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Current Affairs - 30 November 2025

REVIVAL OF THE SHIPPING CORPORATION OF INDIA

- The Government of India has announced a major revival plan for the **Shipping Corporation of India (SCI)**, including the purchase of over 200 merchant ships through joint ventures with other PSUs.
- For decades, the SCI stood as one of the world's leading national carriers, operating **over 120 ships** across categories such as oil tankers, gas carriers, chemical tankers, passenger vessels, liners and offshore vessels.
- SCI symbolised India's maritime pride, combining national service with commercial capability.
- SCI also led technological upgrades, introducing the latest German marine engines, operating India's first LNG carrier, and building vessels in Indian shipyards despite delays and cost overruns.
- Its diverse fleet and national obligations made it central to India's maritime economy.

Role in National Interest and Strategic Missions

- **Energy Security:** Historically, SCI had first rights on transporting India's oil, making tankers the backbone of its fleet.
- **National Service:** It transported civilian workers at concessional rates to the Andaman Islands and supported defence logistics during crises.
- **Risk Operations:** During the Iran-Iraq war, SCI tankers bore the word INDIA in large white letters to signal non-hostility and ensure safe passage.
- **Skill Development:** SCI's Mumbai-based training institute in Powai trained thousands of marine professionals who went on to earn significant foreign exchange for India.

COVID-19 and the Reassessment of Strategic Shipping Capacity

- The pandemic became a turning point. Global freight rates skyrocketed, up to 10 times pre-pandemic levels, as port delays and geopolitical bottlenecks grew.
- Many global carriers skipped developing country ports, disrupting India's key exports such as rice and shrimp and affecting essential imports such as rubber.



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- India's lack of national container capacity left it vulnerable to:
 - Supply chain disruptions
 - High freight costs
 - Loss of export competitiveness

Government's New Revival Plan for SCI

- **Large-Scale Ship Acquisition Through PSU Joint Ventures**
 - The government plans to purchase 200+ merchant vessels for SCI through joint ventures with other PSUs using funds from the Maritime Development Fund.
 - PSU partners, such as oil companies, the Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) and others, will provide long-term assured cargo contracts, enabling SCI to finance new ships sustainably.
- **Rebuilding Container Shipping Capacity**
 - One major initiative includes the creation of Bharat Shipping Line, a joint venture of SCI and CONCOR, to buy 20 new container ships, reviving India's long-neglected container fleet.
- **Balancing Newbuilds and Market Realities**
 - While the revival is ambitious, experts note that global ship prices are currently extremely high due to a prolonged post-pandemic shipping boom. Therefore, expansion will be gradual, balancing strategic needs with market conditions.

Need to Support Private Indian Shipping

- Industry experts emphasise that revival efforts should not remain limited to SCI.
 - India's broader merchant shipping capacity can grow only if private operators also receive:
 - Long-term cargo contracts
 - Support for capital investment
 - A competitive taxation and regulatory environment
 - A holistic approach would build India's overall flag tonnage, enhancing supply chain resilience and global trade competitiveness.
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ASIA POWER INDEX



Recently, India has secured third ranking in the Asia Power Index 2025, while the U.S. and China occupy the first and second spots.

- It is published annually by the Australia-based think tank, **Lowy Institute**.
- It assesses the **ability of nations**, particularly of those in the Asian continent, to **influence their external environment**.
- It is the seventh edition it evaluates the countries and territories across Asia, based on **indicators across eight thematic measures**, including Military Capability and Defence Networks, Economic Capability and Relationships, **Diplomatic and Cultural Influence and Resilience and Future Resources**.

Highlights of Asia Power Index 2025:

- **India ranks third for two measures economic capability and future resources.**
- India's economic and military capability, have both increased in the 2025 edition of the Asia Power Index.

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND



AGRICULTURE (ITPGRFA)

Indian farmers and experts are urging the government to reject proposed expansions to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

- It was **adopted** by the Thirty-First Session of the **Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the United Nations in 2001.
- Entering into force in 2004, it is the **only legally binding international agreement** that specifically deals with the conservation and sustainable management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).



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- The countries which participate in the treaty **exchange and share genetic material and information** for most of the world's most important food crops.

Objectives:

- Conservation and **sustainable use of PGRFA**.
- **Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits** arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.
- The treaty **ensures that farmers and plant breeders access**, easily, the raw genetic material needed to develop new crop varieties, including those with higher yields and those that are resilient to climate change.
- The International Treaty makes it possible to share plant genetic resources across borders through a unique **Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (MLS)**.
 - MLS applies to 64 major crops and forages over which **recipients cannot claim Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)** or any other rights.
- The exchange of material from the MLS is operationalised through the standard material transfer agreement (**SMTA**), a legal document that governs the terms under which genetic material is shared.
- **Those who access genetic materials** through the Multilateral System **agree to share any benefits from their use**.
 - Fair sharing of benefits from use can be achieved through information exchange, access to and transfer of technology, capacity building, and sharing of the financial and other benefits of marketing.
- This treaty **established** and operates a **special initiative** operated for the benefit of developing countries—the **Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF)**.
 - **BSF supports agricultural projects for farmers, public institutions and others in developing countries** to conserve and use PGRFA to improve food crop production, fight plant pests, and adapt to the effects of climate change.



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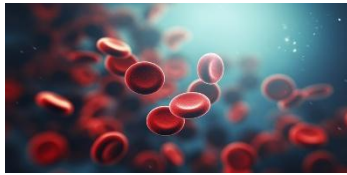
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WHAT IS THALASSEMIA?



Scientists recently tested a gene-editing method called adenine base editing to fix two severe mutations that cause -thalassemia, a genetic blood disease.

- It is an **inherited blood disorder**.
- It affects the body's **ability to produce normal hemoglobin**.
- **Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells (RBCs)**. It allows the RBCs to transport **oxygen** throughout your body.
- In **thalassemia, the body produces fewer healthy hemoglobin** proteins, and bone marrow produces fewer healthy RBCs.
 - The condition of having fewer RBCs is called **anemia**.
 - As RBCs serve the vital role of delivering oxygen to tissues in body, not having enough healthy RBCs can **deprive your body's cells of the oxygen they need to make energy** and thrive.
- Thalassemia is **caused by inheriting a gene mutation** (change in the normal DNA) **from one or both parents**.
- Traits for thalassemia are **more common in people from Mediterranean countries**, like Greece and Turkey, and in people from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.
- There are different types of thalassemia. The type someone has depends on which gene mutation they inherit.

Symptoms: Thalassemia can cause **mild or severe anemia** and other complications over time (such as **iron overload**).

- **Symptoms of Anemia Include:**
 - Trouble breathing.
 - Feeling cold.



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- Pale skin.
- Severe thalassemia may cause death.

Treatments:

- **Blood transfusions** – regular blood transfusions treat and prevent anemia; in severe cases these are needed around once a month.
 - **Chelation therapy** – treatment with medicine to remove the excess iron from the body that builds up as a result of having regular blood transfusions.
 - The **only possible cure** for thalassemia is a **stem cell or bone marrow transplant**, but this is not done very often because of the risks involved.
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WHAT IS SIM BINDING?



The Department of Telecommunications recently directed Over The Top (OTT) communication apps, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat, Signal, Arattai and others, to ensure SIM binding.

- SIM binding refers to a form of device binding in which a user's mobile device is securely linked to their SIM card.
- This approach enhances security by ensuring that authentication processes are tied not just to the device but specifically to the unique identity of the SIM card, reducing the risk of unauthorised access.
- This prevents the user from hackers, spammers, and fraudsters to misuse numbers.

Recent Government Directions:

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked all over-the-top communication platforms operating in India to complete the SIM-binding-to-device exercise within the next 90 days.



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- The DoT has directed these apps to **make sure their services work only when the correct SIM card is in the phone.**
- If the app stops working the moment the SIM is removed, the government believes it will **close one loophole that scammers use to stay untraceable.**
- **Several financial applications, including banking and Unified Payment Interface (UPI) apps, already enforce strict active-SIM rules to prevent fraud.**

KEY FACTS ABOUT ELLORA CAVES



Scottish historian William Dalrymple wants the Maharashtra government to showcase the lesser-known sites at Ellora, including the last Ottoman Caliph's empty tomb, Malik Ambar's tomb, the first Peshwa's tomb, and the Sufi and Naga traditions at the caves.

- They are located near the village of Ellora in **Maharashtra.**
- Inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1983, the Ellora Caves are an extraordinary **complex of rock-cut monasteries and temples** carved into a high basalt cliff.
- These structures date from the 6th to the 10th century CE and represent three major religions—**Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.**
- The sculptures range from **depictions of deities, celestial beings, and mythological scenes** to portraits of royalty and everyday life.
- The architectural brilliance of Ellora is most evident in the **Kailasanatha Temple**, the site's grandest and most breathtaking structure.
 - It is **one of the largest monolithic structures in the world.**
 - The structure is **carved vertically from a single rock.**
 - The temple features **ornate pillars, detailed sculptures, massive courtyards,** and elaborate carvings that **depict stories from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata.**



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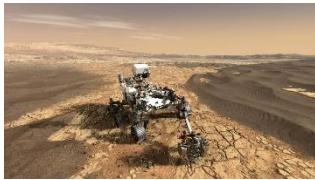


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- The **Buddhist caves** include large chaityas (prayer halls) and viharas (monasteries), while the **Jain caves** are known for their intricate detailing and depictions of Jain Tirthankaras.

WHAT IS THE PERSEVERANCE ROVER?



In a significant breakthrough, NASA's Perseverance rover recently detected electrical activity in Mars' atmosphere for the first time.

- Perseverance, nicknamed “Percy“, is a **semi-autonomous rover** the size of a small car designed to **explore the surface of Mars**.
- It is part of NASA’s **ongoing Mars 2020 Mission**.
- **Landing:** Successfully landed on the surface of Mar’s Jezero Crater in 2021.
 - It is the **first rover to actually land in an ancient Martian river delta**, located inside the Jezero crater.
- **Objective:** Seek signs of ancient life and **collect samples of rock and regolith** (broken rock and soil) for possible return to Earth.
 - The rover will be able to **detect organic matter** and minerals, map the chemical composition of rocks and sediments, and zoom in on distant rocks and rugged terrain for further inspection.
- It is the **first rover to record sounds on Mars** and broadcast them back to Earth.
- It is the **first rover to create oxygen on Mars**. Perseverance carries an instrument called MOXIE, which can generate oxygen from Mars’ carbon dioxide atmosphere.

Features:

- Perseverance is built from the same basic design as Curiosity, which landed on Mars about a decade before Perseverance.



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- **Power source:** Multi-Mission Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generator (MMRTG). It converts heat from the radioactive decay of plutonium into electricity.

Key Facts about Ingenuity Helicopter:

- It is a small, autonomous aircraft.
 - Objective: Technology demonstration **to test the first powered flight on Mars.**
 - The helicopter rode to Mars attached to the belly of the Perseverance rover.
 - It became the **first aircraft in history to make a powered, controlled flight on another planet.**
 - Ingenuity uses **solar power** to charge its batteries and can operate autonomously.
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