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## Uttarakhand Cabinet clears Bill for minority education institutions

In what could be the first of-its-kind draft legislation, the Uttarakhand Cabinet on Sunday approved the Uttarakhand Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2025, which, if enacted, would extend benefits hitherto available only to Muslim educational institutions in the State to educational institutions of Sikh, Jain, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsi communities. [»page 3](#)



## Trump - Putin Summit on Ukraine

Russian leader Vladimir Putin agreed at his summit with President Donald Trump to allow the U.S. and European allies to offer Ukraine a security guarantee resembling NATO's collective defence mandate as part of an eventual deal to end the three-and-a-half-year-long war. [»page 6](#)



Senegal's 'schools for husbands' promote gender equality and safer motherhood - A Case Study [»page 9](#)

## GST reforms will benefit the poor and middle class



The proposed changes to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will benefit the poor, middle class, traders, and entrepreneurs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. According to sources, the new GST structure, with 18% and 5% rates, will have the twin objectives of making tax categories and compliance processes simpler and more rational. The Centre expects any reduction in revenues to be soon offset by new buoyancy in the economy stemming from the rate rationalisation and process simplification. Most of the items in the 28% rate of the GST will move to 18% and "a few" will go to a 40% bracket, which will apply to exceptional items, termed as "sin goods", sources said. The Centre expects the States to be on board with the proposals in time for the Deepavali deadline.



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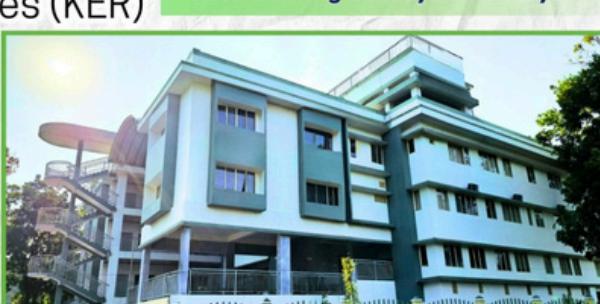
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## T.N. offers incentives to entities engaged in semiconductor design

- Tamil Nadu has launched the Semiconductor Design Promotion Scheme under the ₹500-crore Tamil Nadu Semiconductor Mission 2030 (TNSM 2030).
- Announced in the Tamil Nadu Budget 2025, it aims to strengthen the State's fabless design ecosystem with subsidies and prototyping grants.

### Government Support

- Financial incentives and facilitation will be extended to Tamil Nadu-based entities engaged in semiconductor design (integrated circuits, chips, system on chips, IP cores, etc.).
- Subsidy for payroll:
  - 30% of wages in 1st year, 25% in 2nd year, 20% in 3rd year.
  - Subsidy up to ₹20,000 per employee/month.
  - Cap: 5% of company's payroll cost, maximum ₹1 crore per company.

### Industry Facilitation

- An expert committee will assess product viability.
- The State will negotiate with national and international fabs for chip fabrication using locally designed chips.
- Tamil Nadu-designed products will be promoted in public procurement.

### Training & Skill Development

- New centres of excellence will provide infrastructure for chip design and testing.
- Government plans to train 1,000 students annually in engineering colleges to build a skilled workforce.

### State's Position

- Tamil Nadu is positioning itself as a frontrunner in India's semiconductor landscape.
- Despite competition from other States, Tamil Nadu emphasizes its talent pool and strong electronics ecosystem.
- Focus remains on semiconductor design and R&D rather than manufacturing.

## In a first, Karaikal to get advanced fisheries processing cluster

- Karaikal, an enclave of Puducherry, will get a state-of-the-art fisheries processing cluster, the first of its kind in the Union Territory.
- It is one of the 34 fisheries production and processing clusters approved across India under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).
- Total project cost: ₹348.89 crore, including ₹298.34 crore as Central grant.

### Development Benefits

- Aimed at boosting socio-economic development of the fisher community in Puducherry.
- Two major fishing harbours (Puducherry's Thengaithittu and Karaikal harbour) included.
- Will modernise fisheries infrastructure, provide value-added facilities, and improve market access for marine and inland fish products.

### Cluster Objectives

- Transform selected regions into integrated fisheries clusters with strong forward and backward linkages.
- Benefits include cold chains, ice plants, processing units, transport logistics, and better access to larger markets.
- Expected to enhance income opportunities for fisherfolk through improved handling, processing, and marketing systems.

### Employment & Social Impact

- Will generate employment, encourage skill development, and promote entrepreneurship among coastal communities, especially youth and women.

### Supporting Schemes

- Linked with Matsya Kisan Samrudhi Sah Yojana (PM-MKSSY) in Puducherry.
- Involves 15 Primary Fisheries Cooperative Societies (PFCS), supported by the Puducherry State Fishermen Cooperative Federation Ltd (PSFCFL) with mentorship, financial assistance (₹2 lakh per PFCS), and capacity-building.

### Implementation

- The National Fisheries Development Board will be the nodal agency for coordination and implementation.





## Uttarakhand Cabinet clears Bill for minority education institutions

- The Uttarakhand Cabinet approved the Uttarakhand Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2025.
- The Bill will be introduced in the upcoming Legislative Assembly session (from August 19).
- Scope & Beneficiaries
- Extends benefits (earlier given only to Muslim institutions) to educational institutions of Sikh, Jain, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsi communities.

### Will replace:

- Uttarakhand Madrasa Education Board Act, 2016
- Uttarakhand Non-Government Arabic and Persian Madrasa Recognition Rules, 2019 (effective July 1, 2026).

### Regulation & Recognition

- Minority educational institutions must be registered under the Societies Act, Trust Act, or Companies Act.
- Ownership of land, bank accounts, and other assets must be in the institution's name.
- Recognition can be withdrawn in cases of mismanagement, lack of transparency, or activities against religious/social harmony.

### No Government Interference

- Bill does not interfere with establishment/administration but ensures educational excellence and accountability.
- Recognition requires meeting Uttarakhand Board of School Education standards and fair student evaluations.

### Subjects & Curriculum

- Teaching of Gurmukhi and Pali in minority educational institutions will also be recognised.

### Transparency & Accountability

- Establishes a transparent process for recognition while ensuring quality education, compliance, and financial discipline.
- Protects Constitutional rights of minorities while balancing state oversight.

## Grassland invaders stifle Assam's island-like national park home to feral horses: study

- A new study found at least two native plants have turned invasive, altering the riverine ecosystem of Assam's Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (DSNP), home to India's only feral horses.
- Published in Earth journal, the study is titled "Grasslands in Flux".

### Invasive Native Species

- Key invasive species: *Bombax ceiba*, *Lagerstroemia speciosa*, *Chromolaena odorata*, *Ageratum conyzoides*, *Mikania micrantha*, and *Ipomoea spp*.
- These species have expanded due to recurring Brahmaputra floods and anthropogenic pressures from villages within the park.

### Decline of Grasslands

- From 1999–2024, DSNP's grasslands shrank drastically:
- Covered 28.78% (42.5 sq. km) in 1999.
- By 2013, grasslands reduced to 18.31 sq. km.
- By 2024, shrank further to 7.56 sq. km.
- Grasslands converted mainly into shrubland (29.94 sq. km) and degraded/semi-evergreen forest.

### Ecological Impact

- Forest degradation and shrubland expansion cause loss of biodiversity, faunal decline, and reduced carbon storage.
- Natural disturbance regime (floods, fires) and invasive species dominance threaten the ecosystem's ecological balance.
- Threat to Wildlife
- DSNP harbors about 200 feral horses (descendants of military horses abandoned during WWII).

### Rapidly declining species include:

- Bengal florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*)
- Hog deer (*Axis porcinus*)
- Swamp grass babbler (*Pirinia cinerascens*)

### Conservation Need

- A targeted grassland recovery project is recommended.
- Priorities include: controlling invasive species, improving surveillance, increasing staff, and relocation of villages.
- Urgent action needed to conserve endemics and globally threatened species of DSNP.



## PRELIMS CORNER :

1.Which of the following rightly describe the meaning of Pyrolysis?

- a) Filling of waste materials in layers with active bacteria in between.
- b) The process by which the water is separated into hydrogen and oxygen with external heat.
- c) Thermal decomposition of materials at elevated temperatures in an inert atmosphere
- d) The process which makes the nuclear wastages into non reactive materials.

2.Which of the following serves as an International Corridor for Asian Elephant Migration between India and Bhutan?

- a) Palamau Sanctuary
- b) Buxa Tiger Reserve
- c) Valmiki Tiger Reserve
- d) Kanha National park

3.Diclofenac free zones (DFZ) are mainly intended for the protection of which of the following organism

- a) Snow leopard
- b) Great Indian bustard
- c) Vultures
- d) Sangai deer



## Roll Recall : CEC

### Supreme Court Intervention

- The Supreme Court of India asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to publish names of 65 lakh voters excluded from Bihar's draft electoral roll after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.
- The Court emphasized natural justice and the need for transparency in the process.

### Procedural Failures of ECI

- No consolidated list of excluded voters provided.
- Reasons for deletion (death, migration, duplication, etc.) not made public.
- Reports showed errors and anomalies:
- Much higher exclusion of women (32 lakh) compared to men (25 lakh).
- Dead or migrated voters still included.
- Many genuine voters excluded despite valid IDs and proof of residence.

### Court's Directions

- Ordered ECI to publish full list of excluded names with reasons.
- Voters must be allowed to file objections with Aadhaar card or other identity proof.
- ECI must hear objections and rectify errors before the final roll.

### Transparency Issues

- The SIR exercise seen as non-transparent and poorly explained to citizens.
- Civil society criticized ECI's lack of openness.
- The Court's intervention ensures a fairer process and safeguards voting rights.

### Broader Concern

- Highlights need for clear rules, transparency, and accountability in voter list management.
- Ensures that errors and exclusions do not undermine democratic participation.



## A case for judicial introspection

### Background

- The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 was passed, replacing the Chief Justice of India (CJI) with a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister in the Selection Committee for appointing Election Commissioners.
- This law was challenged, but the Supreme Court did not stay it, allowing it to operate during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

### Judicial Concerns

- The Anoop Baranwal case (2023) had earlier mandated the inclusion of the CJI in the Selection Committee to ensure independence of the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- The 2023 law overturned this safeguard, raising fears of the ECI being dominated by the ruling executive.
- Critics argue this undermines the independence and impartiality of the ECI, vital for protecting free and fair elections.

### Democratic Risks

- Weakening ECI independence risks electoral manipulation, partisan control, and erosion of democratic legitimacy.
- Comparative studies show that regimes with such arrangements tend to consolidate power, weaken the opposition, and manipulate the electoral process.

### Judiciary's Role

- The Supreme Court is criticized for failing to stay the 2023 law in time, which could have impacted the conduct of the 2024 elections.
- The Court is urged to take a more active role in safeguarding democracy, as modern constitutionalism requires strong independent institutions beyond just the executive, legislature, and judiciary.

### Way Forward

- Restoring the position laid down in Anoop Baranwal (CJI in Selection Committee) is essential to ensure ECI autonomy.
- The judiciary is expected to act against threats to electoral fairness by striking down provisions that compromise ECI independence.
- The larger call is for judicial introspection and institutional innovation to strengthen checks and balances.



## European leaders to join Zelenskyy at Trump meet

- Leaders from Germany, France, and Britain will accompany Zelenskyy to meet Trump in Washington.
- Purpose: strengthen Zelenskyy's position as Trump pressures Kyiv to accept a quick peace.
- European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will also attend, alongside Finnish, Italian, and other leaders.
- Aim: avoid repeat of Zelenskyy's failed Oval Office meeting in February, where discussions with Trump ended poorly.
- Key issues on agenda: security guarantees, territorial matters, Ukraine's defense against Russian aggression.
- European leaders are determined to maintain unity and prevent Ukraine from being pressured into an unfavorable deal.
- Meeting seen as crucial for Ukraine's international backing amidst U.S.-Russia negotiations.
- U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff stated that Russia's Vladimir Putin agreed at a summit with Donald Trump to allow U.S. and EU to provide Ukraine with security guarantees resembling NATO's Article 5.
- Article 5 : U.S. could defend Ukraine if attacked — a key reason why Ukraine wants NATO membership.
- Russia promised to make a legislative commitment not to seize more Ukrainian territory.
- Trump decided to push for a peace deal instead of an immediate ceasefire, claiming progress was made.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked the U.S. for supporting guarantees.
- Specific details of the guarantees remain unclear.



## Putin agreed to U.S., EU security guarantees for Ukraine at summit



- A summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, did not produce a breakthrough on the Ukraine war but aimed at narrowing gaps and reducing tensions.
- Relations between the U.S. and Russia have long been marked by hostility and distrust, but both sides hinted at the possibility of a new arms control pact and improved stability.
- Peace in Ukraine is seen as essential for broader global stability, but Russia and the West disagree on how to achieve it.
- Ukraine and European allies demand an immediate ceasefire, while Russia insists on a comprehensive peace agreement addressing what it calls the "root causes."
- Trump suggested the direct path to peace is to negotiate an agreement rather than just ceasefires.
- Positive outcome: summit created diplomatic momentum with Trump and Putin agreeing on "many points" and engaging with European, NATO, and Ukrainian leaders.
- Ukrainian President Zelenskyy is set to visit Washington to continue discussions. Trump indicated that a deal now depends on Zelenskyy's willingness.
- Russia's key demands: recognition of its annexed territories (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Crimea) and Ukraine's "neutrality" (no NATO membership).
- Reports suggest Russia is consolidating its war frontlines and freezing its hold on occupied regions.
- A potential settlement might include Russian withdrawal from some areas (like Kharkiv) but not others.
- The U.S. position: any peace must address Ukraine's security concerns, and Russia must provide credible guarantees not to expand further.

# Explained: What has been the impact of ethanol blending?



## Background of E20 Mandate

- E20 petrol (20% ethanol + 80% petrol) is being sold by oil companies in India since April 2023, under the National Policy on Biofuels (NBP) 2018.
- Government target: 20% blending by 2025, advanced from original 2030.
- Ethanol blending is aimed at reducing import bills, boosting farmers' income, and cutting emissions.

## Impact on Vehicle Owners

- Vehicles sold in India from 2023 are E20-compatible.
- Cars manufactured before 2023 (E10-compatible) can run on E20 but with reduced fuel efficiency.
- Locals fear increased petrol consumption due to lower mileage of E20 petrol.
- 60-70% of vehicles on Indian roads remain non-E20 compliant, posing a challenge.

## Environmental & Economic Aspects

- Ethanol is renewable and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 35-50% compared to petrol.
- India saved about 50.3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 2014–2022 due to ethanol blending.
- Reduced dependence on crude oil saved ₹24,000 crore in 2021-22.

## Challenges

- Heavy dependence on sugarcane-based ethanol (75-80%) raises concerns of water scarcity, soil health, and food security.
- Sugarcane consumes 3,000-5,000 litres of water per kg of sugar, making ethanol production water-intensive.
- Alternative feedstocks (damaged grains, maize, rice, bamboo) need scaling up to diversify ethanol sources.
- Concerns about fair and remunerative price (FRP) to farmers and impact of higher ethanol demand on sugar prices.

## Global Comparison

- Brazil, US, and EU have diversified feedstocks and stronger ethanol industries.
- India lags due to over-reliance on sugarcane and delayed EV adoption.

## Policy Measures

- National Biofuel Policy and Roadmap for Ethanol Blending in India 2020-25 promote blending and diversification.
- Government pushing for second-generation (2G) ethanol plants using crop residue.
- India targets ethanol blending of 30% by 2030 in the long term.

## Key Takeaway

- Ethanol blending has reduced oil imports and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions while supporting farmers.
- But challenges remain:
  - Over-dependence on sugarcane.
  - Vehicle compatibility issues.
  - Environmental sustainability concerns.

## Prelims Corner: Explanations

### Q1. Ans **C**

Pyrolysis is the thermal decomposition of materials at elevated temperatures in an inert atmosphere. It involves a change in chemical composition. It is most commonly used in the treatment of organic materials. It is one of the processes involved in charring wood. It is considered as the first step in the processes of gasification or combustion.

### Q2. Ans **b**

The Buxa Tiger Reserve is a 760-square-kilometre (290 sq mi) tiger reserve located inside the Buxa National Park in West Bengal, India, in the Buxa Hills of the southern hilly area of Bhutan. Animals found in the park include, the Tiger, Civet, Elephant, Gaur (Indian bison), Indian Boar and Red jungle fowl. Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) lies in Alipurduar district of West Bengal. Its northern boundary runs along the international border with Bhutan. The Sinchula hill range lies all along the northern side of BTR and the eastern boundary touches that of the Assam State. National Highway No.31 C roughly runs along its southern boundary.

It is the eastern most extension of extreme bio-diverse North-East India & represents highly endemic Indo-Malayan region. The fragile “Terai Eco-System” constitutes a part of this Reserve. The Phipsu Wildlife Sanctuary of Bhutan is contiguous to North of BTR. Manas National Park lies on east of BTR. BTR, thus, serves as international corridor for Asian elephant migration between India and Bhutan

### Q3. Ans **c**

Diclofenac, a drug used to treat cattle, was linked to kidney failure in vultures and a decline in the bird's population. Though the drug was banned in 2006, it is reportedly still available for use. Diclofenac, that is potentially toxic to vultures being used by vets for treating cattle. The drugs make their way into the vulture's system as they feed on carcasses. Three of India's vulture species of the genus 'Gyps'— the long-billed (*Gyps indicus*) and the slender-billed (*G. tenuirostris*) had declined by 97%, while in the white rumped (*G. bengalensis*) declined nearly 99% between 1992 and 2007. Diclofenac free zones (DFZ) meant the complete removal of diclofenac in the identified vulture safe zones i.e. Places where vulture colonies have been identified.

## Case Study:



Senegal's 'schools for husbands' a United Nations-backed initiative where respected male community members learn about "positive masculinity" in health and social issues and promote them in their communities. The programme, launched in Senegal in 2011, has caught the attention of the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection in recent years, which sees it as an effective strategy to combat maternal and infant mortality. The classes for husbands follow similar efforts in other African countries, particularly Niger, Togo, and Burkina Faso, where the United Nations Population Fund said it improved women's access to reproductive health services by increasing male involvement, growing the use of contraceptives by men and women, and expanding access to prenatal care and skilled birth attendants. Discussions for men have also focused on girls' rights, equality, and the harmful effects of female genital mutilation.

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