

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) celebrated 62nd National Maritime Day

National Maritime Day commemorates the historic voyage of 'S.S. Loyalty', the first Indian-owned steamship, which sailed from Mumbai to London on April 5, 1919.

India's Maritime Sector

- India has 7,500-kilometre coastline, which anchors 12 major ports and over 200 minor ports, positioning it as the 16th largest maritime nation.
- India is third-largest in world in terms of ship recycling by tonnage.
- India's ranking in World Bank's International Shipment Logistics Performance Index (LPI) improved from 44 in 2018 to 22 in 2023.
- From 2014-15 to 2023-24, major ports boosted their cargo-handling capacity by 87%, with Paradip port becoming India's largest major port.

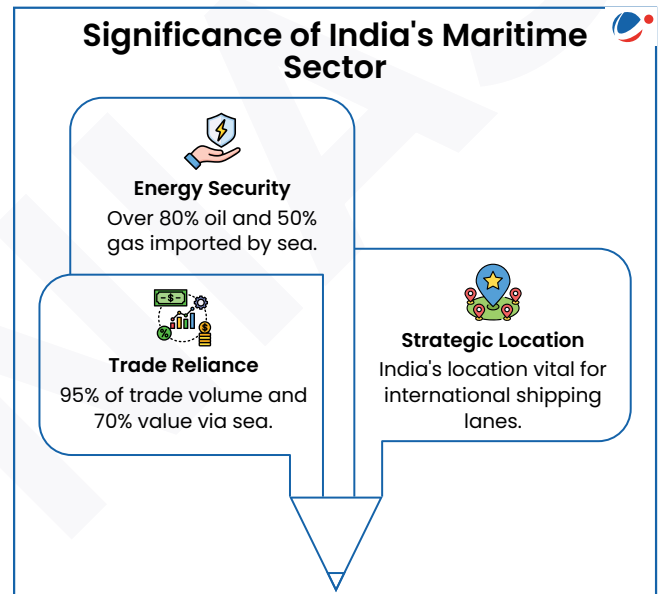
Challenges to Maritime Sector

- Inefficient Port Infrastructure:** Port connectivity, especially with inland transport, remains underdeveloped.
- Environmental Concerns:** Coastal ecosystem degradation and the environmental impact of large port projects pose sustainability challenges.
- Geopolitical Risks:** Changing geopolitical dynamics and threats from non-state actors such as attacks on commercial vessels.

Initiatives for boosting Maritime Sector

- Policies:** 100% FDI under the automatic route for port and harbour projects and 10-year tax holiday to enterprises engaged in port development.
- Infrastructure Development:** Approval for a major port at Vadhavan (Maharashtra) and outlining investment of US\$ 82 billion in port infrastructure by 2035.
- Schemes:** Sagarmala Programme, Maritime India Vision 2030, Green Tug Transition Programme etc.

Significance of India's Maritime Sector



UNHRC adopts resolution linking ocean protection and human right to a healthy environment

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has adopted a resolution recognising the critical connection between plastic pollution, ocean protection, and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for the very first time.

Key Highlights of the Resolution

- The protection of marine ecosystems is part of States' obligations to protect human rights.
- The degradation of the ocean threatens humanity and exacerbates inequalities and disproportionately affects marginalised populations.
- Despite over 600 agreements, marine ecosystems face pressing threats including climate change, overfishing, extractivism, pollution, and deep-sea mining.

Interlinkages between Human Rights and Ocean Protection

- Right to food:** Healthy oceans, through fisheries, provide high-quality protein and micronutrients to millions. E.g., coral reefs support 500 million people with food.
- Right to Livelihood:** Nearly 2.4 billion people live within 100 km of coasts, many depending on fisheries, tourism, and ecosystems like mangroves for income.
- Right to healthy environment:** Ocean regulates the Earth's climate, filters air and water, recycles nutrients and mitigates the impact of natural disasters.
- Rights of future generations:** Oceans as a carbon sink ensures stable climate for the future generations.

Constitutional and Legal Framework in India

- Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.
- M.C. Mehta v. Union of India Case (1986):** Supreme Court recognized the right to a healthy environment as part of Right to Life under Article 21.
- MK Ranjitsinh v Union of India Case (2024):** Supreme Court adopted a balanced approach between conservation of endangered species and the fight against climate change.

Supreme Court directive to stop deforestation activities in the Kancha Gachibowli

The Supreme Court directive came in the backdrop of **Telangana Government's plan to auction some 400 acres of forested land adjacent to the University of Hyderabad to build IT parks**, which led to massive student protests.

Significance of Urban Forest

- **Environmental:** Provides air and water purification, carbon sequestration, temperature regulation, and biodiversity conservation. E.g., Delhi Ridge acts as a green lung for the city.
- **Social:** Improves physical and mental health, reduce stress, boost activity, and enhance social cohesion.
- **Economic:** Increases property values, attract tourism, and support local businesses and development.
- **Climate Resilience:** Help adapt to climate change by reducing heat, flooding, improving air quality, and enhancing biodiversity.

Initiatives taken by government

- **Nagar Van Udyan Program:** To create 200 urban forests, involving local communities, schools, and organizations in their development and maintenance.
- **School Nursery Yojana (SNY):** To connect children with nature by involving them in growing saplings at school nurseries.
- **Miyawaki Forest Plantation:** To create dense, self-sustaining forests using native species, enhancing ecosystems and thriving in urban areas.
- **Greening Guidelines:** Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs requires cities to maintain a minimum of 12-18% green cover.

Threats to Urban Forest in India

<p>Rapid Urbanization and Infrastructure Development: e.g., Aarey Forest issue in Mumbai.</p>	<p>Pollution and Climate Change: Heat island, erratic rainfall and extreme heat/cold affect growth and regeneration of trees.</p>	<p>Invasive Species and biodiversity loss: Non-native species and monoculture disrupt ecosystems and outcompete natives.</p>	<p>Policy and Regulatory gaps: Existence of multiple agencies to manage urban greenery, absence of comprehensive urban forest policy, etc.</p>
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India and Sri Lanka signed 7 MoUs including first defence deal

Along with the signing of the MoUs, Prime Minister of India was also honoured with **Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana award, highest Sri Lankan honour for foreign leaders**.

Key Outcomes of the visit

- **Defence cooperation:** As an **umbrella agreement framework** to pursue ongoing defence sector cooperation in a more structured manner.
 - ⊕ Also, Sri Lankan President reaffirmed **no use of its territory against India**, addressing concerns over **China's regional influence**.
- **Energy cooperation:** **Grid connection** for power trade and **Trincomalee energy hub development** with UAE.
- **Other sectors:** Indian support to Sri Lanka in **digitisation, health, development of Eastern Province, etc.**, along with lowering the interest rates on loans.

Importance of Sri Lanka for India

- **Strategic and Geopolitical:** Sri Lanka is vital to India's '**MAHASAGAR Vision**' due to its proximity to key Indian Ocean shipping lanes.
 - ⊕ **MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions)** aims to strengthen ties with smaller states, enhancing maritime domain awareness and curbing illegal activities.
- **Economic:** India's **Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka (1998)** boosted **bilateral trade to USD 5.5 billion** (India's exports USD 4.1 billion) in 2023-24.
- **Culture:** Strong people to people ties **since Ashoka's time**. E.g., the sacred Bodhi tree at the **Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi temple** is believed to have grown from a sapling brought by **Sangamitta Maha Theri (Ashoka's daughter)** from India in the 3rd Century BCE.



Challenges in India-Sri Lanka Relations

- **Chinese Influence:** Through its Belt and Road Initiative, China is strategically encircling India. E.g., leasing of Hambantota Port for 99 years.
- **Tamil ethnic issue:** Slow reconciliation efforts, e.g., delay in implementation of 13th Amendment post Sri Lanka's Tamil-Sinhala conflict impact India's domestic politics.
- **International maritime boundary:** Issue of firing on Indian fishermen, issue of bottom trawling and dispute over Katchatheevu Island remain unresolved.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released “Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data”

Report offers a comprehensive overview of the gender landscape in India across key areas like population, education, health, economic participation, and decision-making.

Key Highlights from Report

- **Sex Ratio at Birth:** Between 2014-16 and 2018-20, sex ratio in urban areas (910) has surpassed that of rural areas (907), suggesting **increasing female migration towards urban areas**.
- **Health:** Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) declined from 122 in 2015-17 to 97 in 2018-20.
- **Education:** Literacy rates in India reached 84.7% for males and 70.3% for females in 2017 with Kerala having the smallest gender literacy gap, while Rajasthan having the highest.
- **Economic Participation:** Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LPFR) increased significantly from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24.
 - ⊕ **Financial Inclusion:** Women own 39.2% of all bank accounts and contribute to 39.7% of total deposits.
 - ⊕ **Leadership roles:** Women held 28.7% share in board of directors in FY25, up from 26.7% in FY20.
- **Political Participation:** **Female voter turnout** varied over the years, reaching 67.2% in 2019 but slightly declining to 65.8% in 2024.
- **Violence against Women:** Nearly one-third (31.9%) of married women aged 18-49 in India experience spousal violence, with the highest rates in Karnataka (48.4%), Bihar (42.5%) and Manipur (41.6%).



Also In News



Inter-Parliamentary Union

Indian Lok Sabha Speaker attended the **150th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Summit in Tashkent in Uzbekistan**.

About IPU

- **Genesis:** Began in 1889 as a small group of parliamentarians.
- **Mission:** Facilitate parliamentary diplomacy and empower parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy, and sustainable development worldwide.
- It includes **The Forum of Women Parliamentarians**, a unique entity that has for 40 years provided women Members of Parliament a global platform to input into international decision-making.
- **Membership:** 182 member countries with Belize becoming latest member and 15 associate members.
 - ⊕ India is a member country.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.



INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING

India secured an uncontested position in the United Nations Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR) for 2025–2027 term.

About ISAR

- ISAR is a Standing Intergovernmental Working Group dedicated to assisting member States to **improve quality and international comparability of financial reporting and non-financial disclosure**, such as **environmental issues, corporate governance, and corporate social responsibility**.
- It holds its annual sessions in **Geneva to address emerging issues in enterprise accounting and reporting**.
- **Membership:** ISAR allows for 34 formal members to serve three-year terms.
 - ⊕ These members include **nine African, seven Asian, six Latin American, three Eastern European, and nine Western European and Other States**.



Professional Tax

Food and grocery delivery firm Swiggy has received Rs 7.6-crore notice from Pune professional tax department.

About Professional Tax

- Professional tax is **levied by the state government under Article 276 of the Constitution of India**, which grants them the power to impose a tax on professions, trades and employment.
- It is **levied on income** earned by employees, professionals, traders and individuals.
- Professional tax is **deductible under the Income Tax Act of 1961**.



Great Indian Bustard

4 Great Indian Bustard chicks hatched in a week at the Sudasari Centre (Rajasthan), marking a key milestone in the **species' recovery under the Bustard Recovery Program**.

About Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)

Key Characteristics

- ⊕ **Habitat:** Endemic to the Indian Subcontinent, mainly found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, with small populations in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
- ⊕ **Diet:** Omnivorous, feeding on grass seeds, insects (grasshoppers, beetles), and occasionally small rodents and reptiles.

Conservation Status

- ⊕ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- ⊕ **IUCN:** Critically Endangered
- ⊕ **CITES:** Appendix I
- ⊕ Identified as one of the species for **recovery programme under Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats**.



Kannadippaya Tribal Craft

Kannadippaya has become the **first tribal handicraft from Kerala** to receive the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**.

About Kannadippaya

- It is a beautifully woven mat, also known as "mirror mat" due to its unique reflective pattern.
- Made from the soft inner layers of **reed bamboo**, the mat stands out for its unique properties — **providing warmth during winter and cooling effect in summer**.



Rare Earth Elements

Kazakhstan discovered its **largest deposit of rare earth elements in Central Kazakhstan's Karaganda region**.

About Rare Earth Elements (REE)

- REEs are a set of 17 elements including **15 lanthanides plus scandium and yttrium**.
- Elemental forms of rare earths are **iron grey to silvery lustrous metals** that are typically soft, malleable, and ductile and usually reactive.
- **Application:** Electronic and communication equipments, Electric and hybrid vehicles, Flat-screen monitors and Televisions and Defense applications.
- REE resources in India are reported to be the **fifth largest in the world but are tied with radioactivity making the extraction long, complex, and expensive**.



Pamban Bridge

Recently, Prime Minister of India inaugurated the new **Pamban Bridge in Tamil Nadu**, marking the opening of **India's first vertical lift railway sea bridge**.

- **Vertical Lift Bridge** is a **type of movable bridge** in which a **span rises vertically while remaining parallel with the deck**.

About the New Bridge

- It replaces the original cantilever Bridge, built in 1914 and decommissioned in 2022, connecting **Rameswaram Island to mainland India**.
- Designed by **Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL)**, it has a **72.5-meter navigational span** that can be raised up to **17 meters** to allow larger ships to pass.



Dokra Art

During his recent visit to Thailand, the Indian Prime Minister gifted a **Dokra Brass Peacock Boat** to the Thai Prime Minister.

- The sculpture features a **peacock-shaped boat**, adorned with intricate patterns and colorful lacquer inlays.

About Dokra Art

- Dokra (or Dhokra) art is an **ancient form of metal casting craft** with **lost wax technique**, tracing its roots back to the **Indus Valley Civilization**.
- Deriving its name from the **Dhokra Damar tribes**, it is also practiced by the **Gadwas, Gonds and Dhurwas tribes** of eastern Indian states of **Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand**.
- Each piece is **one-of-a-kind** due to the **single-use mold process**.

Place in News



Lesotho (Capital: Maseru)

Lesotho is at the center of an international trade dispute after the US imposed a 50% tariff on its imports, the highest rate for any country.

Political Features

- It is a **small, mountainous, landlocked country** surrounded by its much larger neighbor, South Africa.
- Also known as the **Mountain Kingdom**.

Geographical Feature

- **Climate:** Due to its altitude of 3,096 meters, it is colder than expected for its latitude of 30°S. It is also influenced by both the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, resulting in temperature variations.
- **Mountain:** Drakensberg and Maloti ranges
- **Rivers:** The Orange River, one of southern Africa's largest rivers, originates in the Lesotho Highlands.
- **UNESCO Site:** The **Maloti-Drakensberg Park** is a **transnational property** composed of the UKhahlamba Drakensberg National Park in South Africa and the Sehlathebe National Park in Lesotho.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI