

Daily Current Affairs

Date : 20 February, 2026



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Rajasthan at the India Skills Regional Competition

Why in News?

- 17 candidates from Rajasthan qualified for the national stage at the India Skills 2025-26 regional competition (Western Region).



Key Points:

- The 17 selected participants from Rajasthan will represent Rajasthan at the national-level competition, the India Skills National Competition, where the winning candidates will have the opportunity to represent India at WorldSkills 2026 (Shanghai).
- State-Level Finals:** The 63 best-performing candidates at the state-level finals, held in January 2026, were selected to represent Rajasthan at the regional stage.

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Rajasthan's performance at the regional level (Western Region):

- 9 gold medals (₹75,000 each)
- 8 silver medals (₹50,000 each)
- 10 bronze medals (₹25,000 each)
- 8 Medallions of Excellence.

Other important points:

- **IndiaSkills Competition:** The IndiaSkills Competition is organized by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and is the largest skill competition platform in the country.
- **Nodal Agency in Rajasthan:** The state nodal agency for skill development in Rajasthan is the Rajasthan Skills and Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC).

Facts for Prelims:

- **India Skills – 2025:** State-Level Competition
- **Organized by:** Rajasthan Skills and Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC) from January 20 to 24, 2026.
- This competition was organized at the state level in 10 educational institutions.
- **Objective:** To identify skilled youth in professional fields and provide them with training and mentorship.

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Current Status of Tax Revenue in Rajasthan

Why in News?

- Efficient financial management in Rajasthan has resulted in significant and sustained growth in the state government's tax revenue.



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Key Points:

- **Tax Revenue:** According to the Budget Study 2026-27, the state's own tax revenue was ₹87,347 crore in 2022-23, which increased by 7.72 percent to ₹94,086 crore in 2023-24.
- **Current Status:** Rajasthan's tax revenue increased by 9.80 percent to ₹1,03,310 crore in 2024-25.
- The state government has set a target of ₹1,62,668 crore for its own tax revenue in the Budget Estimates 2026-27, an increase of approximately 17.41 percent from the previous financial year. Additionally, this projected growth is approximately 72.9 percent compared to the year 2023-24.

Other Important Points:

Taxes Imposed by the State Government:

- **State Goods and Services Tax (SGST):** This is an indirect tax levied by the state government on intrastate supplies of goods and services. It is part of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, which was implemented nationwide on July 1, 2017.
- **State Excise Duty:** This is a tax levied by the state government on certain goods manufactured or produced within the state. It is primarily levied on products such as alcohol, narcotics, and opium.
- **Stamp Duty:** This is a tax levied by the state government on the transfer of property or the execution of legal documents (e.g., sale deeds, lease deeds).
- **Registration Fee:** This is a service fee paid to the government for officially registering documents in government records.

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- **Land Revenue:** This is an annual or periodic tax levied by the government on land owned by an individual or its produce. It has traditionally been a major source of income for state governments.
- **Sales Tax:** This is a tax levied on the retail price of goods at the time of sale. After the implementation of GST in India, it is now applicable only on selected products (such as petrol, diesel, and liquor), which are outside the scope of GST.



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NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>'Killing Distractions: The Permanent Fix' – Book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Jaipur-based author Paritosh Sharma's book, 'Killing Distractions: The Permanent Fix,' achieved the No. 1 bestseller status in its category on the online shopping platform Amazon.■ 'Killing Distractions: The Permanent Fix' is a practical guide that offers a permanent solution to dealing with distractions in the digital age.■ This book focuses on building a lasting internal framework through awareness, not just short-term hacks or digital detoxes.
2.	<p>Rajasthan at the 'Special Olympics Bharat National Athletics Championships'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Athletes from Rajasthan won a total of 27 medals (7 gold, 10 silver, and 10 bronze) at the 'Special Olympics Bharat National Athletics Championships'.■ The championship was held from February 2 to 7, 2026, at Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU), Rohtak (Haryana).

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3.

Rajasthan in the 'Special Olympics Bharat' National Hockey Tournament

- A state-level selection trial and camp for the 'Special Olympics Bharat' National Hockey Tournament was held on January 13, 2026, at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur.
- The hockey team selected at this camp will participate in the 'First Special Olympics Bharat National Hockey Championship' to be held in Faridabad from February 22 to 25, 2026.
- Special Olympics Bharat (SO Bharat) is a recognized national sports federation for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The organization works to provide physical fitness, self-confidence, and social acceptance to individuals with intellectual disabilities through sports training and competitions.

4.

Maharana Pratap and Guru Vashishtha Awards

- Recently, Rajasthan's Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore announced, that players and coaches who have brought glory to the state and country at the national and international levels will be honored with the Maharana Pratap and Guru Vashishtha Awards.
- **Maharana Pratap Award:** The Rajasthan State Sports Council honors athletes with the "Maharana Pratap Award" for their outstanding achievements at the national and international levels. The Maharana Pratap Award was established in 1982-83. Selected athletes receive a cash prize of ₹5 lakh, a bronze statue of Maharana Pratap, a blazer with a tie, and a citation.
- **Guru Vashishtha Award:** The Rajasthan State Sports Council honors sports coaches who prepare talented athletes from the state to play at the national and international levels with the Guru Vashishtha Award. The Guru Vashishtha Award was established in 1985-86. The award includes a cash prize of ₹5 lakh, a brass statue of Guru Vashishtha, a blazer with a tie, and a citation.

5.

Rajasthan's Second DIAMOnDS Lab

- Rajasthan's second DIAMOnDS Lab (Department of Health Research-All India Medical Research and Diagnostic Studies) has been established at the Acharya Tulsi Cancer Research Centre (Sardar Patel Medical College) in Bikaner.
- Inaugurated by Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister of Law and Justice.
- This state-of-the-art laboratory, established in collaboration with the Department of Health Research (DHR) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), will ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment selection through modern cancer screening techniques.

6.

Heavy Metal Testing Lab

- To address the problem of contaminated water and ensure water quality, Heavy Metal Testing Labs will be established in Hanumangarh and Sriganganagar in Rajasthan.

CIVIL
SERVICES

NATIONAL

Food Corporation of India (FCI)

Why in News?

- The Food Corporation of India and the World Food Programme (WFP) have signed an agreement for the supply of rice. Its purpose is to support global humanitarian operations aimed at combating hunger.

Key Points:

World Food Programme (WFP)

- **Established:** 1961
- It is the food-aid branch of the United Nations. It is the world's largest humanitarian aid organization combating hunger and promoting food security.

Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- **Established:** It is a statutory body established under the Food Corporations Act 1964.
- **Main functions:** Grain procurement, grain storage, buffer stock management, quality control, etc.



Bhirrana Site

Why in News?

- New research suggests that the Indus Valley Civilization may be much older than previously estimated.

Key Points:

- Experts studying pottery and animal remains at Bhirrana in northern India believe the Indus Valley Civilization may be about 8,000 years old.
- If confirmed, this would mean its origins date back well before the era of Egypt's first pharaohs.
 - Historians have ranked the great civilizations of the ancient world in a chronological order, with Mesopotamia first, then Egypt with its pyramids and pharaohs, and the Indus Valley Civilization.

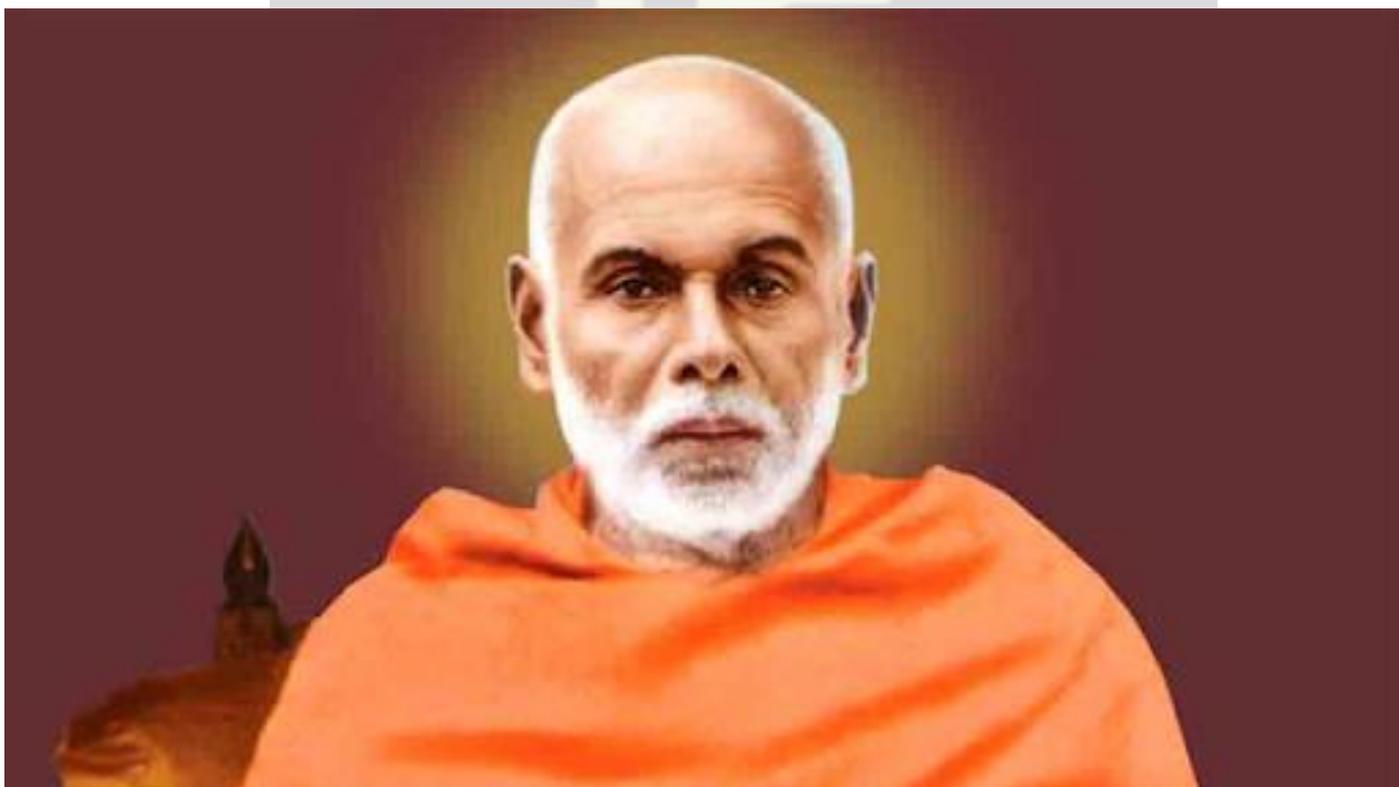
Indus Valley Civilization

- The Harappan Civilization is considered one of the world's oldest civilizations, flourishing between approximately 2600 and 1900 BCE.
- It developed along the banks of the Indus River, making it also known as the Indus Valley Civilization.
- It covered vast areas of present-day Pakistan and northwest India.
- It is identified as a Bronze Age civilization because many objects made of copper alloys have been found from here.

Narayana Guru

Why in News?

- On February 19, 2026, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan formally released senior Congress leader and MP Shashi Tharoor's new book, "The Sage Who Reimagined Hinduism: The Life, Lessons, and Legacy of Sri Narayana Guru."



Key Points:

- This biography, published by Aleph Book Company, explores the life of the 19th-century Kerala-born social reformer and spiritual leader who fought against caste discrimination.

Sri Narayana Guru:

- Birth:** Sri Narayana was born in 1856, in Chempazhanthi, Kerala, into the Ezhava caste ('Avarna' according to social norms).

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■ **Philosophy:**

- He coined the famous slogan "One Caste, One Religion, One God" (Oru Jati, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu).
- He opposed caste discrimination and championed equality, education, and social upliftment.
- **Aruvippuram Movement:** In 1888, he built a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Aruvippuram, protesting against the caste-based restrictions of the time.
- He was a prominent proponent of Advaita Vedanta, the monistic philosophy propounded by Adi Shankaracharya.

■ **Contributions to Social Reform and the National Movement:**

- **Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam:** In 1903, he established a charitable society, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, as its founder and president, to uplift the marginalized.
- **Sivagiri Tirtha:** In 1924, Sivagiri Tirtha was established to promote the virtues of cleanliness, education, devotion, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade.
- **Sivagiri Matha:** He founded the Sivagiri Matha in 1904.
- Sree Narayana Guru gave impetus to Vaikom Satyagraha (Travancore).
- **Literary works:** Advaita Deepika, Asrama, Atmavilasam, Daiva Dasakam, Thirukural, Thevarappathinkangal, Brahmavidya Panchakam etc.

Note: Sree Narayana Guru's Adhyaropa Darshanam (Darshanamla) explains the creation of the universe.

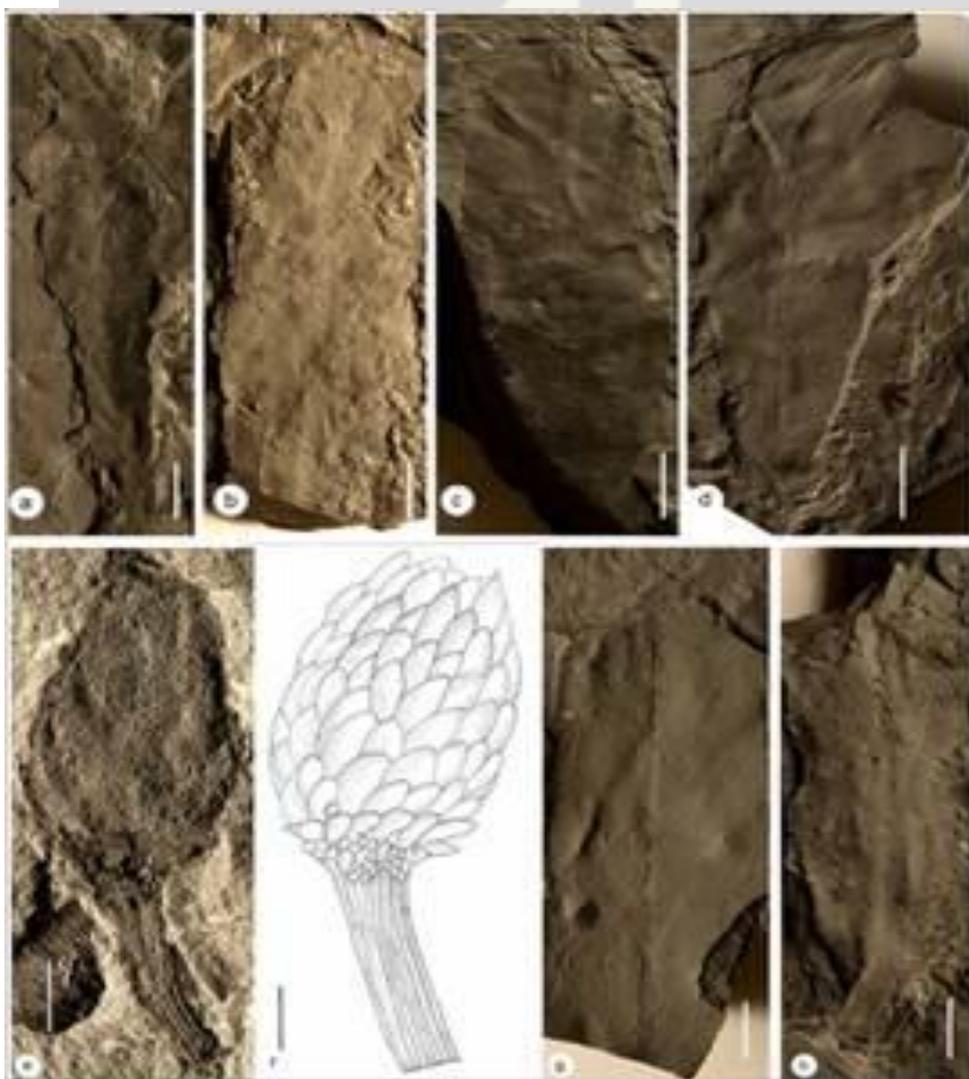
- **Death:** In the year 1928, Sree Narayana Guru took Samadhi in Kerala.

Geography and Geology

Jharkhand: Evidence of a Lost Ecosystem

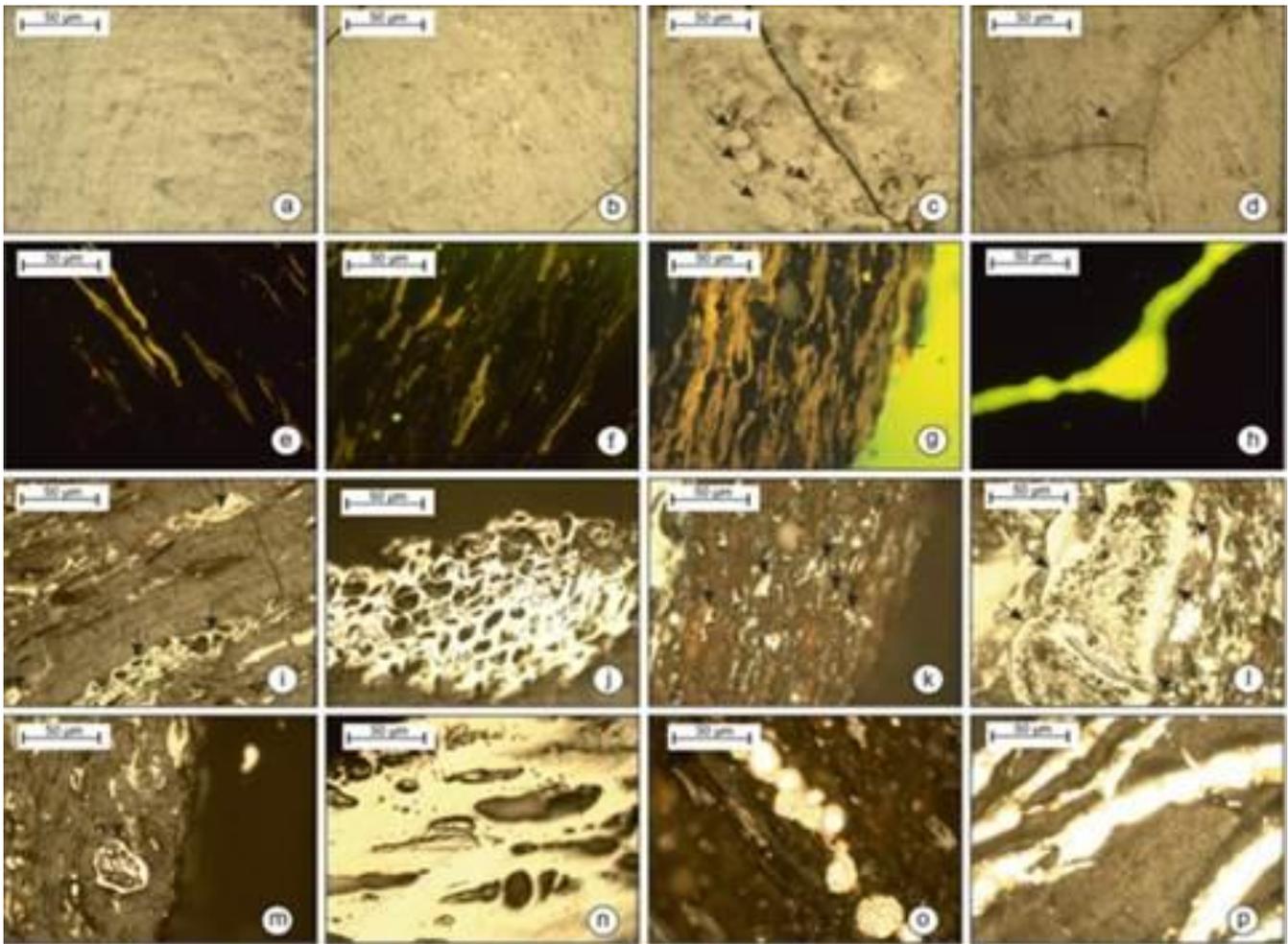
Why in News?

- Jharkhand's open-pit coal mines have revealed evidence of a lost ecosystem that existed long before humans or dinosaurs.
- Evidence buried in the mines has helped unearth the dense swampy forests and river networks that once covered India as part of the southern continent Gondwanaland about 300 million years ago.



Key Points:

- **Research Institute:** A new multidisciplinary study led by the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeontology (BSIP), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), has collected paleobotanical and geochemical evidence from the Ashoka coal mine in Jharkhand's northern Karanpura Basin.
- **Publication:** The findings, published in the International Journal of Coal Geology, provided valuable insights into the marine signatures as well as the sedimentation history of the coal-bearing sequence at the Ashoka Coal Mine in the North Karanpura Coalfield.
- **Findings:**
 1. This study reconstructs the Gondwana environment that was occasionally influenced by the ocean and may provide insights into how sea level rise due to climate change can reshape continental environments.
 2. The study revealed exceptional fossil records of ancient plants and microchemical signatures, which together provide a vivid picture of this lost ecosystem from the time when India, Antarctica, South Africa, South America, and Australia were part of Gondwanaland.
 3. Reconstruction of the Gondwana environment and associated paleoflora revealed the abundance of Glossopteris, an extinct group of seed plants that once dominated the southern continents.
 4. Fossils of at least 14 different species of Glossopteris and its closely related genera have been found preserved in the form of delicate leaf imprints, roots, spores and pollen grains in layers of shale in a coal mine.



■ Geochemical Evidence:

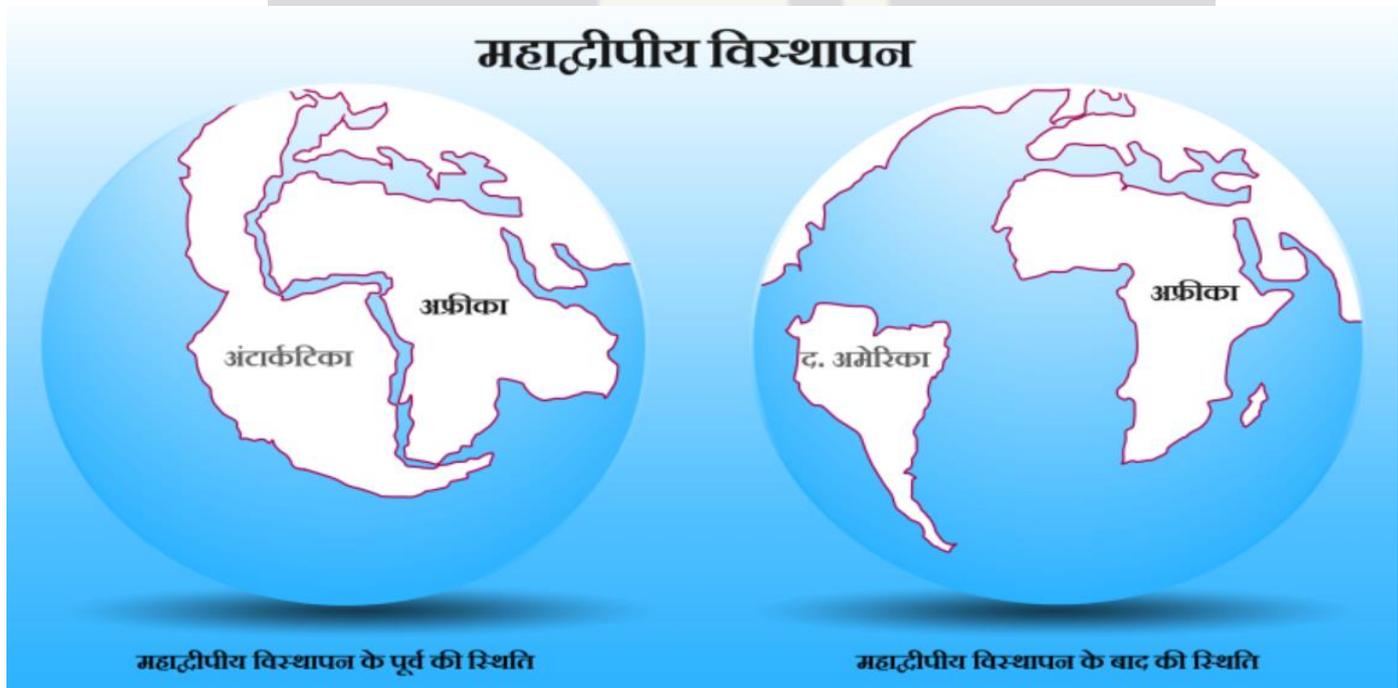
1. **High Framboidal Pyrite and Sulfur Content:** Microscopic examination of coal and shale particles revealed unusually high levels of framboidal pyrite (small, raspberry-shaped mineral clusters) and sulfur in the coal and shale. This indicates brackish conditions, which are unusual for coal deposits in this basin, and thus provides evidence of marine intrusion and its passage.
2. **Gas Chromatography:** Chemical analysis of organic molecules (using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry) suggests the possible entry of marine organisms into the Damodar Basin around 280-290 million years ago, indicating the passage of the Permian Sea from northeastern India to central India.

■ Significance:

1. The discovery of the first juvenile male cones of *Glossopteris* in the Damodar Basin is a discovery of global significance that could help scientists understand how these ancient trees originated.
2. By drawing parallels between past marine transgressions and current sea level rise associated with melting polar ice, this study may shed light on the implications of potential future marine encroachment on continental landscapes under ongoing global warming.

Other key points:

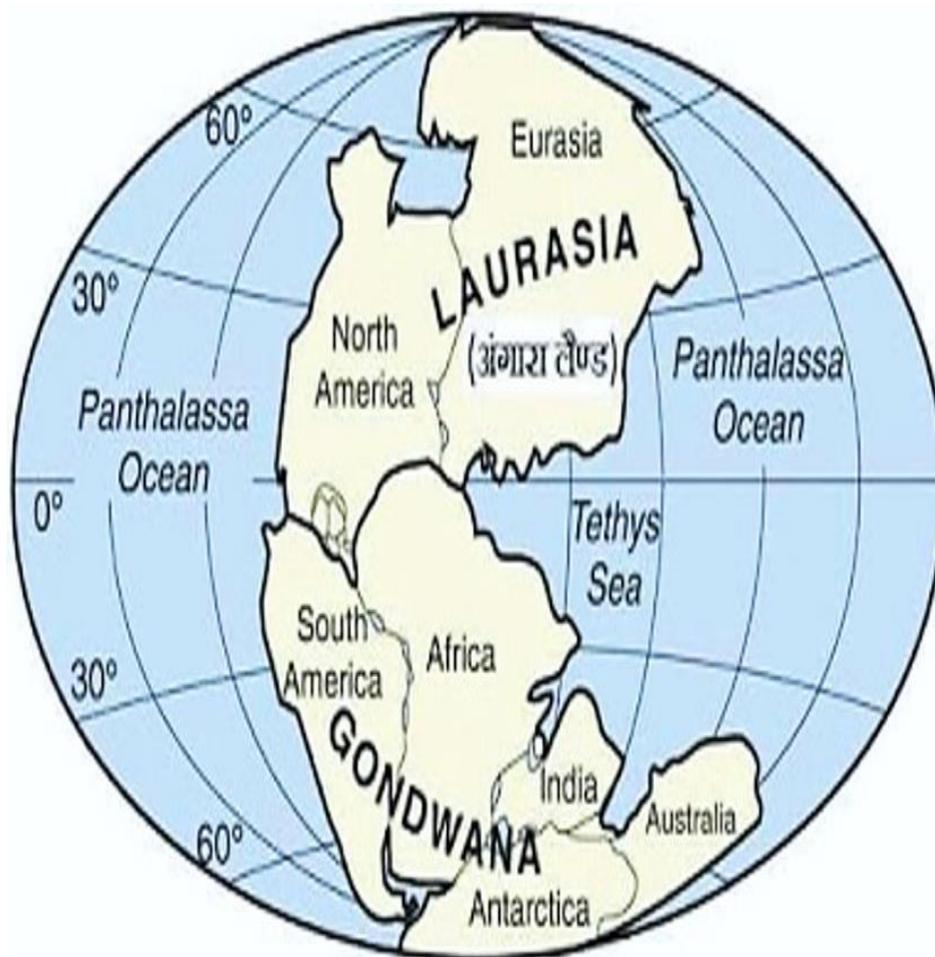
Continental Drift Theory:



■ Propounder: Prof. Alfred Wegener

Theories:

- **Pangaea and Panthalassa:** During the Carboniferous period, all the land masses were connected together as a single mass. This land mass was named Pangaea. Surrounding Pangaea was a vast body of water, which Wegener named Panthalassa.



- **Breakup of Pangaea:** The northern part of Pangaea represented Laurasia, and the southern part represented Gondwanaland. Later, Pangaea fractured, and the landmasses separated from each other. This separation occurred in the form of flows in two directions.
 - o The flow toward the north, or toward the equator, was caused by gravity and flotation, while the flow toward the west is believed to have been caused by the tidal forces of the Sun and Moon. As a result, the oceans and continents developed their present form.
- **"Zigzag Fit":** Geographical uniformity is found on both coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. Both coasts can be joined together. The eastern coast of North America can be joined with the Gulf of Guinea coast of South Africa. Wegener called this the "Zigzag Fit."

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- Based on geological evidence, similarities are found between the Caledonian and Hercynian mountain ranges on both coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. There is considerable similarity in the fossils and plant remains found in the rocks on both the coasts of the ocean.
- The presence of *Glossopteris* plant in India, South Africa, Falkland, Australia and Antarctica also proves that these land masses were once connected to each other.



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Economic Developments



Report on Digital Payments 10 Years After UPI Launch

Why in News?

- The Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, has released a report titled "Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of Incentive Scheme for Promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and Low-Value BHIM-UPI Transactions."

Key Points:

Highlights of the Report

- **UPI Dominance:** UPI has become the most preferred transaction medium (57%), surpassing cash (38%).
- **Global Leadership:** India accounts for nearly half (49%) of the world's total instant payment transactions.
- **Merchant Integration:** UPI adoption among merchants is 94%, primarily due to faster transactions and improved record-keeping.
- **Economic Impact:** Through cost savings and efficiencies, UPI contributed an estimated \$16.2 billion to India's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022.
- **International Expansion:** UPI and RuPay are expanding internationally. UPI is currently active in eight countries. These include the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Qatar, and Mauritius.

Significant Increase in Gender Budget Allocation

Why in News?

- The Union Budget 2026-27 saw a significant increase in the allocation for the Gender Budget, representing an 11.55% increase compared to the previous fiscal year.
- The share of the Gender Budget in the total Union Budget has increased to 9.37%.

Key Points:

Gender Budgeting in India

- **Meaning:** It is a system that ensures that government commitments to gender equality are translated into actual budgetary allocations.
- Its objective is not to create a separate specialized budget for gender-related concerns, but to view the government budget from a gender-sensitive perspective.
- **In India:** India formally adopted gender budgeting in 2004-05.
- India has implemented it at both the national and state levels. Gender budgeting cells have been established in various ministries and departments.
- **Parts of Gender Budgeting:**
 - Part A: Schemes with 100% allocation for women.
 - Part B: Schemes with at least 30% allocation for women.
 - Part C: It was included in the Union Budget 2024-25. The allocation here is less than 30%.
- **Significance:** It integrates gender concerns into planning, helps reduce structural inequalities, and promotes inclusive growth.



Rajya Sabha Elections

Why in News?

- The Election Commission of India has announced elections for 37 Rajya Sabha seats in 10 states.

Key Points:

Rajya Sabha Elections

- **Structure of the Rajya Sabha:** It is a permanent house. It is not dissolved.
 - However, one-third of its members retire every two years. Each member serves a six-year term.
- **Method of Election:** Indirect election, according to the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote (Article 80(4)).
- **Electoral College:** Representatives to the Rajya Sabha from each state and three union territories are elected by the elected members of the respective state/union territory legislative assembly.
- For the three union territories (National Capital Territory of Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu and Kashmir), the elected members of the respective legislative assemblies vote in the Rajya Sabha elections.

Sociology

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCAT): 23rd Foundation Day

Why in News?

- On February 19, 2026, the 23rd Foundation Day of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was celebrated at the Civil Services Officers Institute, Vinay Marg, New Delhi.



Key Points:

- Release:** The “NCST Handbook,” detailing the Commission’s functioning and responsibilities, and a magazine documenting the Commission’s various activities from July to December 2025 were released.
- Key Focus:** The Commission’s current Chairperson, Antar Singh Arya, emphasized forest rights, land rights, and education for tribal girls.

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National Commission for Scheduled Tribes:

- **Introduction and Constitutional Provisions:** The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) is a constitutional body established under Article 338 of the Constitution of India to protect the rights and interests of the Scheduled Castes and the Anglo-Indian community.
- **Existence:** The statutory National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes came into existence as a result of the passage of the 65th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1990.
 - The first Commission under the 65th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1990 was constituted on 12.03.1992, replacing the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commissioner, which was established under a 1987 resolution of the Ministry of Welfare.
 - The Constitution (Eighty-ninth Amendment) Act, 2003, with effect from 30.09.2003, replaced the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by:
 1. National Commission for Scheduled Castes
 2. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
 - The Rules of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes were framed by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and notified by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on February 20, 2004.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- **Composition:** Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and three other members.
- **Current Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes:** Antar Singh Arya
- **Appointment:** Appointed by the President
- **Term:** 3 years
- **Annual Report:** President

INTERNATIONAL

Vibrant Village Programme-II (VVP-II)

Why in News?

- On February 20, 2026, the Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation officially launched the Vibrant Village Programme-II (VVP-II) from Nathanpur village in Cachar district, Assam.
- This will expand its strategic scope beyond the China border to 1,954 strategic villages located along the borders of Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

CABINET DECISION 04-04-2025

Vibrant Villages Programme-II



- Cabinet approves Vibrant Villages Programme-II with 100% Centre funding with total outlay of Rs.6,839 crore
- Programme to ensure comprehensive development of villages located in blocks abutting international land borders
- To be implemented in select strategic villages in the States/UTs of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, J&K (UT), Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal



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Key Points:

- **Introduction:** This is a Central Sector Scheme (100% centrally funded) approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2025, in line with the vision of 'Developed India@2047' for 'Safe, Strong, and Prosperous Border Communities'.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Duration:** Financial Year 2024-25 to 2028-29.
- **Outlay:** ₹6,839 crore, including a proposed expenditure of ₹3 crore per village.
- **Coverage:** VVP-II will be implemented in 15 states and 2 union territories (UTs).
 - States and union territories covered under VVP-II: The program includes Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- **Thematic areas:** All-weather road connectivity, telecommunication connectivity, television connectivity, and electrification.
- **Objective:** The Vibrant Villages Programme-II is designed to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of border villages through a saturation-based and convergence-driven approach. The program focuses on improving essential infrastructure, increasing access to basic services, and creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Other important points:

Vibrant Village Programme-I (VVP-I):



- **Launched:** Launched on February 15, 2023, as a centrally sponsored scheme.
- **Objective:** Comprehensive development of 2,967 villages located in 46 blocks of 19 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and the Union Territory of Ladakh, bordering China.
- **Duration:** Financial year 2022-23 to 2025-26.

Project Vault

Why in News?

- Recently, the United States announced Project Vault.

Key Points:

- This is a supply chain security initiative. A strategic critical mineral repository is being established in the United States.
- This is an independently operated public-private partnership initiative. It will procure and store critical minerals and rare earth elements.
- Examples:** Gallium and cobalt.

Strait of Hormuz

Why in News?

- Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz for a few hours for a live fire drill amid talks with the United States in Geneva.

Key Points:

Strait of Hormuz

- Located between Oman and Iran.
- It is a vital sea route. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- At its narrowest point, it is only 33 km wide.
- **Strategic importance:** About 20–25% of the world's total oil trade passes through this strait.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Akash Missile System

Why in News?

- The Defense Minister flagged off the Akash III and IV Regimental Combat Systems. He also inaugurated the Mountain Fire Control Radar at Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). The event was held in Bengaluru.
- The Mountain Fire Control Radar is part of the Air Defense Fire Control Radar family.
- It is specially designed for operations in high altitude areas.

Key Points:

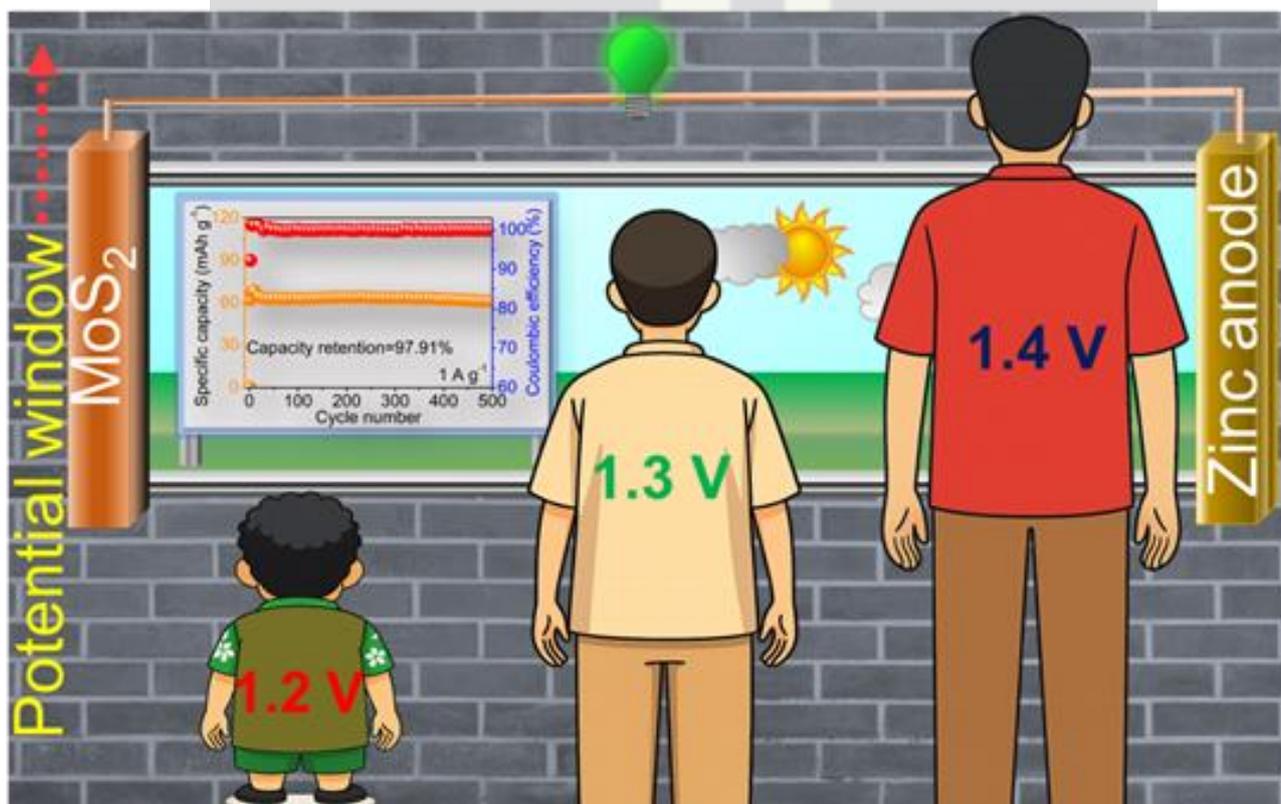
Akash Missile System

- **Type:** Medium-range surface-to-air air defense system.
- **Developer:** Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), in collaboration with BEL and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- **Key Features:**
 - Capable of engaging multiple aerial targets simultaneously.
 - Provides air defense at altitudes up to 18 km.
 - 3D central acquisition radar, which monitors airspace up to 120 km.

Aqueous Zinc-Ion Batteries: The Search for New Cathode Materials

Why in News?

- Researchers at the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CEBS), Bengaluru, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have synthesized sulfur vacancy-induced 1T-phase molybdenum disulfide (1T-MoS₂), a material that could make zinc batteries more viable for large-scale grid storage.



Key Points:

- **Publication:** The research work, published in the Journal of Energy and Fuel, published by American Chemical Society (ACS) Publishers, provides a comprehensive roadmap for the design of high-performance cathode materials.

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- **Researcher Institute:** Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CEBS), Bengaluru
- **Discovery of a New Cathode Material:** Researchers developed sulfur vacancy-induced 1T-phase molybdenum disulfide (1T-MoS₂) as a novel cathode material, significantly enhancing the performance and stability of aqueous zinc-ion batteries.
- **Technology Basis: Controlled Hydrothermal Method:** The team of Ganesh Mahendra, Dr. Rahuldeb Roy, and Dr. Ashutosh Kumar Singh used a carefully controlled hydrothermal method to produce sulfur-deficient 1T-phase 1T-MoS₂ nanoflakes.
- **Performance Standards:**
 - Ideal voltage range: 0.2–1.3 V (relative to Zn²⁺/Zn)
 - Cyclic Stability: The fabricated zinc-ion battery exhibited remarkable cyclic stability, retaining 97.91 percent of its initial capacity even after 500 continuous charge-discharge cycles at a high current density of 1 A g⁻¹.
 - High Reversibility: The device demonstrated a Coulombic efficiency of 99.7 percent, indicating highly reversible insertion and extraction of zinc-ions with minimal side effects.
- **Advantages of Aqueous Zinc-Ion Batteries:**
 - Water-based electrolyte → Economical, safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly battery construction.
 - Zinc metal → High theoretical capacity, abundant availability that can store large amounts of renewable energy on the grid.

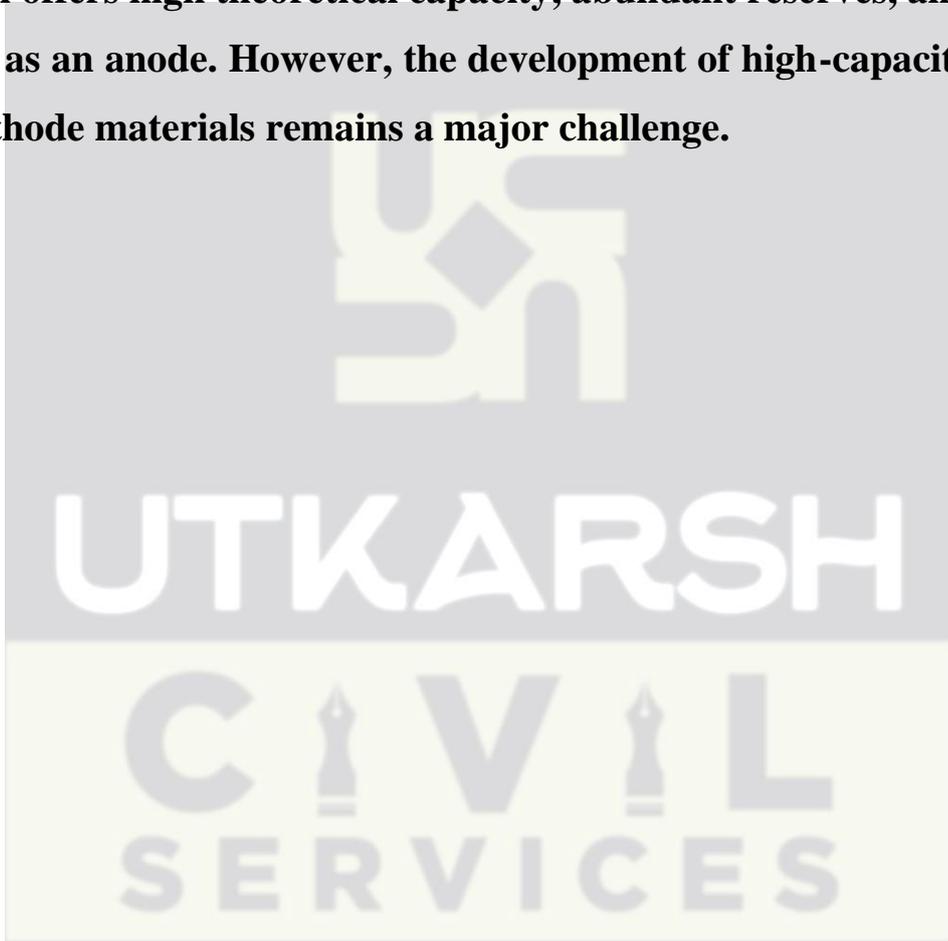
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■ Significance of the Discovery:

1. Aqueous zinc-ion batteries using a water-based electrolyte are considered a safe, economical, and environmentally friendly option for storing energy from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
2. Zinc metal offers high theoretical capacity, abundant reserves, and facilitates direct use as an anode. However, the development of high-capacity and long-lasting cathode materials remains a major challenge.



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Gaganyaan Drogue Parachute

Why in News?

- On February 18, 2026, a qualification-level load test of the parachute for the Gaganyaan program was successfully conducted at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).



Key Points:

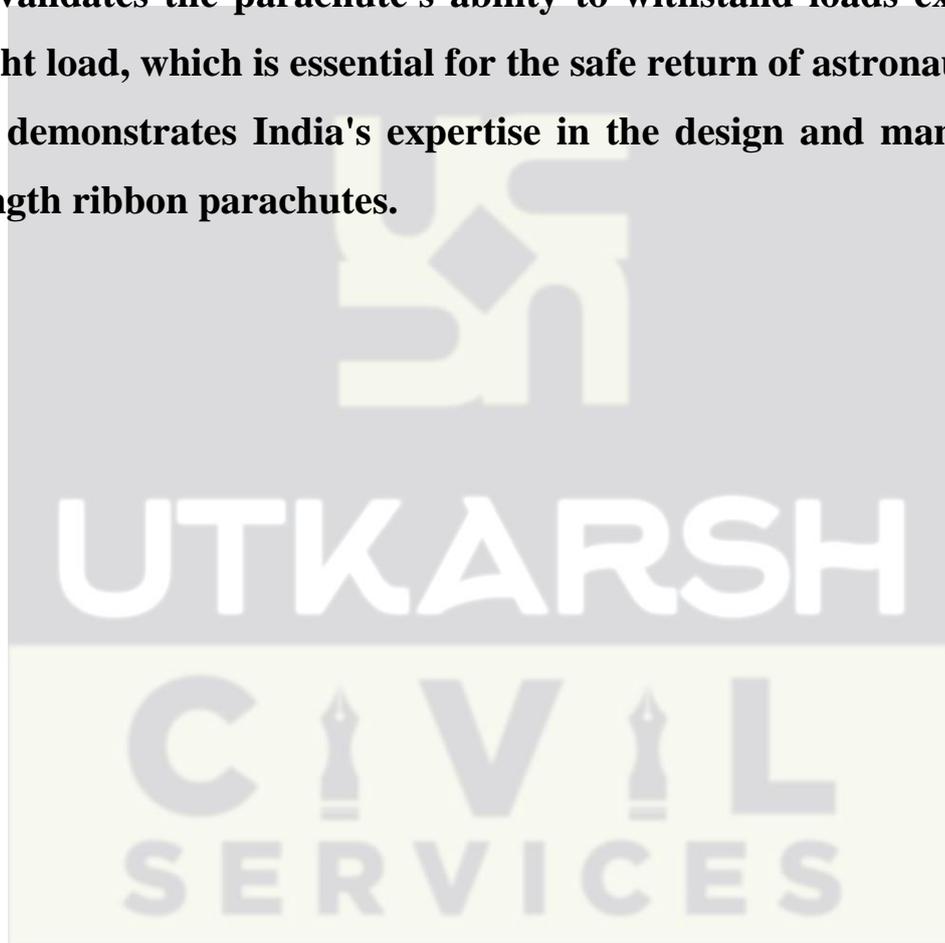
- Test Site:** The test was conducted at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh.
- Objective:** To stabilize and decelerate the Gaganyaan Crew Module during re-entry.

Daily Current Affairs

 Date : 20 February, 2026



- **Collaboration:** Teams from the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), ISRO, and DRDO worked together.
- **Significance:**
 - This test validates the parachute's ability to withstand loads exceeding the actual flight load, which is essential for the safe return of astronauts.
 - This test demonstrates India's expertise in the design and manufacture of high-strength ribbon parachutes.



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