

NEWS TODAY

Coal Production in the Country Crosses One Billion Tonnes Mark in a financial year

Apart from China, India is the only country to cross the 1 billion tonnes mark in annual coal output.

Significance of this Milestone

- **Fostering Energy Security:** Coal contributes approximately 55% of India's energy mix, and around 74% in electricity generation.
- **Powering economy:** Increasing production will **substitute imports**, contributing in **foreign exchange savings**.

How did India accomplish this remarkable Milestone?

- **Key Reforms:**
 - ⊕ **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) CMSP Act- 2015** paved way for commercial mining of the coal mines by private entities.
 - ⊕ **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2021**, allowed **Composite Prospecting Licence-cum-Mining Lease (PL-cum-ML)** specifically for coal.
- **Initiatives:**
 - ⊕ **Integrated Coal Logistic Policy and Plan, 2024**
 - ⊕ **PM Gati Shakti-National Master Plan** in coal sector
 - ⊕ **Other:** Mission Coking Coal, National Coal Index (NCI), etc.
- **FDI Policy:** Allowing 100% FDI in coal mining under the automatic route has attracted global expertise and advanced technologies.

Existing Challenges/Concern for Coal Sector

- **Global Pushback against Coal:** Developed countries are pushing for phasedown of coal production.
- **Import dependence:** India imported about 260 million tonnes of coal in FY 2023-24, dominated by non-coking coal (~77% of total imports).
- **Other issues:** Land acquisition, environmental degradation due to open cast mining, etc.



Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) offered swift justice by resolving around 85k cases in 2024

With a **disposal rate of 96%**, FTSCs have significantly expedited justice in **rape and offenses under the POCSO Act**.

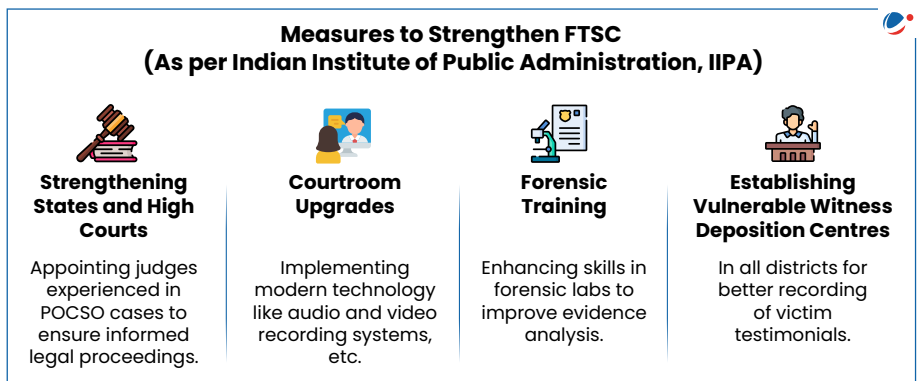
- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012**, is a **gender neutral Act** to deal with the issue of **sexual offences against children**.

Fast Track Special Courts

- **About:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the **Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice**.
- **Background:** Launched in **2019** post the Supreme Court directive (2019) mandating speedy disposal of POCSO Act cases and for the implementation of **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**.
- **Aim:** Support **State Governments** in establishing FTSCs across the country.
- **Target:** Total of **790 FTSCs**, including **exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) courts** to be set up.
 - ⊕ Each FTSC is to **dispose of 41-42 cases per quarter** and **at least 165 cases annually**.
 - ⊕ Each court to have 1 Judicial Officer and 7 Staff Members.
- **Duration:** **Until 2026** with a financial outlay of **₹1952.23 crore** under the **Nirbhaya Fund**.
- **Funding Pattern**
 - ⊕ **60% (Centre)** and **40%** for States and UTs with Legislature.
 - ⊕ In case of Northeastern and hilly States/ UTs, share of Centre is 90%.

Need for FTSC

- **Limited Judicial Resources:** Leads to the pendency of rape and POCSO Act cases.
- **Create Deterrence:** Timely disposal of cases would create deterrence on future occurrences.
- **Aligns with Legislative Framework:** The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and POCSO Act prescribe strict timelines for the completion of investigation and trial.



Seabed Warfare emerges as a critical domain of modern Geotech conflict

This warfare threatens the **security of global connectivity** and could reshape the **geopolitical landscape**.

About Seabed Warfare

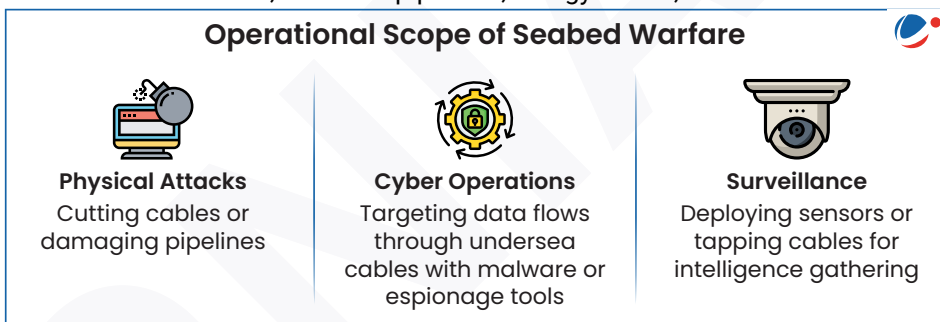
- It encompasses **military operations conducted on, from, or targeting the ocean floor**, focusing on critical undersea infrastructure.
- Tools used:** Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs), Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), Submersibles, etc.

Reasons for the Rise

- Increased Reliance on undersea infrastructure:** Like communication cables, energy pipelines, etc.
- Advancement of deep-sea technology:** It has enhanced the scope of **seabed warfare** from cable-cutting and censorship to sophisticated operations like surveillance, reconnaissance, and cyber warfare.
- Potential of Ocean Economy:** As per **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, it has the potential to reach **\$3,000 billion by 2030**.
 - Several activities like **oil and gas exploration**, submarine cables for **fibre optic communication** etc., hold immense future potential.

Need for Building Seabed Warfare Capability

- Increased geopolitical interests:** **French Navy** unveiled its strategic **seabed warfare doctrine** in 2022 with other countries like USA, UK, China, etc., showing similar interest.
- Security of Indo-Pacific:** Region is home to **critical** undersea cables, essential pipelines, energy routes, etc.
 - Growing **China's influence** in the region has raised concerns for its security.
- Rising Tensions:** Evident in the form of recent incidents like explosions on **Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines (2022)**; sabotage incidents against undersea cables in the **Baltic Sea (2023, 2024)**, etc.
- Building Seabed Surveillance:** To **track submarine movements** laying the foundation for modern naval strategy.



Expand PLI scheme to labour-intensive sectors: Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce

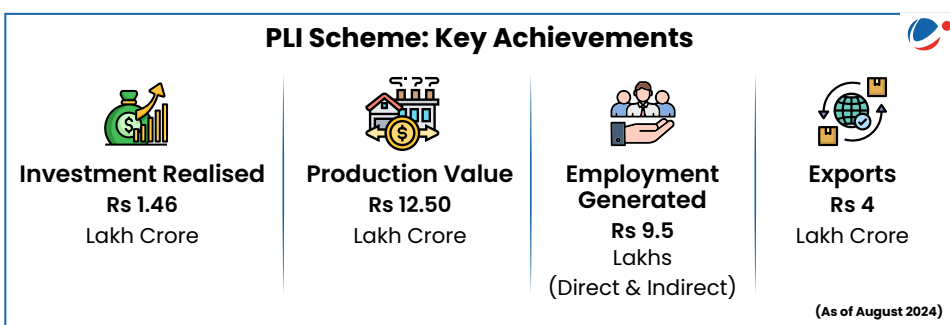
The committee, noting the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme's success in boosting India's manufacturing and exports**, has recommended extending it to labor-intensive sectors like **chemicals, leather, apparel, and handicrafts**.

About PLI Scheme

- Launched:** in 2020, with an outlay of **₹1.97 trillion**.
 - It is aligned with **Make in India** initiative which aims to transforming India into a Global Manufacturing Hub.
- Objective:** To strengthen the **manufacturing backbone**, **reduce reliance on imports**, and **balance growth with sustainability**.
- Sectors Covered:** It covers 14 sectors such as Mobile Manufacturing and Specified Electronic Components, Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery, white goods, etc.
- Incentives:** Extend an incentive of 4% to 6% to eligible companies on incremental sales.
 - Both Domestic and foreign companies registered in India are eligible for incentives.
- Approach:** Follows a **performance-driven approach** that not only **attracts investments from domestic and global players** but also **encourages businesses to embrace cutting-edge technologies** and achieve economies of scale.

Relevance/Need of PLI Scheme

- Boost Manufacturing:** Paving the way to **raise the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25% by 2025** from 17%.
- Supporting Strategic Sectors:** E.g., India has achieved **60% import substitution in telecom products (2024)**.
- Other:** **Enhancing Export Competitiveness**, etc.



1st meeting of Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) under PMAY-U 2.0 Held

A total of over 3.52 lakh houses under Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) and Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) components of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0) was sanctioned.

About PMAY-U 2.0 (Housing for All Mission)

- **Objective:** Provides Central Assistance to eligible beneficiaries/households/ implementing agencies through States/Union Territories (UTs)/ Primary Lending Institutions (PLIs) to **construct, purchase or rent a house at an affordable cost.**
 - ⊕ Supports construction of houses with a **minimum of 30 square meter (sqm) carpet area** along with **basic civic amenities and social infrastructure.**
- **Duration:** 5 years (starting from 01.09.2024)
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) [Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS) component is implemented as a Central Sector Scheme.]
- **Implementation:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
- **Eligibility:** Families belonging to **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)/Low Income Group (LIG)/ Middle Income Group (MIG)** in urban areas, having **no pucca house.**
 - ⊕ **Preference** to Widows, single women, Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, Transgenders, persons from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, etc.



Significance of the scheme

- **Women Empowerment:** More than 2.67 lakh houses sanctioned for the women alone, including single women and widows.
- **Promoting inclusiveness:** Around 80k houses for **Scheduled Castes**, 15k for **Scheduled Tribes**, 90 houses for **transgenders** have been sanctioned.

4 Components of PMAY-U 2.0



Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC)
EWS beneficiary to construct house on own land.



Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)
EWS beneficiary to purchase/avail allotted houses in Apartment projects by public/private sector agencies.



Affordable Rental Housing (ARH)
Utilizes existing Government funded vacant houses or Construct, Operate and Maintain rental housing by Private/Public Entities.



Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS)
Max. Loan value Rs. 25 lakh, Max. House Value Rs. 35 lakh.

Also In News



Proof of origin

Ministry of Finance has notified the **Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Amendment Rules, 2025.** It amended 2020 Rules.

- Rules have been notified in accordance with the Customs Act, 1962.

About New Rule

- An importer will now be required to submit '**proof of origin**' as against '**certificate of origin**' to preferential rate of duty in terms of a trade agreement.
 - ⊕ It will help in certifying that goods in a shipment are wholly obtained, produced, manufactured, or processed in a particular country.
- **Benefits of Changes**
 - ⊕ Indian customs authorities now have greater flexibility to demand additional evidence beyond just a certificate.
 - ⊕ Tighten scrutiny on imports, particularly those from China that are routed through the ASEAN, Sri Lanka, UAE to evade higher tariffs and trade restrictions.



Tobacco

India's tobacco exports have doubled over the last 4 years.

Tobacco

- **India's Status:** **Second largest producer** (after China) as well as **second largest exporter** (after Brazil).
- **Major Producing States:** Gujarat (45% of total cultivated area, 30% production), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, UP and Bihar.
- **Favourable Conditions:**
 - ⊕ **Temperature:** Between 20° to 27°C is required.
 - ⊕ **Rainfall:** When grown as a rainfed crop then requires at least about 500 mm of well-distributed rainfall during the crop growing season. (Usually not grown in the area if rainfall exceeds 1200 mm).
 - ⊕ **Soil:** sandy or sandy loam soil. Cigarette-tobacco growing areas of Andhra Pradesh are an exception in that the crop is grown on heavy black soil.



Sahyog portal

Central and State governments are issuing orders to block online content through Sahyog portal.

About Sahyog portal

- **Mission:** To create an effective framework and ecosystem for the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of Cybercrime in the country.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
- It has been developed to **automate the process** of sending notices to intermediaries by the Appropriate Government or its agency under IT Act, 2000.
- It facilitates the **removal or disabling** of access to any information, data or communication link being used to commit an unlawful act.
- It brings together all **Authorized Agencies** of the country and all the intermediaries on one platform.



Ottawa Convention

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia plan to withdraw from the Ottawa convention owing to military threat from Russia.

About Ottawa Convention

- **Official Name:** Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of **Anti-Personnel Mines** and on their Destruction
- **Objective:** Puts obligations on State parties to **not use, develop, stockpile anti-personnel mines** under any circumstances.
 - ⊖ Further obligates them to **destroy such mines**.
- Adopted at **Oslo (1997)**, **signed at Ottawa**, opened for signature from 1997-1999, enforced in 1999.
- **Signatories:** 133, **India not a signatory**.
- **Depositary:** Secretary-General of the United Nations.



National Board of Accreditation

Madras high court granted an interim stay, restraining National Board of Accreditation (NBA) from publishing the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking** for 2025.

- NIRF aim to bring transparency and accountability to the higher education system by providing a **comprehensive and standardised framework** for ranking institutions.

About National Board of Accreditation

- **Genesis:** Established in the year **1994**, under Section 10 (u) of AICTE Act, 1987.
 - ⊖ In 2010, the NBA was made an autonomous institution.
- **Mandate:** To assess the qualitative competence of programs offered by Technical Institutions from Diploma to Post graduate level in Engineering & Technology, Management, etc.
 - ⊖ NBA accredits programs and **not the institutions**.



Muzhara Movement

Recently, the anniversary of the **Muzhara movement** was observed on **March 19**.

- Commemorated **annually** to observe the violent confrontation between Muzhara and the authorities.

About Muzhara Movement

- **Genesis:** Originated in the erstwhile **princely state of Patiala**, gaining momentum around **1930s**.
 - ⊖ Had roots in the **Praja Mandal movement** of 1920s.
- **Background:** **Tenant farmers** (Muzharas) of pre-Partition Punjab demanded **land ownership rights** from the **biswedari system** (rules regarding land tenancy).
 - ⊖ **Biswedari** (landlord) had share in the **land cultivated by the muzharas**, and further paid to British causing exploitation of the peasant.
- **Notable Leaders:** Buta Singh, Kirpal Singh, etc.

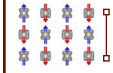


Raisina Dialogue 2025

The 10th edition of the **Raisina Dialogue** was recently held in **New Delhi**.

Raisina Dialogue 2025

- **Hosted by:** **Observer Research Foundation** with the **Ministry of External Affairs**, Government of India.
- **About:** India's annual flagship conference on **geopolitics and geo-economics**, committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the international community.
- **Participation:** Representatives from about 125 countries including Ministers, Heads of State and Governments, Academicians, Think Tanks, Youth, etc.
- **Theme (2025):** "**Kālachakra - People, Peace and Planet**".
 - ⊖ Discussions focussed on **six thematic pillars** like Green Trilemma, Digital Planet, etc.



Altermagnetism

Researchers in **Sweden** have reported a new type of **magnetism**, called **altermagnetism**.

About Altermagnetism

- **Meaning:** It **combines the favorable properties** of ferromagnets and antiferromagnets in one material, setting them apart from **ferromagnets and antiferromagnets**.
 - ⊖ Conventional magnets like iron, nickel etc., rely on aligned spins to deliver the push-and-pull force, while antiferromagnets cancel these forces.
- Altermagnets embody **dual nature** with **zero net magnetization** (antiferromagnets) and **non-relativistic spin splitting** (ferromagnets).
- **Applications:** Increase **memory device operation speeds**, enhance the efficiency and performance of electronic systems, etc.

Place in News



Mongolia (Capital: Ulaanbaatar)

India and Mongolia have reaffirmed commitment to strengthen Strategic Partnership.

Political Features:

- It's a **landlocked country** located in north-central Asia.
- **Land Boundary:** Russia (north) and China (south).

Geographical features:

- **Landform:** It is largely a **plateau (80% area is steppes grasslands)**, with **Gobi Desert** in the south.
- **Major mountain chains:** Altai, Khangai & Khenti
- **Longest river:** Orkhon River (Orkhon Valley is a UNESCO World Heritage Site).



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI