



WHITLEY AWARDS

- It is often called as the “Green Oscars,”
- It recognises **grassroots conservation** leaders in the Global South.
- It is given by the **UK charity Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN)**.
- It provides **winners with £50,000 in project funding over one year** to scale up local **solutions to biodiversity loss**.

Key Facts about Himalayan salamander

- It is a **lizard-like amphibian species**.
- Although it resembles a lizard, it **lacks scales on its body**.
- **Distribution:** It is endemic to India (the Darjeeling region), Nepal and Bhutan,
- **Cultural Significance:** The wetlands where Himalayan salamanders breed are culturally revered **water bodies, associated with local deities and rituals**.
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN: Vulnerable

Key Facts about Indian skimmer

- It is one of the three species that belong to the **skimmer genus Rynchops** in the family Laridae.
- It gets its **name from the way it feeds**, flying low over the water surface and ‘skimming’ for fish.
- **Habitat:** It occurs primarily on larger, sandy, lowland rivers, around lakes and adjacent marshes.
- **Distribution:** It is mainly found in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, with some populations extending to Nepal and Myanmar.

In India, one of the key areas for **spotting Indian Skimmers** is the **Chambal River**.

Conservation status: IUCN: Endangered

INCENTIVE SCHEME FOR PROMOTION OF CRITICAL MINERAL RECYCLING



- It is part of the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)**, which is aimed at building the domestic capacity of and supply chain resilience in critical minerals.
- **Time Period:** The Scheme will have a **tenure of six years** from Financial Year **2025-26 to Financial Year 2030-31**.
- **Features:**
 - Eligible feedstock is e-waste, Lithium Ion Battery (LIB) scrap, and scrap other than e-waste and LIB scraps.
 - Expected beneficiaries will be both **large, established recyclers**, as well as **small, new recyclers (including start-ups)**, for whom one-third of the scheme outlay has been earmarked.
 - It is applicable to investments in new units as well as expansion of capacity and modernization and diversification of existing units.
 - It provides **incentive for the recycling value chain**, which is involved in the **actual extraction of critical minerals**, and not the value chain involved in only black mass production.
 - The **incentives include a 20% capital subsidy on plant and machinery** for projects that commence production within the stipulated timeframe and an operational subsidy tied to incremental sales.
 - The **operational support** will be provided in **tranches—40% in the second year and 60% in the fifth year**—on meeting specific sales thresholds.
 - To ensure wider participation, the **total incentive** has been capped at **₹50 crore per large entity** and **₹25 crore per small entity**, with limits on **operating subsidies** of ₹10 crore and ₹5 crore, respectively.

HIKE IN COMMERCIAL LPG PRICES AND ITS IMPACT

The govt announced a sharp ₹933 jump in commercial LPG cylinder prices (19-kg cylinder), taking the price in Delhi to ₹3,071.50.

While domestic LPG, petrol, and diesel prices remain **unchanged**, the hike has sent shockwaves through India's vast ecosystem of small food businesses — restaurants, roadside eateries, caterers, bakeries, and cloud kitchens.

- Domestic LPG (14-kg cylinder) is used by households for cooking — it is subsidised and politically sensitive.
- **Commercial LPG** (19-kg cylinder) is used by businesses — restaurants, hotels, caterers, cloud kitchens, bakeries, and canteens. For millions of small food businesses, cooking gas is not just an input cost — it is the business itself.
- A spike in commercial LPG prices therefore hits the informal economy far more severely than headline inflation data suggests.

The Timing Makes It Worse

- The price hike arrives at a particularly vulnerable moment. India's smaller enterprises were already struggling with:
 - Weak consumer demand
 - Elevated raw material costs
 - Thinning profit margins due to global supply disruptions from the US-Iran war
- Adding a sharp fuel cost increase on top of these existing pressures risks triggering a chain reaction across the economy.

The Chain Reaction — How One Price Hike Spreads?

- The economic impact of this hike is not confined to restaurants alone. It sets off a cascade of consequences across multiple layers of the economy.
- **For businesses** — Restaurants and eateries face higher operating costs. Those with wafer-thin margins and dependence on daily cash flows — particularly small operators,

roadside stalls, and cloud kitchens — have little financial cushion to absorb the shock. Several operators are already scaling down or shutting temporarily.

- **For workers** — If restaurants and eateries are unable to do business, the first ones to get hit will be people down below. Informal workers — paid daily or weekly — face reduced shifts and lower earnings.
- **For consumers** — Businesses will either **reduce portion sizes** or quietly **increase prices**, passing costs on to consumers. This fans **food inflation** — which economists note is a tax that hurts the poor the most.
- **For the broader economy** — Small suppliers that depend on restaurants — vegetable traders, dairy vendors, transporters, packaging units, and local wholesalers — begin seeing weaker orders. SMEs linked to hospitality and food services face slower cash flows. This weakens local demand cycles that support small businesses across urban and semi-urban India.

The PNG Alternative — Opportunity and Constraint

- The commercial LPG price shock could accelerate the transition from cylinders to Piped Natural Gas (PNG) — a shift that policymakers and city gas distributors have been pushing since the war broke out.

The Deeper Structural Concern

- Analysts highlight a troubling structural pattern in India's economy — formal sectors and large corporations continue to expand, while smaller businesses struggle with profitability and weak consumption demand.
 - Large restaurant chains can weather the storm through scale and pricing power. Small operators cannot.
- India's growth model still relies heavily on millions of low- and middle-income consumers spending small amounts frequently.
- Any sustained rise in everyday food and service costs chips away at discretionary spending — weakening local demand cycles across urban and semi-urban India.

RUPEE UNDER PRESSURE: ECHOES OF THE 'FRAGILE FIVE' ERA

The Indian rupee has depreciated sharply, touching an **all-time low of ₹95.33** against the US dollar on April 30, 2026, meaning it now takes over ₹95 to buy one dollar.

This marks a steep decline compared to the beginning of 2026, when the exchange rate was around ₹90 per dollar, and less than ₹85 a year ago.

Overall, the rupee has **fallen by about 12%** in just **12 months**, significantly higher than its typical annual depreciation of 3–4%.

The magnitude of this fall is reminiscent of the 2013 currency crisis, when the rupee similarly weakened by around 12% within a short span, indicating heightened pressure on the currency in recent times.

'Fragile Five' Economies and Currency Depreciation

- In 2013, a leading global financial services firm Morgan Stanley identified five emerging market economies—**India, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey**—as the “Fragile Five” due to their vulnerable currencies.
- During this period, their currencies saw **sharp declines against the US dollar**, including the Indian rupee, Indonesian rupiah, Brazilian real, South African rand, and Turkish lira.

Rupee in 2026: Revisiting the 'Fragile Five' Comparison

- While India has projected itself as a leading global economy, even reaching the top five in GDP rankings in recent years, recent trends show renewed pressure on the rupee.
- Over the past 12 months, the Indian currency has depreciated by about 12.1% against the US dollar, making it the second-worst performer among the original “Fragile Five” economies.
- **Comparative Performance of Other Economies**
 - Unlike 2013, the current scenario shows divergence among these economies.
 - Brazil and South Africa have witnessed currency appreciation—around 12% and 10% respectively—indicating stronger external positions or capital flows.

- Indonesia has experienced only a modest depreciation of about 4%, suggesting relative stability.
- Turkey remains the worst performer, with its currency—the **lira**—falling by 17% in the past year.
 - More significantly, the lira has undergone a prolonged crisis, losing over 1000% of its value since 2018, highlighting deep structural economic issues.

Rupee Depreciation: Comparing 2026 with the 2013 Crisis

- The rupee's fall in 2026 closely mirrors the decline seen during the 2013 crisis in terms of scale.
- It depreciated by about 9.6% in FY 2025–26, almost identical to the 9.5% fall recorded in FY 2013–14.
- However, a **key difference** lies in the trend: the 2013 decline came after consecutive sharp falls in the preceding two years (around 13% in FY12 and 6% in FY13), whereas the recent depreciation followed a period of relatively moderate currency movement.
- **Underlying External Sector Pressures**
 - The drivers of the current depreciation resemble those of 2013, particularly in terms of **balance of payments stress**.
 - Both periods witnessed a **widening current account deficit**, indicating higher outflows on imports of goods and services.
 - At the same time, the capital account also weakened, with reduced or negative inflows, reflecting capital outflows from the economy.
- **Role of Forex Reserves**
 - In such situations, the only buffer available is the drawdown of foreign exchange reserves.
 - As in 2013, India has had to rely on its reserves to manage the imbalance between inflows and outflows, highlighting the structural similarity between the two episodes despite differences in preceding trends.

HEPATITIS



- It is an **inflammation of the liver** that is caused by a variety of infectious viruses and non-infectious agents.
- It is **commonly the result of a viral infection**, but there are other possible causes of hepatitis.
- **Common Symptoms:** Fatigue, flu-like symptoms, dark urine, pale stool, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, yellow skin and eyes, which may be signs of jaundice.

Classification of Hepatitis Virus:

- **Hepatitis A:** It is the result of an infection with the hepatitis A virus (HAV). This type of hepatitis is an **acute, short-term disease**.
- **Hepatitis B:** The hepatitis B virus (HBV) causes hepatitis B. This is often an **ongoing, chronic condition**.
- **Hepatitis C:** It comes from the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It is among the most common bloodborne viral infections and **typically presents as a long-term condition**.
- **Hepatitis D:** It is a rare form of hepatitis that **only occurs in conjunction with hepatitis B**
 - The hepatitis D virus (HDV) causes liver inflammation like other strains, but a person cannot contract HDV without an existing hepatitis B infection.
- **Hepatitis E:** It is a **waterborne disease** that results from exposure to the hepatitis E virus (HEV).
 - It is mainly **found in areas with poor sanitation** and typically results from ingesting fecal matter that contaminates the water supply.

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- **Treatment:**
 - There **are vaccines** that can help protect against many hepatitis viruses.
 - There are vaccines for **prevention against Hepatitis A, B and D.**
 - However, there is **no vaccine for Hepatitis C or E.**
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INS MAHENDRAGIRI



- It is the **sixth ship of Nilgiri Class (Project 17A).**
- It was designed by **Warship Design Bureau (WDB).**
- It was built at **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL) Mumbai.**
- **Features of INS Mahendragiri:**
 - **Propulsion:** These ships are configured with **Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion plants.**
 - Comprising a diesel engine and a gas turbine that drive a Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP) on each shaft, and state-of-the-art **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS)**
 - **Armaments:** The potent weapon and sensor suite comprises **anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine warfare systems.**

What are Project 17A frigates?

- These are **versatile multi-mission platforms** designed to address current and emerging challenges in the maritime domain.
 - The five already delivered to the Navy are **INS Nilgiri, INS Himgiri, INS Udaygiri, INS Taragiri and INS Vindhyagiri.**
 - **Armaments:** P17A ships are fitted with an advanced weapon and sensor suite like MF-STAR active phased array radar, BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, and Barak-8 long-range surface-to-air missiles, designed for superior anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare.
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GIRNAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



- It is located in the **Junagadh district** of Gujarat.
- It spans the rugged terrain of the **Girnar hills**, which are a **part of the Saurashtra region**.
- Girnar has a rich cultural and religious significance with **Hindu and Jain temples** situated on the hills.
- **Flora:**
 - Predominantly **dry deciduous forests** with species like **teak, dhak, acacia**, and other **drought-resistant plants**.
 - The sanctuary supports a **mix of dense forest, open scrub, and grasslands**.
- **Fauna:**
 - It is filled with abundant wildlife, including **Asiatic lions, spotted deer, Sambar, Chousinghas, Chinkaras**, leopards, Indian golden jackals, and around **300 species of birds**, which include both resident and migratory.
 - It serves as an **extension of the Gir National Park's lion population**.

KOROWAI TRIBE



- The Korowai tribe is a group of indigenous people who live in the **southeastern part of Papua, Indonesia**.
- The tribe has unique cultural practices and a **unique way of living in treehouses** high above the ground. The Korowai people have a deep connection to the forest, which they rely on for their survival.
- They **hunt and gather food** from the forest, including wild animals and plants.
- They live **high up in the trees** which they **built on the tree trunks**.
- The Korowai people were **totally disconnected from the outside world until the 1970s**.
 - While it is believed that the tribe **historically practised cannibalism** as part of their spiritual and social beliefs, it has **largely faded over time**.