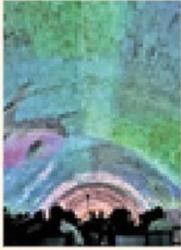


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## INDIA'S SECURITY INTERESTS LINKED TO STABILITY IN WEST ASIA: MODI

*“Peace and stability in West Asia are directly linked to India’s security interests... This is the call of the Global South and of humanity as a whole,”*  
- Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a state visit to Israel—hosted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—from 25 to 26 February 2026. During the visit, the leaders noted the immense progress made in the India-Israel bilateral relationship across diverse domains. These include emerging technologies, cyber, agriculture, water management, health, entrepreneurship, defence, security, and more. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Modi agreed to elevate the Strategic Partnership to a new level: ‘A Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity.’

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their *shared vision for a robust special strategic partnership rooted in mutual aspirations for peace, security, and prosperity through technological innovations and entrepreneurship.*



The leaders acknowledged that Indian and Israeli capabilities complement each other perfectly. Israel is a global powerhouse of technology and innovation. India serves as a hub of talent, manufacturing excellence, and entrepreneurial energy.

The Prime Ministers affirmed their commitment to integrating advancements in key areas. These include AI, cybersecurity, semiconductors, quantum computing, biotechnology, agriculture, water management, defence platforms, and space exploration. This partnership strengthens India’s vision of an ‘Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat 2047’. It aims to spark the next wave of technological transformation and shared progress for both countries. Both leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to global peace and security, welcomed US President Donald Trump’s plan to end the Gaza conflict, and stressed the need for a just, lasting peace through dialogue, stability, and secure regional trade.

*(more on International page)*



## Akkulam-Chettuva waterway a milestone in inland navigation: CM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan officially inaugurated Kerala's prestigious 280-km Akkulam-Chettuva waterway project. This project aims at helping navigation inside the state. It is expected to change Kerala's inland waterway infrastructure and boost tourism.

In the latest development, CM opened the first part of the project at Chilakoor Beach Park in Varkala. Kerala government plans to extend it to Vizhinjam port. This makes a strong logistics network. Mr. Vijayan also flagged off various tourism projects and canal works related to this program. These events come under the West Coast Canal renovation initiative.

The full project is 616 km. It goes from Kovalam to Bekal. It joins lakes, rivers, and canals across Kerala. It will help tourism and move goods by water. Currently, CIAL is fixing the Chilakoor tunnel in Varkala. This tunnel holds history from times as old as 1876 when it was part of the old Travancore state.

The state has allocated 325 crore for phase one. Out of this, 150 crore helps move 579 families. Kerala Waterways Infrastructure Limited runs the project. It is a team of state and CIAL. The waterway covers 10 districts. It brings green growth and new jobs.



## Despite nesting decline, Wayanad's vultures still soar

Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is the sole site that hosts vultures in Kerala. Reports and sightings show that their numbers stay stable due to the healthy ecosystem. Breeding has declined slightly, but experts see no immediate concern. Recent counts show about 80 vultures. Up to 70 gather on one carcass, proving the ecosystem's vitality. Reports further state that local swampy grasslands called *vayals* often attract 24 vultures.

### Niche factor of vultures

Vultures feed mainly on dead animals. They prevent disease spread by cleaning carcasses. Wayanad's open forests with grasses suit them better than dense woods. Warden Varun Dalia notes *vayals* feed herbivores well. Nearly 170 *vayals* exist there. Deer, gaur, elephants, and boars eat grasses and plants. These support predators and vultures. Vultures indicate forest health. **White-rumped vultures dominate the site. Red-headed and Indian vultures also live there.** Migratory Himalayan griffon, cinereous, and Egyptian vultures visit occasionally.

### Human Angle

Humans disturb vulture nests often. Invasive plants like Senna spread fast there. Senna kills native trees over time. Nests disappear from old sites including Ayyappanpara, Kazhukankolli, and Kaithallam. Experts also suggest that human actions are causing decline in vulture breeding while invasive plants harm nesting areas too.

**Focus area : General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Bio diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.**

## SC bans Class 8 textbook, orders seizure of copies

The Supreme Court spoke on Thursday about "a deep conspiracy" behind a calculated move with the Class 8 social science book released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The book shows judiciary as corrupt throughout by picking only facts of corruption tainting the institution.

Consequently, the apex court banned the book completely. It ordered seizure of all copies—digital and physical forms. NCERT published the book. NCERT works under Education Ministry. They released it in February.

### Heads must roll

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant has taken suo motu action on the issue. The court noted that the book has reckless content with the aim to bias young students, as eventually students become tools spreading this view to society. The bench said heads must roll and started contempt proceedings immediately. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta spoke for Centre. He said that officials involved in this issue feel shameful about the same and offered unconditional apology. The court demands deep investigation.



## Railway Minister announces portal to attract tech innovations

The Rail Tech Policy, announced by Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, aims to modernize Indian Railways by encouraging startups and innovators to contribute new technological solutions. Earlier, railway procurement followed rigid specifications and traditional vendor selection methods, which made it difficult for new ideas to enter the system. The new policy shifts the focus from fixed technical requirements to innovation-driven problem solving, making it easier for fresh and practical solutions to be tested and adopted.

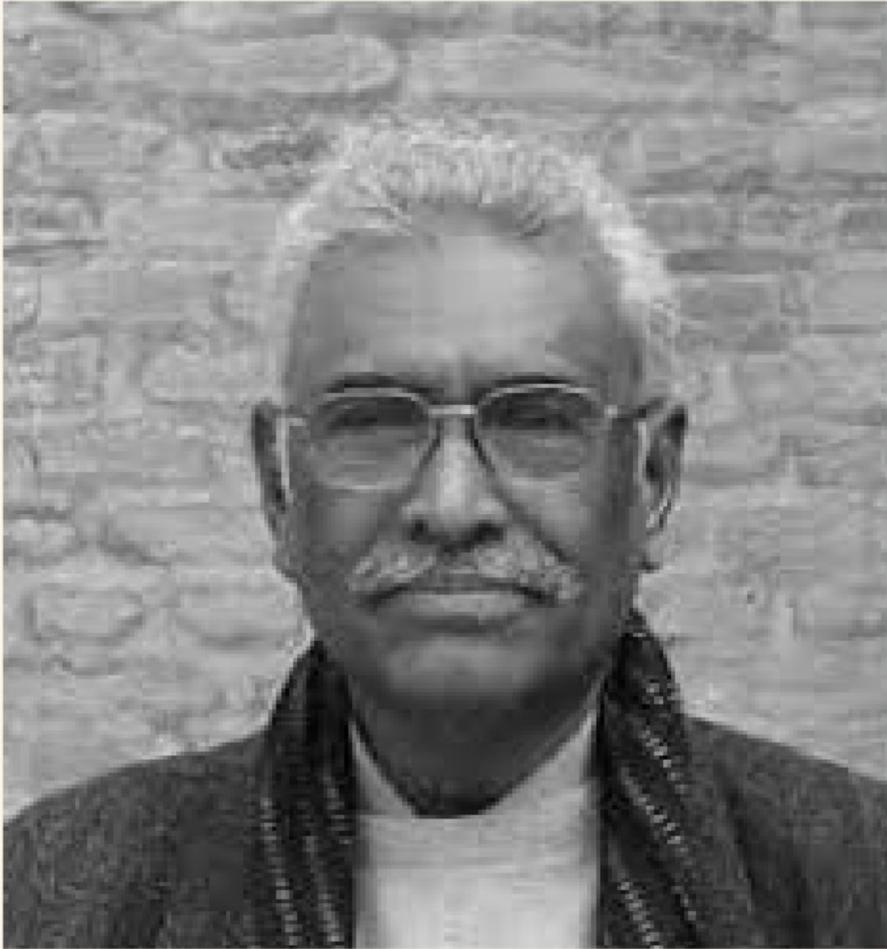
### New Rail Tech Policy

Under this policy, a dedicated online portal will allow innovators to submit detailed proposals to address challenges faced by the Railways. Importantly, Indian Railways will provide financial assistance of up to 50% of the development cost for selected projects. Instead of committing to large purchases immediately, new technologies will first be tested through trials. If the solutions prove successful, the Railways will then place bulk orders, ensuring large-scale implementation.

### Priority Areas

The policy encourages innovation in areas such as safety, efficiency, and sustainability. For example, artificial intelligence can help detect elephants on railway tracks to prevent accidents, identify fires in coaches, and monitor cleanliness. Drones can detect broken rails, while sensors can measure rail stress and wagon loads. Solar panels on coaches can improve energy efficiency. Overall, the policy seeks to improve safety, operational efficiency, and long-term technological growth in Indian Railways.

## Eminent scholar who placed Indian sociology on global intellectual map passes away at 88



T.K. Oommen, eminent sociologist and JNU Professor Emeritus, passed away at 88 in Gurugram. Regarded as a leading architect of modern Indian sociology, he focused on social justice, identity, and pluralism. Known for his Bhoodan Movement study and chairing Gujarat Harmony Project's Advisory Committee post-communal violence.

Former ISA and Indian Sociological Society president, he served on Sachar Committee studying Muslims' status. Sociology, for him, grasped society's pulse in transition, placing Indian sociology globally.

His scholarship spanned five domains: *social movements (Bhoodan), sociology of occupation (nursing, 1978), state-ethnicity-security amid violence, state-civil society ties, and sociology's links to history, politics, culture.*

Born 1937 in Alappuzha (Travancore), he advocated pluralism, theoretical eclecticism, reconciling national-humanist values. Authored ~20 books; awards include Padma Bhushan (2008), V.K.R.V. Rao, G.S. Ghurye prizes.

## A century of struggle and sacrifice: Comrade R.Nallakannu passes away at 101



Veteran CPI leader R. Nallakannu passed away on February 25, 2025, at the age of 101 due to age-related ailments. Widely known as "Comrade RNK," he was regarded as Tamil Nadu's last surviving centenarian communist leader and symbolised integrity and simplicity over nearly eight decades of public life.

Born on December 26, 1925, in Perumpathu village in Thoothukudi district, he joined the Communist Party of India in 1946 during the final years of colonial rule, inspired by Marxist ideals and the struggle against poverty and social injustice. In 1948, he was arrested in the Nellai conspiracy case and spent seven years in prison, where he endured severe torture, including an incident in which a policeman burnt his moustache — after which he chose never to grow one again.

Throughout his political journey, he fought tirelessly for farmers and labourers, campaigning against exploitative landlords, illegal sand mining, and issues surrounding the Kudankulam nuclear plant. He served as CPI's Tamil Nadu State Secretary for 13 years and led farmers' unions for nearly 25 years. His contributions were recognised with honours such as the Ambedkar Award (2008) and the Thagaisaal Tamizhar Award (2023).

## New GDP data set to capture economy more accurately

### New avatar

The upgrades include better methodologies, and the inclusion of new data sets, such as the GST data



- Most visible change in national accounts data is the base year's update from 2011-12 to 2022-23
- Activity-wise revenue share for a company used to calculate the value added in each business activity
- New series to also include value of the housing services provided by governments to their employees

India's new national accounts data, to be released on Friday, will revise how **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA)** are calculated. The update aims to make economic estimates more accurate, transparent and reflective of current realities. **A major change is the shift in the base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23**, allowing better comparison over time and a clearer picture of the present-day economy.

### Changing GDP regime

Several methodological improvements have been introduced. Companies will now split their GVA according to their actual business activities rather than being classified under a single broad sector. Government accounts will include the estimated value of housing services provided to employees. Household data will be drawn more directly from annual surveys such as ASUSE and PLFS.

### Expected Outcomes

The revised system makes greater use of GST data to estimate corporate output and track active firms across regions. Improved data from states, RBI banking statistics, and actual NBFC figures will reduce reliance on assumptions and better capture real economic activity.

**Focus area : General Studies-III: Economic Development - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.**

## SEBI broadens MF categories to keep pace with investor preferences

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has broadened mutual fund categories following a consultation paper released last year. As part of the changes, a new "lifecycle fund" category will replace existing retirement and children's funds. These lifecycle funds will have defined minimum and maximum investment horizons ranging from 5 to 30 years, giving investors structured, goal-based options within a single framework.

### Sectoral Debt Schemes

SEBI has also allowed asset management companies to launch sectoral debt schemes. These schemes must invest at least 80% of their assets in debt instruments belonging to a single sector. The debt can cover companies across different maturities, but the bonds must carry a minimum credit rating of AA+ or higher. Identified sectors include financial services, energy, infrastructure, housing, and real estate.

### Additional changes

Additionally, residual funds will focus on long-duration debt investments. In equity exposure, up to 50% overlap with other equity schemes is permitted, but it cannot exceed this limit, ensuring clearer categorisation and reduced duplication.



## Strengthening Strategic Ties: PM Modi's State Visit to Israel

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a state visit to Israel from 25 to 26 February 2026 at the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. During the visit, both leaders held discussions on strengthening bilateral ties at a time when the global environment is marked by uncertainty and rapid change. The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the I2U2 Group, a four-nation partnership that includes India, Israel, the UAE, and the United States. They highlighted that this platform can help boost trade, investment, innovation, and cooperation by using the strengths of each participating country. The leaders also discussed the *India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)*. They expressed interest in working together to improve regional connectivity, economic growth, and stability through this corridor, and explored how Israel could contribute more actively within its framework.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed their commitment to sustained high-level engagement between their governments, industries, and people. They emphasised building a durable India-Israel partnership rooted in innovation, technology, and the strengths of their knowledge-driven economies. The state visit carries wider significance for the global order. At a time of geopolitical uncertainty, stronger India-Israel cooperation in technology, security, trade, and innovation contributes to regional stability, economic resilience, and diversified strategic partnerships, reinforcing rules-based engagement and collaborative problem-solving in an interconnected world.

### India-Israel: Strengthening Strategic Partnership

→ Key Agreements Signed by the Prime Ministers ←

MoU on Cooperation in <b>Artificial Intelligence (AI)</b> 	Letter of Intent to Establish <b>Indo-Israel Cyber Centre of Excellence in India</b> 
MoU: Education Ministries <b>Advance Education through AI</b>	<b>Cultural Exchange Programme (2026-2029)</b> 
MoU: ICR & MASHAV <b>India-Israel Innovation Centre for Agriculture (IINCA)</b>	MoU on <b>Geophysical Exploration</b> (Ministry of Mines & Ministry of Energy, Israel) 
MoU: <b>Ports &amp; Shipping → Israel Antiquities Authority</b> (Underwater Archaeology - NMHC, Lothal)	Declaration of Intent on <b>Horizon Scanning</b> (Innovation & Science) 
MoU on <b>Fisheries &amp; Aquaculture Cooperation</b>	Presentation of <b>4<sup>th</sup> India-Israel CEO Forum Report</b> 

**Employment & Sectoral Cooperation**

Implementation <b>Protocol C</b> Commerce & Services 	<b>Protocol E</b> Manufacturing 	<b>Protocol D</b> Restaurant Sector Employment 	<b>Protocol UPI Linkage</b> (NPCI & MASAV) 
Cooperation Agreement <b>Israeli Inst. of Commercial Arbitration &amp; Indian Council of Arbitration</b> 	MoU: <b>IFSCA → Israel Securities Authority</b> for Mutual Cooperation 		

## PRELIMS CORNER :

Q) Annie Besant was: (2013)

1. Responsible for starting the Home Rule Movement.
2. The founder of the Theosophical Society.
3. Once the President of the Indian National Congress.

Select the correct statement/statements using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q) Consider the following: (2016)

1. Calcutta Unitarian Committee
2. Tabernacle of New Dispensation
3. Indian Reform Association

Keshab Chandra Sen is associated with the establishment of which of the above?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

## CASE STUDY

### From Silence to Strength: Reviving Mahmabad Ki Vav



On 31 January 2026, Dinesh Kumar Gautam joined hands with volunteers from Drishti Foundation under the Aditya Birla Group's Force for Good initiative to restore Mahmabad Ki Vav — a 500-year-old stepwell in Gujarat that had quietly faded from lifeline to landfill.

Built during the reign of Mahmud Begada, the stepwell once reflected the brilliance of Gujarat's water architecture. Engineered near the Vatrak River to capture subsoil flow and seasonal rain, it sustained communities for centuries. Its five pavilion towers, descending steps, carved brackets, lotus motifs and Kalpavriksha engravings spoke of both structural intelligence and cultural depth. At full capacity, it could hold nearly two lakh litres of water, strengthening groundwater and local ecology.

But urbanisation and neglect slowly silenced it. By the 1980s, waste and silt had choked its capacity, pushing it into obscurity.

On that January morning, silence gave way to action. Gloves rustled, buckets clanged against carved sandstone, and students worked beside elders who remembered its past glory. What began as cleaning became revival — of heritage, ecology and community pride. Together, they proved that restoration is not just about structures, but about reclaiming responsibility.

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# Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option c

**Statement 1:** Responsible for starting the Home Rule Movement. This is correct. Annie Besant, along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was a key leader in initiating the Home Rule Movement in India in 1916. She advocated for self-governance and greater political rights for Indians.

**Statement 2:** The founder of the Theosophical Society. This is incorrect. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott in New York. Annie Besant joined the society later and played a significant role in its activities in India.

**Statement 3:** Once the President of the Indian National Congress. This is correct. Annie Besant was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1917, becoming the first woman to hold this position.



2) Answer is option b



**Statement 1:** Calcutta Unitarian Committee This is not associated with Keshab Chandra Sen. The Calcutta Unitarian Committee was established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, William Adam, and others in 1821. **Statement 2:** Tabernacle of New Dispensation This is associated with Keshab Chandra Sen. He founded the Tabernacle of New Dispensation in 1881 after breaking away from the Brahmo Samaj of India. It aimed to promote a universal religion blending elements of various faiths. **Statement 3:** Indian Reform Association This is associated with Keshab Chandra Sen. He established the Indian Reform Association in 1870 to promote social reforms, including women's education and rights.



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