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1. ISRO Launches EOS-05: India's Advanced Geostationary Imaging Satellite

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the 2,367 kg Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-05) aboard the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F17) from Sriharikota.

- EOS-05 is India's first dedicated imaging satellite to be placed in a geosynchronous orbit (approx. 36,000 km altitude), earning it the moniker "eye in the sky" for its continuous monitoring capabilities.
- The satellite was precisely injected into a Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (Sub-GTO), from where its onboard propulsion system will raise it to its final operational geostationary orbit.
- Carrying advanced payloads capable of visible, infrared, multispectral, and hyperspectral imaging, EOS-05 provides high-frequency coverage with revisit times as short as 5 minutes for targeted areas.
- The mission provides crucial real-time imagery to support agriculture, disaster management, environmental monitoring, and national strategic activities.
- Marking the 19th flight of the GSLV and the 107th launch from Sriharikota, this success restores confidence in the GSLV program following the earlier loss of EOS-03 (GSLV-F10).

Essential Definitions

- **Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO):** A high-Earth orbit located at roughly 36,000 km altitude where a satellite's orbital period matches the Earth's rotational period, keeping it fixed relative to a specific region.
- **Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (Sub-GTO):** An elliptical intermediate orbit with a lower apogee than standard GTO, conserving launcher propellant by requiring the satellite's onboard engines to complete the orbit-raising maneuvers.
- **Hyperspectral Imaging:** An advanced remote sensing technique that captures image data across hundreds of narrow, continuous electromagnetic bands to precisely identify ground materials and vegetation health.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Indian Space Policy 2023:** Encourages the integration of advanced space assets for national security, disaster mitigation, socio-economic growth, and non-governmental space entity participation.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the statutory basis for integrating real-time satellite imagery into early warning, risk reduction, and disaster response operations under NDMA and SDMAs.
- **Article 51A(h) of the Indian Constitution:** Fundamental Duty to develop scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform through technological advancement.

Conclusion The deployment of EOS-05 via GSLV-F17 establishes a vital capability for real-time monitoring of the Indian landmass. By shifting Earth observation from periodic orbital passes to continuous monitoring, ISRO strengthens national disaster preparedness, agricultural management, and strategic situational awareness.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Awareness in the fields of Space, IT, and Remote Sensing; Disaster Management and risk mitigation; Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

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- **Prelims Focus:** Difference between LEO, GTO, and Sub-GTO orbits; GSLV three-stage architecture (including CUS cryogenic stage); functions of Hyperspectral vs Multispectral sensors.

2. Degradation of Shri Guru Gorakhnath Community Reserve Threatens Rare Freshwater Turtles

Key Highlights & Summary

- Untreated sewage discharge and administrative neglect have severe environmental degradation in the Shri Guru Gorakhnath Community Reserve at Kajalheri village in Haryana's Fatehabad district, endangering local freshwater turtle populations.
- Notified by the Haryana government in 2019, the community reserve hosts an estimated 150-200 rare turtles, including the Indian softshell turtle, red-crowned roofed turtle, and Indian peacock softshell turtle.
- The heavy chemical and sewage pollution in the pond water is causing severe health pathologies among softshell turtles, including skin lesions, fungal infections, and blindness.
- Contamination is driving turtles to migrate across roads and agricultural fields toward the nearby Kishangarh canal, exposing them to vehicular crushed hazards, feral dog predation, and nest trampling by cattle.
- Wildlife activists have demanded criminal registration under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 against official authorities for deliberate non-compliance and diversion of allocated conservation funds.
- Proposed mitigation measures include diverting untreated sewage, constructing boundary fencing, building raised nesting mounds, and excavating a dedicated waste diversion pond.

Essential Definitions

- **Community Reserve:** A protected area category under Indian wildlife law declared on private or community land where local communities voluntarily conserve fauna, flora, and traditional values.
- **Softshell Turtle:** Freshwater reptiles belonging to the family Trionychidae, characterized by a soft, leathery carapace rather than a hard bony shell, making them highly vulnerable to aquatic toxins and skin infections.
- **Bio-accumulation:** The process by which toxic pollutants, heavy metals, and chemical effluents accumulate inside an organism's body faster than they can be metabolized or excreted.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Section 36C):** Provides the statutory mandate for State Governments to declare community reserves and grants Schedule I species statutory protection on par with tigers and rhinoceroses.

- **Article 48A of the Indian Constitution:** Directive Principle of State Policy obligating the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution:** Fundamental Duty of every Indian citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.
- **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974:** Prohibits the disposal of untreated poisonous, noxious, or polluting matter into streams, ponds, or land.

Conclusion The anthropogenic crisis at the Kajalheri Community Reserve highlights institutional gaps between protected area notification and ground enforcement. Safeguarding fragile aquatic habitats demands strict anti-pollution enforcement, timely execution of site-specific management plans, and institutionalized community-led conservation frameworks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment, Wildlife Protection Frameworks.
- **Prelims Focus:** Conservation status (Indian Softshell: Endangered, Red-crowned Roofed: Critically Endangered), Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 schedules, governance structure of Community Reserve Management Committees.

3. Inter-State River Water Dispute: Impasse Over Krishna Water Sharing

Key Highlights & Summary

- A high-level three-member committee meeting of the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) failed to resolve the inter-state dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana regarding water-sharing proportions for the 2026-27 water year.

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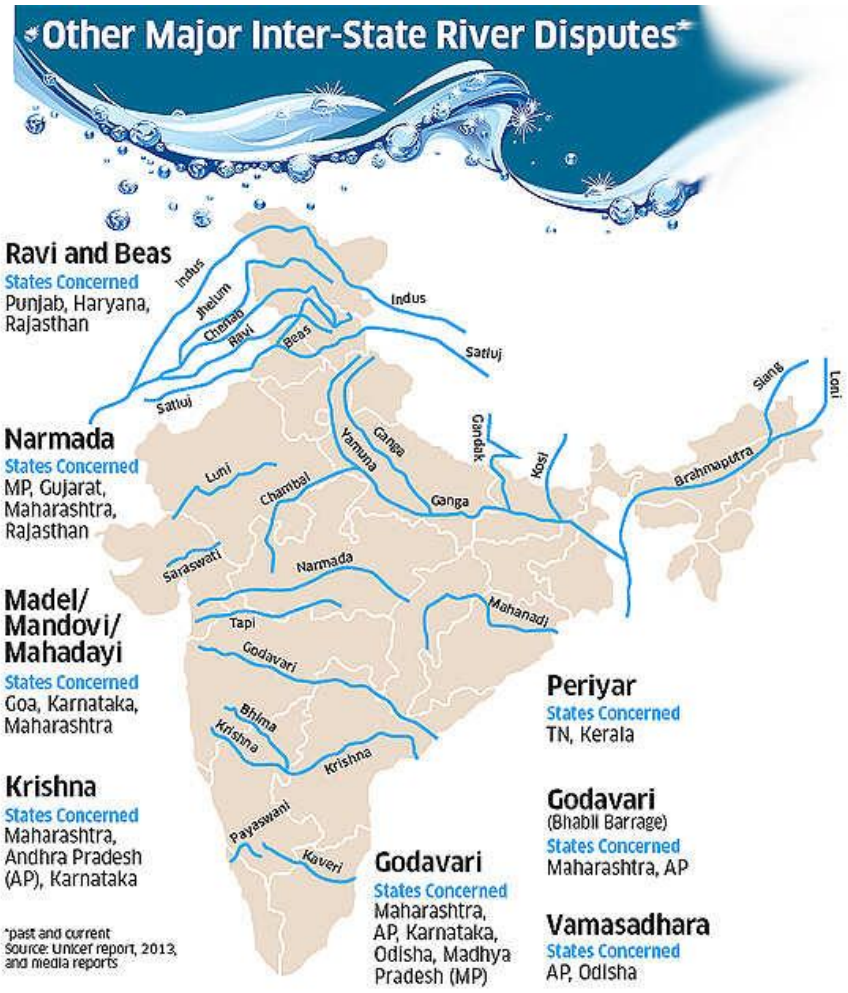
- Andhra Pradesh demanded the continuation of the temporary 66:34 ad-hoc sharing arrangement established in 2015-16, whereas Telangana insisted on an equal 50:50 distribution formula.
- Severe El Niño-induced drought conditions and depleted reservoir inflows have heightened water stress across the basin, limiting usage strictly to meet critical drinking water needs.
- Mutual allegations of unauthorized drawls persisted, with Telangana accusing Andhra Pradesh of diverting excess water through the Pothireddypadu project, while Andhra Pradesh objected to Telangana's unapproved hydel power generation at Common Storage Facilities.



- Both states submitted emergency requests for 47 TMC ft of water each to fulfill regional drinking water demands through October 2026.
- KRMB plans to convene a full-fledged board meeting involving state irrigation secretaries and the Apex Council to resolve the ongoing impasse.

Essential Definitions

- **Krishna River Management Board (KRMB):** An autonomous statutory body established under the Ministry of Jal Shakti to regulate, operationalize, and manage water distribution across the Krishna basin in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Ad-Hoc Sharing Ratio:** A temporary, non-binding water distribution arrangement adopted by riparian states pending final adjudication or formal notification by a river water tribunal.
- **Common Storage Facilities:** Multi-purpose headworks—primarily Srisailam and Nagarjunasagar dams—jointly utilized by riparian states for irrigation, drinking water, and hydroelectricity generation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262 of the Indian Constitution:** Empowers Parliament to enact laws for the adjudication of disputes or complaints relating to the use, distribution, or control of waters in inter-state rivers or river valleys.

- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262 to set up ad-hoc tribunals (such as KWDT) for binding adjudication of inter-state river disputes.
- **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 (Section 85 & Section 84):** Statutory framework providing for the constitution of KRMB and an Apex Council (comprising Union Minister of Jal Shakti and Chief Ministers of both states) to oversee river water management.

Conclusion The recurrent stalemate at the KRMB reflects the vulnerability of ad-hoc administrative arrangements during hydro-climatic stresses like El Niño. Achieving long-term regional water security demands permanent tribunal adjudication, institutionalized real-time telemetry monitoring, and strict compliance with Apex Council mandates.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure; Inter-State Water Disputes.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Water Resources; Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation.
- **Prelims Focus:** Article 262, Inter-State River Water Disputes Act 1956, Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014 (KRMB and Apex Council), and geography of the Krishna River basin (Srisailam, Nagarjunasagar dams, and major tributaries like Tungabhadra and Musi).

4. Indian Researchers Map Colonial Spider Venom: Anti-Cancer and Therapeutic Potential

Key Highlights & Summary

- A multidisciplinary team of Indian researchers, led by A.P. Ajay Kumar from Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi, Kerala, has created the first comprehensive molecular and functional profile of the venom gland of *Stegodyphus sarasinorum*.
- The findings, published in Springer Nature's peer-reviewed journal *Scientific Reports*, identified bioactive compounds with promising anti-cancer, antimicrobial, and immune-modulating properties.
- Using integrated multi-omics techniques—including transcriptomics, proteomics, and UHPLC-MS—the team mapped 31 transcriptomic protein components, 32 proteomic proteins, and 81 distinct metabolites within the venom gland.
- In vitro laboratory trials demonstrated that venom gland extracts exhibit dose-dependent cytotoxicity against Dalton's Lymphoma Ascites (DLA) cancer cells, destroying a higher percentage of malignant cells at higher concentrations.

- Key bioactive molecules discovered include hemocyanin proteins (vital for potential cancer immunotherapy) and U12/U20 lycotoxins (peptides that disrupt cell membranes of pathogens and cancer cells).
- *Stegodyphus sarasinorum* is an Indian cooperative spider species that lives in permanent social colonies, constructs communal silk nests, and hunts cooperatively, making it an exceptional model for bio-prospecting research.

Essential Definitions

- **Dose-Dependent Cytotoxic Activity:** The biological capacity of a chemical compound or extract to destroy living cells in direct proportion to its concentration.
- **Multi-Omics Profiling:** An integrated analytical approach combining transcriptomics (RNA analysis), proteomics (protein identification), and metabolomics (small molecule identification) to decode complex biological systems.
- **Lycotoxins (U12/U20):** Pore-forming antimicrobial peptides capable of permeabilizing lipid bilayer membranes in pathogenic bacteria and cancer cells.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (Sections 3, 4, and 6):** Governs access to biological resources, requiring National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) approval for commercial utilization and bio-prospecting to ensure equitable benefit-sharing.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 & Rules, 1945:** Regulates clinical evaluation, safety testing, and official licensing protocols mandatory before any laboratory bio-molecule transitions to preclinical or human clinical trials.
- **Article 51A(h) of the Indian Constitution:** Prescribes the Fundamental Duty of every citizen to develop a scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform through innovative indigenous research.

Conclusion The identification of targeted cytotoxic peptides in *Stegodyphus sarasinorum* venom underscores the vast, untapped biopharmaceutical potential of India's indigenous fauna. While these preliminary results demonstrate effective in vitro anti-cancer action, rigorous validation, animal toxicity profiling, and clinical trials remain essential prerequisites prior to medical translation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Developments and applications of Science and Technology in daily life; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; Biotechnology, Bio-prospecting, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).
- **Prelims Focus:** Multi-omics techniques (transcriptomics vs proteomics vs metabolomics), social behavior of *Stegodyphus sarasinorum*, functions of hemocyanins and lycotoxins, and provisions of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

5. Shifting Paradigms in West Asia: Transitioning from Multi-Alignment to Hard Security Partnerships

Key Highlights & Summary

- India's legacy West Asia policy—defined by "multi-alignment," transactional commerce, and strategic hedging across regional power centres—is facing rapid obsolescence amid a structural shift in regional security dynamics.
- The gradual retreat of the United States into selective engagement has created a significant security vacuum across major maritime choke points and trade corridors.
- The signing of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan signals a new collective defence architecture that merges Gulf financial capital, Turkish defence technology, and Pakistani military manpower.
- Regional infrastructure remains highly vulnerable to low-cost drone warfare, grey-zone tactics, and maritime disruptions across chokepoints such as the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz.
- Regional powers increasingly prioritize tangible hard-power security guarantees—including naval patrols, joint military exercises, and defence technology partnerships—over routine diplomatic engagements.

- India must pivot from being a passive beneficiary of regional stability to an active net security provider in the Western Indian Ocean to protect its energy lines, trade routes, and diaspora.

Essential Definitions

- **Multi-Alignment Policy:** A pragmatic diplomatic strategy where a nation maintains balanced, independent, and non-binding relationships with competing geopolitical power centres without committing to formal security alliances.
- **Net Security Provider:** A nation capable of projecting credible military and operational presence to stabilize its maritime domain, protect international sea lanes, and deliver disaster relief or counter-terrorism support to regional allies.
- **Grey-Zone Warfare:** Strategic activities conducted by state or non-state actors that fall between traditional peace and formal warfare, relying on asymmetric tools such as drone strikes, cyberattacks, and maritime blockades.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, foster respect for international law, and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982:** Codifies international maritime law, guaranteeing freedoms of navigation and innocent passage through strategic straits like Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb.

- **Bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreements:** The statutory and institutional frameworks enabling joint naval exercises, intelligence sharing, logistics support, and military training between India and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states.

Conclusion As regional security architectures coalesce around external alliances, relying solely on commercial trade and diaspora diplomacy is no longer sufficient to protect Indian national interests. New Delhi must leverage its growing naval capabilities and defence-industrial base to construct robust, hard-power security frameworks in West Asia.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests and Indian diaspora.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border and maritime domains; Links of organized crime with terrorism; Defense technology indigenization.
- **Prelims Focus:** Geography of West Asian chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Gulf of Aden), trilateral defence arrangements in the Western Indian Ocean, and institutional mechanisms under UNCLOS.

6. Revising India's Model Bilateral Investment Treaty: Balancing Investor Protection and Democratic Accountability

Key Highlights & Summary

- Following Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Union Budget announcement, India is revising its 2015 Model Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) to address limitations that hampered new investment agreements over the past decade.
- The 2015 Model BIT tilted heavily toward the State's right to regulate, which heightened concerns among foreign capital exporters regarding legal protections, regulatory risks, and judicial delays in India.
- To restore balance, proposed legal reforms seek to enhance substantive protections for foreign investors, streamline international arbitration access, and improve investment facilitation.
- The treaty-making process faces criticism regarding "democratic deficit," as technocratic and executive negotiations often proceed without adequate parliamentary oversight or public participation.
- External consultation best practices—demonstrated by Norway, Colombia, and the Law Commission of India's 260th Report on the 2015 draft—underscore the need for transparent stakeholder engagement.
- A robust four-step revision framework requires engaging external domain experts, consulting industry bodies and civil society, releasing the draft text for public comments, and submitting it to Parliament and Standing Committees for scrutiny.

Essential Definitions

- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT):** A formal agreement between two sovereign states establishing terms and legal protections for private investments made by nationals and companies of one state in the jurisdiction of another.
- **State's Right to Regulate:** The recognized authority of a sovereign government to enact non-discriminatory measures and domestic policies for public welfare, health, environment, and economic stability without incurring international legal liabilities.
- **Democratic Deficit:** The structural lack of democratic accountability, transparency, and broad representative oversight within executive-led treaty negotiations and international policy-making frameworks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Indian Constitution:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters concerning which Parliament has power to make laws, giving the executive primary mandate over international treaty negotiations.
- **Article 253 of the Indian Constitution:** Vests exclusive authority in Parliament to enact legislation for implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention with foreign nations.
- **Law Commission of India (260th Report):** Formulated comprehensive recommendations on the draft 2015 Model BIT, establishing a precedent for institutional review of investment policy.

Conclusion Revising the Model BIT provides India an opportunity to attract long-term global capital while protecting legitimate state regulatory interests. Achieving a balanced outcome requires moving beyond internal executive deliberations to embed participatory democracy, institutional oversight, and public consultation into the treaty-making framework.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Important aspects of governance, transparency, and accountability; Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, and conduct of business.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to mobilization of resources; Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows; Bilateral and multilateral investment agreements.
- **Prelims Focus:** Article 253, Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms, Law Commission reports on BITs, and the core structural components of India's Model BIT framework.

7. SC-Appointed High-Powered Committee Proposes Ecosystem-Based Delineation for the Aravallis

Key Highlights & Summary

- A High-Powered Committee (HPC) constituted by the Supreme Court cautioned against releasing premature area estimates, stating that the Aravalli hills cannot be scientifically delineated using a single terrain-based elevation yardstick.
- In a compliance report submitted on August 31, the HPC requested a six-month extension until February 28, 2027, to formulate a transparent, reproducible, and scientifically defensible definition for the Aravalli range.
- The panel proposed an "Aravalli Ecosystem Landscape" framework that treats the region as an interconnected ecological entity rather than a fragmented collection of isolated hills.
- This holistic approach integrates core hill systems with recorded forests, protected areas, sacred sites ('Orans'), traditional pastures, wetlands, critical catchments, groundwater-recharge zones, and archaeologically significant sites.
- The review follows criticisms that an earlier October 2025 report—recommending a rigid 100-metre height threshold—suppressed Forest Survey of India (FSI) warnings that such a criteria would exclude nearly 90% of the Aravalli hills.

- Using high-resolution CartoDEM data, Copernicus 30-metre digital elevation models, and district resource maps, the HPC is conducting comparative feasibility assessments across sample districts including Alwar, Ajmer, and Udaipur, validated by the NRSC and ISRO.

Essential Definitions

- **Aravalli Ecosystem Landscape Framework:** An integrated conservation methodology that evaluates topographical, hydrological, biological, and socio-economic dimensions together to delineate protected mountain zones.
- **CartoDEM / Digital Elevation Model (DEM):** A high-resolution 3D digital representation of terrain surface topology created through satellite remote sensing data to analyze elevation, slopes, and landforms.
- **Orans:** Community-conserved sacred groves and traditional pastures in Rajasthan that play a critical role in local biodiversity preservation and groundwater recharge.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides powers to the Central Government to restrict industrial activities and mining in ecologically fragile zones like the Aravalli range via specific notifications.
- **Central Empowered Committee (CEC):** A statutory body set up under the Supreme Court's oversight to monitor compliance with environmental judicial mandates and forest conservation laws.
- **Article 48A of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates the State to protect and improve the natural environment, safeguarding the nation's forests, wildlife, and natural ecosystems.
- **Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution:** Fundamental Duty of citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.

Conclusion Transitioning from a rigid elevation-based threshold to a comprehensive ecosystem-landscape framework ensures that low-lying contiguous hills, recharge zones, and sacred forests receive necessary statutory protection. Scientific validation by remote sensing agencies like NRSC and ISRO is essential to prevent ecological degradation, combat desertification, and balance sustainable development across the Aravalli belt.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment; Role of GIS and Remote Sensing in Environmental Management.
- **Prelims Focus:** Geography of the Aravalli Range, Forest Survey of India (FSI), National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), CartoDEM, definition of sacred groves ('Orans'), and Central Empowered Committee (CEC) mandates.

8. Addressing Judicial Vacancies: SC Pushes to Raise Retirement Age in District Judiciary

Key Highlights & Summary

- A three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant directed seven consenting States—Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal—to amend service rules within two months to raise the retirement age of district judicial officers from 60 to 62 years.
- The decision seeks to curb the severe attrition of experienced judicial talent amidst a mounting backlog exceeding 5.18 crore pending cases across district courts in India.
- Non-consenting States and Union Territories have been directed to re-evaluate their positions within two weeks, as many state recruitment drives have repeatedly failed to fill sanctioned posts.
- The Supreme Court dismissed financial burden concerns raised by hesitant States, clarifying that retaining experienced judges postpones immediate post-retiral dues while maintaining judicial throughput.
- The apex court ruled that other civil service employees cannot claim parity with the judicial service, as judiciary constitutes an independent, specialized service.
- To prevent inefficient officers from benefiting, High Courts are introducing performance assessments and suitability riders at age 60 to filter out deadwood before granting extension.

Essential Definitions

- **Superannuation:** The statutory age at which a public servant or judicial officer is legally required to retire from official service.
- **Judicial Attrition:** The loss of experienced judges from the cadre due to retirement, resignation, or slow recruitment pipelines, aggravating case backlogs.

- **Access to Justice:** A fundamental constitutional guarantee ensuring that citizens have practical, timely, and effective institutional mechanisms to seek legal remedies.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 233 & Article 234 of the Indian Constitution:** Governs the appointment, posting, and recruitment of District Judges and members of the subordinate judicial service in consultation with State High Courts.
- **Article 235 of the Indian Constitution:** Vests the control over district courts and subordinate courts—including conditions of service, postings, and promotions—in the respective State High Court.
- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** Encompasses the fundamental Right to Speedy Trial and prompt access to justice as an integral component of the right to life and personal liberty.
- **All India Judges Association Case Mandates:** Landmark judicial directives establishing standardized pay scales, working conditions, and cadre management standards across the subordinate judiciary.

Conclusion Enhancing the retirement age to 62 years serves as an immediate structural measure to retain experienced judicial mind power and mitigate case pendency. Pairing this extension with strict performance evaluation by High Courts balances cadre efficiency with judicial integrity, ensuring the subordinate judiciary operates as an effective foundation of India's judicial system.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Issues arising out of judicial pendency, vacancies, and reform measures; Subordinate judiciary governance.
- **Prelims Focus:** Articles 233 to 235, Constitutional provisions governing District Judiciary vs High Court judge retirement ages, recommendations of All India Judges Association cases, and Justice Shetty Commission guidelines.

9. RBI Absorbs ₹6.02 Lakh Crore via VRRRs Amid Record Banking Liquidity

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) absorbed ₹6.02 lakh crore from the banking system using two 3-day Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auctions to manage an unprecedented surplus.
- Net banking system liquidity reached a record peak surplus of approximately ₹10.32 lakh crore as of September 3.
- The massive liquidity surge stems primarily from the RBI's special forex mobilization drive, which attracted $136.38 billion by August 31.
- Inflows were led by Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits worth $127.23 billion, along with overseas borrowings (ECBs and OFCBs).

- Dollar-to-Rupee forex swap operations by the RBI to build forex reserves released massive domestic rupee liquidity into commercial banks.
- Excessive surplus liquidity dragged money market rates below the policy Repo Rate, forcing the central bank to step up VRRR operations to align overnight interbank call money rates with its monetary policy stance.

Essential Definitions

- **Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR):** A monetary policy instrument used by the RBI to absorb temporary excess liquidity from commercial banks at market-determined variable interest rates.
- **FCNR(B) Deposit Scheme:** Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposits that allow Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to maintain term deposits in permitted foreign currencies, mitigating exchange rate risks for depositors.
- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** The primary framework used by the RBI to manage day-to-day banking system liquidity through Repo and Reverse Repo operations.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (Section 45ZB):** Empowers the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to set the policy repo rate and directs the RBI to operate the liquidity framework to maintain price stability.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Provides the statutory legal foundation for regulating foreign currency inflows, FCNR(B) accounts, and External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs).
- **Article 246 read with List I (Union List, Entry 36 & Entry 38):** Grants Parliament exclusive jurisdiction over currency, coinage, legal tender, foreign exchange, and banking regulation.

Conclusion While successful dollar-mobilization measures have bolstered India's foreign exchange reserves to historic highs, the resultant rupee liquidity overflow creates challenges for domestic monetary transmission. Active liquidity management through VRRRs ensures short-term interest rate stability and prevents inflationary pressure without undermining systemic stability.

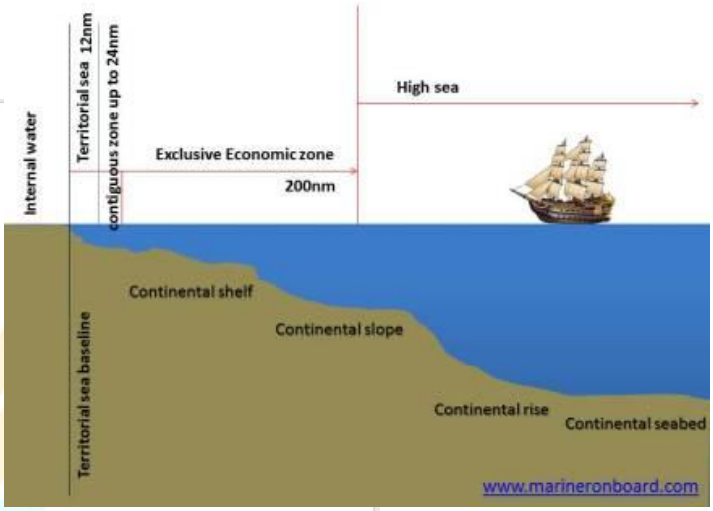
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Monetary Policy Framework and RBI tools (LAF, Repo, Reverse Repo, VRRR).
- **Prelims Focus:** Operational mechanics of VRRR vs MSF vs SDF, FCNR(B) account rules under FEMA, composition of India's Foreign Exchange Reserves, and weighted average call money rate dynamics.

10. UNCLOS: The Enduring Constitution of the Oceans and Global Maritime Governance

Key Highlights & Summary

- Veteran diplomat Tommy Koh reaffirmed that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains the fundamental "constitution of the oceans," guiding a rules-based global order over maritime spaces.
- With 172 state parties, UNCLOS enjoys near-universal adherence; even non-ratifying nations like the United States recognize its codified principles as authoritative customary international law.
- Although Iran is not a formal party to UNCLOS, the doctrine of transit passage through international straits, such as the Strait of Hormuz, has evolved into customary international law that binds all sovereign states.
- During the UNCLOS III negotiations in 1982, the primary diplomatic deadlock involved Part XI, which declared the deep seabed the "common heritage of mankind"—a framework initial United States administrations opposed over commercial seabed mining norms.
- The growing operational threat of "dark fleet" vessels—ships operating without active AIS transponders or clear registry—presents fresh challenges to high seas enforcement, requiring regulation through the International Maritime Organization (IMO).



- Geopolitical friction in regions like the South China Sea highlights that UNCLOS remains the primary legal instrument for resolving Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf boundary disputes.

Essential Definitions

- **UNCLOS III:** The Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1973–1982), which drafted the comprehensive international legal treaty governing maritime zones, navigational rights, and marine resources.
- **Transit Passage Regime:** An established rule under international maritime law permitting all ships and aircraft, including military vessels, continuous and expeditious transit through straits used for international navigation.
- **Common Heritage of Mankind:** A foundational principle under UNCLOS Part XI establishing that international seabed areas beyond national jurisdiction belong to humanity as a whole and cannot be unilaterally claimed or exploited.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **UNCLOS, 1982 (Part XI):** Regulates exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the international seabed area, administered by the International Seabed Authority (ISA).
- **UNCLOS, 1982 (Part V):** Establishes the regime of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extending up to 200 nautical miles, conferring sovereign rights over natural resources to coastal states while preserving freedoms of navigation.

- **Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** India's domestic statutory framework defining its territorial waters, contiguous zone, EEZ, and continental shelf in alignment with international maritime conventions.
- **Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another.

Conclusion Despite regional conflicts and emerging maritime challenges like grey-market shipping fleets, UNCLOS remains the indispensable legal framework for ocean governance. Maintaining freedom of navigation and resolving EEZ overlapping claims through multilateral institutional compliance is crucial for maintaining global supply chain stability and international maritime security.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Important International institutions, agencies, and fora—their structure, mandate; Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and affecting India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in maritime domains; Infrastructure: Ports and Maritime Trade; Conservation and ocean resource management.
- **Prelims Focus:** Division of maritime zones under UNCLOS (Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, EEZ, High Seas), ISA mandate, transit passage vs innocent passage rights, and provisions of India's Maritime Zones Act 1976.

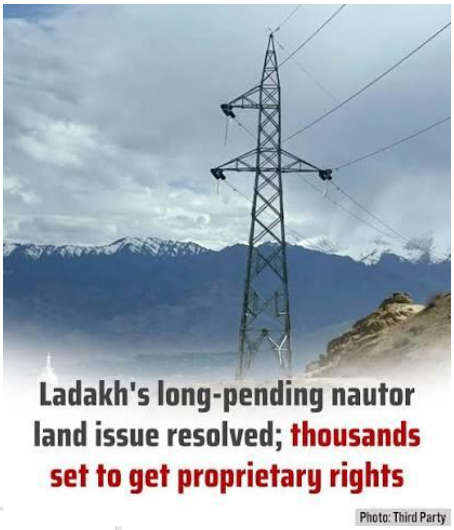
11. Ladakh Clears 'Nautor Land' Regularisation Rules: Granting Proprietary Rights and Strengthening Local Governance

Key Highlights & Summary

- Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena approved the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Nautor Regularisation) Rules, 2026, paving the way for granting proprietary rights over eligible barren and wasteland holdings.
- The new framework establishes a one-time regularisation mechanism granting proprietary ownership for up to 10 acres of nautor land occupied before the cut-off date of October 27, 2020.
- For nautor holdings exceeding the 10-acre cap, the rules allow land allotment strictly on a leasehold basis, while any land occupied after October 27, 2020, remains ineligible for regularisation.
- The policy addresses a long-pending tenure dispute involving over 60,000 acres recorded as nautor holdings across revenue records in all seven districts of the Union Territory.
- The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) are vested with explicit executive authority to administer, allot, and manage the regularisation of nautor land within their respective jurisdictions.

- Granting formal land titles provides legal security to local farmers who reclaimed marginal high-altitude soils, enabling them to use land titles as collateral for bank loans and financial access.

Essential Definitions



- **Nautor Land:** Government-owned barren or wasteland historically granted or allotted to local residents for agricultural cultivation or productive land use.
- **Proprietary Rights:** Complete legal ownership conferred by the state over a property, allowing the title holder to use, transfer, or leverage the asset as collateral.
- **Leasehold Tenure:** A contractual land arrangement where the state retains primary ownership, granting the occupant temporary right of use for a specified duration under set terms.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Section 42 of the LAHDC Act, 1997:** Mandates that state land within the district stands transferred to the Council for local administration and development control.
- **Section 23(1)(i) of the LAHDC Act, 1997:** Vests explicit executive powers in the Hill Development Council regarding the allotment, occupation, and management of lands vested in it.
- **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019:** Repealed legacy tenancy frameworks (including the J&K Tenancy Act, 1980 on October 27, 2020) and created the statutory groundwork for UT-specific land laws.
- **Article 239 of the Indian Constitution:** Outlines the administration of Union Territories by an Administrator or Lieutenant Governor appointed by the President of India.

Conclusion The Nautor Regularisation Rules, 2026 strike a sustainable equilibrium between safeguarding indigenous land rights and preventing unauthorized encroachments. By empowering LAHDCs with statutory land management authority, the policy strengthens local governance institutions, provides tenure security, and unleashes the economic potential of high-altitude agricultural communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of autonomous district councils; Functions and responsibilities of Union Territories; Decentralization of power and local self-governance.
- **GS Paper III:** Land reforms in India; Issues relating to agricultural credit, land tenure security, and rural financial inclusion.
- **Prelims Focus:** LAHDC Act 1997 provisions, definition and scope of Nautor land, Article 239 governance mechanics, and land reform cut-off frameworks post-2019 UT restructuring.

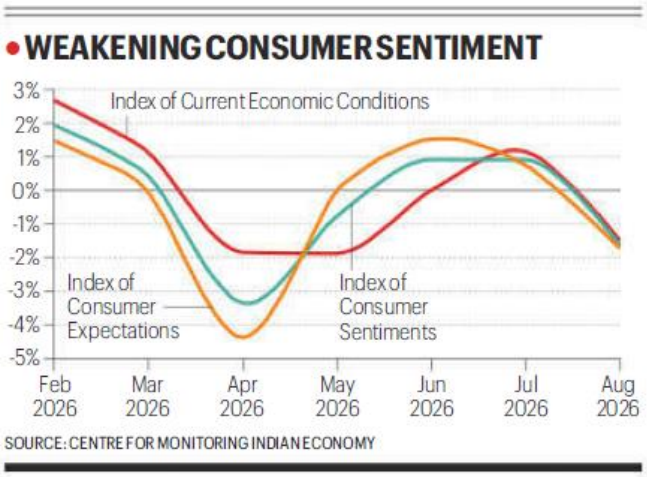
12. Macroeconomic Data vs Lived Reality: Analyzing the Factors Behind Public Mistrust in India's GDP Estimates

Key Highlights & Summary

- India's Union Government released Q1 (April–June) GDP growth figures at a robust 7.8%, yet the official estimates face public skepticism due to a sharp divergence between headline growth and ground-level economic indicators.
- Employment rates have stagnated, with the proportion of working-age individuals (aged 15 and above) holding employment experiencing a sustained decline between 2016-17 and March 2026.
- The overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has contracted, indicating a rise in discouraged workers who have entirely exited the active job-seeking market.
- Average wage rates fell by 1.5% in July 2026—marking the fifth monthly decline over a 12-month period—severely curtailing household purchasing power.
- Retail inflation has escalated rapidly, driven by a sharp rise in food inflation from around 2% in January to over 5% in July, dampening rural and urban demand.
- Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) metrics demonstrate that consumer sentiment indicators remain in negative territory, exacerbated by delayed monsoon impact on kharif sowing schedules.

Essential Definitions

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total monetary or market value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's domestic borders during a specific time period.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The percentage of the working-age population (aged 15 and above) that is either currently employed or actively seeking employment.



- **Discouraged Worker Effect:** A macroeconomic phenomenon where unemployed individuals stop looking for work due to prolonged job search failure, leading to a shrinking labor force despite high working-age population growth.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 112 of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement, relying on standardized national income accounting estimates prepared by statistical authorities.
- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008:** Establishes the statutory framework for the collection of socio-economic and statistical data by central, state, and local government agencies.

- **National Statistical Office (NSO) Mandate:** Functioning under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the NSO holds the statutory responsibility for compiling GDP, CPI, and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) metrics.

Conclusion The divergence between robust top-line GDP figures and sluggish ground-level household indicators highlights structural gaps in economic transmission. Strengthening data collection frameworks, recalibrating GDP base years, and addressing employment stagnation and wage erosion are essential steps to restore public confidence in official macroeconomic statistics.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Inflation management and measurement methodologies.
- **Prelims Focus:** NSO and MoSPI data collection mechanisms, components of GDP base year revisions, consumer sentiment metrics, CPI vs WPI calculation, and Labour Force Participation Rate definitions.

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