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WHAT IS THE EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM (EEF)?



The Eastern Economic Forum has been described as a successful solid platform since its creation.

- It is an **annual international forum** established in 2015.
- It is **held annually** in Vladivostok, Russia.
- **Objective:** To support the **economic development of Russia's Far East** and to expand international **cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region**.
- It is a key international platform for establishing and strengthening ties within the Russian and global investment communities.
- The forum provides a platform for **government representatives, businesses, investors**, and experts to discuss economic cooperation and investment opportunities.
- It increasingly attracts guests from widely different countries, especially **leaders of China, India, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Myanmar**.

Key facts about the Russian Far East:

- It is the **easternmost part of Russia**.
- It is a **cold, inhospitable, and sparsely populated**
- The macro-region **borders two oceans, the Pacific and the Arctic, and five countries (China, Japan, Mongolia, the United States, and the DPRK)**.
- The Far Eastern region **spreads over four time zones** and various climate zones: from northern deserts to subtropics.
- It is **rich in natural resources like gold, diamonds, oil, natural gas**,
- About **1/3 of all coal reserves and hydro-engineering resources of the country** are here.

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WHAT IS THE ASIAN-PACIFIC POSTAL UNION (APPU)?



- It is an **intergovernmental organization** of **32 member countries** of the **Asian-Pacific region**.
- **Headquarters: Bangkok, Thailand.**
- It is the **only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU)** in the **region**, which is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** dealing with postal services.
- **Goal:** To extend, facilitate, and **improve postal relations between member countries** and to promote cooperation in the field of postal services.
- It decides and pursues the regional stance in response to global postal issues and strategy.
- **Since its creation in 1961**, the APPU has taken the lead in **projects for improving quality of services** in express, parcels, e-commerce, logistics, letter post, and financial services.
- As the **regional centre for various UPU projects**, it also takes the lead in ensuring that all technical and operational projects of the UPU are fulfilled in the region so that the region is integrated into the global postal network in the best possible way.
- The APPU is made up of the **three bodies**:
 - **Congress:** It is the **supreme organ** of the Union and **meets not later than 2 years** after the UPU congress.
 - **Executive Council:** It comprises all members and **meets every year** to ensure the work of the union.
 - **APPU Bureau:** It serves as a body for liaison, information, inquiry, and training for members.
- The **Secretary General** leads the activities of the Union and is also the **Director of the Asian Pacific Postal College (APPC)** based in Bangkok.
 - APPC is the **largest intergovernmental postal training institute** in the region.

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FOREST RIGHTS ACT - THE DISPUTE OVER GRAM SABHA CONSENT

- In an official communication, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs stated that there is no provision for obtaining Gram Sabha consent for Stage-II forest clearance under the FRA or the Rules made under it.
- It concluded that "such matters do not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs."
- This position has drawn criticism. A Supreme Court advocate who previously served as legal adviser to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs under successive governments has raised concerns, asking that if such matters are not under the Tribal Affairs Ministry's purview, whose purview they fall under.
- The observation carries weight because the FRA itself names the Ministry as the nodal authority for implementation.

The Forest Rights Act, 2006

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, commonly called the Forest Rights Act (FRA), was enacted to correct the historical injustice faced by forest-dwelling communities.
- The law recognises individual and community rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers over forest land and resources.
- Crucially, it makes the Gram Sabha the primary authority for initiating the process of determining forest rights.
- The Act explicitly states that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry responsible for its implementation.
- This designation is central to the current dispute.

How Gram Sabha Consent Became a Requirement?

- A key point of confusion lies in where the consent requirement actually originates.
- The FRA itself does not contain language on Gram Sabha consent specifically with respect to diverting forest land for non-forestry purposes.

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- However, the Union government's own rules and regulations governing forest diversion, framed under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, require that all processes under the FRA be completed before any authority can formally issue a certificate diverting forest land.

The Core Tension

- Two legitimate concerns pull against each other here.
- On one side is infrastructure delay. An average forest clearance timeline of 106 months imposes real costs on project economics, on power generation capacity, and on public investment.
- On the other side is the purpose of the consent requirement itself. The NOC procedure exists precisely to ensure that communities whose rights are recognised under the FRA are not dispossessed without agreement. Diluting it to a super-majority threshold would mean that some recognised rights-holders could lose their land despite objecting.
- The question of whether consent is a procedural formality or a substantive right sits at the heart of the dispute.

Way Forward

- Several approaches could address the underlying problem without weakening rights.
- Completing FRA recognition first would remove much of the delay.
- A significant part of the 106-month timeline stems from unsettled claims rather than refused consent. Expediting recognition would clarify who holds rights before diversion is proposed.
- Strengthening state-level capacity for FRA implementation would reduce backlogs, since the Ministry itself attributes operational responsibility to states.
- Improving consultation quality, through early engagement, transparent information sharing, and genuine benefit-sharing arrangements, is more likely to secure consent than procedural shortcuts.
- Clarifying institutional responsibility is essential. If the nodal ministry disclaims jurisdiction over consent disputes, the framework has a gap that no amount of procedural reform will fix.

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RAJGHAT REDISCOVERED: OLD EXCAVATION, NEW LIGHT ON VARANASI'S PAST

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has recently examined 22 boxes of artefacts stored for nearly 70 years, uncovering over 10,000 artefacts — including painted black pottery believed to be 3,000 years old.

These were excavated from Rajghat, one of the oldest known settlements in the Varanasi region, between 1957 and 1969. Earlier in August, experts had also opened a box containing a human skeleton recovered from the same site.

Where Is Rajghat, and Why Does It Matter?

- Rajghat today is a neighbourhood in eastern Varanasi, but the archaeological site specifically refers to an ancient settlement on the city's northeastern outskirts, near the confluence of the Ganga and Varana rivers.
- According to archaeologists, Rajghat is identified as the **capital** of the Kashi Janapada.
 - Janapadas were territorial kingdoms that emerged during the later Vedic period; some grew into larger mahajanapadas by the 6th century BCE.
 - Early Buddhist and Jain texts list Kashi as one of 16 mahajanapadas of the Indo-Gangetic plain.

The History of Excavation at Rajghat

- The site first came to attention in 1940, when a railway contractor found archaeological remains while extending Kashi Railway Station.
- Archaeologists conducted a trial excavation for the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) later that year.
- Full-scale excavations began in 1957, led by A K Narain and colleagues from BHU's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology.
- Conducted in four phases over 12 years, these excavations unearthed the site's oldest layer, containing **pre-Northern Black Polished Ware (pre-NBPW) pottery** — associated with an early Iron Age phase.

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What Have the Artefacts Revealed?

- The 10,000+ artefacts include a wide range of objects: sculptures, ancient coins, tools, stamp seals, and items made of copper, ivory, and bone.
- According to experts, the seals and sealings are the most significant finds — many carry Greek inscriptions, while others bear the names of administrative units and officials.
- Additional finds include ivory and iron objects, punch-marked coins, and terracotta figurines.
- These artefacts are valuable for tracing the development of human civilisation in the Indian subcontinent.

Why Is BHU Documenting These Artefacts Now?

- This documentation effort is part of the centenary celebrations of BHU's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology.
- The goal is to preserve a century of departmental work and make it accessible to future researchers — with plans for a future museum also underway.
 - Documentation began in Jan. 2026 and has recorded about 4,000 artefacts so far.

The Human Skeleton: A First-Time Analysis

- The human skeleton recovered from Rajghat is the only artefact opened for the first time during this exercise. When Professor Narain excavated it in the 1960s, technology to analyse human remains did not exist.
- With modern techniques like DNA sampling and analysis, researchers now hope to learn more about the age, ancestry, and lifestyle of the people who inhabited the region.

Conclusion

The renewed examination of Rajghat's 1950s-60s excavation trove offers a rare opportunity to scientifically reconstruct Varanasi's ancient urban history, distinct from its mythological narrative.

With modern techniques like DNA analysis now available, these decades-old artefacts — including a long-sealed human skeleton — could yield fresh insights into one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities.

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CHINA'S VISION FOR BRICS: THE 'POWER' FRAMEWORK

- Ahead of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi (September 12-13, 2026), Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong outlined China's vision for strengthening BRICS cooperation.
- Using the acronym "**POWER**," he lays out five commitments he believes should guide the grouping as it works to empower the Global South.

P — Principle: Upholding a Rules-Based World Order

- The world is undergoing rapid transformation, marked by deepening multipolarity, economic globalisation, and the collective rise of the Global South — alongside rising hegemonism and power politics.
- BRICS must uphold the UN Charter's principles: sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful dispute settlement, to prevent a slide back into "might is right" global politics.
- The Chinese Ambassador references President Xi Jinping's vision of a "community with a shared future for humanity," along with China's Global Security Initiative and Global Governance Initiative, as China's contributions to addressing shared global challenges.

O — Openness: Resisting Protectionism

- With the world economy facing sluggish recovery and rising protectionism — including tariff barriers and supply chain disruptions — there is need for BRICS to:
 - Uphold the **multilateral trading system**, with the **WTO** at its core.
 - Safeguard principles like **most-favoured-nation treatment**.
 - Deepen cooperation in **energy, minerals, infrastructure**, and industrial supply chains.

W — Win-Win: Development at the Centre

- BRICS should keep development central to its agenda, accelerating progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and building consensus on a post-2030 global development agenda.

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- This includes ensuring Global South countries participate as equals in international cooperation.
- On the economic front, the ambassador calls for:
 - Stronger macroeconomic policy coordination
 - Greater trade and investment facilitation
 - Expanded local currency and cross-border payment cooperation
 - A more resilient global food and agriculture system

E — Engine: BRICS as a Growth Driver

- BRICS nations collectively account for nearly half the world's population, about **30% of global economic output**, and **one-fifth of global trade**.
- Citing IMF projections, the ambassador notes greater BRICS growth is expected to be nearly three times faster than the G7 by 2028.
- To harness this, he calls for deeper cooperation in digital economy, smart manufacturing, and AI integration across sectors like health, agriculture and education — highlighting China's own China-BRICS AI Development and Cooperation Center and New Quality Productive Forces Research Center.

R — Responsibility: Sustaining Cooperation Through Leadership Transitions

- With India and China set to hold the BRICS rotating presidency in successive years, the author emphasises the importance of sound coordination between the two countries.
- This is necessary to ensure steady progress of BRICS cooperation and safeguard developing nations' shared interests.

A Note on China-India Ties

- The piece highlights recent positive developments in bilateral relations under President Xi Jinping and PM Narendra Modi — including the resumption of five direct flight routes and the reopening of border trade after a six-year suspension.
- China expresses hope for translating this momentum into stable, sustained cooperation, and extends an invitation to host the next BRICS Summit.

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KEY FACTS ABOUT VITAMIN B6



- Vitamin B-6 (pyridoxine) is a **water-soluble vitamin**.
 - Water-soluble vitamins dissolve in water so the body cannot store them.
- It is **found naturally in many foods**, as well as **added to foods and supplements**.
- It is important for **normal brain development** and for **keeping the nervous system and immune system healthy**.
- It **helps the body to**:
 - **Make antibodies.** Antibodies are needed to fight many viruses, infections, and other diseases.
 - **Maintain normal nerve function.**
 - **Make hemoglobin:** Hemoglobin carries oxygen in the red blood cells to the tissues. A vitamin B6 deficiency can cause a form of anemia.
 - **Break down proteins:** The more protein you eat, the more vitamin B6 you need.
 - **Keep blood sugar (glucose) in normal ranges.**
- **Food sources** of vitamin B-6 include **poultry, fish, potatoes, chickpeas, bananas, and fortified cereals**.
- B-6 can also be **taken as a supplement**, typically as an oral capsule, tablet, or liquid.
- Deficiency of this vitamin can cause:
 - **Confusion, Depression, Irritability,**
 - **Mouth and tongue sores**, also known as **glossitis**,
 - **Peripheral neuropathy.**
- **Large doses** of vitamin B6 can cause:
 - **Difficulty coordinating movement**
 - **Numbness**
 - **Sensory changes**