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### KISHAU MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT: SIX STATES SIGN MOU FOR THE LONG-DELAYED YAMUNA STORAGE DAM

The chief ministers of six states signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in New Delhi to pave the way for the long-pending Kishau Multipurpose Project. The signatories were Himachal Pradesh CM, Uttarakhand CM, Uttar Pradesh CM, Haryana CM, Rajasthan CM and Delhi CM.

- The Kishau Multipurpose Project is a proposed dam and hydropower project on the **Tons River**, a major tributary of the Yamuna
- **Key features:**
  - **Location:** along the Himachal Pradesh–Uttarakhand border, straddling Sirmour district (HP) and Dehradun district (Uttarakhand)
  - **Dam:** 232.6-metre-high concrete gravity dam
  - **Power:** 422 MW capacity, generating 1,476 million units of clean hydropower
  - **Irrigation potential:** about 97,076 hectares
  - **Water supply:** drinking and industrial water to Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh
  - **Storage:** capacity of 1,786 million cubic metres (MCM), with live storage of about 1,324 MCM

#### Why the Dam Was Needed?

- Kishau is **one of three storage projects** planned in the upper reaches of the Yamuna and its tributaries under an MoU signed in May 1994 by the Yamuna basin states: undivided Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and the NCT of Delhi.
- The other two, **Lakhwar and Renukaji**, already have MoUs signed and are under implementation.

#### Why the MoU Was Delayed for Eight Years

- **Cost burden:** Under an earlier arrangement, the previous state government agreed to contribute about Rs 800 crore, mainly for the power component. The current government rejected this as against Himachal's financial interest.

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- **Disproportionate benefits:** Himachal argued it should not invest heavily in a project whose water benefits would flow largely to downstream states like Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, while it bore the burden of submergence and displacement.
- A 2020 feasibility study estimated that about 2,950 hectares would be submerged, affecting 17 villages and around 5,500 people across Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

### How the Breakthrough Was Achieved?

- In June 2026, the Centre announced it would bear 90 per cent of the project's water component cost, with the six states sharing the remaining 10 per cent.
- A special mechanism was devised for Himachal Pradesh:
  - Himachal's allocated water share will be transferred to Delhi and Rajasthan.
  - In return, Delhi and Rajasthan will bear Himachal's share of the power component cost in a 75:25 ratio.
  - Himachal, which does not currently need the power, will receive payment for supplying electricity to neighbouring states.
- **Water Benefits to States**
  - **Storage allocation (MCM):** Haryana 633, Uttar Pradesh 411, Rajasthan 124, Delhi 80, Uttarakhand 34, with a share for Himachal that is now being transferred.
  - **Flow benefits (cusecs):** Haryana 836, Uttar Pradesh 543.2, Rajasthan 163.52, Delhi 105.28.

### Conclusion

The Kishau MoU resolves a decade-old federal deadlock through generous central funding and an innovative cost-benefit swap for Himachal Pradesh.

It marks a significant step towards Upper Yamuna storage, water security for northern states and Yamuna rejuvenation. Implementation must now address submergence, displacement and rehabilitation with equal seriousness.

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### DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS - BACKBONE OF INDIA'S LOGISTICS REVOLUTION

- India has effectively completed a 2,843-km dedicated freight rail backbone, comprising the 1,506-km Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from Dadri to Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal (JNPT) and the 1,337-km Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) from Ludhiana to Sonnagar.

#### About Dedicated Freight Corridors

- Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)** are specialised railway routes designed primarily for the movement of freight.
- Unlike conventional railway networks, where passenger and freight trains share tracks, DFCs provide dedicated capacity for goods transportation.
- They are designed to accommodate **longer, heavier and double-stack container trains**, thereby increasing freight-carrying capacity and improving operational efficiency.
- The two operational corridors have complementary economic roles:
  - EDFC:** Strengthens the mineral and industrial axis connecting northern India with eastern mineral-producing regions.
  - WDFC:** Strengthens the manufacturing and export axis connecting northern industrial regions with western ports.
- The Dadri-JNPT journey is expected to reduce travel time from approximately 66 hours to 58 hours.

#### How DFCs Can Transform Logistics?

- The primary benefit of DFCs is the creation of additional capacity on the conventional railway network by diverting freight traffic onto dedicated routes.
- Average DFC traffic increased from 247 trains per day in 2023-24 to 443 trains per day in August 2026. The WDFC alone was carrying around 210 trains per day, equivalent to approximately 88% of its capacity even before full commissioning.
- This can generate wider productivity gains through:

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- Lower inventory and working-capital requirements
- Improved inventory-to-sales ratios
- Reduced road congestion and fuel consumption
- Lower logistics-related emissions
- Greater reliability of exports
- Expansion of manufacturers' market radius
- Higher factory utilisation
- Improved port productivity

### Economic Significance

- India's logistics costs were estimated at **7.97% of GDP in 2023-24**, equivalent to approximately **Rs. 24.01 lakh crore**.
- Average freight costs were estimated at:
  - **Rail:** 1.96 per tonne-km
  - **Road:** 11.03 per tonne-km
  - **Waterways:** 1.80 per tonne-km
- Consequently, shifting suitable long-distance freight from roads to dedicated rail corridors can generate substantial transportation-cost savings.

### Future Expansion

- The Railways have identified three additional corridors for detailed project report examination:
  - **East Coast Corridor:** Kharagpur-Vijayawada
  - **East-West Corridor:** Including Palghar-Bhusawal-Nagpur-Kharagpur-Dankuni and Rajkharsawan-Kalipahari-Andal
  - **North-South Corridor:** Vijayawada-Nagpur-Itarsi
- The 2,052-km Dankuni-Surat DFC identified in Budget 2026-27 could create another east-west freight spine connecting India's mineral and industrial heartland with Gujarat's ports and manufacturing base.

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### US ADMITS WEAPONS IN SPACE: THE LEGAL VACUUM ON MILITARISATION OF OUTER SPACE

The United States has publicly admitted that it has active weapons deployed in space. US Air Force Secretary said at a conference in Maryland that the US now has "**on-orbit space control weapons**" capable of defending its joint forces against hostile adversary action. The US did not reveal the nature of the weapons or when they were deployed.

#### Reactions from China and Russia

- The two countries the US considers its space adversaries responded immediately:
  - China urged the US to stop expanding its military capabilities and preparing for war in outer space.
  - Russia called for keeping space free of weapons and expressed hope for broad international consolidation towards the complete demilitarisation of space.

*US itself accuses China & Russia of building counterspace capabilities to track & target US forces.*

- US Space Force was set up in 2019 during President Donald Trump's first term.

#### What Weaponisation of Space Means?

- Military use of outer space covers several categories:
  - **Earth-to-space:** Launching a missile from Earth to destroy enemy satellites or other space assets
  - **Space-to-Earth:** Sending weapons from space to destroy ground-based targets
  - **Space-to-space:** Using space-based weapons to target other space-based assets
- It is unclear which category the newly acknowledged US weapons fall into.

#### Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Weapons

- Space weapons need not be "kinetic", that is, capable of physical destruction. Non-kinetic methods can be equally effective in conflict:
  - Disrupting or jamming communications between an enemy's space and Earth-based systems.
  - Attacking cyber-networks that control space assets.

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### Demonstrated Capabilities So Far

- **Anti-satellite (ASAT)** tests are the most open demonstration of space weapons. Four countries have conducted them: the United States, Russia, China and India.
- Each targeted its own non-functional satellite, but the ability to completely destroy a space asset remains the most dramatic use of space weapons to date.

### The Legal Ambiguity

- All countries emphasise **peaceful use** of space and urge each other not to militarise it.
- Yet **no international law explicitly prohibits** the deployment or use of conventional weapons or tactics in space.
- The **Outer Space Treaty, 1967** remains the most relevant law on the subject. Its scope and gaps:
  - It bars countries from carrying or placing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in space.
  - It is silent on conventional weapons and weapons targeting physical infrastructure in space.
  - It says nothing about Earth-to-space weapons, which were still a distant prospect in the 1960s.

### The Artemis Accords

- The Artemis Accords, an initiative of NASA and the US State Department, are a voluntary code of conduct for space exploration with over 70 signatories, **including India**.
- All cooperative activities are meant to be for peaceful purposes. However, nothing in the Accords prevents signatories from deploying or using weapons in space.

### Conclusion

The US admission formalises what has long been an open secret: outer space is already militarised. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty bans only weapons of mass destruction, leaving conventional and non-kinetic weapons unregulated.

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### NUAKHAI FESTIVAL



- It is a festival of Western Odisha and adjoining areas of Simdega in Jharkhand.
- The word nua means new and **khai** means food.
- **Objective:** It is an agricultural festival which is observed to **welcome the new rice of the season**.
- It is observed on the **fifth day of the lunar fortnight** of the month of Bhadrapada or Bhaadra (August–September).
- **Rituals of Nuakhai:**
  - Nuakhai is **understood to have nine colours** and as a consequence nine sets of rituals are followed as a prelude to the actual day of celebration.
  - People offer the newly **harvested crop** called **Nabanha** to their respective presiding deities.
  - After offering the Nabanha, people relish different types of delicacies prepared from the newly harvested crop.
  - The Nuakhai Juhar is a major ritual of the festival.



### GUCCHI MUSHROOM

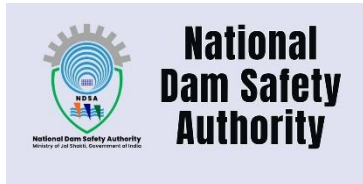
A rare Himalayan ingredient gucchi mushroom has found its way onto the BRICS Summit 2026.

- Guccchi is scientifically known as **Morchella esculenta**.
- **Appearance:** These are recognisable by their **honeycomb-like caps**, which range from pale yellow to dark brown. Their stems are typically pale and hollow.
- **Distribution:** It is found in parts of **Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.
- It **cannot easily be mass-cultivated**. Mountain communities collect gucchi by hand, often trekking through steep and rugged terrain.

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- **Habitat:** The mushroom typically grows in **mountainous coniferous forests**, where a combination of soil conditions, moisture, temperature fluctuations and seasonal snowmelt creates a suitable environment.
- Fresh morels or mushrooms contain substantial moisture. They are commonly dried to preserve them and extend their shelf life, but the process **significantly reduces their weight**.
- They **may or may not grow in the same spot** the next season, which only makes the process of collection more tedious.
- It is known to be one of **the most expensive mushrooms**.
- **Health Benefits:** Gucehi mushrooms contain **protein, dietary fibre** and various antioxidant compounds. They are also reported to contain vitamin D.

### NATIONAL DAM SAFETY AUTHORITY



- It is a statutory body set up by the **Central Government** under the Dam Safety Act, 2021.
- It operates with a clear mandate to **regulate, oversee, and inspect dams**.
- It is **headed by a chairman** and assisted by five members to lead its five wings – policy and research, technical, regulation, disaster and resilience, administration and finance.
- **Headquarter:** New Delhi.
- **Functions of National Dam Safety Authority**
  - **Implementation:** Implementing the policies formulated by the National Committee on Dam Safety;
  - **Resolve Issues:** Resolving issues between **State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs)**, or between a SDSO and any dam owner in that state;
  - **Regulation:** Specifying regulations for inspection and investigation of dams;
  - **Accreditation:** Providing accreditation to agencies working on construction, design, and alteration of dams.

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- These standards encompass various aspects, including structural integrity, environmental impact, and emergency response protocols.
- The NDSA actively engages in nationwide awareness programs to educate citizens about dam safety.
- In the face of natural calamities or unforeseen events, the NDSA ensures that comprehensive emergency response plans are in place.

### NAGARAHOLE TIGER RESERVE



- **Location:** It is situated in the districts of Mysore and Kodagu in **Karnataka**.
- It is situated at the tri-junction area of **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala**.
- Geographically, it is an “ecological confluence” of the **Western and Eastern Ghats**.
- It is named after a **small river**, ‘Nagarahole’(literally a snake stream in Kannada), which meanders within the habitat before joining the river Kabini.
- It is part of the **larger Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**, which is recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- It is flanked by the **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** on its **southeastern side** and the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary of Kerala on the
- **Rivers:** It is surrounded by the **River Kabini** in its north and River **Moyar** in its south.
- **Vegetation:**
  - The dry eastern limits of the reserve have **dry deciduous forests**.
  - Towards the west, with the increase in rainfall, the vegetation changes to tropical moist and semi-evergreen forests.
- **Flora:** It includes **rosewood, Indian kino tree**, sandalwood, Indian laurel, clumping bamboo, giant clumping bamboo, etc.
- **Fauna:** It comprises mammals such as Bengal tiger, gaur, sloth bear, golden jackal, dhole, four-horned antelope, etc.