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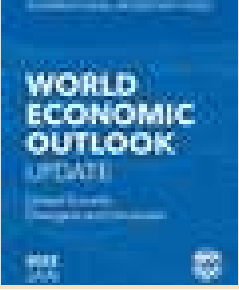


Rules to use funds collected from penalties under green laws notified
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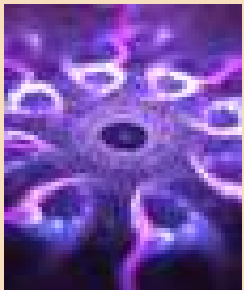


Foreign Ministers of India, Poland spar over neighbours
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EU, UK Walk Tightrope Between Talks and Tariffs



Recent developments in transatlantic relations show how trade measures are increasingly being used for political and strategic purposes. The U.S. President has announced tariffs on seven European Union members and the U.K., reportedly to pressure European countries over the issue of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. This comes despite an existing EU–U.S. trade arrangement under which most European goods already face a 15% tariff in the U.S. While European leaders have kept the door open for negotiations, they have also prepared retaliatory steps, including a €93 billion tariff package and discussions on invoking the EU’s Anti-Coercion Instrument.

Blockbuster drug, proven against a range of cancers, may get much cheaper

A recent Delhi High Court verdict has cleared the way for a cheaper biosimilar version of Nivolumab, a crucial immunotherapy drug used to treat several cancers, by allowing Zydus Lifesciences to manufacture and sell it despite the patent held by Bristol Myers-Squibb (BMS) nearing expiry. Nivolumab, sold as Opdivo globally and Opdyta in India, is currently very expensive, costing about Rs 2.5–3 lakh per month, and is not covered under PMJAY, making it unaffordable for most patients.



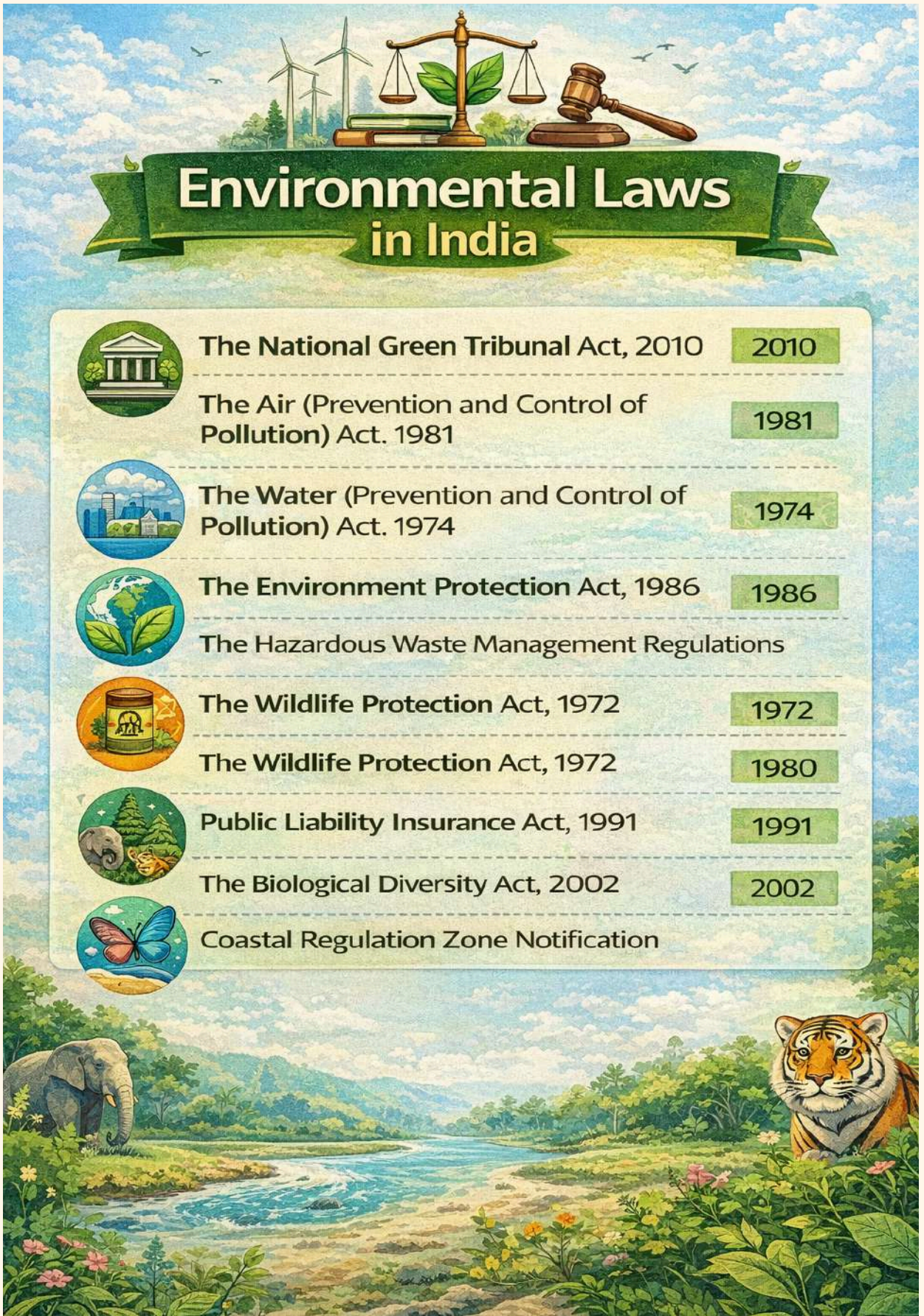
The court’s division bench overturned a single-judge order and took into account public interest, the impending patent expiry, and Zydus’s claim that its biosimilar Tishta would be about 70% cheaper, with annual treatment costs of Rs 3.86–6.46 lakh. The case highlights how India balances patent protection with the need to ensure affordable access to life-saving medicines through legal and policy mechanisms.

Rules to use funds collected from penalties under green laws notified

The Union Environment Ministry has notified new rules under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986 to regulate the use of the Environmental (Protection) Fund. These rules, called the Environmental (Protection) Fund Rules, 2026, lay down how the fund will be used and managed. The fund consists of penalties collected for violations under the EPA, the Air Act, 1981 and the Water Act, 1974. The legal basis for creating such a fund was provided earlier through the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023, which aimed to decriminalise several pollution-related offences and replace them with monetary penalties ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹15 lakh.

The Rules list 11 categories of activities for which the fund can be used. These include installation, operation and maintenance of environmental monitoring equipment such as air quality monitors, setting up laboratories for capacity building, and remediation of environmental damage, including at contaminated sites. The fund can also be used for conducting studies as directed by courts and tribunals. Administrative expenses such as salaries and payments to contractual staff and consultants involved in project management are allowed, but these cannot exceed 5% of the fund available in a financial year. The Union Environment Minister is designated as the “competent authority” and can approve the use of funds for any other purpose considered necessary for environmental protection.

As per the Rules, penalties collected will first be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India and then transferred to the Public Account of India. Seventy-five per cent of the amount will be sent to the concerned State or Union Territory, while 25% will be retained by the Centre. The fund’s accounts will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and audit reports will be placed before Parliament and State Assemblies. This framework links environmental governance, financial accountability and regulatory reform. It provides a structured way to use penalty money for monitoring, remediation and capacity building, while supporting the shift towards a compliance-based, non-criminal approach to environmental regulation.



INTERNATIONAL

Foreign Ministers of India, Poland spar over neighbours

India and Poland witnessed an unusually frank diplomatic exchange during talks in New Delhi between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski. Differences emerged over Poland's recent engagement with Pakistan and over India's ties with Russia. Mr. Jaishankar conveyed India's concern over Poland's outreach to Pakistan and reiterated that India expects its partners to show zero tolerance towards terrorism. He also criticised "selective targeting" of India over its imports of Russian oil.

The Polish side, while agreeing with India on concerns over terrorism, expressed unease over India's participation in the Zapad-2025 military exercises in Russia and Belarus. The discussion also touched upon India's energy purchases from Russia, which Poland had publicly commented on during the visit.

The episode highlights India's consistent stand against terrorism, its insistence on strategic autonomy in defence and energy choices, and its resistance to external pressure in a multipolar and geopolitically tense global environment.

Zapad 2025

On 10-16 September 2025, a contingent of 65 Indian Armed Forces personnel from the Army, Air Force, and Navy, took part in Zapad-2025 military exercise at Nizhny Novgorod in Russia.

India signs Letter of Intent to elevate defence ties with UAE



Against the backdrop of rising military tensions in the Gulf region, India and the United Arab Emirates signed a Letter of Intent for a Bilateral Strategic Defence Partnership during the brief visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to India. The two sides also set a target of doubling bilateral trade to \$200 billion by 2032. The leaders discussed regional developments, including the situations in Gaza, Iran and Yemen. The Indian side clarified that the defence initiative is meant to build a framework agreement and is a natural extension of existing defence cooperation, not a response to any single event.

The visit also saw agreements in the energy and space sectors. HPCL and ADNOC Gas signed a deal for the supply of 0.5 MMPTA LNG for 10 years from 2028. Another Letter of Intent was signed for cooperation in the space industry.

The developments reflect India's expanding strategic, energy and technological engagement in the Gulf at a time of regional instability and shifting security alignments.

Include digital currency link on BRICS agenda: RBI to govt.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recommended to the Union government that a proposal to connect the central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) of BRICS countries be included in the agenda of the 2026 BRICS summit. India is set to host the next BRICS summit later this year, and if this recommendation is accepted, it would be the first time such a proposal is formally discussed at the grouping level. The idea builds on the 2025 BRICS declaration in Brazil, which called for interoperability among members' payment systems to make cross-border transactions more efficient.

The proposal aims to make cross-border payments easier by linking the digital currencies of BRICS members. This could reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar at a time of rising geopolitical tensions. The RBI has already expressed interest in linking India's digital rupee (e-rupee) with other countries' CBDCs to speed up international transactions and increase the global use of the rupee. At the same time, the RBI has clarified that its efforts are not aimed at promoting de-dollarisation. Currently, none of the BRICS countries has fully launched a digital currency, but all five main members are running pilot projects. India's e-rupee has attracted about 7 million retail users since its launch in December 2022.



The significance of this proposal lies in its potential to reshape cross-border payment systems among major emerging economies. It could improve payment efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen financial cooperation within BRICS. However, the initiative could irritate the United States, which has warned against attempts to bypass the dollar, and has previously described BRICS as “anti-American.” For such a system to work, several challenges must be addressed, including interoperable technology, governance rules, and mechanisms to settle imbalances in trade volumes. The proposal reflects the growing importance of digital currencies in global finance and highlights BRICS' efforts to build alternative financial infrastructure, while also underlining the technical and geopolitical complexities involved in such a move.

ECONOMICS

IMF upgrades India's growth projection for current financial year

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised India's GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2025–26 upward to 7.3% from its earlier estimate of 6.6%, according to the January 2026 World Economic Outlook update. The revision reflects stronger-than-expected growth in the third quarter and sustained momentum in the fourth quarter. Despite this, the IMF expects growth to moderate to 6.4% in 2026 and 2027 as cyclical and temporary factors ease. The IMF's estimate is only slightly below the Union government's forecast of 7.4% for the same period. Globally, growth is projected to remain resilient at around 3.3% in 2026 and 3.2% in 2027. The report highlights that while headwinds from shifting trade policies continue, these are balanced by tailwinds from rising investment in technology, including artificial intelligence, and supportive fiscal and monetary measures. For India, inflation is expected to return close to the Reserve Bank of India's target of 4%, following a decline in 2025 driven by subdued food prices. The news is significant as it indicates India's economy continues to perform strongly despite global uncertainties, trade turbulence, and shifting policies.

| (Real GDP, annual percent change) | ESTIMATE | PROJECTIONS | |
|--|----------|-------------|------|
| | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
| World Output | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.2 |
| Advanced Economies | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.7 |
| United States | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.0 |
| Euro Area | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.4 |
| Germany | 0.2 | 1.1 | 1.5 |
| France | 0.8 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Italy | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| Spain | 2.9 | 2.3 | 1.9 |
| Japan | 1.1 | 0.7 | 0.6 |
| United Kingdom | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Canada | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| Other Advanced Economies | 1.8 | 2.0 | 2.1 |
| Emerging Market and Developing Economies | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.1 |
| Emerging and Developing Asia | 5.4 | 5.0 | 4.8 |
| China | 5.0 | 4.5 | 4.0 |
| India | 7.3 | 6.4 | 6.4 |

Silver hits all-time high of \$94 an ounce on geopolitical unrest

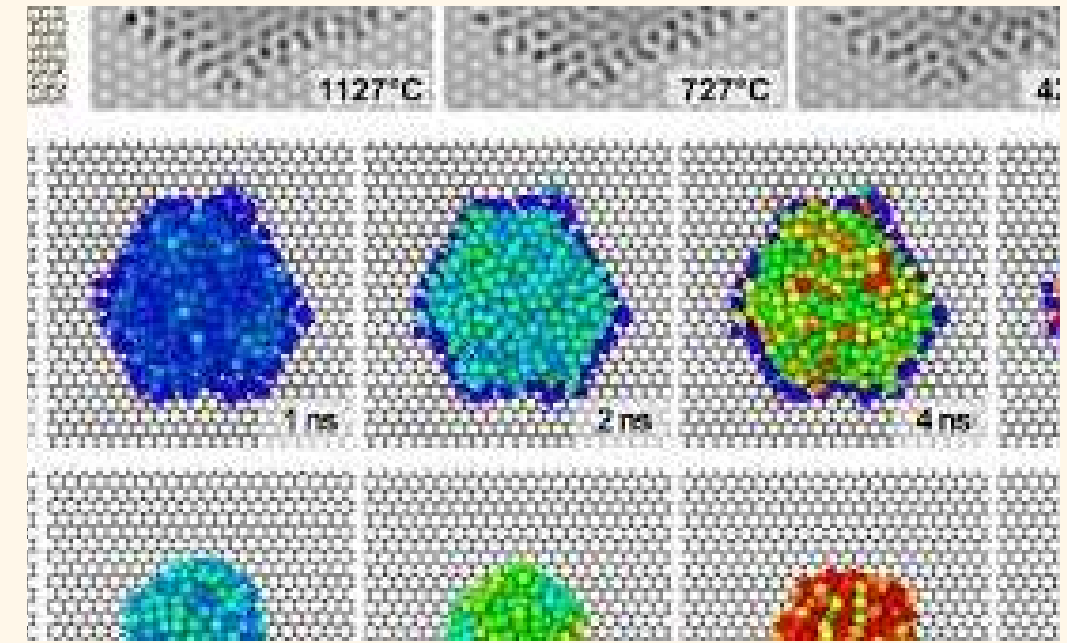


Silver prices reached an all-time high of \$94 per ounce in the international spot market after news of a potential U.S. acquisition of Greenland and the European Union's threat to suspend a trade deal. Silver opened at \$93.3, touched \$94.09, and closed at \$93.5 per ounce on Monday. Gold prices also surged, reaching a record ₹24,690 per ounce, with gold and silver trading at ₹1,45,000/10 grams and ₹23,04,000/kg respectively on the MCX. The rise in prices reflects stronger global demand for precious metals in strategic industries such as semiconductors, along with market uncertainty created by geopolitical tensions. The U.S.'s push for Greenland and potential EU retaliatory measures, including tariffs and the anti-coercion instrument, increased investor interest in safe-haven assets. This trend is significant as it illustrates how geopolitical developments can directly affect commodity markets, influence import costs, and shape investment and trading decisions in the global and domestic financial system.

World's largest silver reserves - Peru (21.1%)
India is a net importer
(among top consumers at global level)

New state of matter is a solid-liquid hybrid

Scientists from Ulm University in Germany and the University of Nottingham have reported the discovery of a new state of matter in the journal ACS Nano. This is not a normal slush or gel, but a special nanoscale structure where different parts of a single nanoparticle exist in different physical states at the same time. The discovery challenges the traditional idea that matter must be either fully solid or fully liquid. Using high-resolution transmission electron microscopy, researchers studied nanoparticles of platinum, palladium and gold placed on graphene. They found that even in a liquid state, some metal atoms remained stationary because they were trapped in the graphene structure. These stationary atoms formed a boundary that surrounded the liquid core. As a result, the particle showed both solid and liquid properties and remained liquid even at 200–300°C, much below normal freezing temperatures. This finding shows that the boundary between solid and liquid at the nanoscale is not sharp. It is especially important for designing better catalysts such as platinum on carbon, which are used in fuel cells, as this structure may prevent clumping and improve long-term performance.



Nivolumab: Affordable Hope for Cancer Patients



Nivolumab is a monoclonal antibody drug that enhances the immune system’s ability to target and destroy cancerous cells. Antibodies are naturally produced proteins that fight infections, while monoclonal antibodies are lab-made molecules designed for targeted action. Unlike chemotherapy, which attacks both healthy and cancerous cells, Nivolumab works specifically on cancer cells, making it part of a class of treatments called immunotherapy. This immunotherapy has transformed medical oncology, particularly in treating lung cancers, by improving both the duration and quality of life. Nivolumab can be prescribed in multiple situations: after primary surgery, when cancer has metastasized, or following chemotherapy or radiotherapy before surgery. The drug has received the U.S. FDA’s “Breakthrough Therapy” designation, allowing faster collaboration with developers to accelerate its availability. In the Indian context, the approval of a biosimilar version will make this life-saving therapy more affordable and accessible, supporting the treatment of cancer patients who previously could not afford it.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) As per Article 368 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament may amend any provision of the Constitution by way of: (2024)

1. Addition

2. Variation

3. Repeal

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

2) Consider the following statements: (2013)

1. An amendment to the Constitution of India can be initiated by an introduction of a Bill in the Lok Sabha only.

2. If such an amendment seeks to make changes in the federal character of the Constitution, the amendment also requires to be ratified by the Legislature of all the States of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN



123 DAYS TO GO

Case Study

Rajni Sekhri Sibal, IAS



Rajni Sekhri Sibal, an IAS officer of the Haryana cadre, displayed exemplary integrity during the 1999–2000 selection process of 3,200 Junior Basic Training (JBT) teachers. She was under pressure to alter the results but refused to compromise with the selection list. As a consequence of her firm stand, she was transferred out of the post. However, before leaving, she took a simple yet brilliant procedural step. She wrapped the steel almirah containing the original results with four-metre-long cloth and bandages, making it impossible for anyone to open it and tamper with the list. This small but thoughtful action prevented a large-scale scandal. Her conduct shows that ethical courage is not only about resisting wrongdoing but also about using intelligent administrative measures to safeguard public interest. It highlights how integrity, combined with presence of mind, can protect institutional fairness even under pressure.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option D

As per Article 368 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution through the following means:

1. **Addition:** Parliament can add new provisions, articles, or schedules to the Constitution. For example, the Tenth Schedule related to anti-defection was added by the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.

2. **Variation:** Parliament can modify or vary existing provisions of the Constitution. For instance, changes in the powers of the President or amendments to fundamental rights fall under this category.

3. **Repeal:** Parliament can repeal or remove provisions from the Constitution. For instance, Right to Property was removed as a fundamental right by the 44th Amendment Act, 1978.

So 1,2, and 3 are correct. Option D is the answer.

2) Answer is option d

Statement 1 is incorrect: An amendment to the Constitution of India can be initiated by the introduction of a Bill in either House of Parliament (Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha), not just the Lok Sabha. This is provided under Article 368 of the Constitution.

Statement 2 is incorrect: If an amendment seeks to make changes to the federal character of the Constitution, it must be ratified by the Legislatures of at least half of the States, not all the States.

Evolution of Basic Structure of the Constitution

- 1951 – Shankari Prasad Case**
 - Supreme Court upheld the 1st Constitutional Amendment.
 - Held that Parliament can amend Fundamental Rights and that constitutional amendments are not “law” Article 13.
- 1967 – Golak Nath Case**
 - Supreme Court reversed its earlier view.
 - Held that Parliament cannot amend Fundamental Rights and that a constitutional amendments is “law” under Article 13.
- 1971 – 24th Constitutional Amendment**
 - Parliament overruled Golak Nath judgment.
 - Declared that Parliament can amend Fundamental Rights and such amendments are not affected by Article 13.
- 1973 – Kesavananda Bharati Case**
 - Supreme Court upheld the 24th Amendment.
 - But introduced the **Basic Structure Doctrine**; Parliament can amend any part, but cannot destroy the **basic structure**.
- 1975 – Indira Nehru Gandhi Case**
 - Supreme Court applied **Basic Structure Doctrine**.
 - Struck down part of the 39th Amendment as it violated basic structure (judicial review, free and fair elections).
- 1980 – Minerva Mills Case**
 - Supreme Court struck down this part of the 42nd Amendment.

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**BoM Apprentice
Recruitment
2026**

- **Eligibility:** Degree
- **Selection:** On 12th Marks (No Exam)
- **Last Date:** 25 January 2026

No. of
Vacancies
600

**RBI Office
Attendant
Recruitment
2026**

- **Eligibility:** 10th Pass
- **Salary:** ₹46,029/- per month
- **Last Date:** 04 February 2026

No. of
Vacancies
572

**ESIC Insurance
Medical Officer
Recruitment
2026**

- **Eligibility:** MBBS + CMSE-2024
- **Salary:** ₹56,100 – ₹1,77,500 (Level-10)
- **Last Date:** 17 February 2026

No. of
Vacancies
225

**NABARD
Development
Assistant
Recruitment
2026**

- **Eligibility:** Graduate (50% Marks)
- **Salary:** ₹46,500/- (Approx Gross)
- **Last Date:** 03 Feb 2026

No. of
Vacancies
162

**CSIR NML MTS
Recruitment 2026**

- **Eligibility:** 10th Pass Pass OR ITI
- **Salary:** ₹36,000/- PM (Approx)
- **Last Date:** 06 February 2026

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Vacancies
22

More details

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"Things may come to those who wait, but only things left by those who hustle"

Abraham Lincoln