

UN Commission for Social Development emphasizes on strengthening Social Cohesion

The ongoing **63rd Session of the Commission** focuses on “**Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion, and social cohesion**” as part of advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

➤ **UN Commission for Social Development** is a **Commission within the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** with its main responsibility to provide advice to the UN on social development issues.

What is Social Cohesion?

- Social cohesion represents the **invisible bonds that unite society, fostering harmony, and shared growth among its members.**
- In socially cohesive societies, processes exist to improve **inclusion of people who are in a disadvantaged situation** – be it on the grounds of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, economic and migration status or any other factor.

➤ Dimensions of Social Cohesion

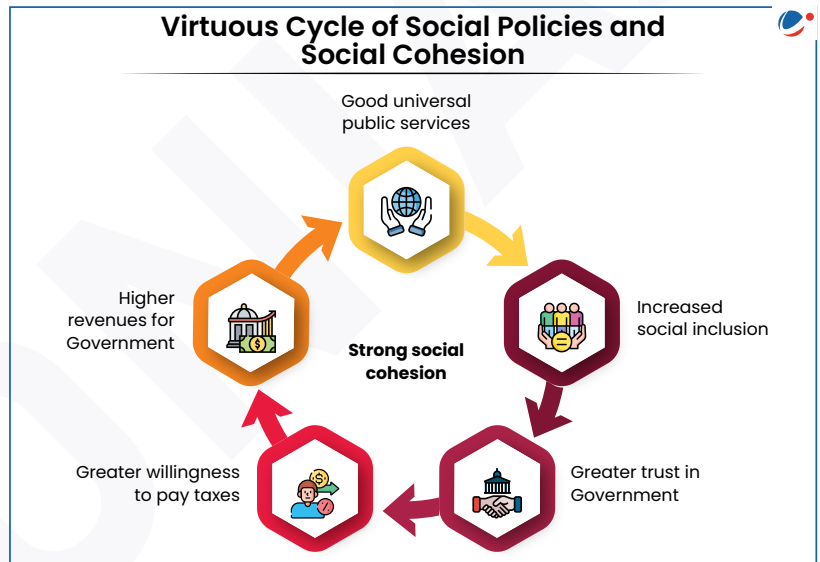
⊕ It is a **result of the interaction** between existing levels of -

- ◆ **social inclusion;**
- ◆ the **institutional mechanisms** in place for promoting social inclusion; and
- ◆ **solidarity and feelings of trust** in others and in institutions.

➤ **Factors undermining social cohesion** include polarization, poverty, marginalization, geopolitical tensions creating an environment of uncertainty, etc.

Key Recommendations to promote Social Cohesion

- Promoting decent work;
- Provisioning of affordable healthcare;
- Implementing progressive and effective taxation systems;
- Fostering a healthy data and information environment and combating misinformation and disinformation, etc.



Income-tax Bill, 2025 tabled in Parliament

The bill proposes to repeal and replace the 60-year old **Income-tax Act, (IT, Act), 1961** along with **simplification** of its language and structure aiming to enhance the **ease of doing business**.

Need for the Bill

- **Numerous Amendments in the existing IT Act, 1961:** This has impacted its **basic structure**.
- **Complicated Language:** It increases the **compliance cost** for the taxpayers and impacts **efficiency** of direct-tax authorities.

Key Highlights of the Bill

- **Reduced Volume:** The bill removes 283 sections and 24 chapters from the existing 1961 Act.
- **Language Simplification:** Introduction of '**tax year**' instead of the existing terminologies like 'financial year' and 'assessment year'.
- **Detailed Framework:** Clearly **defines** taxable income, compliance rules, and restrictions on commercial activities.
- **Provision for Virtual Digital Assets:** Defines "**virtual digital asset**" along with clear provisions on their taxation.
- **No Change to Tax Slabs:** It **preserves** existing tax slabs and rebate structures, maintaining continuity while improving usability.
- **Removal of Redundant Sections:** Outdated provisions like the '**fringe benefit tax**' are removed to simplify the Act.
- **Others:** Use of **easy to read tables**, incorporates **taxpayers' charter** outlining responsibilities and rights, provisions for **alternate dispute resolutions**, etc.



Report on Status of Devolution to Panchayats released by Union Government

Report titled 'Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence Based Ranking' provides an in-depth analysis at how well Panchayats are equipped to fulfill their Constitutional roles under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

Key Highlights of the Report

- **Panchayat Devolution Index:** Ranks States/ UTs along 6-dimensions of devolution – Framework, Functions, Finances, Functionaries, Capacity Enhancement, and Accountability.
- Devolution has increased from 39.9% to 43.9% during 2013-14 to 2021-22.
- **Top 3 States in devolution** – Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Capacity Enhancement:** Increased from 44% to 54.6% due to initiatives like **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**.

Major concerns in effective Devolution

- **Election Management:** State Election Commissions (SECs) sometimes need to consult with state governments on election dates, leading to **delays or political manipulation**.
- **District Planning Committees: Although District Planning Committees** (mandated under the **Article 243 ZD**) have been constituted in almost all States, detailed grassroots planning is undertaken nowhere.
- **Non-centrality of Panchayats:** Many parallel bodies (entities whose functional domains overlap with those of the Panchayats) currently **operate in eleventh schedule subjects** designated for Panchayats, undermining their constitutional mandate.

Key Recommendations






- **Autonomy for SECs:** Complete authority over election-related matters like **fixing dates, delimitation, and seat reservation** without state government interference.
- **Autonomy of Panchayats:** Establish structures for **regular district planning, coordination with state policy, and alignment with national policy** to give Panchayats a stronger role in local governance.
- **Fund Allocation:** All funds from Union and State governments for **Eleventh Schedule subjects** should be channelled directly to Panchayats, not parallel bodies.

PM of India concludes an Official Working Visit to the US

Leaders from both sides reaffirmed the strength of the **India - US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership**, anchored in **mutual trust, shared interests, goodwill, and robust engagement of their citizens**.

- Both sides announced "**US - India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century**" – to drive transformative change across key pillars of cooperation.

Key Outcomes of the Visit

Areas of Cooperation	Initiatives
 Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced plans to sign a new 10-year Framework for US-India Major Defense Partnership in the 21st Century. • Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA): To scale industry partnerships and production in the Indo-Pacific.
 Trade and Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Mission 500': New goal to more than double total bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. • Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA): To negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector BTA by fall of 2025.
 Energy Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US affirmed its firm support for India to join the International Energy Agency as a full member. • Both sides announced commitment to fully realize US - India 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement. – Agreement for Peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy between India and the US is also called 123 Agreement, as it was signed under the Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act, 1954.
 Technology and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US - India TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology): To catalyze government-to-government, academia, and private sector collaboration to promote application of critical and emerging technologies. • INDUS Innovation: Innovation Bridge to advance US-India industry and academic partnerships and foster investments in space, energy, and other emerging technologies.
 Multilateral Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US announced that extradition to India of Tahawwur Rana (linked to 26/11 terror attacks) has been approved. • Indian Ocean Strategic Venture: New bilateral, whole-of-government forum to advance coordinated investments in economic connectivity and commerce.

President of India issued Proclamation imposing President's rule in Manipur

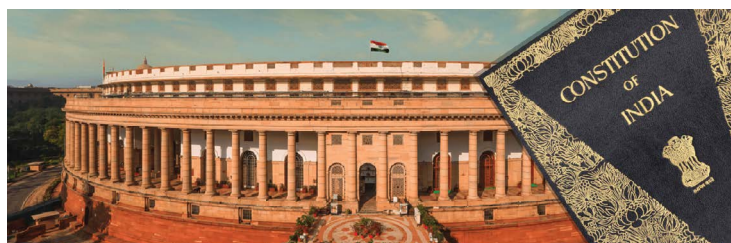
This is the 11th (last being in 2001-02) such imposition in the state placing the state assembly under **suspended animation**.

About President's Rule

- **Constitution: Article 356**, provides for the imposition of **President's Rule in the State** if the President, based on the **report from the State Governor**, is satisfied that the government of the State cannot be carried in accordance with the **Constitutional provisions**.
- **Duration and Approval:** As per **Article 356 (3)**, it shall cease to operate at the expiration of **two months** unless approved by both the Houses of Parliament by **simple majority**.
 - ⊕ If approved, can be extended to **six months** with the maximum extensions of **3 years** (parliamentary approval every 6 months).
- **Revocation:** By the President by a subsequent proclamation.
- **Consequences:**
 - ⊕ President can take over **the functions of the State Government and powers of the Governor**.
 - ⊕ President can **transfer State Legislature's powers to Parliament**.
 - ⊕ It **does not impact** the functioning of the **High Court**.

S R Bommai Vs Union of India (1994)

- Supreme Court held that the proclamation under **Article 356** was subject to **judicial review**.
- The President can **only dissolve a state legislative assembly** after Parliament's approval of the proclamation, and **until then, the assembly remains suspended**.



Union Defence Minister underlines the dangers of Hybrid Warfare to India

About Hybrid Warfare

- It combines **conventional and unconventional methods**, including military operations, cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, and economic pressure.
 - ⊕ **Example: China's three warfare strategy** including psychological, political and legal tactics, etc.

Key Characteristics of Hybrid Warfare

- **Obscurity:** Makes it hard to identify the war threshold.
- **Vagueness:** It **complicates attribution and response** as the target country is not able to either detect a hybrid attack or not able to attribute it to a state.

Key reasons for their emergence

- **Strategic Advantage:** Helps achieve political or economic objectives without any declaration of war keeping the possibility of diplomatic negotiations open.
- **Less Costly:** It evades direct responsibility, and is logistically and economically less complex.

Threats of Hybrid Warfare to India

- **External Threats:** Pakistan's support for proxy forces, terrorist organisations and drug cartels threatening India's security.
- **Internal Insurgencies:** Naxalism in Central India, Ethnic conflicts in Northeast, etc.
- **Threat to Critical National Infrastructure:** E.g. Cyberattacks on the **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant**.

Ways to tackle Hybrid Warfare

- **Integrate Hybrid warfare into defence strategies:** Overcoming natural disadvantages and leveraging India's strengths.
- **Building resilience of armed personnels:** To handle advanced technologies.

Key Measures taken to tackle Hybrid Warfare in India

- **Military Integration:** Through **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**.
- **Tackling Cyber Threats:** Operationalizing a **Defence Cyber Agency**.
- **Defence indigenization:** Through 'Make in India' initiatives, etc.

Also In News

Extended Reality

Recently, XR Creator Hackathon, hosted by Wavelaps and Bharat XR, showcased the **next generation of Extended Reality innovators**.

About Extended Reality (XR)

- It is a broad term encompassing immersive technologies like **Virtual Reality (VR)**, **Augmented Reality (AR)**, and **Mixed Reality (MR)**.
- **Key XR Technologies:**
 - ⊕ **Virtual Reality:** VR immerses users in a **fully simulated environment**, often using a headset that transports them into a virtual world.
 - ⊕ **Augmented Reality:** It enhances the real world by overlaying digital content, enriching a user's perception **without replacing reality**.
 - ⊕ **Mixed Reality:** It is a seamless integration of real world and rendered graphics, allowing users to directly interact with digital and physical worlds together.

ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Framework

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** proposed new measures to strengthen the regulatory framework for **ESG Rating Providers (ERPs)**.

About ESG Framework

- It is a **set of standards** on how a company operates in regard to the **planet and its people**. It includes **three dimensions**:
 - ⊕ **Environmental:** Examines company's performance as a steward of the planet.
 - ⊕ **Social:** Examines how a company manages relationships with employees, suppliers, customers, and communities involved.
 - ⊕ **Governance:** Defines rules, best practices, and processes for managing and controlling an organisation.
- **Significance:** Used to **screen investments**, encourages companies to act responsibly.



Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs)

Recently, **Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs)** are seeing limited investor interest due to **lower yields**.

About SGrBs

- **Announced:** In the **Union Budget 2022-23** to significantly reduce the carbon intensity of the economy.
- **About:** These are **debt instruments** issued by the **Union government** to raise money for environmentally friendly **green projects**.
 - ⊕ Green Projects are those that **encourage energy efficiency** in resource utilization, **reduces carbon emissions**, **promotes climate resilience**, and **values and improves natural ecosystems** and biodiversity.
- **Significance:** Achieve **India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)**; fulfil **Constitutional mandate under Article 48-A**, etc.



Sudan Virus

Recently, the Ugandan Government and the WHO confirmed an outbreak of **Sudan virus disease**.

About Sudan Virus Disease (SVD)

- It is a **viral hemorrhagic fever disease**, belonging to the same family as Ebola virus disease.
 - ⊕ First identified in southern Sudan in **June 1976**.
- **Fatality rates** of SVD have varied from **41% to 70%** in past outbreaks.
- **Transmission:** Person-to-person transmission occurs by direct contact with blood, other bodily fluids, organs, or contaminated surfaces and materials with risk beginning at the onset of clinical signs and increasing with disease severity.
- As of now, there is **no licensed vaccine for SVD**.



Draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025

Government of India has initiated **public consultation on draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025** to amend **Advocates Act, 1961**.

About the Draft Bill

- Amendments aim to **align the legal profession and legal education with global best practices**.
- **Key amendments proposed**
 - ⊕ **Definitions Update:** "**Law graduates**" now include 3 or 5-year degree holders; "**legal practitioner**" extends to corporate and foreign lawyers.
 - ⊕ **Ban on lawyer strikes** with **exceptions** for symbolic or one-day strikes that do not impede justice.
 - ◆ Allows up to **three government-nominated members to the Bar Council**.



Indirect Prompt Injection

Recently, **Indirect Prompt Injection (IPI)** has become an emerging security threat for manipulating AI Chatbots.

About IPI

- It occurs when a **Large Language Model (LLMs)** accepts input from **external sources** controlled by an attacker like websites or files.
 - ⊕ LLMs are **machine learning models** that can comprehend and generate human language text by **analysing massive data sets**.
- The attack is done by **embedding malicious instructions** within benign documents or emails causing chatbots to **perform unauthorised actions**, like searching for sensitive information.
- **Impact:** Corrupt chatbot's long term memory, compromise user data, etc.



Dokra Artwork

Recently, Indian Prime Minister gifted **Dokra art pieces** to French President.

About Dokra Artwork

- **Origin:** It can be traced to the **Dhokra Damar tribes** (traditional metal smiths of Central India), in the regions of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha.
- **Technique:** It uses the **lost-wax technique**, or **cire perdue**, for metal casting.
- **Earliest Example:** This art has been used in India for over 4,000 years, earliest known dokra pieces is the **dancing girl of Mohenjo-daro**.
- **Themes:** Artisans draw inspiration from nature, mythology, and everyday life.



Einstein Ring

European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope has recently discovered **Einstein ring** named **NGC 6505**.

About Einstein Ring

- It is a **ring of light**, first discovered in **1987**, around a form of **dark matter, galaxy or cluster of galaxies**.
- It is an example of **strong gravitational lensing**.
 - ⊕ **Gravitational lensing** occurs when a **massive celestial body** creates a **gravitational field**, distorting and amplifying light from distant galaxies in the same line of sight.
- Gravitational effects associated with Einstein Ring can help in studying **expansion of the Universe**, **detect the effects of invisible dark matter and dark energy**, etc.

Personality in News



Sarojini Naidu

National Women's Day was observed on **February 13** to honour **Sarojini Naidu's** legacy in independence, women's rights, and empowerment.

About Sarojini Naidu (1879 – 1949)

- Also known as the '**Nightingale of India**' or '**Bharat Kokila**', she was a prominent leader and poet in India's freedom struggle.
- In 1947, she became the **first woman** to serve as the **Governor of the United Provinces** in independent India.

Key Contributions

- Joined the **independence movement** after the 1905 partition of Bengal.
- Co-founded the **Women's Indian Association** in 1917.
- She was part of the **All India Home Rule League** in 1919.
- In 1925, she became the **first Indian woman president of Indian National Congress**.
- Naidu was a significant leader in both the **Civil Disobedience** and **Quit India Movements**.
- In 1931, she accompanied Gandhi to the **Second Round Table Conference in London**.
- **Literary work:** The Golden Threshold, The Bird of Time (1912), The Broken Wing, etc.

Values: Patriotism, Justice, Leadership, Equality, etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI