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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 23 July 2026

MISSION VATSALYA SCHEME



Mission Vatsalya Scheme

Recently, the Minister of State for Women and Child Development informed about the Mission Vatsalya Scheme.

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- It is implemented by the States and Union Territories (UTs) to support **Children in Need of care and Protection (CNCP) and Children in Conflict with Law (CCL)**.

Objective: The objective of the Scheme is ensuring care, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in difficult circumstances, including missing and vulnerable children.

- It promotes family- and community-based care, institutional support services, counselling, and emergency outreach for children in need.
- The Scheme provides institutional and non-institutional care and support services for children in difficult circumstances under the statutory framework of the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.
- **Section 55 of the JJ Act, 2015** provides for the evaluation of the functioning of relevant service delivery structures.
 - Under this provision, the Central Government, State Government, or District Magistrate may independently evaluate the functioning of the **Juvenile Justice Board, Child Welfare Committee, Special Juvenile Police Units**, registered institutions, and recognised fit facilities or persons, at such intervals and through such agencies as prescribed.

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Women and Child Development

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PM-YASASVI SCHEME



Recently, the Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment informed the Lok Sabha about the PM-YASASVI Scheme.

- The PM-YASASVI (Prime Minister Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India) umbrella scheme.
- It is aimed at uplifting students from **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**, **Economically Backward Classes (EBC)**, and **Denotified Tribes (DNT)** by providing them with access to quality education during their formative years.

Objective: To reduce financial barriers and promote inclusive, equitable and quality education for eligible students from these communities.

Eligibility: Students from **OBC**, **Economically Backward Classes (EBC)**, and **DNT students** with family income up to Rs 2.5 lakh per annum are eligible for this scheme.

- It **comprises four major scholarship components** designed to support students at different stages of education.
 - These include the **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme**, **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme**, **Top Class Education in Schools Scheme**, and **Top Class Education in Colleges Scheme** for eligible students belonging to **OBC**, **EBC** and **DNT communities**.
- **Implemented by:** Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

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INDIA'S 8TH WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW (TPR) - REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO AN INCLUSIVE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

- Recently, India's 8th Trade Policy Review (TPR) commenced at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva (~65 WTO Members participated), covering the review period 1 January 2021–31 December 2025.
- Led by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal, India presented its trade policy **achievements**, economic **performance** and **reform** agenda while responding to questions from WTO members.
- The review serves as a transparency mechanism to assess members' trade policies and their consistency with WTO principles.

What is the WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM)?

- The TPRM is a **transparency exercise** under the WTO. It enables members to periodically examine each other's trade policies and practices.
- The objective is to improve transparency, predictability and accountability in the multilateral trading system rather than to enforce compliance.

India's Economic and Trade Performance:

- India highlighted its resilience despite geopolitical tensions, supply-chain disruptions and rising global protectionism.
- **Key achievements:**
 - Recorded nearly 8% average annual GDP growth during 2021–2025.
 - Achieved record exports of USD 863.1 billion in 2025–26.
 - Continued pursuing the vision of **Viksit Bharat @2047** while addressing the developmental needs of nearly one-fifth of the world's population.

Major Trade and Economic Reforms Highlighted:

- India showcased a broad range of structural and trade-related reforms aimed at enhancing competitiveness and integration with the global economy.

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- **Key initiatives:**
 - **Aatmanirbhar Bharat:** Strengthening domestic manufacturing while integrating with Global Value Chains (GVCs).
 - **Jan Vishwas initiative:** Regulatory simplification and ease of doing business.
 - Digital customs and trade facilitation measures.
 - Logistics modernisation and quality infrastructure development.
 - Expansion of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for financial inclusion and trade efficiency.
 - Promotion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovation and startups.
 - Focus on sustainability, agricultural resilience and inclusive development.
 - Expansion of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs).
 - Continued support through South-South Cooperation and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.
- India reiterated its support for balanced, development-oriented WTO reforms that strengthen the multilateral trading system while safeguarding the interests of developing countries.

Significance of TPR for India:

- **Soft power and cultural diplomacy:** On the sidelines of the review, India organised an exhibition showcasing diverse Indian products, and traditional papier-mâché handicrafts.
- **Reinforces:** India's image as a responsible stakeholder in the multilateral trading system.
- **Demonstrates:** India's attempt to balance self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat) with greater global economic integration.
- **Highlights:** India's growing role in digital trade, services exports, and South-South cooperation.
- **Strengthens:** India's credibility in ongoing WTO negotiations and reform discussions.
- **Reflects:** India's emphasis on inclusive, transparent and development-oriented global trade governance.

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INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN INDIA - LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND SUPREME COURT RULINGS

- An internet shutdown, as defined by the web rights advocacy organisations, is "an intentional disruption of internet or electronic communications, rendering them inaccessible or effectively unusable, for a specific population or within a location, often to control the flow of information."
- **Forms of Internet Shutdowns**
 - Full network disruptions: complete blackout of internet services.
 - Slowing down internet speed: throttling connectivity.
 - Blocking specific platforms: restricting access to particular websites or apps.
 - Mobile-only shutdowns: disabling mobile internet while keeping broadband active.
- **When Are They Ordered?**
 - According to the International Federation of Journalists, most internet shutdowns are ordered when:
 - Large numbers of people gather for political reasons.
 - Peaceful demonstrations are expected to take place.
 - Violent protests may occur.
 - Religious celebrations draw large crowds.
 - Public examinations are being conducted to prevent cheating.

Legal Recourse Against Shutdown Orders

- A shutdown order may be challenged in court through:
 - High Court under Article 226: for writ petitions within a state's jurisdiction.
 - Supreme Court under Article 32: in appropriate cases involving fundamental rights.
- Courts can examine whether the order was:

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- Lawful and issued by the competent authority.
- Proportionate to the situation.
- Properly limited in area and duration.
- Supported by valid reasons.
- Indefinite suspensions are unlawful. The government must publish its orders and provide reasons capable of judicial review.

Way Forward

- **Legislative Reforms**
 - Ensure strict compliance with the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the 2024 Rules.
 - Discontinue the use of outdated Telegraph Act provisions.
 - Establish clearer criteria for what constitutes a public emergency.
 - Provide for automatic judicial review of shutdown orders.
- **Institutional Safeguards**
 - Strengthen the review committee mechanism.
 - Ensure timely publication of all shutdown orders.
 - Maintain a central public database of shutdowns.
 - Enable easier legal challenges to shutdown orders.
- **Policy Approaches**
 - Explore less restrictive alternatives such as targeted platform blocking.
 - Provide advance notice where possible.
 - Ensure the shortest possible duration of shutdowns.
 - Consider the cumulative impact on affected populations.
- **Transparency Measures**
 - Regular reporting to Parliament on shutdowns.
 - Public consultations on the framework.
 - Enhanced judicial oversight of orders.
 - Civil society engagement in policy formulation.

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NSE'S AHIMSA INDEX: ETHICAL INVESTING MEETS ANIMAL WELFARE

- The Nifty 500 Ahimsa Index tracks **top 500 NSE companies** whose business practices align with the principle of "Ahimsa" (non-violence). It gives investors a way to invest specifically in companies that avoid activities harming animals.
- This marks a shift from conventional ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) investing, which focuses on carbon emissions and governance metrics, toward a values-based screening rooted in Indian philosophical traditions.
- The index was developed jointly by **NSE Indices and the Ahimsagain Foundation**, a non-profit established in November 2024 by ethical finance advocates.
- **Selection Framework**
 - Companies are evaluated using the Ahimsa Investment Movement (AIM) framework, which classifies firms into three bands:
 - **Green band:** Fully compliant with animal-cruelty-free criteria
 - **Orange band:** Partial compliance
 - **Red band:** Non-compliant
 - Only green-band companies are included in the index.

Comparison with BSE's Saatvik Index

- BSE's Saatvik 100 Index, launched earlier, has a broader mandate. It screens against animal cruelty, addictive or toxic products, and generally harmful or violent business activities.
- The near-simultaneous launch of two thematic ethical indices by India's major exchanges signals a new direction in India's capital markets — screening companies through **indigenous philosophical lenses rather than only global ESG frameworks**.
 - Global ESG frameworks are structured guidelines that help companies measure and report their performance on Environmental, Social, and Governance factors.
 - **Environmental:** Tracks a company's impact on nature, including greenhouse gas emissions, waste management, energy efficiency, and water use.

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- **Social:** Evaluates how a company treats people, covering labor practices, workplace health and safety, diversity, and community relations.
- **Governance:** Assesses corporate leadership, executive pay, business ethics, internal controls, and shareholder rights.

Significance for Investors

- Expected to serve as a benchmark for asset managers.
- Likely to enable new passive investment products such as ETFs and index funds.
- Reflects a broader trend of younger, values-conscious investors entering capital markets.
- Market analysts note it will take time for mutual funds to build products around this theme, but see long-term growth potential.

Conclusion

- NSE's Ahimsa Index reflects a maturing Indian capital market willing to root ethical investing in home-grown philosophical concepts rather than borrowed frameworks.
- As younger, values-driven investors enter the market, such indices could reshape how corporate responsibility is measured and rewarded in India.

NATIONAL CHAMBAL SANCTUARY



- It is also called the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary,
- It is a tri-state protected riverine sanctuary along the Chambal River and ravines.
- **Location:** It lies at the tri-junction of three states Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- The main focus of the sanctuary is to protect the critically endangered Gharial, Red-crowned roof turtle & endangered Ganges dolphin.
- Chambal supports the largest population of Gharials in the wild.
- It is listed as an important bird area (IBA).

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- **Topography:** The topography is full of ravines, hills & sandy beaches.
- **Vegetation:** It is part of the **Kathiar-Gir dry deciduous** forest eco region.
- **Fauna:** It includes threatened category like **mugger crocodile, smooth-coated otters, Striped Hyena & Indian wolfs, Indian narrow-headed soft shell turtle, three- striped roof turtle & crowned river turtle.**
 - Mammals are also seen, which include Sambhar deer, Neel Gai (blue bull), Indian gazelle, Rhesus Monkey, Hanuman Langur etc.

KAWAL TIGER RESERVE



- It is located in the **Telangana.**
- It is along the **banks of the river Godavari**, forming part of the **Deccan peninsula-central highlands.**
- Geographically, the reserve is situated at the **southernmost tip of the Central Indian Tiger Landscape**, having **linkages with the Tadoba-Andhari (Maharashtra) and Indravati (Chhattisgarh) tiger reserves.**
- **Rivers:** It is a major catchment of the river **Godavari** and local **rivulets like Peddavagu and Kadam.**
- **Habitat:** It has diverse habitats comprising dense forests, grasslands, rivers, streams, and water bodies.
- **Vegetation:** **Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest.**
- **Flora:** It consists of **teak along with bamboo** and other species like *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Mitragyna parviflora*, *Terminalia crenulata*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Boswellia serrata*, etc.
- **Fauna:**
 - It has a faunal diversity which is **typical of the Deccan Plateau.**
 - The major wild animals include: **tiger, nilgai, chousinga, chinkara**, black buck, sambar, spotted deer, wild dog, wolf, jackal, fox, leopard, and the jungle cat.