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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

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EXERCISE KHAAN QUEST, 2026



The Indian Army contingent is set to depart to participate in the multilateral joint military exercise - Exercise KHAAN QUEST.

- It is an **annual, multinational joint military exercise.**
- It is **hosted by the Mongolian Armed Forces and co-sponsored by the U.S. Pacific Command.**
- It aims to enhance interoperability and cooperation among participating militaries in **peace support operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.**
- It will enable the participating countries to share their best practices in tactics, techniques, and procedures for the conduct of joint operations.
- **Background:**
 - The exercise first **started as a bilateral event between the USA and Mongolian Armed Forces in the year 2003.**
 - Subsequently, from the year **2006 onwards**, the exercise graduated to a **multinational peacekeeping exercise.**
 - The **last edition** of Exercise KHAAN QUEST was conducted in **Mongolia in 2025.**
- **2026 Edition:**
 - It is the **23rd iteration** of the exercise.
 - It is scheduled to be held at the **Five Hills Training Area in Ulaanbaatar (capital of Mongolia).**
 - The exercise will focus on the conduct of joint planning and tactical drills such as establishment of static and mobile checkpoints, cordon and search operations, patrolling, evacuation of civilians from hostile areas, counter improvised explosive device drills, combat first aid, and casualty evacuation.

NATIONAL INTERNET EXCHANGE OF INDIA



The National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) is celebrating its 23rd Foundation Day on June 19.

- It is a **not-for-profit organization** set up under the aegis of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, Government of India.
- It was established under the **Companies Act 2013**.

Aim of NIXI: To promote **internet penetration** in the country as well as across the globe.

- Its Primary purpose is to **facilitate exchange of domestic Internet traffic** between the peering ISP, Content players and any other organizations with their own AS number.

Functions of National Internet Exchange of India:

- NIXI plays a critical role in strengthening **India's Internet infrastructure** by facilitating efficient exchange of domestic Internet traffic, managing the '.IN' and (.Bharat) country-code top-level domains.
- It facilitates **Internet Exchange services, and delegating IP addresses (IPv4/IPv6)** through the **Indian Registry for Internet Names and Numbers (IRINN)**.
- Through its initiatives, NIXI supports a secure, resilient, and inclusive Internet ecosystem aligned with India's digital growth ambitions.
- It operates **79 Internet Exchange Points (IXPs)** across the country and **supports domain names in 22 Indian languages**, furthering its vision of a secure, resilient and inclusive internet ecosystem.

SHE-BOX PORTAL



- It is a **centralized platform for registering** and monitoring complaints of sexual harassment of women in the workplace.
- **SHe-Box** (Sexual Harassment electronic Box) portal was launched by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** in 2024.
- It has been developed to operationalise the provisions of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**.

Key Features:

- It serves as a centralized repository of information related to **Internal Committees (ICs)** and **Local Committees (LCs)** formed across the country, encompassing both the government and private sectors.
- It provides assured **redressal of complaints** and a streamlined process for all stakeholders.
- The portal enables real-time monitoring of complaints through a designated nodal officer.
- It provides **single-window access for women** across all organised, unorganised, public and private sectors to register and track complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace.
- The portal enables seamless coordination among stakeholders and strengthens the implementation framework of the SH Act by providing a more structured monitorable system.
- It provides a **secure, confidential and user-friendly interface** that enables women to report incidents without fear of stigma or retaliation.
- The portal is **available in 22 languages**, including Hindi and English, ensuring inclusivity and wider accessibility across diverse user groups.

GREEN HYDROGEN CERTIFICATION SCHEME



Recently, the Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy launched the Green Hydrogen Certification Portal of India (GHCI).

- It was launched by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**, Government of India, under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.
- It aims to **promote the production and use of Green Hydrogen**, which is generated from renewable energy sources.
- **Objective:** It is designed to facilitate the development of a market in India, ensuring that hydrogen produced is genuinely green and contributes to reducing carbon emissions.
- **Features of Scheme:**
 - **Green Hydrogen standard:** Hydrogen can be officially recognized as “green” only if its non-biogenic greenhouse gas emissions **do not exceed 2 kg of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e)/kg of hydrogen**, averaged over **12 months**.
 - **Eligible pathways:** Eligible Hydrogen Production Pathways include **Electrolysis and Conversion of Biomass**.
 - The GHCI operates with four types of certificates: **Concept Certificate, Facility-Level Certificate, Provisional Certificate and Final Certificate**.
 - Concept and Facility-Level certificates focus on design and operational readiness, while Provisional and Final certificates evaluate actual emissions based on production data.
 - Final certificates are mandatory for facilities benefiting from government incentives or intending to sell hydrogen domestically.
 - The certification also enables producers to **access carbon credits under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)**, subject to additional compliance requirements.

SMART SEED COATING TECHNOLOGY



- It is an innovative **biopolymer-based technology**.
- It is developed by the **ICAR–Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR)**, Hyderabad

Key Features:

- **Multifunctional Layer:** It uses biodegradable biopolymers to form a **multifunctional protective layer around seeds**.
- **Delivery Platform:** This coating acts as a delivery platform for beneficial **microorganisms, nutrients, micronutrients, crop protection agents, and crop-protection agents directly at the seed-soil interface**, improving germination rates and early plant growth,
- **Microenvironment:** It creates a favourable microenvironment that **promotes faster germination, stronger seedling growth, better root development, and enhanced tolerance to both biotic and abiotic stresses** during the crucial crop establishment phase.
- The coating can be tailored for a broad range of crops, **including cereals, millets, pulses, vegetables, and horticultural produce**, and is particularly suited to rainfed farming,
- **Significance:**
 - The technology is **particularly relevant for rainfed agriculture**, which accounts for a major share of India's cultivated area and is highly vulnerable to climatic uncertainties.
 - It **aligns closely** with national priorities on **sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, improved seed systems, and enhanced resource-use efficiency**.

US-IRAN MOU: A CLAUSE-BY-CLAUSE BREAKDOWN

The US and Iran formally signed a 14-clause Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) recently - the US signing at the Palace of Versailles, France, and Iran signing in Tehran.

Clause 1 — End to Hostilities on All Fronts, Including Lebanon

- This is the principal war termination clause. The key advance over the April 8 ceasefire is that **Lebanon is now explicitly included** in the cessation of hostilities — something Israel had consistently resisted.

Clause 2 — No US Interference in Iran's Internal Affairs

- This clause removes the regime change rationale permanently. For Tehran, this is historically significant given decades of US interventionism in Iranian internal politics.

Clause 3 — Option to Extend the 60-Day Period

- Both sides can mutually agree to extend the 60-day negotiation window before finalising a deal.

Clause 4 — Removal of US Naval Blockade

- The US Navy has already effectively withdrawn its blockade (by June 16). Full withdrawal refers to the remaining US Carrier Strike Groups deployed to the Strait of Hormuz.

Clause 5 — Passage Through the Strait of Hormuz

- Iran guarantees unconditional transit passage to all commercial shipping through Hormuz.

Clause 6 — \$300 Billion Reconstruction Plan for Iran

- The reconstruction fund is Iran's pathway back into the international economy. It also contains incentives for businesses linked to Trump and Steve Witkoff (US Special Envoy to the Middle East) — suggesting commercial interests in deal durability.

Clause 7 — Full Sanctions Relief in Final Deal

- The final agreement must address multiple categories of US sanctions on Iran — covering energy, shipping, nuclear activities, and counter-terrorism designations.

Clause 8 — Iran Commits Not to Develop Nuclear Weapons

- Iran reaffirms its commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons — a position it has maintained since 2003.

Clause 9 — Status Quo Until Final Deal

- Iran maintains the nuclear status quo (no further enrichment) for 60 days pending a final agreement.

Clause 10 — Interim Sanctions Waivers

- Acts as a bridge arrangement — sanctions waivers apply immediately while full sanctions removal (Clause 7) is negotiated in the 60-day window.

Clause 11 — Unfreezing Iranian Assets

- Iran holds over \$100 billion in frozen funds in foreign banks. Around \$12 billion has already been unfrozen, facilitated through banks in Qatar and the UAE.

Clause 12 — Monitoring Mechanism

- Creates an executive mechanism to monitor MoU implementation.

Clause 13 — Hierarchy of Priorities

- Sets the sequencing and priority order of issues to be negotiated during the 60-day window.

Clause 14 — UN Security Council Endorsement

- The final deal will be endorsed by a UN Security Council Resolution — notable given Trump's general disdain for multilateral institutions.

Conclusion

- The 2026 MoU is not just a ceasefire — it is a potential **reordering of West Asia's geopolitical architecture**.
- Iran emerges from the war not weakened but diplomatically empowered, economically recovering, and militarily unrestrained in its missile and proxy capabilities.
- The next 60 days will determine whether this fragile opening becomes a lasting realignment — or another chapter in the long history of broken US-Iran agreements.

EMPLOYMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND THE ROAD TO VIKSIT BHARAT

- India's economy and society have transformed over the last 12 years under the leadership of the current Prime Minister (PM) of India.
- Over these years, employment generation, youth empowerment, social security expansion, and the launch of the PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (**PMVBRY**) acted as key pillars of India's journey towards Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY):

- **About:** Introduced (1 August 2025) in the first Budget of the present government's third term with a financial outlay of nearly ₹1 lakh crore, PMVBRY is projected as one of India's largest employment-generation initiatives.
- **Employment target:** Creation of more than 3.5 crore employment opportunities over two years.
- **Key features:**
 - **Part A (Support for first-time employees):** Financial assistance of up to ₹15,000 disbursed in two instalments.
 - **Part B (Incentives for employers):**
 - Up to ₹3,000 per employee per month applicable for each additional worker hired.
 - **Incentives available:** Up to 4 years for manufacturing sector employers. Up to 2 years for employers in other sectors.
- **Expected benefits:**
 - Encourages workforce participation, reduces hiring costs for employers, and supports industrial growth through employment-linked incentives.
 - Enhances income security for workers and families, and strengthens the virtuous cycle of production, employment, and consumption.
- **Implementation and outreach:**

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- To mark the implementation of PMVBRY, incentives worth ₹2,400 crore are being disbursed through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to approximately 15 lakh beneficiaries.
- Events, distributing appointment letters to beneficiaries, recognising employers generating employment opportunities, are being organised across 200 major industrial clusters.

Towards Viksit Bharat 2047:

- As India approaches the centenary of Independence in **2047**, the country's greatest asset is its young population.
- The government views both employees and employers as equal partners in nation-building, seeking to **balance** worker welfare with enterprise growth.
- The **broader vision** of Viksit Bharat rests on:
 - Employment-led growth
 - Skill development
 - Entrepreneurship promotion
 - Social-security expansion
 - Formalisation of the workforce
 - Inclusive economic development

Conclusion:

- India's development trajectory is a combination of economic reforms, youth empowerment, employment generation, and social protection.
- Schemes such as PMVBRY seek to strengthen the relationship between labour and industry, positioning employees and employers as the **twin engines** driving India's journey towards a prosperous, inclusive, and developed nation by 2047.