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World Bank to fund T.N. village councils for mangrove plantation



The Hindu: 24/09/2025- Page 3

India to hold mega drone drill 'Cold Start'



The Hindu: 24/09/2025- Page 4

Huge scope for Indian Tea sector



The Hindu: 24/09/2025- Page 12

Centre to issue new norms to curb highway collapse



The Hindu: 24/09/2025- Page 4

U.S. Treasury's support for Argentina gives peso, Milei leg-up



The Hindu: 24/09/2025- Page 13

India may increase energy efficiency target for COP30

India will submit its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) around the commencement of the UN Climate Change Conference COP30 in Brazil on November 10. The NDCs are renewable-energy adoption goals set by a country as part of being a signatory to the Paris Agreement. As part of this, countries are required to update their NDCs every five years. Major reductions, sources in the Environment Ministry suggest, would likely result from bilateral agreements between countries.



India has recently signed such an agreement called a JCM (Joint Crediting Mechanism) with Japan and is in talks with other countries. The NDCs are of particular significance this year because Brazil, which assumes the COP presidency in Belém, has stressed that a major effort this year will be to assess what hindered countries from achieving their stated NDCs. India last updated its NDCs in 2022, when it committed to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% of 2005 levels; source half of its electric power capacity from non fossil fuel sources; and create a carbon sink of at least two billion tonnes by 2030. Emissions intensity of the GDP refers to the amount of carbon emitted per unit of GDP and does not mean a reduction in net emissions. India is also expected to operationalise the India Carbon Market by 2026 – under which 13 major sectors will be given mandatory emission-intensity targets – and can trade their resulting savings, if any, via emission reduction certificates.

Glimpses from the National Film Awards Ceremony:



The President gives the Dada Saheb Phalke Award to Mohanlal, the best male actor award to Shah Rukh Khan for Jawan and Vikrant Massey for 12th Fail; and best female actor award to Rani Mukerjee for Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway. President lauds women-centric films and called for adequate representation of women on the jury panels



Once again, anger over Almatti Dam »page 2



India's first overseas defence facility in Morocco »page 4





World Bank to fund T.N. village councils for mangrove plantation

- The World Bank will directly fund village mangrove councils in Tamil Nadu to help enhance bioshield protection through mangrove plantation under the Tamil Nadu Coastal Restoration Mission (TN-SHORE).

Funding and Scope

- TN-SHORE, approved in September 2025, is a ₹1,675-crore World Bank-funded project aimed at strengthening Tamil Nadu's coastal resilience and economy.
- About ₹1,000 crore will come from the World Bank, and the State government will provide the rest.
- The program aims to restore 30,000 hectares of seascape, protect endangered marine species such as turtles and dugongs, and promote sustainability, including eco-tourism and plastic waste management.

Mangrove Component

- A significant component is mangrove plantation and restoration, targeting 1,000 hectares (300 hectares new, 700 degraded restored).
- Funds will be routed directly to local village councils comprised of residents, led by a community president and forest range officer.
- Each allocation will be up to ₹8 lakh per council, with an initial corpus of ₹38 crore.
- Mangrove Cover
- Tamil Nadu has a total mangrove cover of 41.9 sq. km, including 1.19 sq. km of very dense patches, 25.07 sq. km of moderately dense areas, and 15.65 sq. km of open mangroves.
- The project supports local empowerment, sustainable coastal practices, and direct community involvement in mangrove ecosystem restoration.

Once again, anger over Almatti

Background and Current Dispute

- The Almatti dam dispute involves Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and recently Telangana, raising political and inter-state tensions that were last prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s.
- Karnataka's recent move to raise the dam's height aligns with the 2013 Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) Award and utilizes "excess water flowing into the sea," but has sparked fears in Telangana about irrigation being negatively affected.

Impact on Telangana

- Telangana relies on Krishna flows for drinking water and irrigation, particularly during dry seasons.
- An increase in Almatti's storage capacity could reduce water for use downstream in Telangana, specifically during lean periods when river water is scarce.

Political Reactions and Stakes

- The issue has become politicized, with opposition and ruling parties in Telangana using it to rally support, especially ahead of local elections.
- Telangana's Irrigation Minister clarified that their case is still pending before the Supreme Court; they will act if necessary to protect state interests.
- A meeting of the KWDT-II is scheduled for September 23rd to address concerns.

Historical Context

- Almatti has been a flashpoint since at least 1996, with previous political and legal battles shaping ongoing perceptions and responses.

Broader Significance

- Drinking water and irrigation projects in Telangana, like the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme and others, are at risk and draw heavy political attention.
- The local population, especially farmers, is closely watching government actions, increasing the pressure on Congress ahead of upcoming elections.
- Ongoing irrigation issues have heightened tank and reservoir anxieties as heavy rains approach.



India to hold mega drone drill 'Cold Start' in Oct. to test air defence capabilities

Main Event Details

- India will conduct a joint Army, Navy, and Air Force exercise called 'Cold Start' in the first week of October in Madhya Pradesh to test drones and counter-drone systems.
- Officials describe it as the largest such drill since Operation Sindoor, focusing on evaluating air defence operational readiness against evolving threats.

Objectives

- The drill aims to assess the effectiveness and identify shortcomings in current air defence systems, preparing for threats posed by drones, UAVs, and other aerial technologies.
- The exercise will assess the effectiveness and gaps in existing air defence systems.
- Senior officials highlight its aim: ensuring operational readiness for new aerial threats and improving responses to adversary drones.
- Industry partners, research agencies, academia, and other stakeholders will also take part.

Strategic Perspective

- Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit emphasized that adversaries also innovate; India will need to stay one step ahead through advanced counter-drone and GPS jamming systems.
- The future vision includes an integrated defence system countering drones, UAVs, hypersonic weapons, and other threats, inspired by Sudarshan Chakra concept.

Defence Insights

- Deputy Chief Rakesh Sinha said warfare is increasingly defined by the race between drone technology and defensive measures.
- Investment in counter-drone systems is strategic; defence technologies must evolve to address rising drone threats.



Centre to issue new norms to curb highway collapse in disaster-prone areas



New Guidelines

- The Union government will introduce fresh guidelines emphasizing slope stabilisation before constructing highways in hilly and disaster-prone regions, following damage from cloudbursts and floods in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Mandate and Implementation

- Slope stabilisation will be made mandatory prior to road construction, instead of after, aiming to prevent collapses during natural disasters.
- Future concessionaire agreements for highway projects will be revised to incorporate these requirements.

Slope Stabilisation Techniques

- Measures include retaining walls, soil nails, anchors, shotcrete, drainage systems, vegetation planting, and adjustments to slope shape for increased safety and erosion control.
- Slope stabilisation involves controlling soil or rock movement, managing water drainage, and ground reinforcement to prevent landslides and erosion.

Recent Damage

- Most highway damage was seen in sections built along riverbanks, often on the "valley side" where the road slopes down towards the river, worsened by rising river levels after heavy rains.
- Sites with preemptive slope stabilisation withstood the impact of floods and cloudbursts better than others.
- Collapsed highways block evacuation routes and prevent access to emergency services, including ambulances, firefighting, and temporary shelters, which are critical during disasters.

SC directs Himachal to be clear on its disaster management measures



Supreme Court Directive

- The Supreme Court has directed the Himachal Pradesh government to provide comprehensive details about its disaster management plans, climate change and tourism strategies, construction and industrialisation practices, mega hydroelectric projects, four-lane highways, number of trees felled, and pending prosecutions district-wise over the years.

Ecological Site Concerns

- The court asked about designated protected areas, reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and eco-sensitive sites that restrict development and prohibit industrial projects, particularly mega ones.
- Queries include whether proper zoning exists to account for seismic activity, landslides, and ecological sensitivity across Himachal Pradesh.

Change in Green Cover

- Details have been sought about the diversion of forest land for non-forest use over the last two decades, and how much tree and forest cover has changed during this period.
- The court wants district-wise details on these changes over the last ten years and any surveys/studies conducted to assess shifts in green cover.
- Changes in the Himalayan ecology have wide-ranging implications, including impacts on water resources, biodiversity, natural disaster frequency, local livelihoods, and regional climate stability.
- Loss of forest cover and vegetation destabilizes slopes, increasing landslides, soil erosion, and flash floods, which harm communities, infrastructure, and agriculture.

Rajnath Singh launches India's first overseas defence facility in Morocco

Inauguration and Strategic Significance

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Moroccan counterpart Abdelatif Loudyi inaugurated Tata Advanced Systems Limited's (TASL) defence manufacturing facility at Berrechid, Morocco, marking the first overseas plant by an Indian firm.
- The 20,000 square metre facility will produce the indigenous Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP) 8x8, jointly designed by TASL and DRDO, India's Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- The plant is the largest defence manufacturing facility in Morocco and the first in Africa by an Indian private company, symbolizing deeper India-Morocco ties and India's growing defence industry.

Production and Employment

- Initial deliveries of WhAP vehicles to the Royal Moroccan Army will begin next month, with production starting three months ahead of schedule.
- The project is expected to generate defence-related jobs in Morocco, with local sourcing of components expected to rise to 50% in the near future.

Platform Capabilities and Vision

- The WhAP is a modular, multi-role combat platform with various configurations, such as infantry fighting vehicle, reconnaissance, command post, mortar carrier, ambulance, tank destroyer, and anti-tank guided missile system.
- Rajnath Singh emphasized the plant as a gateway to Africa and Europe, positioning the facility as an export hub that will boost bilateral defence, regional security, and local industry capacity.

Broader Impact

- The project aligns with India's "Make with Friends" and "Make for the World" vision, aiming to create international partnerships while advancing Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) goals.
- The event was attended by Moroccan ministers, Royal Armed Forces, and TASL representatives, highlighting high-level bilateral cooperation.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1. In India, world's first liquid-mirror telescope developed for astronomical research was set up at which one of the following places ?

- (a) Kodaikanal
- (b) Ladakh
- (c) Nainital
- (d) Imphal

2. The "I4F" fund recently seen in the news is a cooperation between India and ?

- (a) Indonesia
- (b) Israel
- (c) France
- (d) USA

3. "Sohrai Murals", sometimes seen in the news recently, are part of a long tradition of which of the below community ?

- (a) Bhilalas community
- (b) Gond community
- (c) Bhil community
- (d) Santhal community

4. 'Monster Quake' sometimes seen in the news recently, is the largest quake ever observed on:

- (a) Venus
- (b) Saturn
- (c) Jupiter
- (d) Mars

'Huge scope for Indian tea sector'

Global Standing

- India is the second-largest tea producer and consumer, and the third-largest exporter in the world.
- In 2024, global tea output was 7.074 billion kg and consumption 6.97 billion kg; India produced 1.303 billion kg and consumed 1.22 billion kg.

Export Market and Challenges

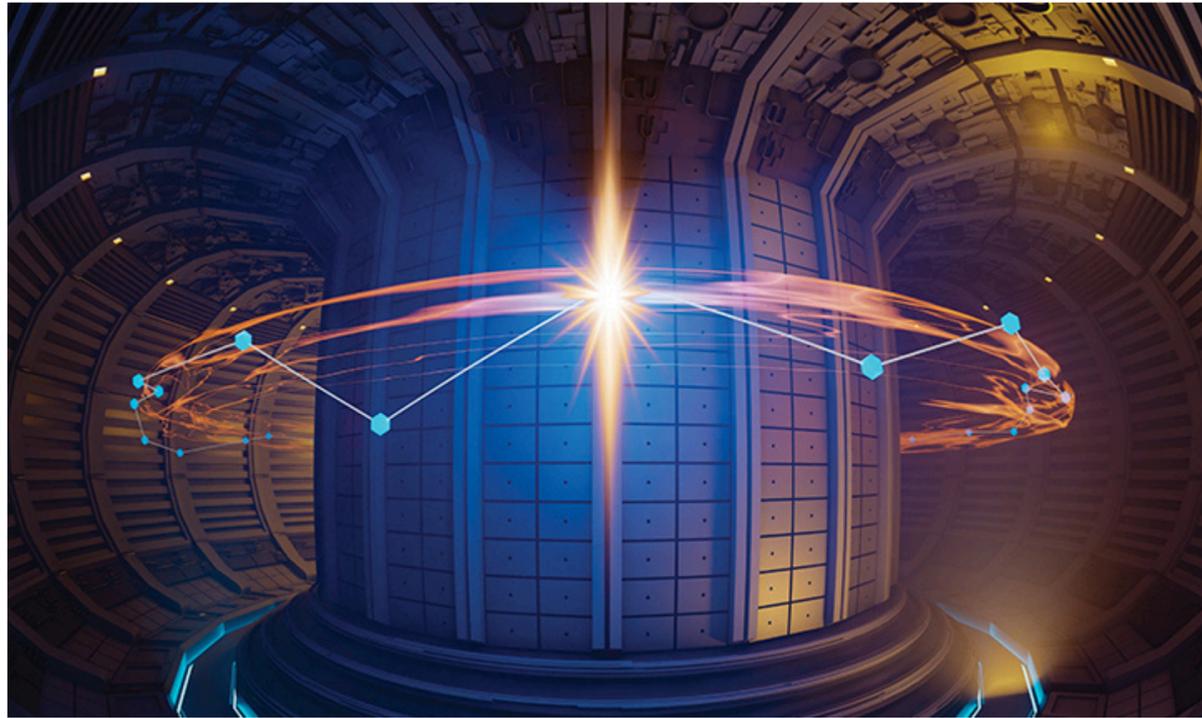
- India exports less tea than Kenya, which ships almost all it produces, and China, the second-largest exporter, consumes much of its own output.
- In 2024, Sri Lanka exported 245 million kg (\$1.4 billion revenue), while India exported 255 million kg (about \$800 million revenue), signaling lower realisation per kg for India.
- The sector needs to focus on enhancing quality and targeting new markets, particularly in South America and Africa, for better realisation.

Domestic Consumption & Opportunity

- Indian consumers are increasingly seeking higher quality tea.
- India's per capita tea consumption is 840 g, while Turkey leads globally with 3 kg per capita.
- If domestic per capita consumption rises to even 1 kg, it would absorb almost all the tea India produces, showing strong potential for sectoral growth.
- Growing popularity of specialty teas (green tea, white tea, herbal blends, organic tea) provides farmers with new opportunities.
- Government initiatives like the Tea Board of India and Brand India campaigns promote exports.
- Rising demand for organic tea farming.
- Value addition through tea-based products: ready-to-drink tea, iced tea, kombucha, tea-infused chocolates.
- Agro-tourism: Tea estates (like Munnar, Darjeeling) are being promoted as tourist attractions.
- Digital marketing: Direct-to-consumer models via e-commerce platforms.



IPR Gandhinagar proposes roadmap for India's fusion power plans



Fusion Roadmap and Current Projects

- The Institute for Plasma Research (IPR) in Gandhinagar reviewed existing fusion projects and proposed a plan for India, including building its first fusion-powered electricity-generating unit with a 'Steady-state Superconducting Tokamak-stellarator' (SST) hybrid as a demonstration reactor.
- The hybrid reactor would generate about 100 MW of power at an estimated construction cost of ₹25,000 crore, with the ultimate aim being a 1 GW reactor.
- The team ultimately aims to commission a full-scale demonstration reactor by 2060 with an ambitious output-to-input power ratio of 20 and to generate 250 MW.

Fusion vs. Fission

- Fusion joins lighter atoms to form a heavier one, releasing large amounts of energy without producing long-lived radioactive waste, making it more attractive than fission for clean energy.
- Controlled fusion requires extreme conditions only present in stars, achieved using magnetic or inertial confinement.

Progress and Global Context

- India is already involved in the ITER international fusion project in France and is planning to leverage this expertise.
- In February 2025, the WEST tokamak in France maintained plasma for a record 22 minutes. The current state-of-the-art facility in India is the SST-1 tokamak at IPR.

Challenges and Timelines

- Commercial fusion remains a distant goal, with key challenges in maintaining plasma stability, economic viability, and scaling technology for reliable power output.
- Digital twin modelling, advanced materials, and new technologies are expected to accelerate progress.

Economic and National Opportunities

- Achieving viable fusion energy would drive innovation across multiple sectors in India, including superconducting magnets, high-temperature engineering, materials science, and advanced simulation.
- Collaboration with international bodies (like ITER) and Indian private industry is recognized as essential for advancing toward commercial fusion power.
- Fusion, if realized, could provide almost limitless clean energy, revolutionizing India's energy sector and industry, but requires significant R&D, investment, and long-term commitment.

INTERNATIONAL

NATO asks Russia to stop 'escalatory' airspace violations on eastern flank



NATO's Warning and Justification

- NATO has formally warned Russia to cease its "escalatory" pattern of airspace violations along the alliance's eastern flank, citing recent incidents over Estonia and Norway.
- NATO's 32 members state that Russia bears sole responsibility for these actions, labeling them as dangerous, potentially escalating, and risking miscalculation.

Actions and Measures

- NATO says it will use all necessary military and non-military means, in accordance with international law, to defend itself and deter threats from all directions.
- The alliance stated it would keep responding to these incidents with urgency and flexibility.

Specific Violations and Complaints

- Norway reported three separate Russian airspace violations in 2025: an SU-24 entered Norwegian airspace for four minutes in April, a L410 Turbolet stayed for three minutes in July, and an SU-33 fighter jet crossed for one minute in August.
- Similar violations have been observed over Poland, Romania, and other eastern flank countries, including Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland.

Broader Context

- These airspace breaches come amid heightened tensions and NATO's strengthening of its eastern defences, especially after Russian drone raids in Poland.
- Norway's Prime Minister and NATO officials described the incidents as "not acceptable" and reaffirmed the alliance's commitment to collective defence.

U.S. Treasury's support for Argentina gives peso, Milei leg-up

U.S. Treasury Backing

- U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent pledged "large and forceful" actions to stabilize Argentina's currency, using the Treasury's \$219.5 billion Exchange Stabilization Fund (ESF).
- This move sent the peso and other Argentine assets soaring after major losses, offering a short-term boost.

Short-term and Long-term Implications

- Experts see the U.S. support as providing a short-term boost to Argentina's currency and government, especially ahead of midterm elections.
- However, any U.S. conditions on the support, such as loans or intervention, could complicate Argentina's debt situation and repayment plans.

Political Overtones

- The support partly reflects President Trump's affinity for Argentina's right-leaning leader, Javier Milei, who attended Trump's 2025 inauguration and is pursuing private sector reforms.
- The U.S. move contrasts with previous U.S. treatment of other South American governments, highlighting shifting diplomatic and economic ties.

Crisis Fund and Precedents

- The ESF has helped in past global financial crises, backing Federal Reserve lending in events like the 2008 crisis, Mexico and Brazil in the 1990s, and as recently as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Despite \$219.5 billion in total assets, only about \$30 billion is readily available for immediate use.

Broader Context and Risks

- Argentina's crisis is not considered a global financial systemic risk, but the ESF's backing could give the country time to stabilize its economy.
- Any support will be closely watched for conditions and longer-term impacts on Argentina's debt and economic reforms.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans **c**

The International Liquid-Mirror Telescope (ILMT) has been set up at the Devasthal Observatory campus owned by Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital in Uttarakhand, as it becomes the world's first liquid-mirror telescope for astronomical observations. It will observe asteroids, supernovae, space debris, and all other celestial objects from an altitude of 2,450 meters in the Himalayas.



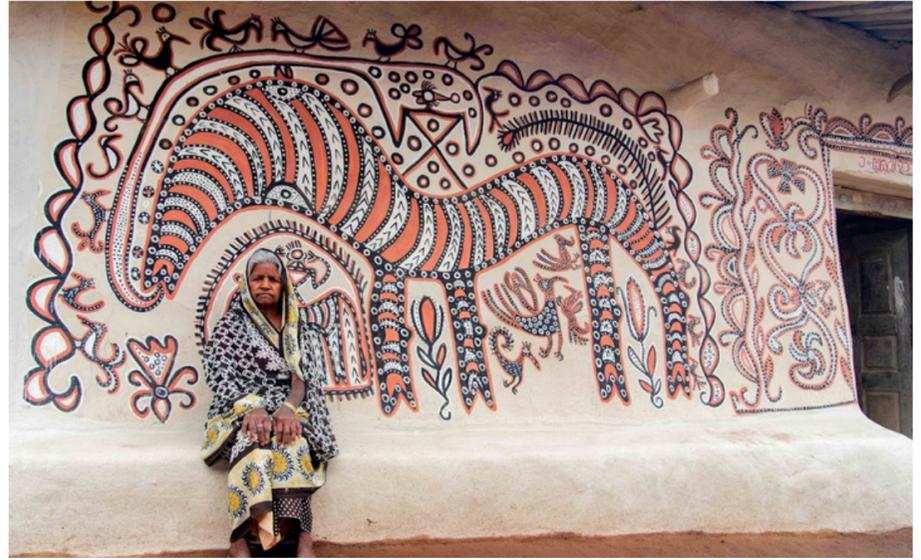
Q2. Ans **b**

India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) fund is a cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Government of India, and the Israel Innovation Authority, the Government of Israel to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects between companies from India and Israel to address the challenges in the agreed 'Focus Sectors'. I4F is aimed to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D between India & Israel, which would lead to the co-development and commercialization of innovative technologies benefiting both countries. Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA) is appointed to implement the I4F program in India, while Israel Innovation Authority is the implementing agency in Israel.



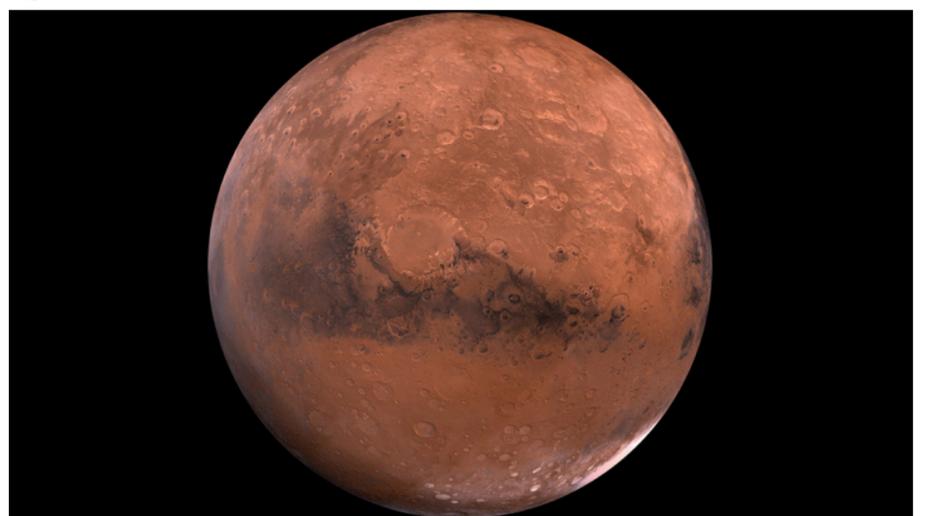
Q3. Ans **d**

Sohrai murals are an art that adorns walls during ceremonies or special occasions, such as weddings and childbirth. It varies across regions, prominently featuring geometric shapes. The prominence given to geometry in the murals can be linked with the Santhal community's affinity for symmetrical precision in its architecture. These murals are a part of the tradition of the Santhal community. Santhali women usually paint the walls of their houses to mark Sohrai, a harvest festival coinciding with Diwali or Kali Puja.



Q4. Ans **d**

NASA'S InSight, short for Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy, and Heat Transport, is a Mars lander designed to give the Red Planet its first thorough checkup since it formed 4.5 billion years ago. It is the first outer space robotic explorer to study in-depth the "inner space" of Mars: its crust, mantle, and core. This lander has recently found a monster marsquake and it has a magnitude of 5 temblors. This Marsquake has been the largest ever recorded tremor on a planet other than earth, hence earning it the name of 'Monster Quake'.



Case Study:



Meet Rajasthan's Amla Ruia, who is reviving water — and hope — in hundreds of villages through traditional harvesting practices. Partnering with local communities, Amla weaves together ancestral knowledge and modern expertise to build affordable check dams. These structures transform short-lived seasonal streams into dependable water sources, breathing new life into once-barren lands. These low-cost check dams work best in hilly regions, where the entire hill range naturally serves as a catchment for the reservoir. Unlike large dams, they offer all the benefits without the drawbacks — no displacement of people, no massive unused storage, no waterlogging, and no risk of devastating breaches. They are also highly cost-effective. Her first initiative in Mandawar village was a resounding success: with just two check dams built by the Trust, farmers earned nearly Rs 12 crore in a single year. From there, her journey only gathered momentum. Today, 814 dams and 494 ponds are colouring the landscape of Rajasthan, bringing hope to these villages.

FIFA 2025 Ballon d'Or Winners



Paris Saint-Germain's Ousmane Dembele and Barcelona's Aitana Bonmati have been named the 2025 Ballon d'Or winners. Barcelona's Lamine Yamal won the men's Kopa Trophy — awarded to world football's best player under the age of 21— for a second successive year, also finishing second in Ballon d'Or voting. Vicky Lopez won the women's Kopa Trophy to complete a clean sweep of the award for Barcelona and Spain.

Legendary Dickie Bird passes away



Harold "Dickie" Bird, the charismatic and much loved former cricket umpire from England who officiated in 66 Tests and three World Cup finals, has passed away. He was 92.