu detections** in dairy cattle have involved **genotype B3.13**.

About Bird Flu:

- **Caused by: Avian Influenza Type A Virus.**
- **Divided into subtypes** on the basis of two proteins on the surface of the virus:
 - ⊕ **Hemagglutinin (HA) and Neuraminidase (NA).**
- **Carrier and Transmission:** Migratory wild birds, especially waterfowl, are natural reservoirs of avian influenza viruses.
- **Transmission to Humans:** **Certain subtypes of the virus can infect humans**, leading to severe respiratory illnesses like **H5N1**.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, fatigue, cough, sore throat, muscle aches etc.

Article 200 of the Constitution

Supreme Court questioned **whether a Governor can reserve a Bill for the President under Article 200 after already withholding assent.**

About Article 200

- After a Bill is passed by the State Legislature, the Governor can:
 - ⊕ Assent to it
 - ⊕ Withhold assent
 - ⊕ Reserve it for the President's consideration
- **Returning a Bill:** If **not a Money Bill**, the Governor can return it with recommendations. However, if passed again, the Governor must approve it.
- **Reservation for the President:** If the **Bill affects High Court powers**, the **Governor must send it to the President for approval.**

Dibru Saikhowa National park

Union Environment Ministry's Forest Advisory Committee approved the R&D proposal for Dibru Saikhowa National Park.

About Dibru Saikhowa National Park

- **Location:** Situated in Assam, it is both a National Park and a Biosphere Reserve.
- **Rivers:** Bounded by the **Brahmaputra and Lohit Rivers** to the north, and the **Dibru River** to the south.
- **Vegetation:** Moist mixed **semi-evergreen and deciduous forests**, with the **largest salix swamp forest** in northeastern India.
- **Fauna:** Feral horses, tigers, elephants, leopards, and jungle cats.

Dashavatar Theatre

Recently, Dashavatar performances in Maharashtra started.

About Dashavatar theatre

- It is a traditional **theatre form** with a history of eight hundred years.
- The term Dashavatar refers to the **ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu** (God of preservation).
 - ⊕ The ten incarnations are 'matsya' (fish), 'kurma' (tortoise), 'varaha' (boar), 'narasimha' (lion-man), 'vaman' (dwarf), Parashuram, Ram, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.
- **Features:** The performers use **bright make-up and costumes** and they are accompanied by **three musical instruments: a paddle harmonium, tabla and zanj (cymbals)**.
- **Popular in:** Sindhudurg district of the South Konkan Region of Maharashtra and North Goa district of Goa.

Rhododendron

A recent study highlighted the **threat to Rhododendron wattii in Nagaland**, while new orchid species is recorded for the first time in Manipur.

About Rhododendron

- It is one of the largest genera of **flowering plants with more than 1,000 wild species**.
- **Distribution:**
 - ⊕ Mainly in the **Himalayas and Southeast Asia**.
 - ⊕ In smaller number in **North America, Europe, the Middle East, and northeast Australia**.
- **Recognition**
 - ⊕ Rhododendron arboreum is **National flower** (called Lali gurans) **of Nepal**.
 - ⊕ Pink Rhododendron **state flower of Himachal Pradesh**.
- Considered as **indicator species for climate change** and used in **traditional medicine**.

Place in News

Panama (Capital: Panama City)

India and Panama signed an MoU for Indian grant assistance in projects like roads, community centers, and improvements in education and healthcare.

Political Features

- **Location:** Country of Central America, located on the Isthmus of Panama.
 - ⊕ Isthmus of Panama is a **narrow bridge of land** that connects North and South America.
- **Territorial Boundaries:** Costa Rica (West) and Colombia (East).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Caribbean Sea (North) and Pacific Ocean (South).

Geographical Features

- **Major Rivers:** Río Chagres, Rio Chepo etc.
- **Major Mountain Range:** The **Tabasará Mountains (Cordillera Central)** in the west and the **Cordillera de San Blas** in the east.
- **Panama Canal:** It is a man-made waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making it one of the world's most **strategic canals**, alongside the **Suez Canal**.

