

### BORDER SECURITY FORCE



#### **Border Security Force**

- It is one of the seven **Central Armed Police**

**Forces (CSPFs)** of the Union of India under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- It was raised in **the wake of the 1965 War on 1 December 1965.**
- **Mandate:** It is meant to **secure India's borders** with its neighbouring nations and is empowered to arrest, search and seize under several laws.
- Currently, BSF is deployed at the **Indo-Pakistan International Border, the Indo-Bangladesh International Border, and Line of Control (LoC)** along with the Indian Army, and in Anti-Naxal Operations.

#### **Role:**

- The primary role of BSF is to **protect the country's land borders** during peacetime and prevent transnational crime.
- They help the Indian Army during wartime as they are familiar with local people and topography.
- **Motto:** The motto of BSF, "**DUTY UNTO DEATH**" is placed at the bottom.
- It has a **separate camel and dog wing** that lets them expand their reach into varied terrain such as the India-Pakistan border in the Rann of Kutch.
- BSF is the only CAPF to have its **own Air Wing, Marine Wing, and artillery regiments**, which support the General Duty Battalions in their operations.
- **Powers:** It has been given powers of **arrest, search, and seizure under various Acts.** "These Acts include Passport Act 1967, Passport Act (Entry into India) 1920, Customs Act, NDPS Act and Arms Act.
- The head of the BSF is known as the **Director General (DG)**, and he should be an officer from Indian Police Services (IPS).

### LAVENDER CULTIVATION

#### Lavender Cultivation



- Lavandula (common name lavender) is a genus of 47 known species of **flowering plants** in the **mint family, Lamiaceae**.
- It is a small, perennial **aromatic herb shrub**.
- **Appearance:** The flowers may be blue, violet or lilac in the wild species, occasionally blackish purple or yellowish.
- These flowers grow in **temperate areas and are drought-resistant crops**.
- A single lavender **plant bears flowers for up to 15 years**, requires minimal maintenance, and can be harvested from the second year onward.
- It is a **crop native to Europe** but was introduced in the temperate regions of **Jammu & Kashmir** state by the **CSIR Aroma Mission**.
- **Propagation:** Propagation of lavender can be done by seeds, rooted cuttings, tissue culture, and layering.

#### Required climatic conditions:

- **Climate:** It is a **hard and temperate plant that** can tolerate drought and frost conditions. The ideal climatic conditions are cool winters and cool summers.
- It requires a **good amount of sunlight**.
- **Soil:** It can grow well in **light well-aerated soil rich with organic matter**. It grows best in neutral to alkaline soil which is free draining.
  - It is very **sensitive to waterlogging** however can go well with poor or eroded soil.
- **Rainfall:** It can produce well with an annual rainfall range from **300 to 1400 mm per year**.
- **Applications:** Food and flavouring, Pharmaceutical and therapeutic, Cosmetic, and Industrial purposes etc.

### SKYCAST SYSTEM



- It is an advanced **integrated aviation weather monitoring system**.
- It is developed under "**Mission Mausam**".
- The scientific foundation of SkyCast comes from the **Winter Fog Experiment (WiFEX)**, jointly initiated by **IITM and IMD under the Ministry of Earth Sciences** at IGI Airport in 2015.
- **India becomes 19th** in the world to deploy advanced integrated aviation weather monitoring system.
- **Key Features of SkyCast System:**
  - The system integrates state-of-the-art atmospheric remote sensing technologies which includes:
    - **Radar Wind Profiler:** It forms the **core of the system** and measures **wind speed, wind direction, turbulence, vertical velocity** and boundary-layer dynamics.
    - **Ground-based Fog Aerosol Spectrometer (GFAS):** It is an advanced fog monitoring instruments which provides **detailed information on fog droplets**, aerosols and aerosol-fog interactions.
    - **CL61 Lidar-based Ceilometer:** It monitors the **vertical structure of fog and visibility conditions in real time**.
    - It improves understanding of **fog formation** and atmospheric behaviour affecting aviation operations.
  - It brings together real-time measurements of fog, aerosols, turbulence, moisture, visibility and atmospheric conditions into a **single advanced aviation weather intelligence framework**.

- It can **assess atmospheric conditions** from the **surface up to nearly 10 km altitude** and **generate aviation meteorological parameters** (wind shear, turbulence, fog formation indicators and icing potential).
- **Significance:**
  - It will provide real-time weather intelligence to Pilots, reducing flight delays, diversions and cancellations caused by fog and turbulence.
  - It **will support advanced forecasting models**, artificial intelligence-enabled decision support systems, urban weather forecasting, pollution management, transport advisories and disaster preparedness initiatives.

### BANNI GRASSLAND

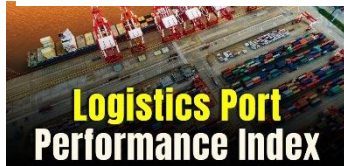


#### **Banni Grassland**

**NTPC's proposed solar project in Gujarat's Banni grassland threatens one of Asia's most fragile ecosystems.**

- **Location:** It is located along the northern border of **Kachchh district** in the state of **Gujarat**.
- The **Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary** and **Chhari Dhand Conservation Reserve** are **part of the Banni Grasslands**.
- It is also home to **the ethnic groups**, the majority of whom are **pastoralists** such as the **Maldharis, the Rabaris, the Jats, the Mutwas, and the Meghwals**.
- It is home to great biological diversity, having many grass species, bird species, and domesticated animals like Buffalo, Sheep, Goat, Horses and Camel, as well as wildlife.
- **Flora:** The vegetation here mainly comprises **Prosopis Juliflora, Cressa critica, Cyperus spp, Sporobolus, Dichanthium, and Aristida**.
- **Fauna:** It is home to mammals such as the Nilgai, Chinkara, Blackbuck, Wild boar, Golden Jackal, Indian Hare, Indian Wolf, Caracal, Asiatic Wildcat and Desert Fox etc.

## LOGISTICS PORT PERFORMANCE INDEX



Recently, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) launched the logistics port performance index (LPPI) for FY2024- 25 and 4 major digital initiatives.

- It is developed under the Sagar Aankalan framework.
- It is a national benchmarking mechanism designed to assess and improve the operational performance of Indian ports.
- The LPPI evaluates ports across three cargo segments dry bulk, liquid bulk and container cargo using operational indicators such as:
  - Cargo handled, vessel turnaround time, berth idle time, pre-berthing waiting time, container dwell time and ship berth day output.
- The framework assigns equal weightage to absolute performance and year-on-year improvement, encouraging continuous enhancement of port operations.
- The index aligns with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, and seeks to strengthen India's position in global logistics and maritime trade.

### Highlights of Logistics Port Performance Index:

- Paradip Port Authority topped the Dry Bulk Cargo category handling more than 5 million tonnes.
- Sikka Port and Terminals led the Liquid Bulk Cargo segment.
- Mundra Port emerged as the highest-ranked port in the Container Cargo category handling more than 0.5 million TEUs.
- Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority secured the second position among major container ports in the same category.

### Other Initiatives Launched

- **24x7 Grievance Redressal Module:** It was launched under the e-Navik platform, a Ship Registration Module on the e-Samudra platform, a Medical Practitioner Module and a Unified Ship Recycling Credit Note Module.
- **Unified Ship Recycling Portal for Ship Recycling Credit scheme**
  - It is part of the Government's ₹70,000-crore maritime development package announced in 2025.
  - Under the scheme, **ship owners recycling vessels at Hong Kong Convention-compliant Indian yards** can receive a credit note equivalent to 40 per cent of the vessel's scrap value, redeemable against new shipbuilding projects in India.

### UNCLAIMED ASSETS PORTAL



- It is a common landing portal for **unclaimed financial assets**.
- It is developed in collaboration with the **Public Sector Bank Alliance (PSBA)** to facilitate easier access to information relating to unclaimed financial assets.
- **Objective:** This portal serves as a unified platform providing access to search facilities relating to **unclaimed bank deposits, insurance claims, shares, dividends and mutual funds** available across the financial ecosystem.
- The initiative builds upon the nationwide campaign “**Your Money, Your Right**”, undertaken by the Department of Financial Services in coordination with financial sector regulators, banks and other stakeholders.

### What is Public Sector Bank Alliance?

- PSBA is a centralized umbrella organisation **jointly promoted by 12 public sector banks** in the country.
- It was **set up to deliver tech-driven**, secure services to the banking sector that foster innovation and redefine banking excellence.

### INDIA AND AUSTRALIA – BRIDGING THE TRADE AND TRUST BARRIER

- India and Australia are moving closer to a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which would build on the 2022 Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA).
  - The ECTA granted full market access to Indian exports in Australia, while India opened around 70% of its market, covering nearly 91% of bilateral trade value.
- Australia has since sought greater market access from India.
- The push for a broader trade pact comes at a time when India is looking to expand trade and attract investments amid global economic uncertainties and the impact of the West Asia crisis, described as a “balance of payments stress test.”
- CECA is part of India’s wider strategy of rapidly concluding trade agreements to strengthen economic resilience in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment.
- This article highlights the prospects and challenges of a proposed India–Australia CECA.

### **Challenges in India–Australia ECTA**

- Since the India–Australia ECTA came into force in 2022, bilateral merchandise trade has doubled from \$12.2 billion in FY 2020-21 to \$24.1 billion in FY 2024-25.
- However, the benefits have been uneven, with Australian exports accounting for nearly two-thirds of total bilateral trade.
- In services trade, which has crossed \$10 billion, Australia's higher education sector dominates, contributing nearly 60% of the total.
- **Contrasting Investment Trends**
  - While Australia enjoys a trade surplus, investment flows tell a different story:
    - Indian investment in Australia: Nearly \$32 billion (2024)
    - Australian FDI in India: About \$18 billion cumulatively
  - This imbalance raises questions about how India can secure a more balanced economic partnership under the proposed CECA.

- **Australia's Push for Greater Market Access**
  - Australia seeks parity in market access and has identified four major areas of cooperation in its 2025 Economic Engagement Roadmap for India:
    - Clean energy
    - Education
    - Tourism
    - Agribusiness
  - While both countries broadly agree on the first three sectors, agriculture remains the most contentious issue.
- **Agriculture: The Major Sticking Point**
  - India has traditionally protected its agricultural sector in trade agreements and excluded sensitive products such as: Dairy; Wheat; Rice; Sugar; Chickpeas.
  - Even with these restrictions under ECTA, Australian agricultural exports to India increased by nearly 90%, while Indian agricultural exports to Australia grew by only 35%.

### Towards a Balanced India–Australia Trade Partnership

- Agriculture is too important to India's economy, food security, and rural livelihoods to be treated merely as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations.
- At the same time, it cannot remain completely outside the scope of India–Australia economic cooperation.
- Instead of pursuing absolute parity in market access, both countries should focus on a **complementary partnership** that balances trade liberalisation with investment, technology transfer, and institutional cooperation.
- If negotiations succeed in creating such a mutually beneficial framework, the India–Australia relationship could evolve into a deeper and more integrated economic partnership.

### NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY - KEY FINDINGS OF THE LATEST REPORT

- The Union Health Ministry has released the National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6) findings, showing significant progress in maternal and child health alongside a sharp rise in obesity and diabetes among Indian adults.
- The NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round household survey conducted across India to provide reliable data on population, health, nutrition, and family welfare indicators.
- It is one of the most comprehensive sources of health data in the country and plays a crucial role in shaping public health policies.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)
- **Progress Areas**
  - Strengthening of public healthcare systems and maternal health programmes.
  - Improved vaccination coverage indicates the success of Mission Indradhanush and the Universal Immunisation Programme.
  - Better antenatal care reflects effective implementation of JSY, JSSK, and PMSMA.
  - Declining stunting and wasting show the impact of POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- **Areas of Concern**
  - Excessive C-section deliveries, especially in private facilities, indicate potential over-medicalisation and the need for stricter regulation.
  - Rising obesity and diabetes signal a public health crisis requiring urgent intervention.
  - Urban-rural disparities in lifestyle diseases highlight changing food habits and sedentary lifestyles.
  - India's dual burden of malnutrition, i.e. persistent undernutrition among children (stunting, wasting, underweight) and rising overnutrition (obesity) among adults. This requires integrated nutrition strategies.