

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

UN ADOPTS THE EQUAL EARTH MAP: WHY THE WORLD IS MOVING BEYOND MERCATOR

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution to **move away from the 16th-century Mercator map** towards the **Equal Earth projection**, which shows Africa's true size more accurately.

The Togo-led resolution was supported by 164 countries, including India. The United States voted against it and six countries abstained. Since UN resolutions are not binding, it remains to be seen whether governments, organisations and classrooms will actually adopt the new map.

India backed the resolution while drawing a firm line on the depiction of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Why No Flat Map Can Be Perfect?

- The Earth is not a perfect sphere. It **bulges at the equator** because of its spin, is **warped** by the Moon's gravity, and is **further shaped** by continents and oceans.
- The most accurate representation is therefore a **spheroid**, a three-dimensional shape formed from a two-dimensional ellipse.
- A globe is the best model, but carrying one around is impractical. This is where map projections come in.
- Every flat map must distort at least one of four properties:
 - **Area:** how large a landmass is relative to others
 - **Shape:** the true outline of a country
 - **Distance:** the actual space between two points
 - **Direction:** the correct compass bearing between locations

Origins of the Mercator Projection

- The Mercator map was introduced in 1569 by Gerardus Mercator, a Flemish geographer from present-day Belgium.
- It is a **conformal, cylindrical projection**, created as if the Earth's surface were unwrapped from a cylinder around the globe.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

The Distortion Problem

- On the Mercator grid, **longitudes are evenly spaced**, but the **gaps between latitudes widen towards the poles**.
- This is deliberate. To preserve shapes, the stretching of parallels is matched exactly with the stretching of meridians. The result is that **landmasses far from the equator appear much larger than they are**.
- The most famous example is Africa, which appears similar in size to Greenland. In reality, Greenland is **14 times smaller** and roughly the size of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Antarctica also appears far larger than its true size.

The Colonial Lens

- Critics argue that the Mercator projection reflects a Western-centric worldview. It helped Western cartographers map their own towns, cities and roads with ease.

Which Projection to Use?

- **Navigation and direction:** Conformal projections like Mercator.
- **Thematic and statistical data:** Equal-area projections like Equal Earth.
- **General reference and world maps:** Compromise projections like Robinson or Winkel Tripel.
- **Polar or single-point studies:** Azimuthal or planar projections, which project the Earth onto a flat plane from a central point.
- **Adoption in Practice** - The World Bank already uses Winkel Tripel or Equal Earth for static maps and is phasing out Mercator on web maps. Google Maps offers a choice between Mercator and a 3D globe view on desktop, but Mercator remains the default on its mobile app.

Conclusion

The UN's adoption of the Equal Earth map is a symbolic step towards a fairer representation of the world. Yet no flat map can be perfect, and every projection serves a specific purpose. The real shift will depend on whether governments, institutions and classrooms embrace the change and challenge long-held perceptions shaped by Mercator.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

NHRC PROBE INTO INSTAGRAM ADS: GAPS IN INDIA'S RESPONSE TO ONLINE CHILD ABUSE MATERIAL

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), and the Delhi Police over paid Instagram advertisements that allegedly directed users to Telegram channels offering child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Two Questions Raised by the NHRC

- The NHRC's order raises two key issues:
 - **Compliance with POCSO reporting duties:** Whether statutory reporting obligations under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 were followed.
 - **Intermediary status of AI-driven platforms:** Whether platforms whose AI systems actively shape content can still claim the legal protections available to intermediaries.
- **The Mandatory Reporting Obligation**
 - Section 19 of the POCSO Act requires any person who apprehends that an offence is likely to be committed, or knows that one has been committed, to report it to the Special Juvenile Police or the local police.
 - The NHRC has asked Meta whether the alleged offences were reported and, if not, to identify who was responsible for compliance.
 - The Commission stressed that this legal duty cannot be replaced by internal correspondence, grievance redressal or regulatory engagement.

From Report to FIR: The Verification Funnel

- Before an FIR is registered, authorities conduct preliminary verification. Investigators use account details, IP logs, linked email addresses, phone numbers, account creation records and digital hash values to identify the jurisdiction from which content was uploaded.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

- A hash value acts as a digital fingerprint of a file. Investigators compare the hash of recovered material with the hash in the CyberTipline report to confirm both refer to the same content.
- An FIR is registered when the material prima facie appears to depict child sexual abuse. A recurring difficulty is verifying the victim's age. Poor image quality or blurred visuals can prevent police from proceeding.
- **Investigation and Trial**
 - Once an FIR is registered, investigators identify the person behind the account by obtaining subscriber information, tracing IP addresses, identifying internet service providers and seizing devices for forensic examination.
 - Such cases are tried before **POCSO Special Courts**.
 - Convictions depend heavily on digital evidence.

Structural Limitations

- A CyberTipline report usually identifies where material was found, not where it originated. Establishing origin requires separate investigation.
- Reports pass through multiple agencies before reaching a police station, causing delays even when the child, offender and platform are all in India.
- Offenders increasingly use encrypted platforms and AI-generated content, making traditional detection methods like hash matching less effective.
- Experts argue that equipping agencies is not a one-time fix, as the crime keeps changing shape. Law enforcement must evolve at the same pace.

Conclusion

The NHRC probe highlights two urgent gaps: weak enforcement of mandatory reporting under POCSO and outdated intermediary rules for AI-driven platforms. India's system converts only a fraction of abuse alerts into prosecutions because of multi-layered routing, verification hurdles and evolving technology. Faster reporting chains, clearer platform accountability and continuous capacity building are essential to protect children online.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS - HOW THEY CUT TRANSIT TIME AND BOOST RAIL FREIGHT

- DFCs are rail routes built exclusively for goods traffic, separated from the passenger network.
- India's two busiest trunk routes, Howrah-Delhi on the eastern side and Mumbai-Delhi on the western side, had become severely oversaturated, with line capacity utilisation ranging between 115% and 150%.
- This congestion caused freight traffic to decline, since passenger trains are typically given priority over goods movement.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the last three sections of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor in Vadodra, marking the completion of the 1,506-km corridor and taking India's total dedicated freight network to 2,843 km.
- **Financing**
 - The projects were financed through debt funding from two multilateral sources:
 - **World Bank:** Rs. 14,900 crore
 - **Japan International Cooperation Agency:** Rs. 38,722 crore



The Two Corridors

- **Western Dedicated Freight Corridor**
 - The WDFC spans **1,506 km**, running from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) in Navi Mumbai to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, near Delhi.
- **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor**
 - The EDFC spans **1,337 km**, running from Ludhiana in Punjab to Sonmargar in Bihar. It caters mostly to coal and mineral traffic from eastern India.

Performance and Impact

- **Speed Gains**
 - The most measurable benefit has been in average speeds.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

- **Other Benefits**

- Reduced transit time, since freight trains are no longer held for passenger services.
- Lower logistics cost per tonne moved.
- Last-mile connectivity at certain locations, including direct port links.

Why Freight Matters for Railways?

- Freight is the financial backbone of Indian Railways. Freight services account for over 65% of total earnings. This revenue plays a crucial role in subsidising passenger travel.
- The scale of the shift being attempted is significant:
 - Current share of freight traffic moved by rail: around 27%
 - Target under the National Rail Plan: 45% by 2030, equivalent to 3,000 million tonnes. Highest ever loading achieved: 1,670 million tonnes in 2025-26
- **The Third Corridor**
 - In the Budget this year, the government announced plans for a **third dedicated freight corridor, connecting Dankuni in West Bengal to Surat in Gujarat.**
 - The detailed project report is currently being prepared. This corridor would create an east-west link, complementing the existing north-south and north-west alignments.

Significance

- **For logistics costs:** India's logistics expenditure as a share of GDP has historically been higher than in comparable economies. Faster, more reliable freight movement addresses one component of that gap.
- **For port connectivity:** Direct rail links to JNPT and Gujarat ports reduce dependence on road transport for container movement, improving turnaround times for exporters and importers.
- **For emissions:** Rail freight is considerably less carbon-intensive per tonne-kilometre than road transport, making modal shift relevant to India's climate commitments.
- **For passenger services:** Freeing capacity on trunk routes creates room for additional passenger trains, which had previously competed with goods traffic for the same tracks.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

SHIVNERI FORT



- It is a very old and important **hill fort** located near the town of Junnar in the **Pune district of Maharashtra**.
- This fort is famous because it is the **birthplace of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**.

• History:

- The Shivneri Fort was **built** during the time of **Satavahanas**.
- After the Satavahanas, the Shivneri Fort was occupied by the **Shilaharas and the Yadavas**.
- In the **15th century**, it came under the **Bahmani Sultanate**. Later, in the **16th century**, it was taken over by the **Ahmadnagar Sultanate**.
- In **1595**, a **Maratha chief** named **Maloji Bhosale** was **honored by the Ahmadnagar Sultan, Bahadur Nizam Shah**.
 - **Maloji Bhosale** was the **grandfather of Shivaji Maharaj**.
- **Shivaji Maharaj** was **born at Shivneri Fort** on **February 19, 1630**. Some records suggest he was born in 1627. He spent his early childhood years growing up within the fort's walls.
- An **English traveler** named **Fraze** visited the fort in 1673. He wrote that the fort was very strong and could not be easily defeated.

• Features:

- It is a **triangular-shaped** hill fort and has its entrance from the southwest side of the hill. It has **winding gates** that are very well protected. **All around the fort**, there are **strong mud walls**.
- **At the very center of the fort**, there is a **water pond** called '**Badami Talav**'. To the south of this pond, you can see **statues of Jijabai and a young Shivaji**.
- In the fort there are **water springs**, called **Ganges and Yamuna**, which have water throughout the year.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

WHAT IS THE TRISHNA MISSION?



TRISHNA Mission

- The TRISHNA (Thermal Infra-Red Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment) mission, is a collaborative endeavor between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the French Space Agency Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES).
- Objectives:
 - Detailed monitoring of the energy and water budgets of the continental biosphere for quantifying terrestrial water stress and water use.
 - High-resolution observation of water quality and dynamics in coastal and inland waters.
 - A comprehensive assessment of urban heat islands detection of thermal anomalies linked to volcanic activity and geothermal resources.
 - Precise monitoring of snow-melt runoff and glacier dynamics.
- The satellite will operate in a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 761 km.

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT- INDIA

- It was set by the Government of India in 2004.
- It is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions.
- FIU-IND is an independent body reporting directly to the Economic Intelligence Council (EIC) headed by the Finance Minister.



Financial Intelligence Unit- India

- Function of Financial Intelligence Unit-India:
 - Collection of Information: It acts as the central reception point for receiving Cash Transaction reports (CTRs), Non-Profit Organisation Transaction Report (NTRs), Cross Border Wire Transfer Reports (CBWTRs) from various reporting entities.

Current Affairs - 09 September 2026

- **Analysis of Information:** Analyze received information in order to uncover patterns of transactions suggesting suspicion of money laundering and related crimes.
- **Sharing of Information:** It shares information with national intelligence/law enforcement agencies, national regulatory authorities and foreign Financial Intelligence Units.
- **Central Repository:** It establishes and maintains a national database on the basis of reports received from reporting entities.
- **Coordination:** It coordinates and strengthens collection and sharing of financial intelligence to combat money laundering and related crimes.
- **Research and Analysis:** Monitor and identify strategic key areas on money laundering trends, typologies and developments.

FINANCIAL FRAUD RISK INDICATOR



- It was launched in 2025 by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT's) Digital Intelligence Unit (DIU).
- It is a risk-based metric that classifies mobile numbers into three categories: Medium, High, and Very High Risk based on their likelihood of involvement in financial fraud.
- The classification draws from a comprehensive analysis using inputs from various platforms, including the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), DoT's Chakshu platform, and intelligence shared by banks and financial institutions.
- This tool enables banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and UPI service providers to take appropriate measures for customer protection.

Key Facts about Digital Intelligence Unit

- It is a secure, nationwide intelligence-sharing and coordination platform developed by DoT and launched in 2024.
- **Purpose:** To counter telecom-enabled cyber frauds and the misuse of telecom resources.