

### PROVISIONS OF NEW INCOME TAX BILL

- The Indian government has introduced the new **Income Tax Bill, 2025**, which aims to modernize the country's **six-decade-old** tax framework by streamlining tax provisions, removing outdated references, and incorporating new regulations.
- A key highlight of this bill is the **explicit inclusion of virtual digital spaces** within the ambit of tax searches and seizures.
- This means that **tax officers will now have the power to access digital assets, including social media, email accounts, online investments, and trading platforms**, as part of their investigations into tax evasion.
- The bill, introduced in **Lok Sabha last month**, is currently under review by the **Parliamentary Select Committee** and is expected to come into effect on **April 1, 2026** once passed.

### **Key Provisions of the New Income Tax Bill:**

- The **Income Tax Bill, 2025**, expands the definition of assets subject to search and seizure. Some of the crucial provisions include:
- **Defining Virtual Digital Space:**
  - The bill introduces a legal definition of virtual digital space, encompassing all digital realms where users interact, communicate, and conduct activities via computers or digital platforms.
- **Power to Override Access Codes:**
  - Tax authorities will have the power to override access codes to enter virtual digital spaces, such as social media accounts, email servers, and digital trading platforms, if required during tax investigations.
- **Expansion of Search & Seizure Under Section 247:**
  - While Section 132 of the existing Income Tax Act, 1961, already allows authorities to inspect and seize electronic records, the new bill specifically includes digital spaces as assets that can be accessed for tax audits.

## Current Affairs - 09 March 2025

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- **Inclusion of Digital Documents as Taxable Assets:**
  - The bill explicitly recognizes digital documents, computer systems, and encrypted financial records as assets liable for taxation scrutiny, alongside traditional assets like money, bullion, and real estate.
- **Mandated Cooperation from Account Holders:**
  - Under Section 132(1)(iib), individuals in possession of electronic records, accounts, or documents must facilitate access to tax authorities by providing necessary credentials for audits.

### Reasons for Introducing These Changes:

- The expansion of tax authorities' powers into **virtual digital spaces** stems from the **increasing digitization of financial transactions** and the **rise of digital tax evasion**
- **Addressing Tax Evasion in Digital Spaces:**
  - Authorities often face challenges in detecting concealed income and undisclosed transactions occurring through online wallets, crypto assets, or offshore accounts.
  - The new bill closes this loophole by ensuring that digital records can be investigated similarly to physical records.
- **Enhancing India's Direct Tax Framework:**
  - The bill aims to simplify India's tax structure while making provisions more transparent and effective in addressing emerging financial fraud techniques.
- **Aligning with Global Standards:**
  - Many developed economies already have provisions that allow tax authorities to inspect digital transactions and encrypted financial accounts.
  - The new law brings India's tax regime in line with global best practices.

### Conclusion:

The New Income Tax Bill, 2025, represents a significant step toward modernizing India's tax system by including digital assets under the purview of tax investigations.

While the law seeks to curb tax evasion and streamline direct taxation, it has also raised concerns about privacy and compliance burdens.

### INDIAN FIRMS ARE RACING TO BUILD LOCAL AI SOLUTIONS

#### IndiaAI Mission: Driving AI Innovation in India

- The IndiaAI Mission was initially launched as a joint initiative between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Nasscom in 2023.
- It has since evolved into a government-led initiative with an outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore.
- The mission's key goals are:
  - "Making AI in India" – Encouraging domestic AI development.
  - "Making AI Work for India" – Ensuring AI benefits various sectors in the country.
- This initiative aims to bolster India's AI ecosystem by making high-end computing resources accessible to startups and researchers.
- **Common Compute Facility & GPU Access**
  - A major initiative under the mission is the **Common Compute facility**, which provides startups and researchers access to Graphics Processing Units (GPUs)—essential for training and running AI models.
  - Since GPUs are expensive and in high demand globally, IndiaAI is empaneling data centers with GPU resources.
- **Current GPU Deployment**
  - 14,000 GPUs have already been acquired and commissioned.
  - More GPUs will be added quarterly to expand computing resources.
  - The mission will allocate GPU access to selected entities based on need and availability.

#### Key Pillars of the IndiaAI Mission

- The IndiaAI Mission comprises seven pillars, with a focus on building India's AI capabilities across various domains.
- **Common Compute Facility**
  - Provides GPU access to startups and researchers.

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### Current Affairs - 09 March 2025

- Aims to reduce dependency on costly foreign computing resources.
- **AI Kosha (IndiaAI Datasets Platform)**
  - Develops India-specific datasets to improve AI models.
  - Reduces bias from Western-trained AI models by incorporating local language and cultural data.
- **AI Safety Institute of India (Upcoming)**
  - Focuses on AI risk assessment and safety guidelines.
  - Ensures AI tools are reliable and secure, preventing misuse.
- **IndiaAI Innovation Centre**
  - Develops domain-specific foundation models for various industries.
- **AI Application Development Initiative**
  - Supports AI-based solutions for commercial and societal applications.
- **FutureSkills Initiative**
  - Establishes AI labs in smaller cities to foster skill development.
- **Startup Financing**
  - Provides financial support to AI startups to boost innovation.

**Building India's Own Foundation Model:** The IndiaAI Mission has invited proposals to develop an indigenous AI foundation model. 67 applications have been received, and the government aims to fast-track the process within months.

#### AI Kosha: India's National AI Dataset Platform

- AI Kosha is part of the **IndiaAI Datasets Platform**, aimed at addressing a key challenge in AI development—the **dominance of Western-trained models**.
- Many AI models rely heavily on English-language data from developed countries, making them less effective for India's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape.
  - AI Kosha seeks to **make India-centric data more accessible** for researchers and AI developers.
  - It includes datasets such as **translation models for Indian languages**, helping reduce bias in AI training.

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)



- The IPCC was established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1988.
- **Membership:** The IPCC is an organisation of governments that are members of the United Nations or the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The IPCC currently has **195 members**.
- **Objective:** To assess **scientific, technical, and socio-economic information** relevant to the **understanding of human-induced climate change**, potential impacts of climate change, and **options for mitigation** and adaptation.
- The IPCC **provides governments with scientific information** for use in developing climate policies.
- The main activity of the IPCC is the **preparation of reports** assessing the state of knowledge of climate change. These include **assessment reports**, special reports and methodology reports.
- **IPCC reports** are also **key inputs into international climate change negotiations** under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- The IPCC **does not undertake new research or monitor climate-related data**.
  - Instead, it **conducts assessments** of the state of climate change knowledge **on the basis of published and peer-reviewed scientific and technical literature**.
  - **Scientists volunteer** their time to **assess** the thousands of scientific papers published each year to **provide a comprehensive summary** of what is known about the drivers of climate change, impacts and future risks, and how adaptation and mitigation can reduce those risks.

### SHARAVATHI PUMPED STORAGE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT (PSHP)



- It is a **pumped storage power project** on the **Sharavathi River** in **Karnataka**.
- The Sharavathi River serves as a crucial source of hydroelectric power in Karnataka, and this project, with its planned total **power generation capacity of 2000 MW**, stands as the **largest pumped storage power generation unit in the country**.
- **PSHP** will be **built between two existing reservoirs**.
  - The **Talakalale dam**, which stands at 62.48 meters tall, will be the **upper reservoir**. This dam currently helps balance water for the existing Sharavathi hydroelectric project.
  - The **Gerusoppa dam** will be the **lower reservoir**, and it is about 64 meters tall.
- **Water will be pumped uphill during the off-season using grid power and released downhill during peak demand** to generate electricity.
- Modelled on the lines of Telangana's Kaleshwaram project, it also **aims to supply drinking water to Bengaluru**.

#### **Key Facts about Sharavathi River:**

- It is a west flowing river in the western **Karnataka State**.
- A **large part of its basin** lies in the **Western Ghats**.
  - **Rising in the Western Ghats**, it flows in a **northwesterly direction** to the **Arabian Sea** at Honavar in Uttara Kannada District.
  - The length of the river is **128 km**, and the river basin covers 2,985 sq km.
  - On its way, the Sharavathi forms the **Jog Falls**, **one of the highest waterfalls** in India, where the river falls from a height of 253 m.
- **Major Tributaries:** **Nandihole, Haridravathi, Mavinahole, Hilkunji, Yennehole, Hurlihole, and Nagodihole.**



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### INDIA SUPPORTS MAURITIUS' CLAIMS OVER CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

The Chagos Archipelago is a group of seven atolls comprising over 60 islands in the Indian Ocean about 500 kilometres (310 mi) south of the Maldives archipelago.



- This chain of islands is the **southernmost archipelago of the Chagos-Laccadive Ridge**, a long submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean.
- **From 1715 to 1810**, the Chagos Islands were part of **France's** Indian Ocean possessions. **Under the Treaty of Paris (1814)**, France ceded the Islands to the **United Kingdom**.
- **Mauritius** became the British Empire's main sugar-producing colony and remained a primarily sugar-dominated plantation-based colony until independence (in 1968).
- **In 1965**, three years before Mauritius became independent, the UK split off the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritian territory, to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).
- **Diego Garcia** - the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago, has been used as a **joint UK–U.S. military base since the 1970s**.

#### Negotiations Over the Chagos Archipelago's Sovereignty

- **The UK and Mauritius** have been engaged in **prolonged negotiations** over the archipelago's sovereignty.
- **The UK and the US** have reached a political agreement **to retain a strategic military base on Diego Garcia while restoring Mauritius' sovereignty over the rest of Chagos**.

#### Conclusion

- PM Modi's visit to Mauritius underscores India's commitment to **deepening strategic, economic, and diplomatic ties with the island nation**.
- The Chagos issue remains a critical aspect of India's foreign policy, reflecting its broader stance on **decolonization and regional stability**.

### ISSUE OF DUPLICATE VOTER ID

The Election Commission (EC) has pledged to resolve the long-standing issue of duplicate voter ID numbers within three months.

The EC acknowledged that different individuals could share the same **Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** number due to states using identical alphanumeric series but denied this indicated fake voters. Opposition leaders argue that duplicate voter IDs exist within the same state.

According to the EC's Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023, all EPICs should have unique numbers.

### **Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC)**

- The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 mandates the issuance of Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) to prevent voter impersonation.
- State governments began issuing EPICs to registered voters in 1993.
- **Nature of EPICs**
  - EPICs serve as identity documents but do not grant the right to vote. Only those listed in the electoral roll of a constituency can vote.
  - An EPIC includes the voter's name, age, residence, specified particulars, a photograph, and the facsimile signature of the registration officer.
- **Unique EPIC Number System**
  - As per the EC Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023, each EPIC is assigned a unique alphanumeric number consisting of three alphabetical codes followed by a seven-digit number.
  - This includes a Functional Unique Serial Number (FUSN) for each Assembly constituency.
- **Issuance Process**
  - Since 2017, EPICs have been generated through the EC's ERONET portal and can only be created online.
  - A unique EPIC number is assigned to a voter when issued for the first time. If a replacement is needed, the original number remains unchanged.



### HANTAVIRUS PULMONARY SYNDROME (HPS)



- It is a rare **infectious disease** that begins with **flu-like symptoms** and progresses rapidly to more severe disease.
- It can lead to **life-threatening lung and heart problems**.
- The disease is also called **hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome**.
- Several strains of the hantavirus can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome.

#### **Transmission:**

- They are spread mainly by **rodents** like rats and mice and are **not spread from person to person**.
- Infection is usually caused by **inhaling hantaviruses** that have become **airborne from rodent urine, droppings, or saliva**.
- Though rare, it can also spread through **rodent bites or scratches**.

#### **Symptoms:**

- Symptoms often start with fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, followed by headaches, dizziness, chills, and abdominal issues.
- **If respiratory symptoms develop, the mortality rate is approximately 38%.**

**Treatment:** There is **no specific treatment** for hantavirus infection, but early medical care can help if serious disease develops.