

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) initiative has saved 3.48 lakh crore rupees till 2024

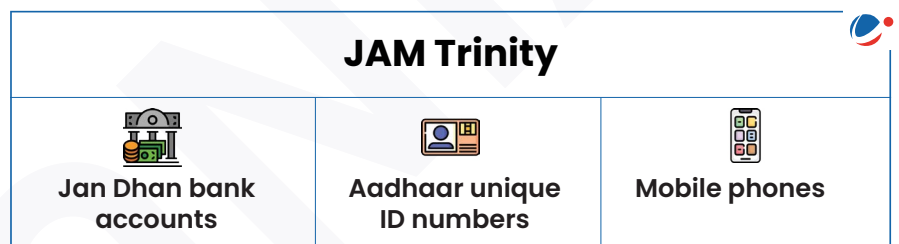
This has been revealed by the policy paper titled a Quantitative Assessment of India's DBT System.

Other Key findings

- **Increased coverage:** Coverage of beneficiaries has increased by **16 times** improving welfare delivery.
- **Welfare Efficiency Gains:** Welfare Efficiency Index (WEI) rose from **0.32 (2014)** to **0.91 (2023)**.
 - ⊕ WEI assess the impact of the DBT system, it is driven by **DBT Savings (50% weight)**, **Subsidy Reduction (30% weight)** and **Beneficiary Growth (20% weight)**.
- **Subsidy share in total expenditure reduced:** 16% in pre-2013 to 9% in 2023–24.
 - ⊕ E.g. ₹1.85 lakh crore saved in food subsidies via Aadhaar-linked PDS.

About DBT Initiative

- **Genesis:** Initiated in 2013.
- **Aim:** Reforming Government delivery system by **re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes** and ensure **accurate targeting of the beneficiaries**, de-duplication and reduction of fraud.
- **Implementation:** Initially under the Planning Commission but now placed under **Cabinet Secretariat**.
- **Key Features:**
 - ⊕ **Aadhaar** is not mandatory in DBT schemes but it is preferred.
 - ⊕ DBT key enabler is **JAM trinity (refer to image)**.
 - ⊕ **Electronic Payment Framework** is applicable on all Central Sector (CS)/ Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and for all schemes.



Electronic surveillance system will cover Entire Pakistan Border in four years: Home Minister

It will help to counter **cross-border infiltration and smuggling of narcotics and fake currency from Pakistan**.

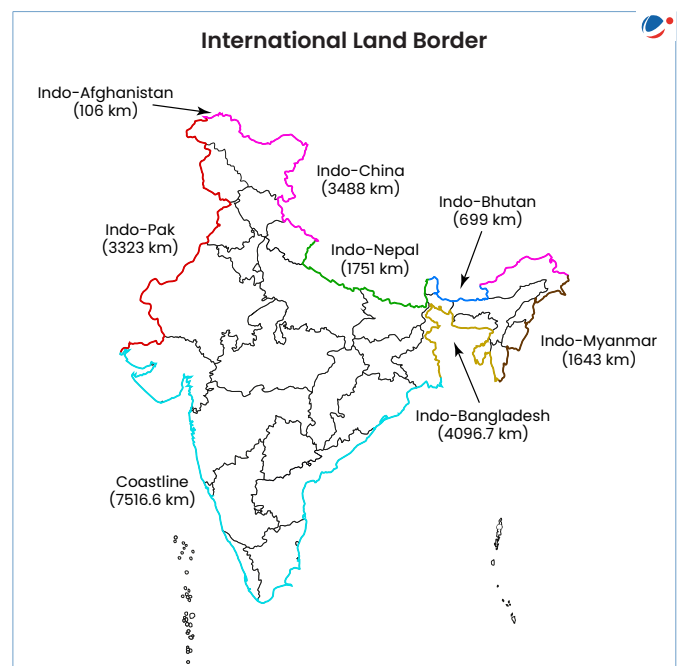
- The length of the border with different countries is given in the infographics.

Key surveillance technologies being deployed by India

- **Laser Walls and Laser Fencing:** These systems use infrared and **laser beam intrusion detection** to cover gaps where physical fencing is difficult.
- **Electronic Surveillance Systems:** India is developing **two models** which will integrate **sensors, networks, intelligence, and command-control solutions** to detect infiltrators and tunnels.
- **Layered security system:** Includes the **three-tier fencing**, flood lighting sensors, thermal imagers and manual patrolling.
- **Others:** Use of **drones** and **tunnel detection** technology along with **Long Range Reconnaissance and Observation Systems (LORROS)** for real-time video imagery, etc.

Initiatives taken by India for border security

- **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS), 2016:** To **improve situational awareness through technology and intelligence integration** along the India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh borders.
- **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme:** A **Central Sector Scheme** that aims to implement **border infrastructure projects** such as Border Fence, Border Floodlights, etc.
- **Others:** Developing **strategic roads** under the **Bharatmala Pariyojana**, **Vibrant Villages Programme** for supporting border population, etc.



Cruise operations formally commenced from the Mumbai International Cruise Terminal (MICT)

MICT is India's largest world class cruise terminal.

- It has been developed as a part of the **Cruise Bharat Mission**.

About Cruise Bharat Mission (2024)

- Aim:** To excel in India's vision to become a global hub for cruise tourism and promote the country as the leading global cruise destination.
 - It also aims to double cruise passenger traffic within five years; i.e. by 2029.
 - Double volume of cruise calls from 254 in 2024 to 500 by 2030.
- Implementation:** The mission will be implemented in 3 phases from 2024 to 2029.
- Three key cruise segments:**
 - Ocean & Harbour Cruise segment
 - River & Inland Cruise segment
 - Island Cruise segment

Factors Facilitating Cruise Tourism in India



12 Major and 200 Minor Ports along the 7500 km long coastline



Network of more than 20000 kilometres long navigable 110 waterways



Presence of 1300 islands along the coastline or Rivers

Other Initiatives to Boost Cruise Tourism

- Maritime India Vision 2030:** Aims to make India a significant player in the global cruise market.
- River Cruise Tourism:** Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is playing key role in promoting it.
 - Cruises plying along a broad stretch of the river Ganga, Brahmaputra and houseboats floating in the backwaters of Alappuzha in Kerala. E.g. MV Ganga Vilas, the world's longest river cruise, launched in 2023

World's first particulate Emission Trading Market in Gujarat cut pollutants by 20-30 %

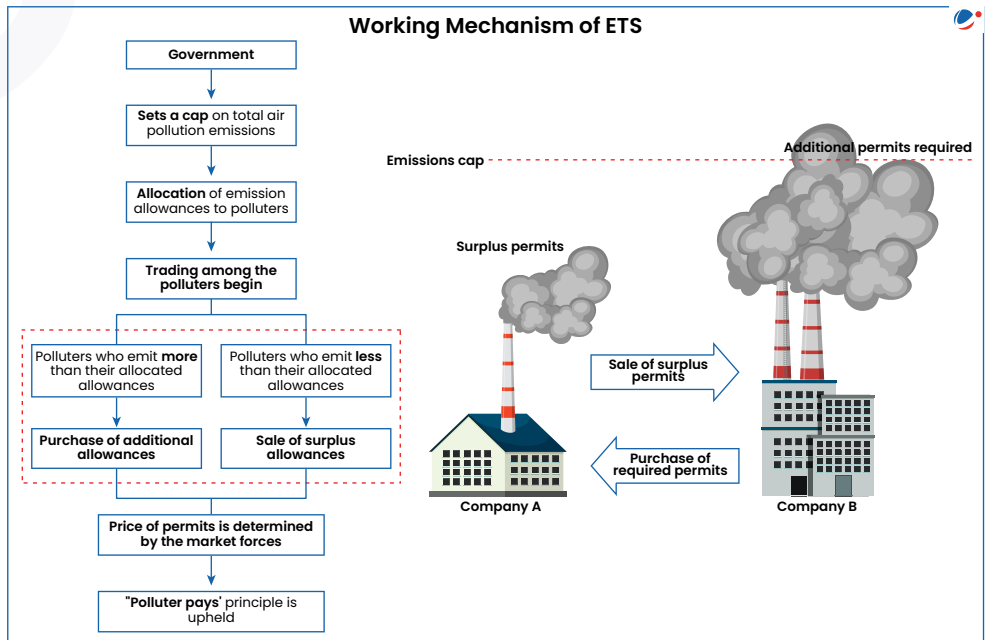
A new study has revealed that the **Surat Emission Trading Scheme (ETS)** launched in 2019 has been successful in controlling particulate matter emissions.

- Pollution abatement costs** also dropped by over 10%, and compliance with environmental laws rose among participating plants.

About Surat ETS

- Overview:** It is the world's first-ever market for trading in particulate matter emissions.
 - It is also India's first pollution trading scheme of any kind.
 - The concept of ETS first originated in US, targeting sulfur dioxide (SO₂) pollution.
- Objective:** To curb air pollution in accordance with the **polluters pay principle**.
- Working Mechanism:** It is based on market-linked 'cap and trade' mechanism (Refer Image).
 - This approach has been used in Europe for greenhouse gases and in China for carbon emissions.
 - ETS uses **Continuous Emissions Monitoring Systems (CEMS)** devices for monitoring.
- Trading:** Industries trade permits on a platform developed by **NeML (National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange e-Markets)**.
- Participating units are also required to submit an '**Environmental Damage Compensation**' amount (rate varies according to size of industry).

Working Mechanism of ETS



Urban transformation in Asia and the Pacific report released by ESCAP

It states that Asia's megacities face an uncertain future.

➤ **Seven of the ten most populous cities in the world are in Asia**, with Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai and Dhaka topping the list.

Key findings of report

- **Skyrocketing temperatures:** Straining infrastructure and healthcare systems.
 - The "urban heat island effect", which causes cities to be hotter than surrounding rural areas, impacts especially for the elderly and poor.
- **Rapidly ageing populations:** By 2050, the number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific is projected to reach 1.3 billion – nearly double the figure in 2024.
- **Expanding informal settlements:** With housing prices soaring and wages stagnating, slums increase.

Recommendations

- **Enhance regional cooperation:** To share knowledge and best practices among cities and enable them to act as catalysts for regional leadership.
- **Adopt integrated national urban policies to bolster multilevel governance:** It will ensure that urban development aligns with national economic, social and environmental goals.
- **Development of subnational and local capacities:** To collect, interpret and utilize disaggregated data with a view to effectively localizing the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Innovative approach to urban financing:** Strengthening municipal own-source revenue collection, including through property tax reforms.
- **Bolster planning capabilities:** To address demographic changes, including population ageing, youth outmigration and international migration.

About Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- **About:** It is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.
- **Genesis:** As Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) in 1947 and renamed in 1976.
- **Aim:** To promote cooperation among its **53 member States (including India)** and **9 associate members** to find solutions to sustainable development challenges.
- **HQ:** Bangkok, Thailand.



Also In News



Arsenic Pollution

According to a study **Climate change could be resulting in higher levels of arsenic in rice**, potentially increasing lifetime cancer and health risks.

About Arsenic Pollution

- Arsenic is a natural component of the **earth's crust and is widely distributed throughout the environment** in the air, water and land.
- It is **highly toxic** in its inorganic form.
- Long-term exposure to **arsenic from drinking-water and food can cause cancer and skin lesions**.
- It has also been **associated with cardiovascular disease and diabetes**.
- **In utero and early childhood exposure has been linked to negative impacts** on cognitive development and increased deaths in young adults.



Liquidity coverage ratio (LCR)

The Reserve Bank of India has **come up with new guidelines regarding LCR**.

- RBI also said that **banks need to assign a lower run-off factor on retail deposits**.
 - ⊖ **Run-off factor** refers to the percentage of deposits that could be withdrawn by depositors in a stress scenario.

About Liquidity coverage ratio (LCR)

- It is the amount of **High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLAs)** that financial institutions must have on hand to ensure they can meet their **short-term obligations** in the event of market turmoil.
- The LCR is a result of **updates to the Basel Accords**, regulations created by the **Basel Committee on Banking Supervision**.
- High LCR decreases money supply by requiring banks to hold a **larger proportion of highly liquid assets**.



Salami Slicing

China is using South China Sea-Style “Salami Slicing” Tricks in the Yellow Sea to capture new territory.

About Salami Slicing

- The term was coined by Stalinist dictator **Mátyás Rákosi**.
- It is a **divide-and-conquer tactic** used to dominate opposition territory, piece by piece.
- **Advantage:** Operations are too small to result in a war, They leave a neighboring country confused about how it should respond and it helps in avoiding international diplomatic attention but gives benefits in the long term.
- Recently, the term has been **increasingly used to describe China's unilateral military actions** in India, Japan and countries in the South China Sea region.



Colossal squid

Recently, scientists have captured the **first-ever image of colossal squid** in the southern Atlantic Ocean.

About Colossal squid

- The first report of a **colossal squid** was in **1925**, when the head and arms were discovered in a sperm whale stomach.
- It is a massive deep-sea squid species **found in the Antarctic waters**, primarily **south of 40°S**, living at depths **usually greater than 1,000 meters**.
- They can reach from **7 to 14 metres in length** and weigh as much as **500 kilograms**.



Snow Update Report

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) released the **Snow Update Report**.

Key Findings

- The **Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH)** region experienced its third consecutive below-normal snow year in 2025.
- **Ganga basin recorded lowest snow persistence in last 23 years.**
 - ⊕ Snow persistence measures **the fraction of time snow remains on the ground after snowfall**.
- **Snow persistence** of Indus and Brahmaputra Basin also declined.



Safeguard Duty

The Government of India imposed **12% safeguard duty** on certain steel products.

About Safeguard Duty

- It is a form of safeguard measure available to **World Trade Organization (WTO) Member countries**.
- They are imposed to provide a level-playing field to domestic players **against sudden and significant increase in imports** of a product.
- In principle, safeguard measures **cannot be targeted at a particular country**.
 - ⊕ However, **under exceptional circumstances** where the imports increase **disproportionately**, individual country quotas can be applied.
- A safeguard measure **should not last more than four years**, although this **can be extended up to eight years**, subject to national authorities.



Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

Recently, the Khadi and Village Industries recorded its highest ever turnout of Rs. 1 lakh 70 thousand crore.

- KVIC played key role in it.

About Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- It is a statutory body established under the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- **Objective:** To promote rural development through the production and promotion of khadi (hand-spun, hand-woven cloth) and village industries, along with employment generation.
- **Key Initiatives:** Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, etc.



Poshan Tracker

PoshanTracker Application receives the **Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2024**.

About Poshan Tracker

- It is a **mobile-based application for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, and under-weight prevalence among children and last-mile tracking** of nutrition service delivery.
- **Poshan Calculator:** Interactive calculator **designed to measure growth of the child based on standards defined by World Health Organization (WHO)** and suggest appropriate **corrective action based on inputs**.



Fiscal Slippage

The government's debt is being managed well and will not lead to fiscal slippage, the **Union Finance Minister** stated recently.

About Fiscal Slippage

- A situation where a government's actual **fiscal performance deviates from its planned or targeted fiscal targets**, usually resulting in higher-than-expected budget deficits, increased public debt, or a combination of both.
- It can be **due to reasons such as** farm loan waivers, cut back on GST collection, reduction in VAT and excise due to lessen the impact of rising Brent crude oil price.



Nano-sulphur

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) scientists claim that its **nano sulphur** gives yield enhancement similar to **DMH-11** using conventional mustard varieties.

- DMH-11 is the genetically-modified mustard.

About TERI's Nano-sulphur

- It is a **completely green product** that uses biological agents like plant promoting bacteria that secrete enzymes and metabolites.
 - ⊕ This makes it different from other **nano-fertilizers** such as nano urea and nano diammonium phosphate.
- Nano-sulfur has **antibacterial and insecticidal** properties.
- **Benefits:** Acts as a plant growth promoter, enhancing plant stress resistance, and improving the nutritional quality of plants, etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI