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PRADHAN MANTRI SHRAM YOGI MAANDHAN YOJANA (PM-SYM)



- It is a government scheme meant for the **old-age protection and social security of unorganized workers.**
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** administered by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** and implemented through **Life Insurance Corporation of India** and **CSC eGovernance Services India Limited (CSC SPV).**
- **LIC** is the **Pension Fund Manager** and responsible for pension pay out.
- The amount collected under the PM-SYM are invested as per the investment pattern specified by the Government of India.
- **Eligibility:**
 - Should be an Indian Citizen
 - Unorganised Workers (working as street vendors, agriculture-related work, construction site workers, workers in industries of leather, handloom, mid-day meal, rickshaw or auto wheelers, rag picking, carpenters, fishermen, etc.
 - Age group of 18-40 years
 - Monthly income is below Rs. 15000 and not a member of EPFO/ESIC/NPS (Govt. funded).
- **Features:**
 - It is a **voluntary and contributory** pension scheme.
 - **Minimum Assured Pension:** Each subscriber under the PM-SYM shall receive minimum assured pension of **Rs 3000/- per month after attaining the age of 60**
 - **Contribution by the Subscriber:**
 - The subscriber's contributions to PM-SYM shall be made through '**auto-debit**' facility from his/ her savings bank account/Jan- Dhan account.
 - The subscriber is required to **contribute the prescribed contribution amount** from the age of joining PM-SYM till the age of 60 years.

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- **Matching contribution by the Central Government:** It is a pension scheme on a 50:50 basis where prescribed age-specific contributions shall be made by the beneficiary and the matching contribution by the Central Government.
- **Family Pension:**
 - During the receipt of pension, if the subscriber dies, the spouse of the beneficiary shall be entitled to receive 50% of the pension received by the beneficiary as a family pension. Family pension is applicable **only to spouse**.
 - **If a beneficiary has given regular contributions and died** due to any cause (before age 60 years), his/her **spouse will be entitled to join and continue the scheme** subsequently by payment of regular contributions or **exit the scheme** as per provisions of exit and withdrawal.
- **Exit:**
 - Even if the subscriber wants to opt out of the scheme **before 10 years**, the **share of the subscriber will be given back along with the interest** amount accrued.
 - If the subscriber **opts out after 10 years** but before 60 years of age, the **share of the subscriber contribution, adding the accumulated interest** will be given back to the candidate.

SMALL MODULAR REACTORS (SMRS)

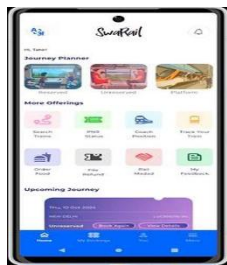


- SMRs are defined as **small nuclear reactors** with a **maximum output of 300 Megawatt electric (MWe)** and which can produce 7.2 million kWh per day.
- By comparison, **large-size nuclear power plants** have an **output of over 1,000 MWe** and can produce 24 million kWh per day.
- SMRs, which can produce a large amount of low-carbon electricity, are:

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- **Small** – physically a fraction of the size of a conventional nuclear power reactor.
- **Modular** – making it possible for systems and **components to be factory-assembled and transported** as a unit to a location for installation.
- **Reactors** – harnessing **nuclear fission** to generate heat to produce energy.
- **Advantages:**
 - Relatively **small physical footprints**;
 - **Reduced capital investment**;
 - Can be **factory-built**, unlike the conventional nuclear reactors that are built on-site;
 - Ability to be sited in remote locations, not possible for larger nuclear plants;
 - **Provisions for incremental power additions**;
- Power plants based on SMRs may require **less frequent refueling**, every 3 to 7 years, in comparison to between 1 and 2 years for conventional plants.
 - Some SMRs are designed to operate for up to 30 years without refueling.
- It also offers distinct safeguards, **security and non-proliferation advantages**.
- They are well **suited to be integrated into energy hubs** in combination with **other sources of energy**.
- They are adapted to **supply electricity** and **additionally capable of supplying heat** for industrial applications, district heating, as well as for the production of hydrogen.

SWARAIL APPLICATION



- It **integrates various railway services**, eliminating the need for multiple applications and reducing space consumption on user devices.
- A key focus of the App is enhancing user experience with a seamless and clean **user interface (UI)**.
- The App caters to a wide range of user needs, including:
 - **Reserved and Unreserved ticket bookings**

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- Parcel and Freight Enquiries
- Train and PNR status enquiries
- Food Orders on Trains
- Rail Madad for Complaint Management, etc.
- It has been developed by the **Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS)**.

Centre for Railway Information Systems:

- It is an organization under Ministry of Railways.
- It is a unique combination of competent IT professionals and experienced Railway personnel enabling it to successfully deliver complex Railway IT systems in core areas.
- It **develops and maintains software** for the key functional areas of the Indian Railways.

VERY SHORT-RANGE AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM (VSHORADS)



- It is a **Man Portable Air Defence system**.
 - It is **short-range, lightweight** and portable **surface-to-air missiles** that can be fired by individuals or small groups to destroy aircraft or helicopters.
 - **Range:** They are having a **maximum range of 8 kilometres** and can engage targets at **altitudes of 4.5 km**.
 - The missile incorporates many novel technologies including a miniaturized **Reaction Control System (RCS)** and **integrated avionics**, which have been successfully proven during the tests.
 - The RCS is responsible for attitude control and steering by the use of thrusters and is also capable of providing small amounts of thrust in any desired direction or combination of directions.
- It is designed and developed indigenously by the Research Center Imarat in collaboration with other **DRDO laboratories** and Development cum Production Partners.
- The missile system has the capability to meet the needs of **all the three branches of the Armed Forces**, viz. Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.

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WORLD WETLANDS DAY

World
Wetlands Day



- It is celebrated annually on February 2. This date marks the adoption of the Ramsar Convention in 1971.

- It aims to spread awareness about conserving the wetlands, one of the most critical ecosystems on the planet.
- This year, the theme was “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future”.
- India has been a party to the Convention since 1982, designating 89 Ramsar sites.

What are wetlands?

- Wetlands are regions covered by water either **perennially or seasonally**, such as marshes and lakes.
- **Significance of Wetlands:**
 - They are vital **reservoirs of biodiversity**, aid **water conservation** and provide **habitat** for numerous migratory birds, aquatic species, and plant life. They also help **recharge groundwater**, **control floods** and **support fisheries and local communities**.
 - From the point of view of **climate change mitigation**, wetlands are **important carbon sinks**, meaning they absorb more carbon from the atmosphere
- The major threats to wetlands, in general, are **due to man-made factors**, leading to habitat degradation and declining biodiversity.

A BUDGET THAT IS FORWARD-LOOKING AND GROWTH-ORIENTED

Context

- The Union Budget 2025-26 is a continuation of the Indian government’s sustained efforts to strengthen economic growth and development.

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- **Through strategic measures** such as income tax cuts, increased capital expenditure, and a focus on manufacturing and labour-intensive sectors, **the budget aims to stimulate economic activity, generate employment, and enhance ease of doing business.**
- While its full impact will unfold over time, **the budget's framework suggests a proactive, forward-looking approach to national economic planning.**

Targeted Initiatives for Key Sectors

- **Focus on Labor-Intensive Sectors**
 - Recognising the importance of employment generation, **the budget prioritises labour-intensive industries such as tourism, food processing, and leather.**
 - **These sectors have historically been major contributors to both employment and export earnings.**
 - By offering targeted incentives and streamlining regulations, the government aims to enhance productivity and global competitiveness while creating new job opportunities.
- **Focus on Maritime and Aviation Sector**
 - Additionally, **the maritime sector has been given a boost through the establishment of a Maritime Development Fund**, which is expected to benefit coastal states and support the growth of the marine economy.
 - **The expansion of flight connectivity to 120 new destinations under the modified UDAN scheme is another significant measure** that will help unlock economic opportunities in previously underserved regions, focusing regional development.
- **Agricultural Reforms and Rural Development**
 - The budget introduces the **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana**, a targeted initiative designed to improve agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

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- Covering 100 districts with low productivity and limited credit access, this scheme will focus on crop diversification, post-harvest infrastructure, irrigation improvements, and credit facilitation.
- With an estimated 1.7 crore farmer-beneficiaries, this initiative has the potential to transform India's agricultural sector by increasing rural incomes and driving economic activity in the hinterlands.
- A rise in rural purchasing power will indirectly benefit industries related to consumer goods and agricultural supply chains.

Conclusion

- The Union Budget 2025-26 presents a well-structured approach to economic growth by focusing on capital expenditure, manufacturing, labour-intensive industries, and rural development, while maintaining fiscal prudence.
- The significant tax relief for the middle class, infrastructure investments, and business-friendly policies set the stage for robust economic progress.
- While the success of various initiatives will depend on their implementation, the overall direction of the budget signals a strategic and growth-oriented vision for India's future.

RBI'S DIGITAL PAYMENTS INDEX



country.

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) digital payments index (DPI) rose to 465.33 as of September 2024, compared to 445.5 in March 2024, reflecting the rapid adoption of digital payments in the

- It is a first-of-its kind index to measure the spread of digital payments across the country. It has been constructed by the RBI.
- It was launched in January 2021.
- **Base Year:** It has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period, i.e., the DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100.

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- The DPI index comprises **five broad parameters** that enable the measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods. The parameters include:
 - **Payment enablers** (25 percent weightage in the index)
 - **Payment Infrastructure Demand-side factors** (10 percent)
 - **Payment Infrastructure Supply-side factors** (15 per cent)
 - **Payment performance** (45 percent)
 - **Consumer centricity** (5 per cent)
- Each of the parameters has sub-parameters, which, in turn, consist of various measurable indicators.

TRUMP PUTS TARIFFS ON CANADA, MEXICO AND CHINA

On February 1, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order imposing heavy tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada, and China, triggering swift retaliation and straining ties with North American allies.

He justified the move as necessary to protect Americans, citing concerns over illicit fentanyl production and illegal immigration.

Imposition of tariffs by President Trump

- U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order imposing tariffs of 10% on all imports from China and 25% on imports from Canada and Mexico, citing economic and national security concerns.
- Energy imports from Canada, including oil and natural gas, would be taxed at 10%.
- The move aims to curb illegal immigration and fentanyl exports but has triggered swift retaliation.

India is exempted from Trump's tariff volleys for now

- Despite Trump's frequent criticism of India's tariffs, the country was not included in the first round of US trade restrictions.

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- India, however, has proactively reduced tariffs on US exports, including motorcycles, satellite ground installations, and synthetic flavouring essences, as announced in the Union Budget 2025-26.
- **India's Position in the US Trade Deficit**
 - India is the **ninth-largest** contributor to the US trade deficit, accounting for **3.2%** of the total.
 - The largest contributors are: **China**: 30% (\$317 billion surplus); **Mexico**: 19% (\$200 billion surplus); **Canada**: 14.5% (\$153 billion surplus).
- **Opportunities for India in the US Market**
 - With US tariffs making Chinese goods more expensive, Indian exporters see an opportunity to gain market share.
 - Experts noted that trade diversions in Trump's first term already benefited India, and the new tariffs could further enhance its position.
- **Potential Sectors at Risk for India**
 - Although India is not an immediate target, US trade restrictions may focus on high-value Indian exports, including:
 - **Pharmaceuticals** (21.9% of India's consumer goods exports to the US).
 - **Gems & Jewellery** (9.6%).
 - **Fisheries (shrimps & prawns)** (6.6%).
 - Other sectors that may come under scrutiny include **chemical products, textiles, and wood pulp**.

Conclusion

- Trump's aggressive trade policies have set off a high-stakes economic confrontation, with potential global repercussions.
- As tariffs take effect, inflation, economic disruption, and strained international relations are likely to dominate Trump's second term.