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Fourth Meeting of 'Raj-Unnati': Jaipur



Why in News?

- Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma presided over the fourth meeting of 'Raj-Unnati' in Jaipur on April 24, 2026.



Key Points:

- 'Raj-Unnati' is an ambitious initiative of the Government of Rajasthan, developed on the lines of the Central Government's 'PRAGATI' model.
- It is a multi-dimensional platform based on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), wherein the Chief Minister personally reviews the progress of various projects with senior officials and District Collectors via video conferencing.

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- Rajasthan is the first state in the country to adopt this model.
- The first meeting of 'Raj-Unnati' was held in Jaipur on January 17, 2026, under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister.

Other Important Points:

- **PM-PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation)** was launched by the Central Government in 2015 to facilitate the implementation of projects, schemes, and public grievances through technology-based monitoring and time-bound resolution.
- **Three-Tier System:** Under this system, the 'Seva Teerth' (PMO), Secretaries to the Central Government, and the Chief Secretaries of the States connect simultaneously on a single platform.

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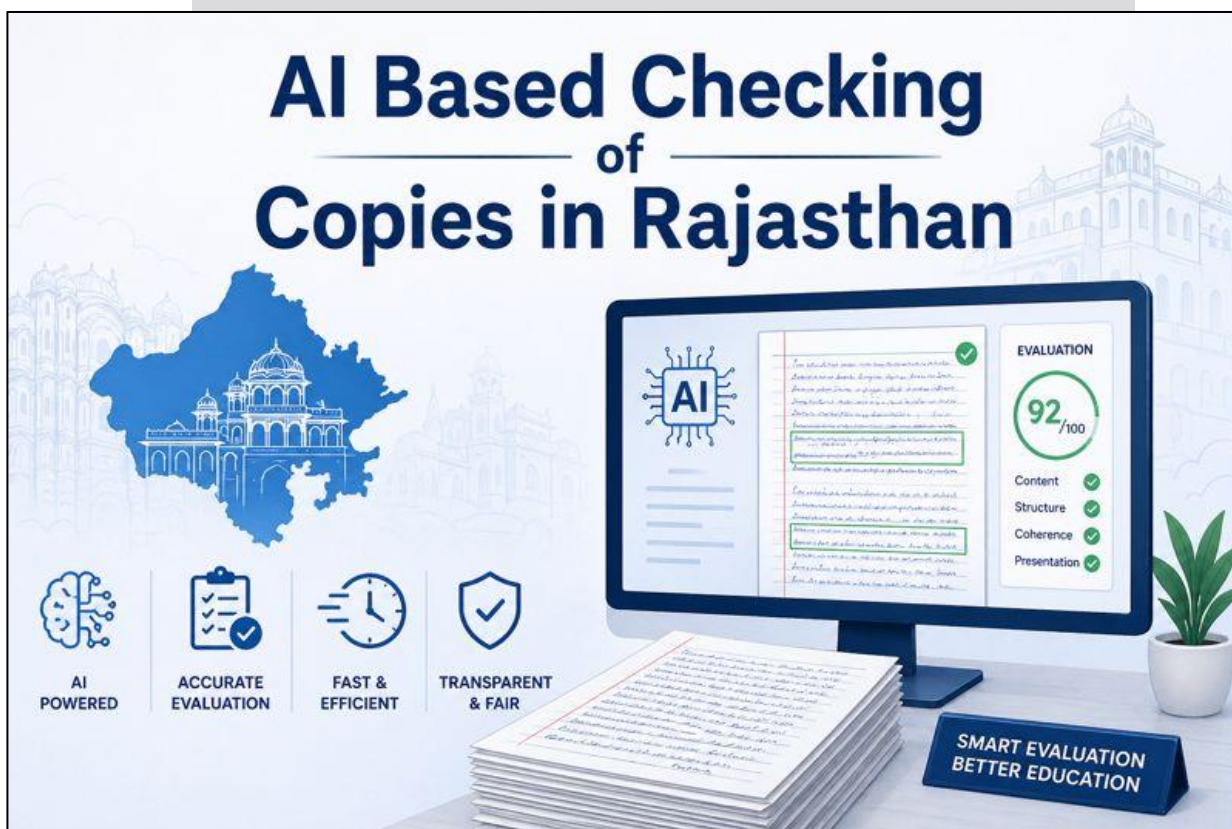
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AI-Based Evaluation of Answer Sheets in Rajasthan

Why in News?

- Recently, the Rajasthan Education Department launched a new Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based initiative to evaluate students' answer sheets in government schools, commencing with the Jodhpur district.



Key Points:

- This project is being implemented under the initiative titled 'Rajasthan Ke Shiksha Mein Badhte Kadam' (Rajasthan's Advancing Steps in Education).
- Under this initiative—launched as a pilot project—scanned copies of answer sheets are uploaded onto AI-based software.
- The Education Department has developed a mobile AI application in collaboration with Vadodara-based company EdOptimize Solutions and Central Electronics Limited (CEL).

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- **Note:** Central Electronics Limited (CEL) is a premier Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) operating under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- Once the project is fully implemented, detailed reports regarding the evaluation of answer sheets will be sent to the students and their parents.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Rajasthan Ke Shiksha Mein Badhte Kadam:** On July 11, 2022, the then Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, launched a remediation program titled 'Rajasthan Ke Shiksha Mein Badhte Kadam' to compensate for the learning losses suffered by school students in the state during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Smart 'Theranostic' Platform Developed by IIT Jodhpur



Why in News?

- Recently, scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Jodhpur, developed a smart 'theranostic' platform that combines diagnosis and therapy to enable precision healthcare.



Key Points:

- The term 'theranostics' is a portmanteau of 'therapy' (treatment) and 'diagnostics' (diagnosis). This platform is capable of simultaneously identifying a disease and providing a precise treatment for it.
- The researchers have utilized ultra-small nanomaterials (such as MXenes, Metal-Organic Frameworks, and Black Phosphorus) for cancer and other complex diseases. These materials are so minute that they are invisible to the naked eye, yet they can reach diseased cells directly within the body.
- Drawing inspiration from nature, the team is also developing biomimetic nanocarriers.
- A key highlight of this research is 'phototheranostics,' which leverages the interaction between light and nanotechnology to diagnose, treat, and monitor diseases.
- This approach employs Near-Infrared (NIR) light, which penetrates deep into the body's tissues to destroy cancer cells through the application of heat or oxygen radicals.

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✂ NEWS IN SHORTS ⚡

S. No.	News
1.	<p>All India Shootingball Championship – 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Venue: Munshi Bagh Ground, Alwar.■ Duration: April 24 to April 26, 2026.
2.	<p>Bhilwara's Mandalgarh Panchayat in the Spotlight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Recently, Union Minister of Jal Shakti (Water Resources), C.R. Patil, interacted with representatives from select Panchayats across the country to review the progress of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM); during this interaction, the drinking water management system of the Mandalgarh Panchayat in Bhilwara district received commendation.
3.	<p>Triple R Center: "Shakti Sangam"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The Jaipur Zila Parishad (District Council) has established an innovative Triple R (RRR – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Center named 'Shakti Sangam'.■ This center has been launched primarily with the objective of promoting women's empowerment and sanitation.
4.	<p>'Eklavya Model Residential Schools' Operating in Rajasthan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Currently, the Rajasthan State Eklavya Model Residential School Society is operating 31 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) across the state.■ The 31st and newest EMRS: Commenced operations in June 2025 at Jamwaramgarh (Jaipur).■ Classes ranging from Grade 6 to Grade 12 (affiliated with the CBSE board) are conducted in all EMR schools within the state. Science and Arts streams are available for students in Grades 11 and 12.

5.

Rajasthan's First Net Zero Cooling Station

- Recently, Rajasthan's first Net Zero Cooling Station (NZCS) was jointly established in Jaipur by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation and the Mahila Housing Trust.
- Its primary objective is to provide relief from the scorching heat to those city residents who work outdoors throughout the day—such as street vendors, delivery partners, and drivers.

6.

North India's First FIH-Recognized Hockey Turf Ground

- Located at Phuliya Kalan in Bhilwara, this facility stands as North India's first—and currently only—hockey turf ground to be recognized by the International Hockey Federation (FIH).
- It was constructed by the village philanthropist, Satyanarayan Laddha.

7.

Biz-Maze 2026

- Recently, Jagannath University, Jaipur—in collaboration with the Rajasthan Center of Advanced Technology (R-CAT)—organized a two-day national symposium titled 'Biz-Maze 2026' on the subjects of AI and Digital Transformation.

8.

Establishment of SC/ST Cells and Anti-Human Trafficking Units in the 8 Newly Formed Districts


- Recently, the State Government approved the establishment of SC/ST (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe) Cells and Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in the 8 new districts to strengthen law and order.
- Constituted under the budgetary provisions for the year 2026-27, the objective of these bodies is to protect the rights of marginalized sections of society and to exercise effective control over organized crimes, such as human trafficking.
- **Selected Districts:** Beawar, Didwana-Kuchaman, Deeg, Kotputli-Behrur, Balotra, Salumber, Phalodi, and Khairthal-Tijara.



Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

-  **Why in News?**
- Recently, CGTMSE organized a global seminar on credit guarantees.



-  **Key Points:**
- CGTMSE:**
- Establishment:** In the year 2000.
 - Ministry:** It was jointly established by the Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).
 - Objective:** Its objective is to enhance the availability of collateral-free formal credit to existing and new enterprises within the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) sector by providing them with guarantees.
 - Modus Operandi:** If a bank extends a collateral-free loan to a Micro or Small Enterprise and the borrower defaults, CGTMSE bears 75-90% of the resulting loss.
 - Function:** It administers the Credit Guarantee Scheme for the Micro and Small Enterprises sector.



History and Culture



The Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha (The Tathagata)



Why in News?

- An exhibition of the sacred relics of Lord Buddha (the Tathagata) will be organized in Ladakh.



Key Points:

The Tathagata Relics:

- The sacred relics of the Tathagata symbolize the physical remains of the Buddha (such as bones) and the monuments associated with him. These relics embody reverence and respect, and special emphasis is placed on safeguarding them from conflict and harm.
- 'Tathagata' is the name that the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, used to refer to himself. Details regarding this can be found in the Pali Tipitaka.

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- The term 'Tathagata' signifies: "He who has thus come and thus gone" (having realized the ultimate reality). It denotes an individual who has attained Nirvana by walking the path of truth, and who puts into practice exactly what he preaches.

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, this term helps in understanding two distinct types of lineages (traditions):

- **The Scriptural Lineage (Textual Transmission):** Where knowledge and teachings are propagated through scholars and scriptures.
- **The Experiential Lineage (Transmission of Realization):** Where knowledge is received directly from Guru to disciple in the form of a personal experience.
- This concept is also considered to be of significant importance within Vajrayana Buddhism.

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Geography and Geology

Twister



Why in News?

- A severe weather phenomenon known as 'twister' has been observed in the United States.



Key Points:

Twister:

- This is another name (informal) for a tornado. It is a rapidly rotating column of air (moving at approximately 500 km/h) that extends from a thunderstorm cloud down to the ground.
- **Formation:** When warm, moist air collides with cold, dry air, it creates instability in the atmosphere, generating strong updrafts within the thunderstorm.
- Changes in wind direction and speed cause the air to begin rotating. When this rotation becomes vertical and intensifies, a tornado—or twister—is formed.
- The highest number of tornadoes occur in the region of the United States known as "Tornado Alley" (comprising Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska).

Economic Developments

Mission for Self-Reliance in Pulses

Why in News?

- Under the Mission for Self-Reliance in Pulses, Bihar's first systematic pulse procurement initiative has been launched.



Key Points:

Mission for Self-Reliance in Pulses:

- Objective:** Its aim is to achieve self-reliance in pulses by boosting domestic production and reducing dependence on imports. Additionally, it ensures a sustainable improvement in farmers' income.
- Target:** To increase domestic pulse production to 350 lakh tonnes by the year 2030-31. Simultaneously, the target is to expand the area under pulse cultivation to 310 lakh hectares.
- Inception:** It was announced in the Union Budget 2025-26 and was approved on October 1, 2025.
- Scheme Duration:** 6 years (2025-26 to 2030-31)
- Concerned Ministry:** Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Key Crops:** Tur/Arhar; Urad; and Masur.

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Indian Governance and State System

National Panchayati Raj Day

Why in News?

- National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated every year on April 24th to commemorate the establishment of the Panchayati Raj system.



Key Points:

- This day is observed in remembrance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which came into force in 1993 and granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Historical Background of the Panchayati Raj System

- After independence, decentralized governance was promoted through the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), which recommended a three-tier Panchayati Raj system; this system was first implemented in Rajasthan in 1959.

- The system received constitutional backing through the 73rd Amendment Act to the Constitution, which made the Panchayati Raj system mandatory and incorporated it into Part IX of the Constitution (Articles 243–243O).

Structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- The Panchayati Raj system is based on the principle of decentralization. Power is transferred from the Central and State governments to elected representatives at the village level.
- **The structure of the Panchayati Raj system consists of three tiers:**
 - **Gram Panchayat (Village Level):** Manages basic local administration functions such as water supply, sanitation, street lighting, and village infrastructure.
 - **Block Panchayat (Intermediate Level):** Coordinates development activities across villages and ensures the proper implementation of government schemes.
 - **Zila Panchayat (District Level):** Oversees and coordinates development activities across the blocks, focusing on planning and resource allocation.

Initiatives to Strengthen the Panchayati Raj System

- **SVAMITVA Scheme:** Launched on April 24, 2021, this scheme aims to provide legal ownership rights to rural households by mapping inhabited rural areas using drone and GIS technology and by issuing property cards.
- **Sabhasar:** AI-Powered Meeting Documentation: Sabhasar is an AI-based tool that automatically generates minutes for Gram Sabha meetings, thereby reducing manual workload and strengthening oversight.
- **eGramSwaraj – A Digital Platform for Panchayats:** eGramSwaraj is a user-friendly web portal that enhances transparency in planning, progress reporting, financial management, and asset monitoring within Panchayats. It is integrated with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), facilitating the online transfer of Central Finance Commission funds from the States to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- **Gram Urja Swaraj:** Under the eGramSwaraj framework, Gram Urja Swaraj is a digital dashboard that tracks renewable energy assets at the Gram Panchayat level in real-time.

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- **Meri Panchayat:** The Meri Panchayat app is an integrated m-governance platform designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre.
- Its objective is to empower rural communities by improving governance, accountability, and citizen participation in Panchayat-related affairs.
- Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through capacity building, institutional development, and infrastructural support.
- Mahila-Hitaishi Gram Panchayat is an institutional initiative aimed at strengthening women's leadership in local governance.
- The government has launched the "Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan" to enhance the leadership, communication, and decision-making skills of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs).
- Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) is an initiative launched with the objective of engaging the youth in grassroots democracy. Implemented in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Literacy and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, this initiative involves the participation of students from Classes 9 and 10 of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Eklavya Model Residential Schools.
- Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act): The PESA Act, 1996, extends Panchayati Raj provisions to Scheduled Areas, thereby strengthening the Gram Sabha-led governance system in the tribal regions of 10 states.
- This Act applies to Fifth Schedule areas in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh; of these, most states—with the exception of Odisha—have already notified their respective PESA Rules.

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Progress

- Public sector entities are undergoing rapid digital transformation, leading to increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability at the grassroots level.
- With 3G/4G connectivity now available in over 95% of villages, last-mile service delivery has improved significantly.
- Common Service Centers (CSCs), operated by over 6.5 million village-level entrepreneurs, are making digital services easily accessible in rural areas.
- Additionally, out of approximately 218,000 Gram Panchayats, about 214,000 are already connected and service-ready, reflecting robust progress in digital inclusion at the village level.

Challenges Facing PRIs

- **Fiscal Dependence:** Due to limited sources of their own revenue, Panchayati Raj Institutions rely heavily on grants received from the State and Central governments.
- **Capacity Deficit:** A shortage of trained personnel, planning expertise, and digital literacy compromises the quality of implementation.
- **Resistance at the State Level:** Many state governments undermine the autonomy of PRIs through bureaucratic control.
- **Elite Capture:** Caste hierarchies, gender biases, and local power structures distort representation, despite constitutional reservations.
- **Weak Accountability:** Inadequate audit mechanisms and limited access to social audits lead to leakages and diminish transparency.

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Schemes and Policies

NAMASTE Scheme

Why in News?

- The 'National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem' (NAMASTE) scheme has achieved a significant milestone by identifying approximately 90,000 sewer and septic tank workers.



Key Points:

NAMASTE Scheme:

- **Launch:** It was launched in 2023 as a Central Sector Scheme.
- **Objective:** Its aim is to provide formal employment to individuals engaged in the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, and to work towards their rehabilitation.
- **Joint Initiative:** It has been jointly launched by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- It is implemented by the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC).
- **Target Group:** Sewer and Septic Tank Sanitation Workers (SSWs); in 2024, rag pickers were also included in this group



Straits of Malacca



Why in News?

- The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz has drawn attention to another of the world's major chokepoints: the Strait of Malacca.



Key Points:

- **Straits of Malacca:**



- **Location:** It is a waterway connecting the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean).
- **Littoral States:** Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

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Strategic Significance:

- Approximately 22% of global maritime trade passes through this strait.
- It is considered the largest "oil transit chokepoint."
- It serves as the shortest maritime route from East Asia to the Middle East and Europe.

Concerns:

- Its narrowest point (the Phillips Channel in the Singapore Strait) creates a natural bottleneck. This gives rise to persistent concerns regarding ship collisions or oil spills.
- Certain sections of the strait are relatively shallow, which hinders the movement of large vessels.
- The threat of piracy and attacks on merchant vessels remains a persistent concern.

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India and Egypt: Bilateral Defence Cooperation

Why in News?

- Recently, the 11th meeting of the India-Egypt Joint Defence Committee (JDC) was held in Cairo. This marked a significant step towards strengthening bilateral defence relations under the Strategic Partnership (2023) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation (2022).



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Key Points:

Current Status of Relations

- **Political and Strategic:** Elevated to the level of a Strategic Partnership (2023).
- Regular high-level visits; Egypt was invited as the Chief Guest (Republic Day 2023).
- Cooperation in multilateral forums (United Nations, BRICS expansion).
- **Economic Relations:** Bilateral trade stands at approximately US\$ 6–7 billion.
- **Maritime and Geostrategic Significance:** Egypt's control over the Suez Canal, which is vital for India's trade; convergence in connectivity between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea; and India's role as a key security provider in the 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 conducted between the Indian Army (Para Special Forces) and the Egyptian Special Forces.

Key Outcomes of the 11th Joint Defence Committee (JDC)

- **Forward-looking Defence Roadmap (2026-27):** Both nations agreed upon a structured defence cooperation plan, focusing on the following points:
 - o Expansion of military-to-military engagements
 - o Intensification of joint training exercises
 - o Promotion of maritime security cooperation
 - o Increased scale and complexity of military exercises
 - o Strengthening of defence production and technology cooperation

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- **Defence Industry Cooperation:** India highlighted its advancements in defence manufacturing, which include a production output exceeding \$20 billion and exports worth approximately \$4 billion to over 100 countries.
- **Agreement to Develop a Defence Industry Cooperation Plan-** areas include co-development and co-production, technology transfer, and industrial partnerships.
- This reflects India's efforts towards 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) and export-led growth within the defence sector.
- **Maritime Security Cooperation:** The inaugural Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks were held, during which India emphasized the Indian Navy's role in ensuring freedom of navigation, as well as the contribution of the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).
- Maritime cooperation serves as a focal point of India's strategic outreach in the Indian Ocean and beyond—particularly in securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and countering emerging threats.
- This aligns with India's vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- **Air Force Cooperation:** A meeting was held with the Commander of the Egyptian Air Force, acknowledging the growing cooperation in the air domain. Opportunities exist for joint exercises and training exchanges.

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India Welcomes Japan's Easing of Defense Export Restrictions

Why in News?

- Following Japan's relaxation of restrictions on its arms exports, India welcomed the move, stating that both sides have expressed a commitment to "enhance practical cooperation in the interest of their national security."



Key Points:

- Under previous restrictions, arms exports were limited to just five categories: rescue, transport, warning, surveillance, and mine clearance.

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- Japan can now sell lethal weapons to the 17 countries with which it holds defence agreements, including the United States and the United Kingdom.
- The ongoing review aims to permit transfers under strict yet more flexible terms, particularly for trusted partners.
- India and Japan collaborate both bilaterally and multilaterally within the strategic defence and security landscape, including through the Quad grouping.

Significance:

- This becomes particularly significant at a time when both India and Japan are confronting the challenge posed by an assertive China in the Indo-Pacific region.
- This shift is expected to open avenues for the co-development of defence platforms, supply chain integration, and technology sharing—areas of growing interest for India.

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United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP)



Why in News?

- The 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2026' report has been released by UN-ESCAP.



Key Points:

- **Forecast:** The growth rate of the Indian economy is projected to be 6.4% this year (following 7.4% in 2025) and is estimated to reach 6.6% in 2027.

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UN-ESCAP

- **Headquarters:** Bangkok (Thailand)
- It serves as an intergovernmental forum within the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Establishment:** It was established in 1947 as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE).
- **Parent Body:** It is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations and reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- **Membership:** It comprises 53 member countries and 9 associate members.
- It also includes countries located outside the Asia-Pacific region—for instance, nations such as the UK and France.
- India is a founding member of this organization.

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India's Economic and Insurance Market Outlook 2026–2030 Report

Why in News?

- Swiss Re has released a report titled 'India's Economic and Insurance Market Outlook 2026–2030'.

Key Points:

- This report projects a rapid expansion of India's insurance sector. According to the report, the insurance premium growth rate could reach 6.9% between 2026 and 2030.

The Insurance Sector in India

- Global Ranking:** In terms of total premiums, India is the world's 10th largest insurance market.
- Insurance Density:** This refers to the average premium amount per capita. Currently, it stands at US\$ 97.0.
- Share of Insurance in Household Financial Assets:** The share of insurance and pension funds in household financial assets rose to 29.6% in the financial year 2025.

Measures Taken to Strengthen the Insurance Sector

- Insurance for All by 2047:** This is the vision of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).
- Amendments in 2025:** To attract capital and technology into the insurance sector, 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was permitted.
- GST Exemption:** GST was removed from individual life insurance and health insurance policies. This made insurance coverage more affordable.
- Protection of Consumer Interests:** The moratorium period in health insurance has been reduced to 5 years. This means that if an individual maintains uninterrupted health insurance coverage for 5 consecutive years, the insurance company cannot subsequently reject their claim on the grounds of non-disclosure or misrepresentation of information.