



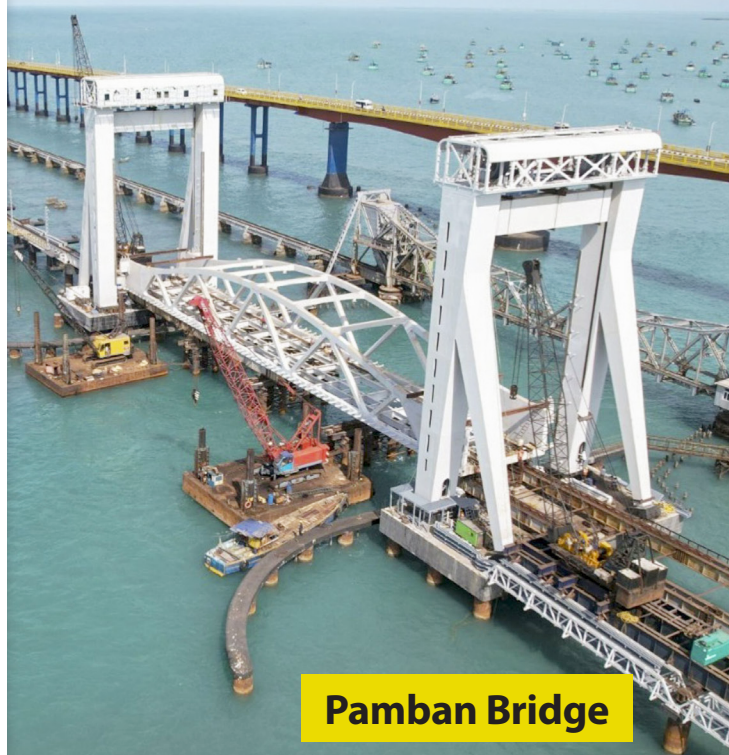
WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

02 April - 08 April, 2025

★★ Useful for ★★

**UPSC ESE, PSUs,
RRB, SSC, Banking &
State Services Exams**



Pamban Bridge

02nd APRIL 2025

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024

- **Context** : Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025, now renamed as the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development (UMEED) Bill, has been passed in the Parliament. Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill 2024 also approved, repealing the Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923.

Key Amendments

- **Composition of the Central Waqf Council:** The Union Minister in-charge of waqf is the ex-officio chairperson.
- **Council members include:**
 - Members of Parliament (MPs).
 - Persons of national eminence.
 - Retired Supreme Court/High Court judges.
 - Eminent scholars in Muslim law.
 - The Bill removes the Muslim requirement for MPs, former judges, and eminent persons.
 - The Bill mandates two non-Muslim members in the Council.
- **Composition of Waqf Boards:**
 - Empowers state governments to nominate one person from each group.
 - Non-Muslim members required: two.
 - Must include at least one member each from Shias, Sunnis, and Backward Muslim classes.
 - Requires two Muslim women members.
- **Composition of Tribunals:**
 - Removes the expert in Muslim law.
 - District Court judge (Chairman).
 - Joint Secretary rank officer.
- **Appeals Against Tribunal Orders:**
 - **Act:** Decisions of Tribunals are final, with no appeals allowed in courts.
 - **Bill:** Allows appeals against Tribunal decisions to the High Court within 90 days.
- **Survey of Properties:** The Bill replaces the Survey Commissioner with the District Collector or other senior officers to oversee the survey of Waqf properties.
- **Government property as Waqf:** The Bill states that any government property identified as waqf will cease to be so. The Collector of the area will determine ownership in case of uncertainty, if deemed a government property, he will update the revenue records.
- **Audits:** Waqf institutions earning over 1 lakh will undergo audits by state-sponsored auditors.
- **Centralized Portal:** A centralized portal will be created for automating Waqf property management, enhancing efficiency and transparency.
- **Property Dedication:** Practicing Muslims (for at least five years) can dedicate property to the Waqf, restoring pre-2013 rules.
- **Women's Inheritance:** Women must receive inheritance before the Waqf declaration, with special provisions for widows, divorced women, and orphans.

Meaning of 'Waqf':

- It refers to properties dedicated solely for religious or charitable purposes under Islamic law.
- Sale or other use of the property is prohibited.
- The ownership of the property is transferred from the person making the Waqf (called waqif) to Allah, making it irrevocable.
- The creator is a wakif, and the property is managed by a mutawalli.

Fram2 Mission

- **Context:** SpaceX launched the Fram2 mission, sending the first private astronaut crew on a groundbreaking journey to orbit Earth from pole to pole.

Key Facts

- The Fram2 mission lifted off atop a Falcon 9 rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida, sending the Crew Dragon capsule "Resilience" into a polar orbit.
- It also allows scientists to study how astronauts' bodies respond to weightlessness and motion sickness.
- It will last between 3 to 5 days, with the crew traveling in a novel orbital path to perform various experiments.
- The crew will perform the first-ever x-ray in space, providing insights into how microgravity affects bone and muscle density.
- It will also focus on cultivating mushrooms in space, which could offer valuable insights into sustainable food production for future space missions.

NITI-NCAER Portal on State Finances

- **Context:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the "NITI NCAER States Economic Forum" portal.

Key Facts

- It has been developed by NITI Aayog and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER).
- It is a comprehensive repository of data on state finances covering the period 1990-91 to 2022-23.
- The portal will act as a research hub, offer a historical and real-time data analysis to track state progress, identify trends, and help formulate evidence-based policies for development.
- **Main Components:**
 - **State Reports:** Summarizes macro and fiscal data of 28 states, covering demography, economic structure, and fiscal indicators.
 - **Data Repository:** Provides access to a complete database categorized across five verticals: Demography, Economic Structure, Fiscal, Health, and Education.

- **State Fiscal and Economic Dashboard:** Offers graphical representations of key economic variables and quick access to data through appendices and summary tables.
- **Research and Commentary:** Includes extensive research on state finances and fiscal policy at both state and national levels.

03rd APRIL 2025

Katchatheevu Island

- **Context:** The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the Union government to take steps to retrieve the Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka.

About Katchatheevu

- Katchatheevu is a small, uninhabited island covering approximately 285 acres in the Palk Strait, situated between Tamil Nadu, India, and northern Sri Lanka.
- It lies 14.5 km south of Delft Island and about 16 km northeast of Rameswaram.
- The island is barren, lacking drinking water or infrastructure, except for a Catholic church dedicated to St. Anthony.

Dispute

- It began in 1921 between the British colonial governments of Madras and Ceylon and it was resolved through two bilateral agreements signed in 1974 and 1976 by India and Sri Lanka.
- These agreements established that Katchatheevu belongs to Sri Lanka and defined the maritime boundaries between the two countries, including their exclusive economic zones (EEZs).
- The agreement also allowed Indian fishermen to visit Katchatheevu for the annual St. Anthony's festival, but prohibited fishing activities in Sri Lankan waters.

Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025

- **Context:** NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the Press Information Bureau, has released the Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025.

Key Highlights

- FHI initiative assesses the fiscal health of states in India.
- The analysis covers 18 major states that contribute significantly to India's GDP, demography, public expenditure, revenues, and fiscal stability.
- **Sub-Indices:** Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.
- Data for the index is sourced from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) for the 2022-23 financial year.
- Odisha ranks 1st in the FHI, followed by Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, and Gujarat.
- States account for about two-thirds of public spending and one-third of total revenue, influencing the nation's economic stability.
- **Debt Concerns:** West Bengal and Punjab face growing debt burdens and increasing debt-to-GSDP ratios.

04th APRIL 2025

Reciprocal Tariffs

- **Context:** In a significant move, US President Donald Trump announced 'reciprocal tariffs' on imports from various countries, including India, aimed to address trade imbalances but sparked global concerns about economic stability and diplomatic relations.

Key Highlights

- Trump declared April 2, 2025, as 'Liberation Day' marking the introduction of reciprocal tariffs aimed at addressing trade imbalances.

- A universal 10% tariff was imposed on all imports, with higher rates applied to countries with significant trade surpluses with the USA.
 - The tariffs ranged from 10% to 50% on its exports to the USA.
 - Major sectors affected included textiles, chemicals, machinery, and electronics.
- India faced a 26% discounted reciprocal tariff, while China was hit with 34%, the European Union with 20%, Japan with 24%, and Taiwan with 32%.
- The tariffs were calculated to balance trade deficits and address non-monetary trade barriers such as currency manipulation and regulatory differences.

Impact on India

- India faced a 26% tariff on its exports to the US, affecting key sectors such as automobiles, textiles, and fisheries.
 - It posed a challenge for Indian exporters, who had to navigate higher costs and reduced competitiveness in the US market.
- To mitigate the impact, India might consider reducing tariffs on US imports, including gems, jewelry, and auto parts.
- Despite the tariffs, India is emphasizing its commitment to strengthening bilateral trade relations with the U.S., aiming for long-term economic collaboration.
- Tariff on India (26%) is lower than other Asian and South Asian countries including Vietnam (46%), Thailand (37%), Bangladesh (37%), Sri Lanka (44%) and Pakistan (30%), which could give India some 'comparative advantages'.

About Tariff

- It is a tax or duty imposed by a government on imported goods and services.
- It is used to regulate trade, protect domestic industries, generate revenue, correct trade imbalances, and exert economic leverage.

About Reciprocal Tariff

- It refers to trade measures imposed by one country in response to tariffs or trade barriers set by another country.
- It aims to create a level playing field by mirroring the duties imposed on exports.

Discounted Reciprocal Tariff

- It is a trade arrangement between two countries (or economic blocs), where each agrees to reduce or eliminate import duties on goods or services from the other on a reciprocal basis, but at discounted rates compared to standard tariff commitments.
- It is a trade measure designed to counteract perceived trade imbalances.

Tipitaka

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi was presented with 'The World Tipitaka: Sajjhaya Phonetic Edition' by his Thai counterpart, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, in a diplomatic exchange.

About Tipitaka

- The term Tipitaka means "Three Baskets" in Pali, representing the three primary divisions of the Buddhist scriptures.
- **The Three "Baskets" of the Tipitaka includes:**
 - **Vinaya Pitaka (Basket of Discipline):** Contains rules and procedures for monastic life and the discipline of monks and nuns.
 - **Sutta Pitaka (Basket of Discourses):** Comprises the Buddha's teachings, presented in the form of discourses or sermons.
 - **Abhidhamma Pitaka (Basket of Higher Doctrine):** Offers a systematic and philosophical analysis of Buddhist teachings.
- Compiled after the Buddha's death (5th century BCE) at the First Buddhist Council in Rajagaha (Rajgir), India.

Baku to Belem Roadmap

- **Context:** India called upon BRICS nations to unite behind the 'Baku to Belem Roadmap', aimed at mobilizing USD 1.3 trillion to support the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of developing countries.

About Baku to Belem Roadmap

- The Baku to Belem Roadmap is a strategic framework adopted at COP29 (2024) to guide negotiations and actions on:
 - Defining a new collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance post-2025.
 - Ensuring greater predictability, adequacy, and accessibility of climate finance.
 - Supporting low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways in developing countries.
 - Enabling the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- The BRICS bloc—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (recently expanded to include 6 new members)—represents 47% of the global population and 36% of the global GDP (PPP).
- These emerging economies face similar environmental challenges and developmental aspirations, making their cooperation vital for achieving a just and equitable climate transition globally.

05th APRIL 2025

BIMSTEC Summit, 2025

- **Context:** PM Modi attended the 6th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Summit, hosted by Thailand.

Key Highlights

- **Theme:** "BIMSTEC: Prosperous, Resilient, and Open"
- Focus on shared growth amid global uncertainties.

- The BIMSTEC Summit is the first in-person meeting in seven years.
- The chairmanship of the regional grouping was handed over to Bangladesh.

India-led Initiatives:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed a 21-point action plan.
- **Mitigation and Disaster Management:**
 - Establishing the BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Disaster Management in India to cooperate in disaster management, relief and rehabilitation.
 - Fourth joint exercises between BIMSTEC Disaster Management Authorities to be held in India this year.
- **BODHI Program for skilling youth:** BODHI [BIMSTEC for Organized Development of Human Resource Infrastructure] under which training and scholarships would be provided to professionals, students, researchers, diplomats and others.
 - 300 youths will be trained from BIMSTEC countries in India every year.
- **India to host BIMSTEC Athletics Meet this year.**
 - First BIMSTEC Games in 2027
 - BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival.
- **Youth-focused initiatives:** Young Leaders' Summit, Hackathon, Young Professional Visitors program.
 - Pilot study on Digital Public Infrastructure, cancer care capacity building.
 - Proposal for BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce and Business Summit.
- Proposed establishing connectivity between India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and the payment systems of BIMSTEC member states.
 - Such integration would bring substantial benefits across trade, industry and tourism, enhancing economic activity at all levels.
- **Space Sector:** Build nano-satellites for the BIMSTEC member nations and also explore the setting up of ground stations and promote the use of remote sensing data.

- **Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre:** Proposed the establishment of a Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre in India to enhance coordination in capacity building, research, innovation and maritime policies.

Summit Outcomes:

- **BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030:** It's the first long-term plan to make BIMSTEC more prosperous, strong, and open by the year 2030. The vision focuses on improving trade, transport links, and people's safety and well-being
- **Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC:** This sets clear rules for how BIMSTEC will work, helping the group to function more smoothly and efficiently.
- **Report by the BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group:** This report gives helpful suggestions for how BIMSTEC should move forward, in line with the 2030 vision.
- **Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation:** A new agreement was signed to improve sea transport between South and Southeast Asia. This will help reduce shipping costs, make trade faster, and make it easier for goods and people to move across the region

About BIMSTEC

- It is a regional cooperation organization formed in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. It unites South and Southeast Asian nations bordering the Bay of Bengal.
- **Founding Members (1997):** Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand.
- **Current Members:** It comprises seven member states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- **Objective:** To help countries in their economic growth, to support social development, and to encourage development in other areas, like science, technology and economic development.

Axiom-4 Mission (Ax-4)

- **Context:** Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla will pilot the Axiom-4 mission (Ax-4) to the International Space Station.

About Axiom Space Mission

- Ax-4 is the fourth crewed mission (to the ISS organized by Axiom Space, a private company based in Houston).
- It will include Shubhanshu Shukla, former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson (commander), and astronauts Sławosz Uzna ski-Wi niewski (Poland) and Tibor Kapu (Hungary).
- The crew will spend 14 days aboard the ISS, conducting around 60 scientific experiments as part of the mission.
- ISRO's research will focus on microgravity studies, including investigating the effects of space on human health (e.g., physical and cognitive impacts of computer screens, skeletal muscle dysfunction), plant growth, and crop seed germination in space.
- The mission underscores the global significance of the research, with collaboration between ISRO, NASA, and the European Space Agency (ESA) to advance microgravity research.

06th APRIL 2025

Pamban Bridge

- **Context:** The new Pamban Bridge will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, replacing the century-old structure.

Historical Linkages

- The Pamban Bridge connects Rameswaram to mainland India, spanning across the ocean.
- It was originally built in 1914 and served as India's first sea bridge, crucial for trade and pilgrimage.

- The old bridge survived the 1964 tsunami, which tragically washed away a train, but suffered extensive damage. It was later restored by renowned engineer E. Sreedharan with the help of local fishermen.
- The new bridge was designed to overcome the limitations of the old structure, ensuring durability, improved maritime navigation, and future-ready capacity. It aims to enhance regional connectivity and support economic growth.

New Bridge

- The New Pamban Bridge was constructed by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), a Navratna PSU under the Ministry of Railways.
- It features a 72.5-meter lift span that can rise 17 meters to allow ships to pass.
- It is 3 meters higher than the old bridge and is designed to accommodate both heavy freight trains and advanced semi-high-speed trains, like Vande Bharat.
- It spans 2.08 kilometers and has an expected lifespan of 58 years.
- It is India's first Vertical Lift Railway Sea Bridge and is built with advanced materials to withstand harsh marine conditions.

Ottawa Convention

- **Context:** Poland, Finland, and all three Baltic states have announced plans to withdraw from the 1997 Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, citing growing security threats from Russia.

About Ottawa Convention

- It is formally known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
- It is an international agreement that bans anti-personnel landmines.

- It was adopted in 1997 during a diplomatic conference in Oslo and opened for signature in Ottawa later that year. The treaty came into force on March 1, 1999.
- It has significantly reduced the production and use of anti-personnel mines, leading to the destruction of over 40 million stockpiled mines.
- It has also facilitated assistance for survivors and communities affected by landmines, as well as the clearing of mine-contaminated areas.
- This has resulted in a substantial decline in casualties.
- It has been crucial in advancing global mine clearance efforts and framing victim assistance in the broader context of disability, contributing to safer, more productive land use in affected regions.

Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) to boost development in strategic border areas.

About Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

- It is a Central Sector Scheme (100% Centre-funded) with a total outlay of 6,839 crore.
- **Implementation and Timeline:** It will be implemented in select strategic villages across the following States/UTs till FY 2028–29: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir (UT), Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- The programme aims to create better living conditions and adequate livelihood opportunities to ensure prosperous and safe borders, control trans-border crime, assimilate the border population with the nation, and inculcate them 'as eyes and ears of the border guarding forces'—vital for internal security.

07th APRIL 2025

Technology and Innovation Report 2025

- **Context:** The 2025 Technology and Innovation Report, entitled: Inclusive artificial intelligence for development, has been issued by United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Key Highlights

- It aims to guide policymakers through the complex AI landscape and support them in designing science, technology and innovation policies that foster inclusive and equitable technological progress.
- The US leads the world in terms of private investment in AI, at 67 billion US dollars in 2023, or 70 percent of global AI private investment.
- China was in second position, with 7.8 billion US dollars, and India in tenth position, with 1.4 billion dollars.
- India has been ranked 10th in the world with significant private investments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in 2023.
- According to the Report India ranked 36th in 2024 on the Readiness for Frontier Technologies Index, improving its position from 48th in 2022.

World Health Day 2025

- **Context:** World Health Day, observed annually on 7 April, highlights pressing global health issues and mobilises action to improve public health outcomes.

Key Highlights

- It was founded by WHO in 1950. The idea for World Health Day originated from the first World Health Assembly, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1948.
- It is aimed at uniting governments, institutions, and communities to address global health priorities.

- **2025 Theme:** “Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures” focuses on maternal and newborn health, urging countries to reduce preventable deaths and prioritize women’s long-term well-being.
- **India’s Commitment:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, strengthens efforts for equitable, accessible, and quality healthcare.
- According to WHO, close to 300,000 women lose their life due to pregnancy or childbirth each year, while over 2 million babies die in their first month of life and around 2 million more are stillborn.
- Based on current trends, 4 out of 5 countries are off track to meet targets for improving maternal survival by 2030.

India’s Maternal Mortality and Child Mortality

- MMR (Maternal Mortality Ratio) in India dropped from 130 (2014-16) to 97 (2018-20) per 1,00,000 live births – a decline of 33 points.
- **Infant & Child Mortality:** IMR (Infant Mortality Rate) dropped from 39 (2014) to 28 (2020) per 1,000 live births.
- NMR (Neonatal Mortality Rate) reduced from 26 (2014) to 20 (2020) per 1,000 live births.

08th APRIL 2025

Time Use Survey

- **Context:** The Time Use Survey (TUS) 2024 revealed significant data on how people in India allocate their time across various activities.

Key Highlights

- The National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) conducted the first all-India Time Use Survey (TUS) from January to December 2019, and the second survey for 2024 was released in February 2025.
- It provides data on time spent on paid and unpaid tasks, learning, socializing, leisure, and self-care activities.

- It aims to assess the participation of men and women in paid and unpaid activities, such as caregiving, volunteer work, and domestic chores.
- It aids in policy formulation, planning, and decision-making by government departments, organizations, and researchers.

Recent findings

- Delhi residents spend the most time on work-related activities, averaging 563 minutes daily, far surpassing the national average of 440 minutes. Goa follows closely with 536 minutes, showing a notable increase from 2019.
- The survey highlights a gender gap in unpaid domestic services, with women dedicating 289 minutes daily compared to men’s 88 minutes.
- Learning activities have slightly declined, with the national average dropping from 424 minutes in 2019 to 414 minutes in 2024. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu remain high in learning time.
- Socializing and community participation show varying trends across states, with Nagaland reporting increased social engagement.
- Leisure activities have risen nationwide, with Uttarakhand seeing a notable increase.
- Self-care time, including sleep and hygiene, has decreased nationally, with some states like Meghalaya and Jammu & Kashmir showing an increase.

■ DO YOU KNOW: _____

India, alongside countries like Australia, Japan, and the USA, conducts the National Time Use Survey to analyze the participation of men and women in various activities.

Exercise INDRA 2025

- **Context:** The 14th edition of the India-Russia bilateral naval exercise, INDRA 2025, was recently concluded.

Key Highlights

- The exercise included a wide range of activities and structured drills designed to enhance interoperability towards countering common maritime threats.
- The INDRA series of exercises have been a cornerstone of India-Russia Defence relations since its inception in 2003 and both countries recognise the importance of maritime security and the need for a collaborative approach to counter common threats and concerns.

Women and Men in India 2024 Report

- **Context:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), released the 26th edition of its publication titled “**Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data**”.

Key Highlights

- The publication offers a comprehensive overview of the gender landscape in India, presenting selected indicators and data across key areas like population, education, health, economic participation, and decision-making, all sourced from various Ministries/ Departments/Organizations.
- **Education:** The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for enrolments at both primary and higher secondary levels increased in FY24 compared to FY23 and FY22, indicating more girls being enrolled in school.
 - At the upper primary and elementary levels, the enrolment numbers were nearly equal for both boys and girls.
- **Labour Force Participation:** The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women aged 15 years and above saw a significant improvement from 49.8% in 2017–18 to 60.1% in 2023–24.
 - This reflects growing inclusion of women in the workforce and economic activity.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Women owned 39.2% of all bank accounts in India as of the latest data. They contributed 39.7% to total deposits in banks.
 - Women’s presence is most prominent in rural areas, where they make up 42.2% of account holders.
- **Entrepreneurship & Economic Independence:** The number of female-headed proprietary establishments across manufacturing, trade, and services has been rising consistently between 2021–22 and 2023–24.
 - Startups with at least one woman director (DPIIT-recognized):
 - ♦ **In 2017:** 1,943 startups
 - ♦ **In 2024:** 17,405 startups
 - This is more than an 800% increase in 7 years.
- **Political Participation:** Female voter turnout has seen variations over the years, rising to 67.2% in 2019, followed by a modest dip to 65.8% in 2024.
- **Violence against Women:** Nearly 31.9% of married women aged 18 to 49 in India report experiencing spousal violence, with the highest prevalence observed in Karnataka (48.4%), Bihar (42.5%), and Manipur (41.6%).

