



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

*Coverage of*

**24 Apr. - 30 Apr., 2026**

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



**Ashok Kumar Lahiri**

Appointed as the  
Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog

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24<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD)

- **Context:** The National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD) is observed every year on 24 April to mark the establishment of the Panchayati Raj system.

### Key Highlights

- The day commemorates the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which came into effect in 1993 and gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- These provisions are included in Part IX of the Indian Constitution, strengthening grassroots democracy by empowering local bodies at the village, block, and district levels.

### Historical Background of Panchayati Raj System

- The Panchayati Raj system in India has its origins in ancient village assemblies like sabhas and samitis, which handled local governance. It declined during British rule due to centralised administration.
- After independence, decentralised governance was promoted through the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), which recommended a three-tier Panchayati Raj system which was first implemented in Rajasthan in 1959.
- Constitutional backing came through the 73rd Amendment Act, making PRIs mandatory and embedding them in Part IX (Articles 243–243O) of the Constitution.

### Structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- The Panchayati Raj system is based on the principle of decentralisation. Power is transferred from central and state governments to elected representatives at the village level.
- **The Panchayati Raj system has a three-tier structure:**
  - **Gram Panchayat (village level):** Handles basic local administration like water supply, sanitation, street lighting, and village infrastructure.

- **Block Panchayat (intermediate level):** Coordinates development across villages and ensures proper implementation of government schemes.
- **District Panchayat (district level):** Oversees and integrates development activities across blocks, focusing on planning and resource allocation.

### Key Initiatives to Strengthen Panchayati Raj System

- **SVAMITVA Scheme:** Launched on 24 April 2021, aims to provide legal ownership rights to rural households by mapping inhabited village areas using drone and GIS technology and issuing property cards.
- **SabhaSaar: AI-Powered Meeting Documentation:** SabhaSaar is an AI-based tool developed that automatically prepares minutes of Gram Sabha meetings, reduces manual workload and strengthens monitoring.
- **eGramSwaraj - Digital Platform for Panchayats:** eGramSwaraj is a user-friendly web portal that improves transparency in planning, progress reporting, financial management, and tracking of assets in Panchayats. It is linked with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), which allows online transfer of Central Finance Commission funds from States to Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- **Gram Urja Swaraj:** Gram Urja Swaraj, under eGramSwaraj, is a digital dashboard that tracks renewable energy assets at the Gram Panchayat level in real time.
- **Meri Panchayat:** The Meri Panchayat App is an integrated m-Governance platform designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC). It aims to empower rural communities by improving better governance, accountability, and citizen participation in Panchayat affairs.
- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):** It is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through capacity building, institutional development, and infrastructure support.

- **Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat (MWFPG):** It is an institutional initiative aimed at strengthening women's leadership in local governance. It focuses on building inclusive and gender-sensitive Panchayats that ensure women's participation along with safety, rights, and empowerment at the grassroots level.
- **Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan:** It aims to enhance leadership, communication, and decision-making skills of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). The focus is on practical and interactive learning for real governance situations.
- **Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS):** It is an initiative aimed at engaging young people in grassroots democracy. Implemented with the Department of School Education and Literacy and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, it involves Class 9 and 10 students from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Eklavya Model Residential Schools.

## 11th India-Egypt Joint Defence Committee (JDC) Meeting

- **Context:** Recently, the 11th India-Egypt Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting was held in Cairo. It marked a significant step in strengthening bilateral defence ties under the Strategic Partnership (2023) and MoU on Defence Cooperation (2022).

### Key Highlights

- **Forward-Looking Defence Roadmap (2026-27):** Both countries agreed on a structured defence cooperation plan focusing on:
  - Expansion of military-to-military engagements
  - Intensification of joint training exercises
  - Enhancement of maritime security cooperation
  - Increasing scale and complexity of military exercises
  - Strengthening defence production and technology collaboration
- **Defence Industry Collaboration:** India highlighted its defence manufacturing growth, as production of

more than \$20 billion, and exports approx \$4 billion to more than 100 countries.

- Agreement to develop a Defence Industry Cooperation Plan
- Focus areas include co-development and co-production, technology transfer, and industrial partnerships.
- It reflects India's push for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence and export-led growth.
- **Maritime Security Cooperation:** First-ever Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks held, and India emphasized the role of the Indian Navy in ensuring freedom of navigation, and contribution of Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).
  - Maritime cooperation is central to India's strategic outreach in the Indian Ocean and beyond, especially in securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and countering emerging threats.
  - It aligns with India's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)
- **Air Force Cooperation:** Meeting with Egyptian Air Force Commander, and recognition of growing air-to-air cooperation. There are scopes for joint exercises, and training exchanges.

### About India-Egypt Relations

- **Ancient and Medieval Links:** Trade relations between Indus Valley and Nile civilizations via Red Sea routes. Cultural exchanges through Greco-Roman and later Islamic networks.
- **Post-Independence Phase:** Strong ties under Nehru-Nasser leadership:
  - Founding members of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).
  - Cooperation during the Suez Crisis (1956), India supported Egypt's sovereignty.
  - Shared vision of anti-colonialism and South-South cooperation.
- **Cold War to Post-Cold War:** Relations slowed due to shifting geopolitical priorities, and renewed engagement in the 1990s onwards with economic liberalisation.

## Present Status of Relations

- **Political & Strategic:** Elevated to Strategic Partnership (2023)
  - Regular high-level visits; Egypt invited as Chief Guest (Republic Day 2023)
  - Cooperation in multilateral forums (UN, BRICS Expansion).
- **Economic Relations:** Bilateral trade \$6–7 billion (approx.). Key sectors include petroleum, fertilizers, textiles; and Indian investments in pharma, IT, manufacturing.
- **Maritime & Geostrategic Importance:** Egypt's control of Suez Canal which is critical for India's trade; convergence in Indian Ocean & Mediterranean connectivity; and India's role as a net security provider in Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **Defence Cooperation:** Institutional mechanism: Joint Defence Committee (JDC). Key focus areas include joint exercises and training; defence production and technology; and maritime security cooperation.
  - Exercise Cyclone (Army Exercise) is a joint special forces exercise between Indian Army (Para Special Forces) and Egyptian Special Forces, focused on counter-terrorism operations, desert warfare, urban warfare tactics, and special operations coordination.

## E100 Fuel

- **Context:** The government is considering E100 fuel blending and a transition to flex-fuel vehicles to reduce India's dependence on imported crude.

## Key Highlights

- The steps come amid a growing energy crisis triggered by the war in West Asia, which has choked supplies of crude oil and gas.
- The government has allowed blends of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), produced from used cooking oil or ethanol.
- The notification legally defines aviation turbine fuel (ATF) both as a complex mixture of hydrocarbons

and as synthesised hydrocarbons blended with cooking oil or ethanol, creating a legal basis for SAF.

## About E100

- E100 refers to fuel with 100% ethanol content or near-100%, since small quantities of water improve combustion.
- Flex-fuel vehicles are designed to run on any mixture of ethanol and petrol, from pure petrol to E100, with onboard sensors adjusting engine parameters accordingly.
- Brazil has operated the world's most mature flex-fuel programme since 2003, where sugarcane-derived ethanol powers a large share of the vehicle fleet.

25<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## SAARC Currency Swap Framework

- **Context:** India has approved the first withdrawal of 30 billion rupees for the Maldives under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework, reinforcing its ongoing financial support to the island nation.

## About SAARC Currency Swap Framework

- It is a recognised bilateral swap arrangement in the Global Financial Safety Net.
- It aims to further strengthen India's ties with SAARC Countries and promote regional integration and inter-dependence.
- The Framework is in place since 2012 to provide SAARC countries a line of funding for short-term foreign exchange requirements.

## About SAARC

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka in 1985.
- SAARC comprises eight Member States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

- **The objectives of the Association** as outlined in the SAARC Charter are:
  - to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region
  - to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia
  - to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields
  - to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries

## FTO Ranking

- **Context:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has released the second phase ranking (April 2026) of the DGCA Approved Flying Training Organizations (FTOs).

### About FTO Ranking System

- It is compiled by The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)
- It aims to improve transparency, enhance safety standards, and promote accountability across DGCA-approved flying training institutes. The first phase of the ranking framework was published in October 2025.
- The ranking system aims to help aspiring pilots and their families make informed choices by increasing transparency in pilot training and making a flying career more attractive to youth.
- Latest Ranking: The latest rankings show overall progress, with Avyanna Aviation Pvt. Ltd. achieving the top Category 'A' for the first time, while more institutes have moved into Category 'B' and fewer remain in Category 'C', indicating improving standards.
- **Impacts of FTO ranking system:**
  - India's aviation training sector has improved significantly, with training flying hours increasing

from 32% to 50%, expansion of aircraft fleets at flying training schools, and greater efficiency that has reduced the time needed for cadets to complete Commercial Pilot License requirements.

- The system has also helped aspiring pilots make informed choices using objective performance data and has strengthened pilot training infrastructure in line with India's goal of becoming a global aviation hub.

26TH APRIL, 2026

## Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Policy for Delhi

- **Context:** The Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs announced a new transit-oriented development (TOD) policy for Delhi.

### Key Facts

- TOD projects typically combine residential, commercial and recreational spaces within walkable distances of transit hubs.
- The push is part of a broader strategy to promote integrated urban development along mass transit networks, including the Delhi Metro and Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors.
- **Benefits of TOD:**
  - Higher quality of life with better places to live, work, and play.
  - Greater mobility with ease of moving around.
  - Reduced traffic congestion, car accidents and injuries.
  - Reduced household spending on transportation, resulting in more affordable housing.
  - Healthier lifestyle with more walking, and less stress.
  - Increased foot traffic and customers for area businesses.
  - Reduced dependence on foreign oil, reduced pollution and environmental damage.

## Major Features of Delhi's TOD Policy

- **Aim:** Creating large-scale, planned affordable housing projects for lower- and middle-income groups in Delhi.
- **Areas Included:** The policy opens up areas within 500 metres of metro lines, as well as near Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors and railway stations, for development. A total of 207 sq km in Delhi has been identified for TOD. Of this, around 80 sq km, including areas identified for land pooling, low-density residential zones, and unauthorised colonies.
- **Planning:** 65% of the permissible built-up area in TOD zones must be used for housing, with unit sizes largely capped at around 100 sq m to keep them within reach.
  - The remaining 35% can be used for commercial activity, offices and other amenities, allowing the development of mixed-use neighbourhoods.
  - The policy also encourages walkability, with provisions for pedestrian links connecting housing clusters to nearby transit stations.
  - The revised norms reduce minimum plot size significantly and increase permissible Floor Area Ratio (FAR), enabling denser construction.
- **Shift in Policy Framework:** The most important reform is the shift in the policy's approach, from being node-based to corridor-based. Switching to the corridor logic and reducing the minimum plot size from one hectare to 2,000 square metres means more landowners, more plots, and more locations now qualify for inclusion.
- **Single Window Clearance:** The single-window clearance and unified TOD charge are introduced as the earlier policy's insistence on Influence Zone Plans for approval was a procedural bottleneck. The policy mandates a 60% share for affordable housing.

## Moving Towards Effective City Government Report

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs, released the report "Moving Towards Effective City Government - A Framework for Million-plus Cities" by NITI Aayog.

## Key Highlights

- India's urbanisation is central to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 and progressing towards a \$30 trillion economy. Cities are central to driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and generating employment.
- The report identifies persistent governance issues, including weak and fragmented leadership structures, constrained fiscal capacity, and capacity gaps that limit service delivery and urban performance.
- It calls for a shift towards empowered city governments through a clear realignment of authority, responsibility, and resources at the city level.

## Key Recommendations:

- Strengthening city leadership through the introduction of a directly elected Mayor with a fixed tenure, supported by an empowered Mayor-in-Council system to ensure continuity, clarity, and accountability in decision-making.
- Integrating urban service delivery by bringing key functions such as water supply, sanitation, and public transport under the purview of city governments to improve coordination and accountability.
- Enhancing municipal finances by strengthening own-source revenues, ensuring more predictable and timely fiscal transfers through robust State Finance Commissions, and enabling access to market-based financing mechanisms such as municipal bonds.
- Undertaking institutional restructuring by bringing multiple parastatal agencies involved in service delivery under city government oversight, with clearly defined roles and stronger coordination frameworks.
- For effective implementation, the report recommends that states amend their Municipal Acts to reflect these governance reforms. It also calls on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to update the Model Municipal Law and provide guidance and incentives to support reform adoption.

27<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## Ashok Kumar Lahiri: NITI Aayog Vice Chairperson

- **Context:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reconstituted NITI Aayog, appointing noted economist Ashok Lahiri as Vice-Chairperson and replacing four of its five full-time members.

### About NITI Aayog

- NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog is a government think tank established in 2015.
- It replaced the Planning Commission, aiming to focus on more contemporary challenges like sustainable development, policy innovation, and governance reforms.
- It is led by the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, with the Vice-Chairperson and CEO leading the executive functions.
- **Governing Council:**
  - The Prime Minister of India
  - Chief Ministers of States and Union Territories
  - The Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories, except Delhi and Puducherry
  - The Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog
  - Full-time members of NITI Aayog

## Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

- **Context:** Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme.

### About Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

- It promotes small hydropower as a long-lasting, eco-friendly energy source with minimal environmental impact.
- It aims to support inclusive growth by generating jobs, encouraging local investment, and

strengthening regional economies, contributing to India's self-reliant energy future

- It will support small hydro projects (between 1-25 MW capacity) to come up in different states.
- The scheme targets developing about 1,500 MW of small hydropower capacity, especially in hilly and North Eastern regions with untapped potential and limited energy access.

### About Small Hydropower (SHP)

- Small hydropower (SHP) is an important source of clean, decentralised energy in India, especially suitable for remote and hilly regions.
- It generates electricity close to where it is used, reducing transmission losses and improving reliability.
- It is a clean and cost-effective energy option with no fuel use or emissions, and it supports rural development by improving electricity access and boosting local economies.

## Skyroot's Vikram-1

- **Context:** Skyroot Aerospace has dispatched its first orbital rocket, Vikram-1, to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre for final integration and launch preparations, marking a key step toward India's first private orbital launch.

### About Vikram-1 Launcher

- Vikram-1 is a multi-stage launch vehicle using both solid and liquid fuel-based propulsion systems.
- It is designed to launch satellites up to 350 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO). LEO lies between 160–2,000 km above Earth and has seen a surge in satellite launches in recent years, with many being the Starlink communication satellites.
- The rocket is made of carbon composite instead of metals, and houses a 3D-printed indigenously made engine making its manufacturing and assembly easier, quicker and cheaper.

- The launch vehicle has been named to honour Dr Vikram Sarabhai, considered to be the father of the Indian space programme, and its propulsion systems honour several other scientific greats — the solid propulsion system is called Kalam, the liquid Raman, and the cryogenic Dhawan.

### About Skyroot

- Skyroot, founded by Pawan Chandana and Bharath Dhaka, was also the first private company to carry out a single-stage sub-orbital flight in 2022, followed by another company, Agnikul.
- A sub-orbital flight is launched at a slower speed than the orbital velocity, so it reaches outer space but cannot get into an orbit around Earth.

28<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## G7 Environment Ministers Meeting

- **Context:** Recently, the G7 Environment Ministers have elevated desertification, land degradation and drought to the core of their agenda, and termed these conditions 'systemic global challenges' and 'security risk multipliers'.

### Key Highlights

- **Scale of the Crisis:** Desertification, land degradation and drought leads to declining soil fertility, water scarcity, and loss of ecosystem services.
  - It directly threatens food security and livelihoods, particularly in agrarian economies.
  - Nearly 40% of global land is degraded, affecting about 3.2 billion people.
- **Environmental Stress as a Security Threat:** G7 identifies desertification, land degradation and drought as a 'security risk multiplier'.
  - Over 40% of intrastate conflicts are linked to land and water disputes.
  - Environmental degradation contributes to resource competition, forced migration, and political instability.

- It confirms the climate-conflict nexus, especially in vulnerable regions like the Sahel.

### Land Crisis in India

- Approximately 97.85 million hectares (around 29.7%) of India's total geographical area underwent land degradation as of 2018–19 (ISRO Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas). India faces desertification across around 30% of its geographical area (around 97.85 million hectares).
- Declining soil health directly threatens food and economic security, with over 40% of the population dependent on agriculture and land-based livelihoods.
- India became a signatory to the UNCCD in 1994 (ratified 1996) and has committed to restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge and UNCCD framework. India has already restored 18.94 million hectares against this target.

### India's Key Policy Interventions

- **Aravalli Green Wall Project (2023):** A green corridor across Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and Gujarat, inspired by Africa's Great Green Wall.
- **National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (NAPCD),** revised in 2023, integrated with MGNREGS, CAMPA, and PMKSY.
- **India is a signatory to the UNCCD** and has committed to the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), and restoration of millions of hectares of degraded land. Desertification, land degradation and drought action support SDG 2 (Food Security), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).
- **Green India Mission (GIM),** revised in 2025 with ₹ 12,190 crore outlay targeting afforestation over 1 million hectares.

## India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (IN-NZ FTA)

- **Context:** India and New Zealand signed the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (IN-NZ FTA).

## Key Highlights

- The India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement was concluded in nine months and marks a key milestone in India's engagement with developed economies.
- India is signing its seventh FTA in the last three and a half years, with plans for agreements with the European Union and the United States, taking the total to nine FTAs with 38 advanced economies, covering nearly 65-70% of global GDP.
- **Zero-Duty Market Access:** India- New Zealand FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports. India has offered market access in 70.03% of the tariff lines while keeping 29.97 % tariff lines in exclusion.
- **FDI Commitment:** New Zealand will invest USD 20 billion in India over 15 years, strengthening long-term economic ties.
- **Organic Primary Products:** Mutual recognition of organic certification to be agreed between the two sides.
- **MSME Cooperation:** Institutional linkages to help small businesses access trade-related information and global markets.
- **Technical Assistance:** Cooperation has been agreed in AYUSH, audio visual industries, tourism, sports and traditional knowledge systems. The FTA promotes India's AYUSH systems internationally, encourages medical value travel, and positions India as a global wellness hub.
- **MFN Treatment:** Commitment across 118 services sectors, with Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment in 139 sectors.
- **Student Mobility:** New Zealand signed Annex on Student Mobility and Post Study Work Visa for the first time with any country. Indian students can work up to 20 hours per week while studying, even if there are policy changes in future, with extended post-study work visas (STEM Bachelor: 3 yrs; Master's: up to 3 yrs; Doctorate: up to 4 yrs).
- **Professional Pathways:** A quota of 5,000 visas for skilled Indians for stay upto 3 years in the sectors of interest to India.

- **Working Holiday Visa:** 1,000 young Indians annually can avail multiple entry in New Zealand for a period of 12 months.
- **Certain products are kept** in exclusion from the dairy and agriculture sector of India, which is a huge win for labour intensive sectors. Dairy, animal products, vegetable products, sugar, artificial honey, Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, Arms and Ammunition, Gems and Jewellery, Copper and Articles, Aluminium and articles.

## About Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- **A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a pact between two or more countries where they agree to:**
  - Reduce or eliminate customs duties on goods
  - Liberalise trade in services
  - Provide investment protection
  - Ensure safeguards for intellectual property rights (IPR)

29<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## UAE Exits OPEC and OPEC+

- **Context:** The United Arab Emirates announced its withdrawal from OPEC and OPEC+ (effective May 1, 2026). UAE blamed fellow Arab states for not doing enough to protect it from numerous Iranian attacks during the war and decided to exit the grouping.

## About OPEC

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1960 during the Baghdad Conference. Its original founding members were Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, Kuwait, and Iraq.
- The organization coordinates petroleum supply and demand policies to maintain stable and fair market prices while ensuring a consistent income for oil-producing nations.
- It consists of 11 member nations: Algeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

## About OPEC+

- OPEC+ is an expanded framework now consisting of 21 members. This includes the 11 original OPEC countries plus 10 other major oil-producing nations: Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Bahrain, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, Sudan, and Malaysia.
- It was established in 2016 following the Algiers Accord (September 2016) and the subsequent Vienna Agreement (November 2016) between OPEC and non-OPEC exporters.
- The alliance was primarily created to stabilize the market in response to a significant drop in oil prices triggered by the rapid increase in U.S. shale oil production.

## Index of Service Production (ISP)

- **Context:** The National Statistical Office has proposed a new Index of Service Production (ISP) with 2024–25 as the base year.

### Key Facts

- The services sector contributes more than 50% to India's Gross Value Added (GVA), yet there is no equivalent of the Index of Industrial Production to monitor short-term trends.
- The ISP will fill this gap and complement the IIP, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of economic activity.
- The absence of such an index currently limits real-time assessment of services sector performance.
- The index will use Service Producer Price Indices (PPIs) for sectors like banking, insurance, and telecommunications to adjust for price changes.
- In sectors where PPIs are unavailable, sector-specific Consumer Price Indices (CPIs) will be used as substitutes.

## About National Statistical Office (NSO)

- The National Statistical Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, is India's central agency for official data. Formed in

2019 by merging the CSO and NSSO, it is headed by the Chief Statistician of India.

### • Functions:

- The NSO conducts large-scale socio-economic surveys, compiles national income (GDP/GNP), and sets statistical standards for uniformity.
- It provides technical guidance to states, ensures data reliability through digital tools, and coordinates with international organizations.

### • Major Publications:

- National Accounts Statistics (NAS): GDP and capital formation
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS): Employment trends
- Index of Industrial Production (IIP) & ASI: Industrial performance
- Consumer Expenditure & Social Consumption: Poverty and service utilization
- Statistical Year Book & Energy Statistics: Comprehensive sectoral and energy data

## SIPRI Report: India - 5th Largest Military Spender in 2025

- **Context:** India emerged as the world's fifth-largest military spender in 2025, with defence expenditure reaching \$92.1 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

### Key Highlights about India

- Defence spending rose by 8.9% year-on-year, driven by operational and procurement needs amid India–Pakistan tensions (May 2025).
- India remains the 2nd largest arms importer, accounting for 8.2% of global imports. However, arms imports declined by 4% between 2016–20 and 2021–25.
- India has gradually diversified its arms imports away from Russia towards Western suppliers such as France, Israel, and the United States; Russia's share declined from 70% (2011–15) to 51% (2016–20) and further to 40% in 2021–25.

## Global Arms Trends

- Global military expenditure reached a record \$2,887 billion, marking the 11th consecutive year of growth and accounting for 2.5% of global GDP.
- Ukraine became the largest arms recipient (2021–25), with 9.7% share.
- Pakistan, ranked 31st globally, increased its defence spending to \$11.9 billion (increase by 11%), driven by post-conflict procurement from China.

## About SIPRI

- SIPRI was founded in 1966 by the Swedish parliament as an independent research institute.
- Its main objective is to conduct research on issues related to international peace and security, including arms control, disarmament, and conflict resolution.
- It is funded by a combination of government grants, private donations, and project-based funding.
- SIPRI's flagship publication is the SIPRI Yearbook, which provides comprehensive data and analysis on global military expenditure, arms transfers, and other relevant security issues.
- SIPRI is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

30<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2026

## DPI@2047 for Viksit Bharat

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has launched DPI@2047 for Viksit Bharat, a roadmap for India's next phase of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) aimed at driving inclusive and productivity-led growth.

## About Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to foundational digital systems that are accessible, secure, and interoperable, supporting essential public services.
- India's Digital Public Infrastructure began with the JAM trinity - Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar identity, and mobile connectivity - which linked citizens directly to government systems. This

enabled direct transfer of welfare benefits, reducing intermediaries, delays, and leakages, and laid the foundation for India's broader digital transformation.

## Importance of DPI

- **Governance Efficiency:** DPI Enables direct benefit transfers, subsidy delivery, and e-governance platforms, reducing leakages and corruption.
- **Financial Inclusion:** UPI has transformed payments, now operational in 8 countries, supporting cross-border transactions.
- **Economic Growth:** India is the world's 3rd-largest digitalised economy, with digital platforms embedded in daily economic and social life. DPI drives entrepreneurship, fintech innovation, and digital commerce.
- **Global Leadership:** India Stack Global and DPI cooperation agreements with 24 countries showcase India's role in shaping trusted digital pathways.

## Key Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- **Aadhaar:** A biometric-based digital identity platform that enables unique identification and authentication of residents for efficient service delivery.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** A real-time digital payment system enabling instant, interoperable, and secure person-to-person and merchant transactions. UPI is now active in 8 countries, improving cross-border payments, remittances, and financial inclusion, and strengthening India's fintech influence globally.
- **CoWIN:** A digital platform for end-to-end management of vaccination services, including registration, scheduling, and certification.
- **API Setu:** A platform that enables secure and standardized sharing of government data and services through APIs.
- **DigiLocker:** A digital document wallet that allows citizens to store, access, and share authenticated electronic documents.
- **Aarogya Setu:** A digital health application providing risk assessment, health advisories, and access to health-related services.

- **Government e-Marketplace (GeM):** An online platform for transparent and efficient procurement of goods and services by government entities.
- **UMANG:** A unified mobile and web platform providing single-window access to a wide range of government services.
- **DIKSHA:** A national digital platform supporting teachers and learners with e-content, training, and academic resources.
- **e-Sanjeevani:** A telemedicine platform enabling remote doctor-to-patient consultations, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- **e-Hospital:** A hospital management system providing online registration, appointments, diagnostics, and billing services.
- **e-Office:** A digital platform for paperless governance enabling electronic file management and decision-making in government offices.
- **eCourts:** A mission-mode project for digitising court processes and improving access to judicial services.
- **POSHAN Tracker:** A mobile-based application for real-time monitoring of nutrition service delivery under ICDS.
- **National Non-Communicable Diseases Platform (NCD):** A digital platform for screening, diagnosis, and management of major non-communicable diseases.
- **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH):** A unified digital platform integrating skilling, training, and employment-related services.
- **Public Financial Management System (PFMS):** A platform for end-to-end monitoring of government funds and direct benefit transfers.
- **PM GatiShakti:** A GIS-based digital platform for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure projects.

## E-PRAAPTI Portal

- **Context:** The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is launching a new portal called E-PRAAPTI to help resolve long-pending issues of unclaimed EPF deposits.

### About E-PRAAPTI Portal

- It is a dedicated digital platform to facilitate identification, tracking, Unique Account Number (UAN) linking, and activation of old EPF accounts.
- It will use Aadhaar-based authentication to allow users to securely access old EPF accounts, even those not linked to a UAN, and help them update details, link UANs, and activate accounts.
- In its initial phase, access will be based on member IDs, benefiting users who still have those details, and later it will be expanded to those who cannot recall their old IDs.
- It is designed to reduce paperwork and manual intervention while improving transparency and efficiency in handling dormant EPF accounts.
- **Significance:**
  - The portal is important for resolving about 31.83 lakh inoperative accounts, many of which have remained unused for over 20 years.
  - It mainly supports members who retired after the age of 55 or whose accounts became inactive after three years without contributions.
  - With features like auto-mode processing and Aadhaar authentication, it strengthens EPFO's efforts, which already settled a record 8.31 crore claims in FY26.

