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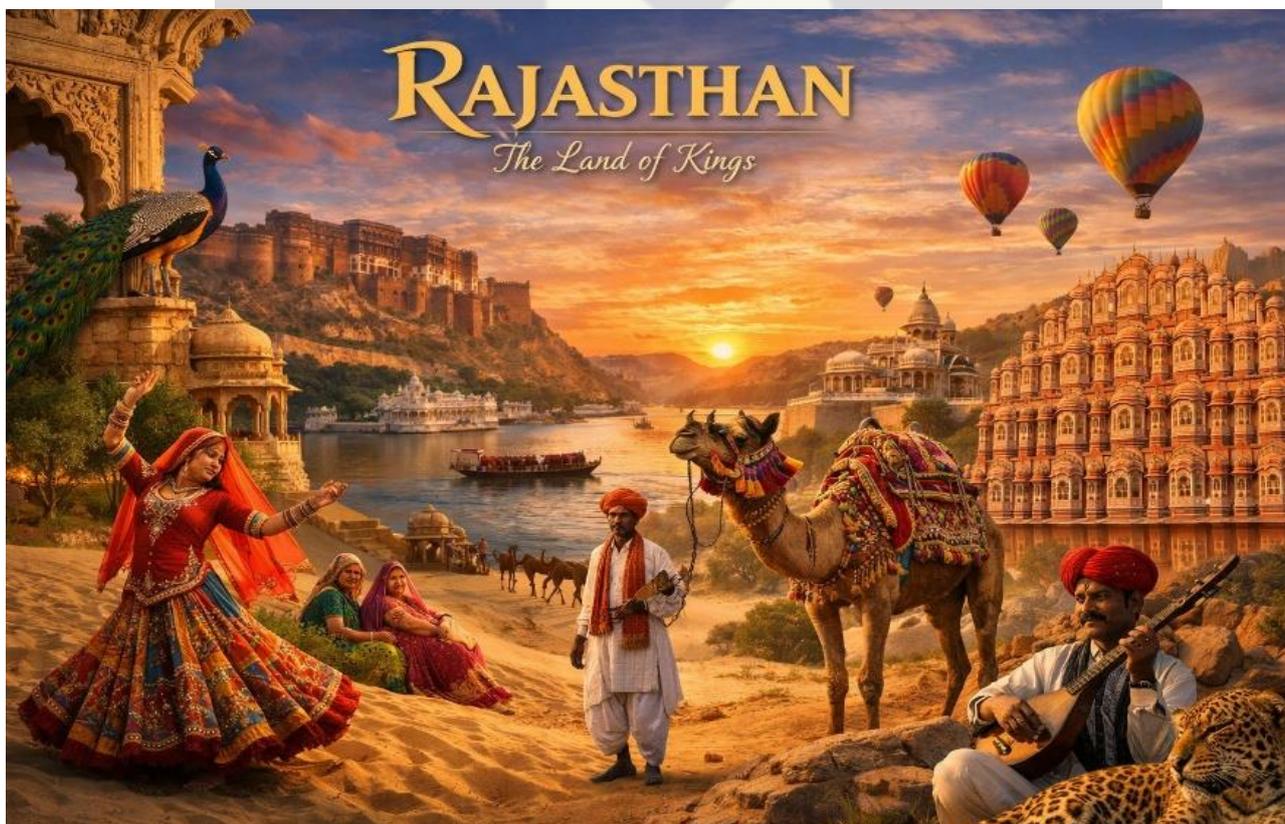


Major Projects Operated by the Central Ministry of Tourism in Rajasthan



Why in News?

- Recently, Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, provided information in the Lok Sabha regarding the major projects being implemented by the Central Ministry of Tourism in Rajasthan.



Key Points:

- The Central Ministry of Tourism's Swadesh Darshan scheme has been revamped as Swadesh Darshan 2.0, which aims to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations based on a tourist and destination-centric approach.

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Details of projects sanctioned under various schemes of the Ministry in Rajasthan:

Serial Number	Project Name	Approved amount (in ₹ crores)
1.	Swadesh Darshan 1.0	283.47 crore
	i. Development of Sambhar Lake town and other locations in Jaipur district (September, 2015)	50.01 crore
	ii. Integrated development of Govind Dev Ji Temple (Jaipur), Khatu Shyam Ji Temple (Sikar), and Nathdwara Temple (Rajsamand) (September, 2016)	75.80 crore
	iii. Development of the Spiritual Circuit: Churu (Salasar Balaji) – Jaipur (Shri Samod ke Balaji, Ghat ke Balaji, Bandhe ke Balaji) – Viratnagar (Bijak, Jain Nasiyan, Ambika Temple) – Bharatpur (Kaman area) – Dholpur (Machkund) – Dausa (Mehandipur Balaji) – Chittorgarh (Sanwaliyaji Temple) (March 2017)	87.05 crore
	iv. Development of Heritage Circuit: Rajsamand (Kumbhalgarh Fort) – Jaipur (Facade Illumination in Jaipur and Nahargarh Fort) – Jhalawar (Gagron Fort) – Chittorgarh (Chittorgarh Fort) – Jaisalmer (Jaisalmer Fort) – Hanumangarh (Gogamedi) – Udaipur (Pratap Gaurav Kendra) – Dholpur (Bagh-e-Nilofar and Old Cantonment) – Nagaur (Meera Bai Memorial, Merta) – Tonk (Sunheri Kothi) (June, 2017)	70.61 crore

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2.	Swadesh Darshan 2.0	180.83 crore
	i. Development of Keshavraipatan Temple (Bundi) (February 2024, revised June 2025)	21.65 crore
	ii. Development work at Shri Khatu Shyam Ji Temple (Sikar) (March, 2025)	87.87 crore
	iii. Development work at Shri Karni Mata Temple (Bikaner) (July 2025)	22.58 crore
	iv. Development of Malaseri Dungri, (Bhilwara) (July, 2025)	48.73 crore
3.	PRASHAD Scheme - Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive	32.64 crore
	i. Integrated Development of Pushkar (Revised in September, 2019)	32.64 crore
4.	Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI)	145.92 crore
	i. Development of Amer - Nahargarh and surrounding areas (November, 2024)	49.31 crore
	ii. Development of Jal Mahal (Jaipur) (November 2024)	96.61 crore
5.	Assistance to Central Agencies (ACA)	42.33 crore
	i. Development of border tourism at Shri Tanot complex in Jaisalmer sector.	17.68 crore
	ii. Installation of a musical fountain and a water-screen-based multimedia projection show at Naval Sagar Lake in Bundi.	9.26 crore
	iii. Ajmer Railway Station	5.52 crore
	iv. Jaipur Railway Station	4.88 crore
	v. Chittorgarh Railway Station	4.99 crore
Total Central Assistance - ₹685.19 crore		

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Auction of India's First Hard Rock Block, Bhatikheda

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Mines completed the auction process for Bhatikheda, India's first hard rock block.



Key Points:

- Bhatikheda, famous for its rich reserves of Rare Earth Elements (REE), is located in Siwana, Balotra district, and is also India's first hard rock block.
- It is noteworthy that after research by the Geological Survey of India and the Atomic Minerals Directorate, a 1.34 sq km block in Bhatikheda, Siwana, was identified for auction.
- The microgranite found in this area contains abundant quantities of rare earth minerals.
- According to the Ministry of Mines, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and the Atomic Minerals Directorate (AMD) have conducted a total of 47 detailed geological surveys in these areas so far.

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- These surveys have specifically identified Siwana tehsil of Balotra as a significant area for Rare Earth Elements.

Certified Reserves:

- The rare and strategic minerals present in Siwana (Balotra) include Thorium (81.8 million tonnes), Neodymium (67.6 million tonnes), Tantalum (6.8 million tonnes), and Zirconium (52.5 million tonnes).
- In addition, extremely important minerals such as Niobium, Rhenium, Radium, and Rubidium have also been found in this region.

Strategic Importance:

- These minerals play a crucial role in nuclear energy, electronics, defense, space research, high-tech manufacturing, and the production of electric vehicles.
- **Note:** Currently, China accounts for more than 60 percent of the world's rare earth mining and more than 90 percent of the processing (refining).
- **Dependence on imports:** India imports 80-90 percent of its demand for rare earth magnets and related raw materials from China.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Rare Earth Corridor:** The Union Budget 2026-27, announced the creation of a 'Dedicated Rare Earth Corridor' in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to boost mining and processing.
- **National Critical Mineral Mission:** In January 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the 'National Critical Mineral Mission' (NCMM) with a total outlay of ₹34,300 crore for seven years. The mission aims to strengthen India's self-reliance in the field of critical minerals.

Union Budget – Potential Benefits for Rajasthan from 2026-27

Why in News?

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2026-27, in Parliament on February 1, 2026.

UNION BUDGET - 2026-27
Potential benefits for Rajasthan

- Increased infrastructural development
- Boosted tourism sector
- Enhanced rail and road connectivity
- Growth in solar energy projects
- Empowerment of local industries

Key Points:

- Note:** This was the ninth consecutive budget presented by Nirmala Sitharaman as the Union Finance Minister. Also, for the first time in Indian history, the budget was presented on a Sunday.

Potential Benefits for Rajasthan:

- The budget includes provisions for strengthening 200 industrial clusters across the country, which will also benefit Rajasthan. Liquidity support, credit guarantees, and transaction settlement programs will boost small-scale industries in cities like Jaipur, Alwar, Bhilwara, Udaipur, and Kota.
- The establishment of Mega Textile Parks on a challenge mode basis, along with the Textile Labour Incentive Scheme, will benefit the textile industry in Bhilwara, Balotra, Jaipur, and Jodhpur.
- Funding from Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) for infrastructure development in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities with a population of over 5 lakh will benefit cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, Ajmer, and Bikaner in the state.
- **Promotion of Municipal Bonds:** A proposal to provide an incentive of ₹100 crore for issuing single bonds exceeding ₹1000 crore by large cities will help in financing urban infrastructure.
- The Budget 2026-27 provides for an exemption from customs duty on the import of sodium antimonate, used in solar glass manufacturing. This announcement will increase new investment and employment opportunities in solar energy in the desert areas of Rajasthan, a leading state in solar energy, including Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jodhpur, and Bikaner.
- The Budget 2026-27 expands on the success of the Lakhpati Didi Yojana with a provision for the establishment of 'SHE-Marts'. The objective is to provide a direct market for products made by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and eliminate intermediaries. This announcement will expand the contribution of women to the workforce in Rajasthan.

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- The campaign to build hostels for female students in every district of the country will make education more accessible. Hostels for female students will thus be opened in all 41 districts of Rajasthan.
- The state government has recently implemented the Semiconductor Policy, AI-ML Policy, and Data Center Policy. Taking advantage of the incentives provided in the budget for the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, AI Mission, National Quantum Mission, Electronic Component Manufacturing Scheme, Data Centers, and Cloud Services, Rajasthan will become a hub for semiconductors and data centers.
- The Union Budget 2026-27 announced the 'SME Development Fund' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Top-up' to promote Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These announcements will pave the way for small industries in Rajasthan to become global business houses.
- For the first time, an amount exceeding ₹10,228 crore has been allocated for railway development in Rajasthan in the 2026-27 budget. This amount is approximately 15 times more than the budget allocation for the period 2009-14.

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NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>State Brand Ambassador of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban): K.K. Gupta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recently, the Rajasthan government appointed K.K. Gupta, the state coordinator of Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) and former chairman of Dungarpur Municipal Council, as the State Brand Ambassador of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).K.K. Gupta is the former chairman of Dungarpur Municipal Council and is known for the 'Dungarpur Model', which resulted in Dungarpur becoming the first open defecation-free (ODF) city in Rajasthan.Notably, K.K. Gupta has previously served as the state's sanitation brand ambassador twice.
2.	<p>Surajkund International Crafts Mela: Rajasthan Participates for the First Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rajasthan is participating for the first time in the Surajkund International Crafts Mela - 2026 (39th edition) being held in Faridabad, Haryana.'Rajasthan Chowk' has been set up by the Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation (RAJSICO) at this fair. Rajasthan's art and culture are being showcased here.20 stalls have been set up at this fair to display Rajasthan's handicrafts and ODOP (One District One Product) products.

3.

Namita Gokhale - Bharatendu Harishchandra Lifetime Achievement Award

- Renowned author and co-founder of the Jaipur Literature Festival, Namita Gokhale, was recently honored with the 'Bharatendu Harishchandra Lifetime Achievement Award'.
- She received this award during the second edition of the Banaras Literature Festival (BLF) 2026.
- Namita Gokhale is known for her first novel 'Paro: Dreams of Passion', which is considered a cult classic. She also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2021, for her novel 'Things to Leave Behind'.

4.

Former Cabinet Minister Hem Singh Bhadana Passes Away

- Recently, senior BJP leader and former Cabinet Minister of Rajasthan, Hem Singh Bhadana, passed away.
- He served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Thanagazi constituency in Alwar twice (2008 and 2013).
- He served as the Cabinet Minister for Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs in the Vasundhara Raje government (2013-2018).

5.

Dr. Mukesh Pancholi - NEXTGEN ICON AWARD 2026

- Recently, the renowned educationist Dr. Mukesh Pancholi was honored with the prestigious 'NEXTGEN ICON AWARD 2026'.
- This award was presented during Rajasthan's largest corporate and iconic awards show, NextGen Icon Awards 2026.
- He was given this honor for his innovation, outstanding contributions to the education sector, and for empowering students.

6.

Cognivera Polo Cup-2026

- Recently, in the final of the Cognivera Polo Cup-2026 held in Jaipur, Team Jaipur defeated V Polo by a score of 5-2 to win the trophy.
- For the winning team Jaipur, Lance Watson scored 4 goals and Padmanabh Singh scored one.
- A 7-foot-tall trophy was unveiled for this cup, making it the tallest polo trophy in the world. Weight - 65 kg. It cost Rs. 10 lakh to make and was crafted by Ramsharan Jangid of Jaipur.

7.

5th Soft Hockey Championship: Jaipur

- **Venue:** Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Jaipur.
- **Organizer:** Amateur Soft Hockey Federation of India.
- **Winner:** In the Senior Men's category final, Rajasthan defeated Maharashtra 5-3 to win the gold medal.
- In the Senior Women's category, Puducherry defeated Rajasthan 3-0 to win the gold medal.

8.

MoU between GMDC and Mohanlal Sukhadia University

- A significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed between Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation (GMDC) and the Department of Geology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University (MLSU), Udaipur, for mineral exploration and academic collaboration.
- **Objective:** To work jointly in the field of exploration and research of mineral resources.
- Under the agreement, mineral exploration and mining efforts have already begun in the Ambaji region.

9.

State's First e-Service Center: Pali

- As part of the digitization of judicial functions, Rajasthan's first e-Service Center is being established in the Pali District Court complex.
- Through this center, ordinary citizens and lawyers will have easy access to judicial processes, case status, and digital documents. Free services will be provided at these e-service centers.

Training Program on Hydrological Modelling: CAZRI, Jodhpur

- A training program on Hydrological Modelling was organized by the National Institute of Hydrology (NIH) at the Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI), Jodhpur, from February 2 to 6, 2026.
- **Topic:** Theoretical and practical training on hydrological modelling using the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT).



Economic Developments

Orange Economy: Union Budget 2026-27

Why in News?

- The Union Finance Minister emphasized the Orange Economy (Creative Economy) in the Union Budget 2026. He also highlighted its role in generating employment, fostering innovation, boosting exports, and enhancing soft power.



Key Points:

What is the Orange Economy?

- **Origin:** The term 'Orange Economy' was coined in 2013, by former Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez and Felipe Buitrago in their book "The Orange Economy: An Infinite Opportunity".
- It refers to knowledge-based economic activities where ideas and creativity are transformed into cultural goods and services. Their value is primarily determined by intellectual property.

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- Unlike traditional manufacturing-based growth, the sectors included in this economy derive their value from ideas, artistic expression, and cultural capital rather than physical goods.
- **Key Sectors:** This includes audiovisual media (film, TV), live music concerts, the gaming industry, design, theatre, etc.

Key Announcements of Budget 2026-27

- **AVGC (Animation, VFX, Gaming, and Comics) Sector:** Assistance will be provided to the Mumbai-based Indian Institute of Creative Technology (IICT) to establish AVGC content creator labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges.
- **Strengthening Design Education:** A new National Institute of Design (NID) will be established in the eastern region through a 'Challenge Competition'.
- Currently, India has 7 NIDs, which have been granted the status of Institutes of National Importance.

Economies Classified by Other Colors

- **Green Economy:** Sustainable, low-carbon, and energy-efficient industries
- **White Economy:** Health and social care sectors
- **Blue Economy:** Marine and ocean-based activities
- **Silver Economy:** Services related to the aging population and senior citizens

Current Status of the Orange Economy

- Globally, the creative economy is estimated to generate over \$2 trillion in annual revenue and create approximately 50 million jobs.
- According to UNCTAD estimates, creative industries contribute between 0.5% and over 7% to countries' GDP.
- India's creative industry is valued at \$30 billion, and its employment share accounts for approximately 8% of India's working population.

16th Finance Commission Report

Why in News?

- The Union Finance Minister presented the 16th Finance Commission report in the Lok Sabha. The 16th Finance Commission was constituted in 2023. Its chairman is Dr. Arvind Panagariya, former Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog.



Key Points:

- The central government has accepted the commission's main recommendations. These recommendations will be implemented from the financial year 2026-27 to 2030-31.

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Transfer criteria between states by the Finance Commission

Criteria	15th Finance Commission (2021–26)	16th Finance Commission (2026–31)
Income Distance	45%	42.5%
Population (2011)	15%	17.5%
Demographic Performance (efforts at population control)	12.5%	10%
Area	15%	10%
Forest Cover	10%	10%
Tax and Fiscal Reforms	2.5%	–
Contribution to GDP	–	10%
Total	100%	100%

Finance Commission

- The Finance Commission is a constitutional body (Article 280).
- **Formation:** It is constituted by the President every 5 years or earlier if needed.
- **Structure:** Chairman and 4 other members. All of them are appointed by the President for a specified period.
- As per Article 281, the Central Government lays the Finance Commission's report and the memorandum of action taken thereon before Parliament.

Key Recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission

- **Vertical Devolution:** The states' share in the divisible pool will remain 41%. This percentage is the same as that of the 15th Finance Commission.
- The divisible pool includes gross tax revenue. However, it excludes the cost of tax collection, cesses, and surcharges.
- **Horizontal Devolution:** This is the method of distributing the 41% share among the states.
- This time, the states' contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been made a new criterion.
- Less weightage has been given to the income difference between states and the area of the state.

- As a result of this change, the southern states are likely to receive a larger share.

Macroeconomic Situation and Fiscal Stability:

- States should limit their fiscal deficit to a maximum of 3% of their Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
- However, loans received by states under the Special Assistance Scheme for capital investment will not be included in this.

HOW STATES SHARE THE MONEY BAG

Total divisible pool of central taxes is up 86%, from ₹56 lakh crore under the 15th Finance Commission to ₹104 lakh crore under the 16th. While all states will get more funds in absolute terms, their shares have shifted—mostly marginally. On this front, only one of the five southern states stands to lose

State	15th FC	16th FC	Change in share (% point)	State	15th FC	16th FC	Change in share (% point)
UP	17.93	17.62	-0.31	Kerala	1.94	2.38	0.44
Bihar	10.06	9.95	-0.11	Telangana	2.13	2.17	0.04
MP	7.89	7.35	-0.54	Punjab	1.79	2.00	0.21
West Bengal	7.52	7.22	-0.31	Haryana	1.08	1.36	0.28
Maharashtra	6.13	6.44	0.31	Arunachal	1.76	1.35	-0.41
Rajasthan	5.98	5.93	-0.05	Uttarakhand	1.1	1.14	0.04
Odisha	4.63	4.42	-0.21	Himachal	0.8	0.91	0.11
Andhra	4.11	4.22	0.11	Tripura	0.7	0.64	-0.06
Karnataka	3.64	4.13	0.49	Meghalaya	0.77	0.63	-0.14
Tamil Nadu	4.19	4.10	-0.09	Manipur	0.72	0.63	-0.09
Gujarat	3.4	3.76	0.36	Mizoram	0.5	0.56	0.06
Jharkhand	3.31	3.36	0.05	Nagaland	0.57	0.48	-0.09
Chhattisgarh	3.41	3.30	-0.11	Goa	0.39	0.37	-0.03
Assam	3.13	3.26	0.13	Sikkim	0.39	0.34	-0.06

Note: FC is short for Finance Commission; figures for 15th & 16th FC are in %

Textile Sector: Union Budget 2026-27

Why in News?

- An integrated program for the textile sector was announced in the Union Budget 2026-27.



Key Points:

- **Objective:** To strengthen the entire textile sector value chain, from fiber to fashion and from rural industries to global markets.

Five Sub-Components of the Integrated Program

- **National Fiber Scheme:** This aims to achieve self-reliance in the fiber sector.
- The scheme will support natural fibers such as silk, wool, and jute, as well as man-made and new-age fibers.
- **Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme:** This component aims to modernize traditional textile clusters through capital assistance for machinery, technology upgrades, and the establishment of common testing and certification centers.

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- **National Handloom and Handicrafts Program:** Existing schemes for handlooms and handicrafts will be subsumed and strengthened under this integrated national program.
- **Tex-Eco Initiative:** This aims to promote globally competitive and environmentally friendly textile and apparel manufacturing.
- **Samarth 2.0:** This aims to modernize the textile skills ecosystem through close collaboration with industry and academic institutions.

Other Initiatives Announced for the Textile Sector

- **Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative:** This initiative will strengthen Khadi, handlooms, and handicrafts. It will also focus on global market linkages and branding, etc.
- It will also support the 'One District One Product' (ODOP) initiative.
- **Mega Textile Parks and Technical Textiles:** This initiative will promote growth in the technical textiles sector. This is a high-potential sector for critical applications such as industrial, medical, defense, and infrastructure.

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Bharat VISTAAR



Why in News?

- The Union Budget 2026-27, proposed the launch of Bharat VISTAAR for agricultural development.



Key Points:

- Bharat VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) will be a multilingual artificial intelligence tool.
- It will integrate the AgriStack portal and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) package of practices on agricultural methods with an AI system.
- AgriStack is envisioned as a digital public infrastructure for agriculture. It is based on the India Digital Ecosystem Architecture-2.0.

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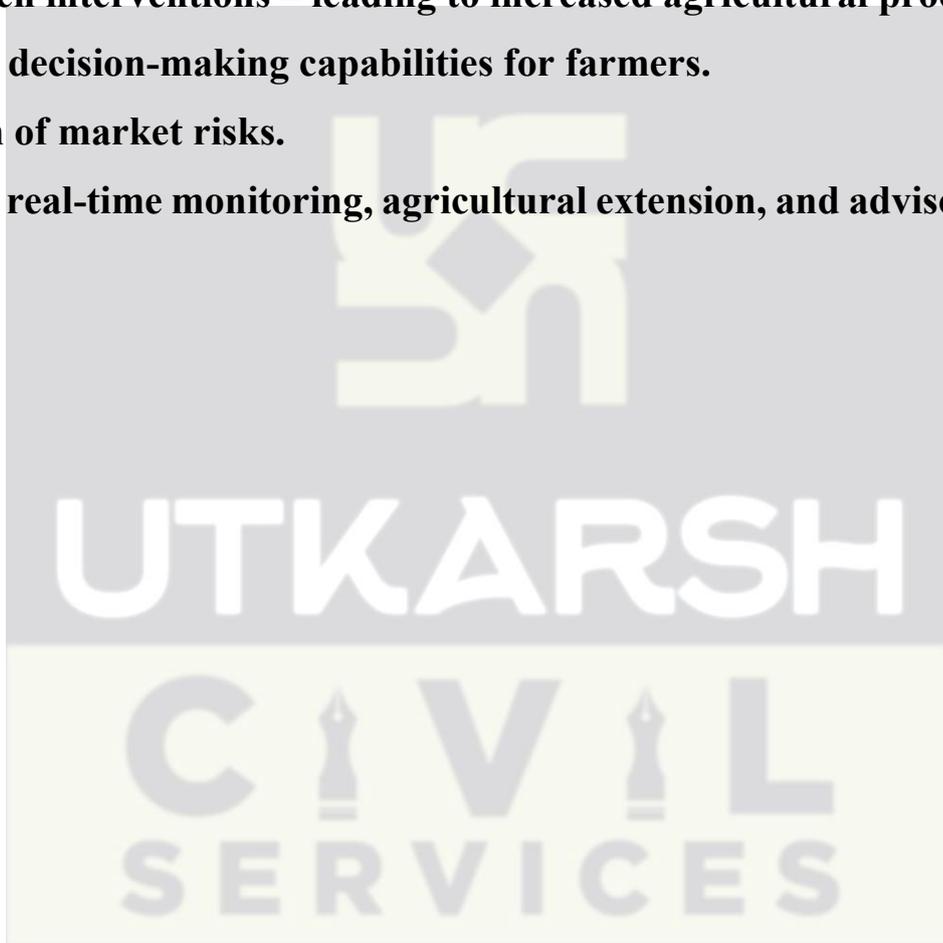
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- It will function as a decentralized repository, facilitating the discovery and availability of agriculture-related content, best practices, and agricultural skills across various private and public platforms.

Significance:

- Data-driven interventions – leading to increased agricultural productivity.
- Improved decision-making capabilities for farmers.
- Reduction of market risks.
- Improved real-time monitoring, agricultural extension, and advisory services.



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INTERNATIONAL



Donetsk



Why in News?

- The issue of the Donetsk region has emerged as the most complex in the current phase of the Russia-Ukraine peace talks.



Key Points:

Donetsk region – Additional information:

- **Location:** Eastern Ukraine
- **Borders:** Sea of Azov to the south.
- It shares a border with Russia to the east.
- **Resources:** Coal, shale gas, salt deposits (Yuzivska gas field)



Rafah Crossing



Why in News?

- Israel has partially reopened the Rafah border crossing with Gaza.



Key Points:

- **Geographical Location:** Situated between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. It borders Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.
- The Rafah crossing does not pass through Israel, therefore it is considered the lifeline of Gaza.
- There are only two other crossing points for entry and exit to the Gaza Strip, and both are under Israeli control.
 1. Erez – Located in northern Gaza.
 2. Kerem Shalom – Located in southern Gaza.



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⌚ SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 🌡️

'Biopharma SHAKTI' Initiative: Union Budget 2026-27

📣 Why in News?

- The Union Finance Minister announced Biopharma SHAKTI (Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation). This initiative focuses on establishing India as a global biomanufacturing hub.



📌 Key Points:

Biopharma SHAKTI

- **Objective:** To make India a global hub for biopharmaceutical manufacturing. The main focus is on creating a robust ecosystem for the domestic production of biologics and biosimilars.

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- **Biologics:** These are medicines made from natural and living sources such as animal and plant cells and microorganisms. These include vaccines, blood and blood components, somatic cells, gene therapy, proteins, etc.
- **Biosimilars:** These are copies of biologics. They are as effective as the original biological product and have no significant clinical differences.
- **Funding:** Provision of ₹10,000 crore for the next 5 years.

Strategy:

- Three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs) will be established, and seven existing institutions will be upgraded.
- A network of over 1,000 accredited clinical trial centers will be created across the country.
- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) will be strengthened to meet global standards. This will involve the appointment of experts and a dedicated scientific review cadre to reduce the time taken for drug approvals.

India's Bioeconomy

- Bioeconomy refers to an economic system that uses renewable resources such as plants, animals, and microorganisms for the production of food, energy, and industrial goods.
- It contributes 4.25% to the country's GDP.
- India's bio-economy is driven by four main sub-sectors: bio-industrial (47%), biopharma (35%), bio-agriculture (8%), and bio-research (9%).