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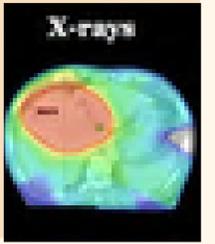


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## India and the United States Reach Framework for Interim Trade Agreement

On 7 February 2026, India and the United States issued a joint statement announcing that both countries had reached a framework for an Interim Trade Agreement, while reaffirming their commitment to work towards a comprehensive Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). The joint statement underscored that the proposed BTA would include additional market access commitments and aim to support more resilient supply chains. In this context, the Interim Agreement was projected as a significant milestone in India-U.S. economic relations, reflecting a shared commitment to reciprocal and balanced trade based on mutual interests and tangible outcomes. Developments on the tariff front also preceded this announcement. The U.S. President had earlier signed an executive order removing the 25% tariffs imposed on Indian imports in connection with India's trade in Russian oil. Subsequently, the interim trade framework provided that the United States would apply a reduced reciprocal tariff rate of 18 per cent, down from 25 per cent, on originating goods from India, including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastics and rubber, organic chemicals, home décor, artisanal products, and certain categories of machinery.

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## Five cubs born to Namibian cheetah at Kuno National Park



Five cheetah cubs were born to the Namibian cheetah Aasha at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, as announced by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change. With this birth, India's cheetah population has increased to 35, comprising 24 Indian-born cubs and 11 translocated adult cheetahs.

Kuno National Park (KNP) is located in the Vindhya Hills of central India in Madhya Pradesh. The park derives its name from the Kuno River flowing through the region. Recognising its ecological significance, the Government of Madhya Pradesh notified the area as the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in 1981, covering about 345 sq km within a larger forest landscape. For improved wildlife management, a buffer was later added, and in December 2018, the area was upgraded to a National Park with a core area of about 748.7 sq km and a buffer of around 557.3 sq km.

Biogeographically, Kuno falls under the Kathiawar–Gir dry deciduous forest eco-region. The dominant vegetation includes Kardhai, Khair and Salai, along with northern and southern tropical dry deciduous forests, dry savannah grasslands and riverine forests. The park supports diverse fauna such as chital, sambar, nilgai, chinkara, blackbuck, four-horned antelope, gaur, leopard and dhole.

Kuno has also been associated with wildlife restoration initiatives, including proposals related to the Asiatic lion. More recently, it has become central to India's Action Plan for the introduction of cheetahs. Translocated cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa have been quarantined and monitored in dedicated enclosures, with expert consultations aimed at establishing a viable cheetah metapopulation in India.

## Prohibitory orders issued in Manipur's Ukhrul district

The administration of Ukhrul district in Manipur imposed prohibitory orders in the Litan area on Sunday following tensions between Naga and Kuki-Zo villagers arising from an alleged assault incident. According to district authorities, a Tangkhul Naga man was reportedly assaulted by members of a Kuki-Zo group on Saturday night, leading to apprehensions of a breach of peace and public tranquillity.

District Magistrate Asish Das stated that the restrictions were imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which empowers executive magistrates to issue preventive orders in urgent situations where immediate action is required to avert danger to life, safety, or public order. The prohibitory orders came into effect from 7 p.m. on Sunday and will remain in force until further notice, subject to statutory limits.

As a preventive measure, the district administration also requisitioned the services of the Army and paramilitary forces, including the Assam Rifles, to assist in maintaining law and order. At the same time, authorities indicated that the matter was being addressed peacefully through established customary mechanisms, with the Litan Sareikhong village authority engaging in consultations with the family of the injured person.

### Section 163 in Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 Power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger.

(1) In cases where, in the opinion of a District Magistrate, a Sub-divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate specially empowered by the State Government in this behalf, there is sufficient ground for proceeding under this section and immediate prevention or speedy remedy is desirable, such Magistrate may, by a written order stating the material facts of the case and served in the manner provided by section 153, direct any person to abstain from a certain act or to take certain order with respect to certain property in his possession or under his management, if such Magistrate considers that such direction is likely to prevent, or tends to prevent, obstruction, annoyance or injury to any person lawfully employed, or danger to human life, health or safety or a disturbance of the public tranquillity, or a riot, or an affray.

# SCIENCE

## Heavier ions improve multi-ion cancer therapy

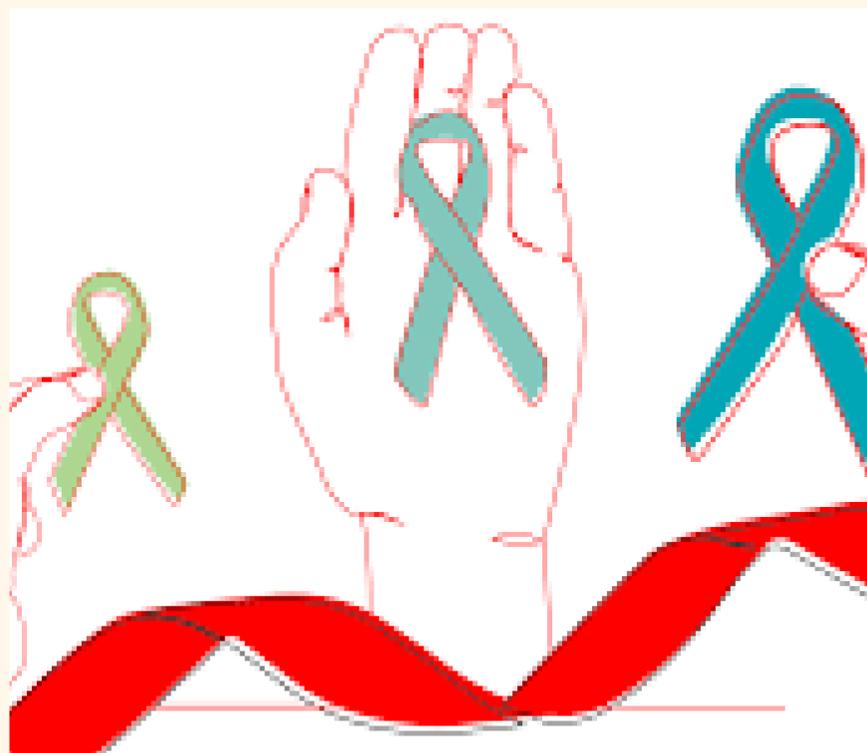
A research team at the National Institutes for Quantum Science and Technology (QST) in Japan is exploring the potential of multi-ion cancer therapy that combines beams of carbon, oxygen and neon ions. This approach is being studied for the treatment of radiation-resistant tumours. According to the researchers, different ions possess distinct physical and biological characteristics, and combining them in a manner suited to the specific nature of a tumour and its surrounding environment can improve tumour control while limiting damage to healthy tissues.

Multi-ion therapy is considered a powerful treatment option but faces a major challenge in balancing high treatment intensity with precise targeting. A key concern identified by researchers is range uncertainty, which refers to the risk of the ion beam stopping slightly before or beyond the intended target area. Such uncertainty poses a significant threat to treatment accuracy and increases the possibility of damage to surrounding tissues.

To address this issue, the Japanese research team examined the use of heavier ions within multi-ion therapy. Their findings indicate that using heavier ions, such as oxygen, can reduce the margin of error associated with range uncertainty by more than 7 percent. This improvement enhances targeting accuracy and contributes to safer and more effective cancer treatment. The study highlights how tailored combinations of ion beams may help overcome existing limitations in advanced radiation therapies.

- Heavy-ion cancer therapy offers advantages over proton therapy due to higher precision, limited lateral scattering, and high linear energy transfer (LET).
- High-LET radiation causes complex DNA damage, making it effective against hypoxic and radio-resistant tumours.
- Researchers at Japan's National Institutes for Quantum Science and Technology (QST) are studying multi-ion therapy using carbon, oxygen and neon ions.
- Combining different ions allows treatment plans to be tailored to tumour type and location, improving tumour control while reducing damage to healthy tissues.
- A key challenge is the "LET trilemma", which involves balancing treatment effectiveness, dose uniformity and accuracy.
- Studies show heavier ions like oxygen can reduce targeting uncertainty, improving treatment robustness.

## 'Over one-third of cancers worldwide may be preventable



A global analysis published in Nature Medicine highlights that a significant proportion of cancer cases worldwide could potentially be prevented by reducing exposure to known and modifiable risk factors. The study estimates that nearly 7.1 million of the 18.7 million cancer cases reported in 2022, or about 38%, were linked to risk factors that could have been addressed through public health interventions and lifestyle changes.

The analysis covered data from 185 countries and examined 36 cancer types in relation to 30 preventable risk factors, including tobacco use, alcohol consumption, infections, obesity, physical inactivity, air pollution, and occupational hazards. Given the long latency period of cancer development, the study relied largely on risk-factor prevalence data from around 2012.

Smoking emerged as the single largest contributor, accounting for 15.1% of new cancer cases globally, followed by infections at 10.2% and alcohol consumption at 3.2%. The study also identified gender differences, with preventable risks linked to 45.4% of cancers among men compared to 29.7% among women. Regional disparities were evident, with tobacco use and infections dominating in East Asia, while infections accounted for nearly one-third of cancer cases among women in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings underscore that cancer prevention is closely tied to well-recognised public health measures such as tobacco control, vaccination, improved air quality, safer workplaces, healthier diets, and increased physical activity.

# INTERNATIONAL

## India's Strategic Dialogue with Doval meets his Canadian counterpart, discusses safety, security of citizens

India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, met his Canadian counterpart, Nathalie Drouin, in Ottawa on Saturday, marking an important step in efforts to stabilise and advance bilateral engagement on national security and law enforcement issues. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, both sides acknowledged the progress made on initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of their countries and citizens. During the meeting, the two sides agreed on a shared work plan to guide bilateral cooperation on national security and law enforcement, with an emphasis on enabling practical collaboration in areas of mutual priority. The discussions are being viewed in the context of attempts to normalise India-Canada relations, which had come under strain following the killing of a Khalistani separatist in 2023. The visit also precedes the scheduled visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India in March.

Both countries agreed to establish dedicated security and law-enforcement liaison officers and to strengthen working relationships between their respective agencies. This step is expected to streamline bilateral communication and facilitate timely information sharing on issues such as the illegal flow of drugs, including fentanyl precursors, and transnational organised criminal networks. India and Canada further committed to formalising cooperation on cybersecurity policy and information sharing, while continuing discussions on collaboration related to fraud and immigration enforcement. Together, these measures reflect a structured approach to rebuilding trust and enhancing cooperation in sensitive security domains.



## Iran defies U.S. threats, says it has right to enrich uranium



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated on Sunday that Tehran would not relinquish uranium enrichment in its negotiations with the United States, rejecting what he described as pressure and threats of military action. Speaking at a forum in Tehran, he asserted that Iran would not be intimidated by the presence of U.S. military forces in the region, including the deployment of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea.

Mr. Araghchi expressed limited trust in Washington and questioned the seriousness of the United States in the renewed negotiations, which resumed in Oman on Friday. These talks marked the first engagement between the two sides since Israel's 12-day conflict with Iran in June last year. Iran is seeking the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions in exchange for what the Foreign Minister described as a series of confidence-building measures related to its nuclear programme.

Western countries and Israel have repeatedly accused Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, a charge Tehran has denied. Mr. Araghchi reiterated that Iran was not pursuing an atomic bomb, portraying its stance instead as an assertion of strategic autonomy and resistance to external pressure.

His remarks followed visits by U.S. negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to the aircraft carrier, a move interpreted as signalling continued military pressure. Mr. Araghchi argued that the continuation of sanctions and military actions undermined confidence and raised doubts about the United States' commitment to genuine negotiations.

# INTERNATIONAL

## India and Malaysia are connected by the 'shared affection' for Tamil: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the deep cultural and people-to-people ties between India and Malaysia during his two-day visit, emphasising the shared affection for the Tamil language as a key link between the two countries. Speaking to the media on the concluding day of his visit, he noted that Tamil has a strong and vibrant presence in Malaysia's education system, media landscape and cultural life. Malaysia is home to nearly three million people of Indian origin, the second-largest Indian diaspora in the world, with a majority tracing their roots to Tamil Nadu.

The Prime Minister expressed confidence that the audio-visual agreement signed during the visit would further strengthen cultural connections, particularly through films and music, with a special reference to Tamil cinema. Earlier, he also referred to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's admiration for the Tamil film icon Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran (MGR), a song from whose 1975 film *Naalai Namadhe* was played during an official lunch.

Addressing a community programme, Mr. Modi underscored the role of the Indian diaspora as a vital bridge between the two countries. He recalled that India had established the Thiruvalluvar Chair at the University of Malaya and announced plans to set up a Thiruvalluvar Centre to further strengthen shared cultural heritage. Together, these engagements underline the role of cultural diplomacy and diaspora links in reinforcing India-Malaysia relations.



## India-Greece defence ties in focus as Ministers meet in New Delhi today



India and Greece are set to further strengthen their defence cooperation as Greek Defence Minister Nikos Dendias and Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh are scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi. The discussions are expected to focus on enhancing cooperation in the defence sector, reflecting the steady momentum in bilateral military engagement.

The meeting comes against the backdrop of growing strategic convergence between India and Europe. Speaking at the India-EU Forum 2026, Mr. Dendias described India as an indispensable partner for Europe, underlining its increasing strategic and economic significance for the European Union and for Greece in particular. He noted that European perceptions of India have evolved considerably, with India now being viewed as a necessary partner in the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

Defence relations between India and Greece have witnessed notable progress in recent months. In January this year, the two countries held their inaugural India-Greece Joint Services Staff Talks in New Delhi, marking an important step towards institutionalising defence cooperation. Earlier, in September 2025, the Indian Navy and the Hellenic Navy conducted their maiden bilateral maritime exercise in the Mediterranean Sea, held in two phases encompassing harbour and sea operations. The upcoming bilateral talks are expected to consolidate these developments and further strengthen the growing defence partnership between India and Greece, highlighting defence cooperation as a key pillar of their broader strategic engagement.

UNION BUDGET 2026-2027 : KEY TAKEAWAYS - SPECIAL FEATURE

## AYUSH Expansion: Evidence, Safety and Professional Boundaries

In the Union Budget for 2026–27, the Government of India proposed enhanced financial and institutional support for the AYUSH sector. The total allocation for AYUSH increased to ₹4,408 crore, reflecting a steady rise from previous years. Key announcements included plans to establish three new All-India Institutes of Ayurveda on the lines of AIIMS, with mandates covering patient care, advanced research, and education. The Budget also proposed upgrading the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, with the objective of positioning India as a global standard-setter in traditional medicine. Further, the National AYUSH Mission received a significant increase in funding to modernise AYUSH hospitals and dispensaries, co-locate AYUSH services within modern healthcare facilities, and strengthen preventive healthcare. Additional support was extended to upgrade AYUSH pharmacies, drug-testing laboratories, and to introduce Bharat-VISTAAR, an AI-based advisory platform for medicinal plant cultivators.

### Challenges to AYUSH sector

The expansion of AYUSH systems has attracted criticism, particularly from the Indian Medical Association (IMA), on scientific, ethical and patient-safety grounds. A key concern is the lack of rigorous empirical validation. While allopathic drugs must clear randomised controlled trials to establish safety and efficacy, many AYUSH therapies are based on ancient texts and observational history, with limited reproducible evidence meeting modern medical standards.

Safety issues have also been flagged. Certain Ayurvedic formulations contain heavy metals such as lead and mercury, and health advisories from countries like the U.S., Australia and New Zealand have reported cases of lead poisoning linked to imported Ayurvedic products.

The most contentious issue is “mixopathy”, or the blurring of boundaries between traditional and modern medicine. In 2020, the Central Council of Indian Medicine permitted postgraduate Ayurveda students to train in 58 surgical procedures. Critics argue that surgery requires extensive training in anatomy, anaesthesia and peri-operative care, which AYUSH curricula do not adequately provide. The controversy intensified in 2025 when Andhra Pradesh allowed Ayurveda practitioners to perform such surgeries independently, triggering nationwide protests and ongoing Supreme Court litigation.

Further friction exists over AYUSH doctors prescribing allopathic medicines to address rural doctor shortages, with warnings that this may encourage irrational drug use and aggravate antibiotic resistance.

Overall, critics argue that integration must be guided by evidence, patient safety and clear professional boundaries, rather than expediency. The expanded budgetary support and global market access indicate a shift towards formalising AYUSH as a regulated industry and economic sector. At the same time, greater global engagement is likely to increase expectations of evidence, accountability, and institutional discipline within the sector.

### AYUSH IN INDIA-EU FTA

*India's Free Trade Agreement with the European Union has opened new opportunities for the AYUSH sector. Under the agreement, Indian AYUSH practitioners can offer services in EU countries where traditional medicine is unregulated, and Indian firms receive legal certainty to establish wellness centres and clinics across the EU. The agreement also enables partial mutual recognition of laboratory tests and safety certifications, facilitating exports of AYUSH products. Importantly, the FTA recognises India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, helping prevent misappropriation of traditional formulations.*

#### FM Proposals – Traditional Medicine / AYUSH



3 New All India Institutes of Ayurveda



Upgrade AYUSH Pharmacies & Drug Testing Labs  
(Higher certification standards + Skilled Manpower)



WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre, Jamnagar Upgraded  
(Evidence-Based Research, Training & Awareness)

**PRELIMS CORNER :**

1) When the Reserve Bank of India reduces the Statutory Liquidity Ratio by 50 basis points, Which of the following is likely to happen? (2015)

- India's GDP growth rate increases drastically
- Foreign Institutional Investors may bring more capital into our country
- Scheduled Commercial Banks may cut their lending rates
- It may drastically reduce the liquidity to the banking, system

2) With reference to Indian economy, consider the following: (2015)

- Bank rate
- Open market operations
- Public debt
- Public revenue

Which of the above is/are component/component of Monetary Policy?

- 1 only
- 2, 3 and 4
- 1 and 2
- 1, 3 and 4

**PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN****104 DAYS TO GO****HERITAGE****CHATTAMBI SWAMIKAL (1853-1924)**

Chattampi Swamikal (1853–1924), born as Ayyappan and later known as Kunjan Pillai, was a towering social reformer, philosopher and intellectual figure in modern Kerala. Revered as the “Saint without Saffron”, he was also known by honorific titles such as Sri Bhattakaran, Vidyadhiraja and Shanmugha Dasan, reflecting his wide scholarship and spiritual stature despite his rejection of formal religious symbols. Chattampi Swamikal played a pioneering role in questioning caste hierarchies, ritual orthodoxy and intellectual monopolies that dominated Kerala society. He constituted the Theertha Paada Matham, which emerged as a centre for spiritual inquiry and social reform, and mentored several eminent disciples, most notably Sree Narayana Guru, along with Neelakantha Theertha Padar and Theertha Pada Paramahansa. Deeply grounded in Indian philosophical traditions, he offered a detailed and original explanation of the Chinmudra and consistently upheld the principles of Advaita Vedanta, which found systematic expression in his work Advaita Chinthapaddhathi. Through Vedaddikara Nirupanam, he decisively challenged the Brahmin monopoly over the Vedas, asserting the spiritual and intellectual equality of all sections of society. In Pracheena Malayalam, he critically examined Kerala's social history and questioned the Brahmin-centric theory of social supremacy, while Kristumata Nirupanam presented a critical assessment of Christian conversion practices. Together, his writings and teachings contributed significantly to the democratization of knowledge, the growth of rational thought, and the broader social reform movement in Kerala.

# Prelims Corner: Explanations

## 1) Answer is option C

In an attempt to provide more liquidity to the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) by 50 basis points to 21.50 per cent from 22 per cent. This is likely to cause banks to cut their lending rates.

### Statutory Liquidity Ratio

The Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) is the minimum percentage of a commercial bank's total deposits that must be maintained in the form of liquid assets such as cash, gold, or government-approved securities. It is prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to ensure adequate liquidity in the banking system and to promote financial stability. By requiring banks to hold a portion of their deposits in safe and liquid assets, SLR helps regulate the flow of credit in the economy and acts as a tool to manage inflationary pressures. It also ensures the solvency of banks by strengthening their ability to meet depositors' demands. The SLR requirement is calculated as a percentage of a bank's Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL). In India, all scheduled commercial banks have to maintain SLR mandatorily.

## 2) Answer is option c

**Monetary policy :** it is framed and implemented by the central bank and focuses on controlling money supply and interest rates in the economy.

**Tools of monetary policy :** Bank Rate, Open Market operations.

**Fiscal policy :** It deals with government decisions on spending and taxation and aims to promote economic stability and growth.

By changing tax rates and government expenditure, the government can use fiscal policy to manage the fiscal deficit. Public debt and public revenue are part of fiscal policy.

### Monetary policy vs fiscal policy

Understanding the distinct roles of RBI and the government in steering India's economy

Aspect	Monetary policy	Fiscal policy
Definition	Monetary policy involves central bank decisions on money supply and interest rates to manage economic stability and growth.	Fiscal policy involves government decisions on taxation, spending, and borrowing to influence the economy.
Authority in charge	The central bank, e.g., the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).	The government, primarily through the Ministry of Finance.
Goals	Price stability, controlling inflation, and managing economic growth.	Economic growth, reducing unemployment, equitable wealth distribution, and managing public services.
Focus	Controlling the money supply and credit flow in the economy.	Government spending and revenue generation to influence aggregate demand.
Primary tools	1. Open market operations: Buying/selling government bonds. 2. Interest rate adjustments: Repo/reverse repo rate changes. 3. Reserve requirements: Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR).	1. Taxation: Adjusting tax rates (e.g., corporate tax cuts). 2. Government spending: Infrastructure projects, subsidies, etc. 3. Public borrowing.
Timeline of impact	Short to medium-term; changes in monetary policy often show results within months.	Medium to long-term; it may take years for fiscal measures to fully materialise.
Flexibility	Relatively independent and quicker to implement.	Often constrained by political and legislative processes.

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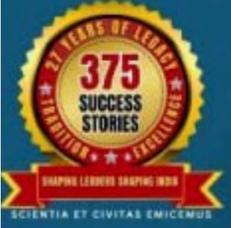
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