

NEWS TODAY

Mass Drug Administration (MDA) Campaign for elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) launched

The MDA campaign is a core component of India's LF elimination strategy.

About Lymphatic Filariasis(LF)

- It is a neglected tropical disease and is also known as "Hathi Paon" or Elephantiasis.
- **Causal agent: Parasites (classified as nematodes (roundworms) of the family Filarioididea)**
 - ⊕ **Life Cycle of Filarial Parasite:** Infection is typically acquired in childhood, causing hidden damage to the lymphatic system.
- **Transmission: by infected mosquitoes.**
- **Impact: physical and long-term disabilities,lymphoedema (swelling of the limbs) and hydrocele (scrotal swelling)**

What is Mass Drug Administration?

- **Implementing Agency:** led by **National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC).**
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **Objective:** Eliminate LF from **111 endemic districts across 13 states** by eliminating microscopic filarial parasites present in the bloodstream of infected individuals.
- **Medication Regimen** includes:-
 - ⊕ **Double Drug Regimen (DA):** Diethylcarbamazine Citrate (DEC) and Albendazole
 - ⊕ **Triple Drug Regimen (IDA):** Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine Citrate (DEC) & Albendazole
- **Strategy: Five-pronged strategy for eliminating LF by 2027 ahead of the SDG goal of 2030**
 - ⊕ Mission Mode Mass Drug Administration (MDA),
 - ⊕ Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP),
 - ⊕ Vector Control (Surveillance and Management),
 - ⊕ High-Level Advocacy, and
 - ⊕ Innovative Approaches.

About National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control

- It is an umbrella programme for the prevention and control of **vector-borne diseases such as Malaria, Japanese Encephalitis, Dengue, Chikungunya, Kala-azar and Lymphatic Filariasis.**
- Vector-borne diseases are infections spread to humans and animals through **bites from blood-feeding insects like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas.**

India Achieves Record ₹1.27 Lakh Cr in Domestic Defence Production: Defence Minister

Announcing the 'Aero India' conclave in Bengaluru, the Defence Minister highlighted that defence exports grew by 30 times over the past decade.

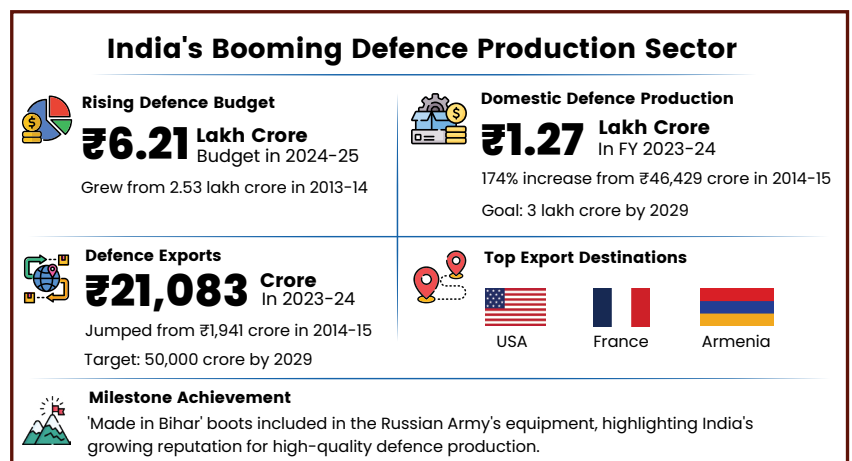
- Aero India is Asia's largest airshow and the theme for the current conclave is 'BRIDGE (Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement)'.

Significance of Defence Indigenisation for India

- **Augment Sovereign Military Strengths:** Domestic production enables India to avoid global sanctions, like the USA's CAATSA, while securing critical missiles and equipment.
- **Modern Warfare Readiness:** Example, ADITI scheme has been launched to develop around **30 critical deep-tech and strategic technologies** currently lacking in the country.
- **India as a Net Security Provider:** Example: **BrahMos missile exported** to the Philippines which enhanced India's strategic presence in the **Indian Ocean Region**
- **Economic Growth:** Creates jobs, drives innovation, and attracts investments.

Initiatives for Defence Indigenization

- **Policy and Schemes:** Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy, 'Make in India', **notification of 'Positive Indigenization List'**, Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), etc.
- **Global Cooperation: Enhanced FDI limits** (74% - Automatic Route; 100% - Government Route) for those likely to result in access to modern technology., etc.
- **Others:** Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Board, Defence Industrial Corridors, SRIJAN Portal, etc.



Sri Lankan Navy arrests 14 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu

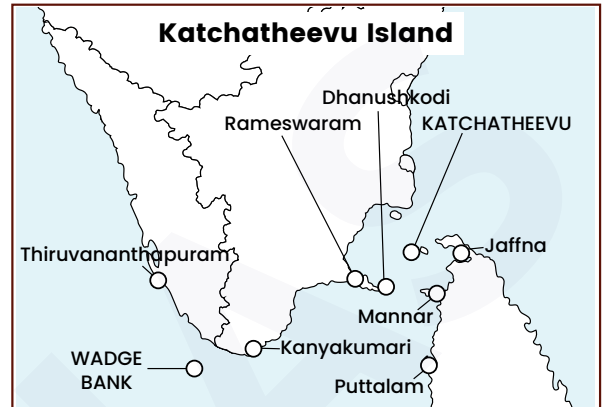
Recently, India's External Affairs Minister raised concerns over the recurring arrests of Indian fishermen with the Sri Lankan President.

Background of the Maritime Dispute

- It relates to fishing rights in the **Palk Bay region** and stems from violations of the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)** and illegal fishing activities in the region.
 - The Palk Bay, is a narrow sea strip **separating Tamil Nadu and northern Sri Lanka** rich in marine resources.

Maritime Boundary Agreements of 1974 and 1976

- 1974 Agreement:**
 - Island of Katchatheevu** lies on the **Sri Lankan side** of the **India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line**
 - However, Indian fishermen were given access to Katchatheevu for **drying of nets** and the annual **St. Anthony Church festival**.
- 1976 Agreement:**
 - It further delineated **boundaries in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal**.



Factors Contributing to the Dispute

- Traditional Fishing Practices:** Tamil Nadu fishermen frequently cross the IMBL due to historical fishing patterns.
- Depletion of Fish Stocks:** caused due to practices such as **bottom trawling**. (It is a fishing practice that herds and captures the target species, like ground fish or crabs, by towing a net along the ocean floor).

Recent Measures to Resolve the Dispute

- Joint Working Group (JWG):** explores joint patrolling and resource management strategies.
- Humanitarian Approach:** Adoption of livelihood-based approach to address fishermen-related issues.
- Technological Interventions:** to prevent unintentional crossings of the IMBL and promote sustainable fishing practices. (e.g. with use of GPS)

India Reportedly Introduces New Harmonised System(HS) Codes For GI Tagged Rice

An amendment to the **Customs Tariff Act(1975)** was introduced to provide an **HS (Harmonised System)** code for **GI-recognised rice varieties**.

- The amendment will make it possible for the **exports of GI-tagged rice without any problem or special notification** from the Ministry of Finance.

About HS

- Definition:** HS is a **global product classification system developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO)**.

Classification Structure:

- HS assigns specific **six-digit codes for varying classifications and commodities**.
- Countries are allowed to add longer codes** to the first six digits for further classification.

Governance and Updates

- HS is governed by "**The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System**".
- HS Committee**, made up of member countries, oversees the HS classification system and also updates **HS every 5 – 6 years**.

Widespread adoption

- Classifies approximately **98% of international trade**
- Encompasses over **5,000 commodity groups**
- Implemented by **more than 200 countries**

Benefits of HS

- Common coding method** helps countries **organize and track products** in global trade.
- Extensively used by governments, international organizations and private organisations for **internal taxes, trade policies, etc.**
- Reduces **international trade costs and support economic research**

About World Customs Organization (WCO)

Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium

- Genesis:** WCO, established in 1952 as the **Customs Co-operation Council (CCC)**
- Role:** is an **independent intergovernmental body** whose mission is to **enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations**.
- Focus:** It is exclusively focused on **customs matters**. Its work includes the development of global standards, the simplification and harmonization of customs procedures, trade supply chain security, the facilitation of international trade, etc.
- Members:** WCO represents **186 Customs administrations (including India)**

India Launches EFTA Desk To Strengthen Trade And Investment Ties with EFTA Nations

EFTA Desk will serve as the main contact for **EFTA businesses**, providing market insights, addressing concerns, and supporting expansion.

- EFTA desk is a key part of the **India-EFTA Free Trade Agreement (TEPA)**, a **Trade Agreement** between India and EFTA, signed in 2024.

Key Highlights of TEPA

- **First-ever Binding FTA:** binding commitment of \$100 bn investment and 1 million direct jobs in the next 15 years has been given.
- **Tariff Reduction:** EFTA eliminates 92.2% of tariff lines, benefiting 99.6% of India's exports.
- **Market Access: Full access for non-agri products** and concessions on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).
- **Enhanced Services Access:** Services offers from EFTA include-
 - ⊕ **Mode 1:** Digital delivery of services.
 - ⊕ **Mode 3:** Commercial presence.
 - ⊕ **Mode 4:** Easier temporary stay for key personnel.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** Aligns with TRIPS for strong protection.
- **Professional Recognition:** Covers fields like **nursing, chartered accountancy, and architecture.**
- **Rules of Origin & Trade Remedies:** Clear regulations to ensure smooth trade and safeguard interests.

Challenges Associated with TEPA

- **Strict IPR rules** could impact India's generic drug industry.
- **Trade imbalances**, especially due to high gold imports from Switzerland, need careful management.
- The **16-year negotiation process** reflects the complexity of aligning interests.

About EFTA

- Formed in 1960, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is the intergovernmental organisation of **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.**
- It was set up for the promotion of **free trade and economic integration of its members.**
- **Switzerland** is India's largest EFTA trade partner, followed by **Norway.**

'Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities' Report released by NITI Aayog

The report is the first-of-its kind policy document in the higher education sector focused specifically on **States and State Public Universities (SPUs)**

Key aspects of State Public Universities (SPUs)

- **SPUs and its affiliated institutions** account for **>80% of total student enrolment.**
- **Establishment:** by **State Acts** and are funded by **State Governments** and are **predominant responsibility of State Governments**

Parameters	Challenges Highlighted	Recommendations
Quality	Poor research infrastructure and low R&D spending , outdated curriculum and issues of faculty shortages.	➤ Research: Develop a National Research Policy ➤ Pedagogy: Regularly update curricula & assess teaching effectiveness
Funding	Limited funding to cater to capital expenditure & operating expenses , lack of fee autonomy. E.g. Education spending by states have fallen as percentage of GSDP between 2005-06 & 2019-20.	➤ Increase education investment to 6% of GDP , boost R&D spending to 2% of GDP , ➤ Diversify revenue via self-financed programs, alumni engagement, CSR, and PPP models.
Employability	Outdated curriculum and weak academia-industry collaboration	➤ Promote internships, industry collaborations, skill training, and entrepreneurship.
Governance	High accreditation costs , lack of administrative autonomy, opaque faculty hiring. E.g. Only 38 SPUs appeared in the top 100 institutions (university category) in NIRF 2024.	➤ Enhance accreditation affordability , Grant SPUs autonomy , improve regulatory frameworks.
Internationalisation	Selection criteria need revision, underfunded research limits global outreach.	➤ Identify and prioritize SPUs with existing infrastructure suitable for international students. ➤ Conduct a review of existing model curricula to identify areas needing adjustments to align with international standards.

Also in News



South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)

Solvent Extractors' Association of India urged Cente to **regulate the surge of refined soybean and palm oil imports** from Nepal citing 'Rule of Origin' norm's violation.

About SAFTA

- **Genesis:** SAFTA, the free trade pact of SAARC, replaced the 1993 SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement in 2006.
- **Members:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- **Special treatment to LDCs:** SAFTA recognizes the need for special and differential treatment for LDCs in its preamble.

However, South Asia's **intra-regional trade remains low, hovering around 5%** due to poor transport infrastructure, political disputes, etc.



Srjanam

India's first indigenous Automated Biomedical Waste Treatment Rig, **Srjanam**, was launched at AIIMS Delhi.

- Developed by CSIR-NIIST (National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology), Thiruvananthapuram, it disinfects biomedical waste without costly incinerators.

About Bio-Medical Waste

- **Definition:** Biomedical waste includes waste generated from diagnosis, treatment, immunization, research, or biological production/testing in healthcare settings.
- **India's Biomedical Waste Challenge:** India produces 743 tonnes of biomedical waste daily, requiring safe and efficient disposal (CPCB, 2023).
- **Regulation: Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016** mandate proper segregation, treatment, and disposal



Graphene

Researchers found a **new quantum state in twisted bilayer-trilayer graphene**, where electrons form a lattice but allow resistance-free edge currents.

- This could aid **quantum computing** as it offer stability against noise

About Graphene

- Graphene is an **allotrope of carbon**
- It is a **one-atom-thick carbon sheet** arranged in a **hexagonal lattice**.
- It is the **thinnest, lightest, and strongest material**, 200 times stronger than steel and 1,000 times lighter than paper. It is **98% transparent, chemically stable, and highly conductive**.



Accelerating Smart Power & Renewable Energy in India (ASPIRE) programme

India and the UK have initiated the second phase of the bilateral ASPIRE program as part of the Fourth India-UK Energy Dialogue.

About ASPIRE Program

- It is a bilateral initiative aimed at **promoting clean energy transition and sustainable development in India**.
- **Focus of Second phase of ASPIRE:-**
 - ⊕ **Round-the-Clock Power Supply:** Providing technical support to ensure uninterrupted electricity.
 - ⊕ **Renewable Energy Expansion:** Strengthening India's clean energy initiatives.
 - ⊕ **Industrial Efficiency & Decarbonization:** Promoting energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.
- The program is implemented in partnership with India's **Ministry of Power (MoP)** and **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.



Bombay Blood Group

Doctors recently conducted a cross-blood transplant in a patient with a rare Bombay blood group.

About Bombay Blood Group (HH blood group)

- It is a **rare blood group**
- **Discovery:** 1st discovered in Mumbai in 1952 by Y.M. Bhende.
- **Characteristics:** presence of **serum antibodies anti-A, anti-B, and anti-H**, which can cause agglutination in all blood groups within the ABO system.
- **Clinical Feature:** People with Bombay blood group cannot receive blood transfusions from any ABO group, including type O, which has the H antigen.
- **Note:** They can only receive blood from another Bombay blood group donor.



Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

The government has revised certain guidelines related to the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).

Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

- It has been made a component of the integrated scheme of **PM-AASHA** (PradhanMantriAnnadataAaySanraksanAbhiyan).
 - ⊕ **PM-AASHA aims to ensure remunerative prices** to farmers with components such as **Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS)**
- **Purpose:** prevents farms from distress selling of commodities of various perishable agricultural/horticultural commodities
- **Implementation Mechanism:** on the request of the State/UT Government.
- **Condition:** There should be a **reduction of at least 10% in the market prices** in the States/UTs as compared to the rates of the previous normal season
- **Procurement/coverage:** limit of production quantity of crops has been increased from the existing 20% to 25%.



Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)

Biolumpivaxin, an LSD vaccine recently developed by Bharat Biotech and ICAR got license from **Central Drug Standards Control Organization**.

About Lumpy Skin Disease

- **Viral disease** that affects primarily cows and lesser buffalos.
- **Pathogen:** by lumpy skin disease virus of the capripox virus genus in the **Poxviridae** family.
- **Symptoms:** Causes **fever**, and **nodules on the skin** and can also lead to death.
- **Transmission:** By blood-feeding insects, such as certain species of flies, mosquitoes, or ticks.

States receive **central funding to combat LSD** through training, awareness, and vaccination programs.



'Cyclone 2025'

India and Egypt to commence joint military exercise 'Cyclone 2025'.

About Cyclone 2025

- **Participants:** India & Egypt
- **Location:** Rajasthan
- **Objective:** Enhance **defence cooperation**, improve **interoperability**, and share **special forces skills in desert warfare**.

Place in News



Zambia (Capital: Lusaka)

A bilateral meeting was conducted between India's Defence Minister and Zambia's Minister of Defence during Aero India 2025.

Physical Features:

- It is a **landlocked country**.
- **Land Boundaries:** **Tanzania** (northeast), **Malawi** (east), **Mozambique** (southeast), **Zimbabwe** (south), **Botswana** and **Namibia** (southwest), **Angola** (west), and the Democratic Republic of the **Congo** (north).

Geographical features

- **Climate:** Tropical climate, generally with a rainy season from October to April.
- **Major Rivers:** Zambezi River (famous for Victoria Falls), Kafue River, Luangwa River.
- **Highest peak:** **MafingaCentral** located in the Mafinga Hills along the **Zambia-Malawi border**.

