



21 Mar 2025

National and International News

<p><b>India-US Relations</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. President Donald Trump stated that he believes India will reduce its tariffs on American goods, while also reaffirming his threat to impose reciprocal tariffs on India starting April 2.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relationship between India and the United States has evolved into one of the most significant partnerships in the 21st century.</li> <li>It spans <b>economic, strategic, and cultural dimensions, reflecting the shared values and mutual interests of the world's largest democracies</b></li> <li>The two nations are motivated by common interests: <b>India aims to become the world's third-largest economy, while the US seeks reliable allies to counterbalance China's growing influence.</b></li> <li><b>Defense Ties:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2018, India was elevated to <b>Strategic Trade Authorization tier 1 status, which allowed India to receive license-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies regulated by the US's department of commerce.</b></li> <li>The signing of foundational agreements like <b>LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), and BECA (2020)</b> has enabled deeper military cooperation.</li> <li><b>Joint exercises like Malabar and the establishment of the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in 2018</b> have further strengthened strategic ties.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Recent initiatives like the <b>US-India Artificial Intelligence Initiative and the Critical and Emerging Technology Initiative (iCET) launched in 2022</b> underscore the strategic importance of tech cooperation in bilateral ties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reports &amp; Indices: World Happiness Report 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recently, the World Happiness Report 2025 was released.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is published by the <b>Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford, in partnership with Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and an independent editorial board.</b></li> <li>The <b>top three happiest countries are Finland, Denmark, and Iceland, while the least happy countries are Afghanistan (the lowest), Sierra Leone, and Lebanon.</b></li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The factors considered in determining happiness include <b>social support, GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and perception of corruption.</b></li> <li><b>India's Ranking:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India ranked 118th out of 147 countries.</li> <li>India's lowest ranking was 144 in 2012.</li> <li>India's highest ranking was 94 in 2022.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)</b>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) announced the implementation of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), which guarantees a pension equal to 50% of the average basic pay earned in the last 12 months before retirement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UPS shall apply to <b>Central Government employees who are covered under the National Pension System (NPS) and who choose this option under the NPS.</b></li> <li>Both current and future Central Government employees covered under the NPS have the option to choose between the UPS or continue with the existing NPS plan.</li> <li><b>Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)</b> may issue regulations for operationalizing the UPS.</li> <li>The effective date for operationalization of the Unified Pension Scheme shall be <b>April 1, 2025.</b></li> <li><b>Key Features of UPS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UPS provides a guaranteed payout to employees upon superannuation.</li> <li>UPS will offer 50% of the average basic pay drawn by a Central government employee during the 12 months prior to retirement, provided they complete 25 years of service.</li> <li>Employees with less than 25 years of service but more than 10 years will receive a pension on a proportionate basis.</li> <li>A minimum payout of Rs 10,000 per month is assured for employees with 10 or more years of qualifying service.</li> <li>For those who choose to retire voluntarily after 25 years of service, the payout will begin from the date they would have reached superannuation if they had continued working.</li> <li>In the event of the payout holder's death after superannuation, a family payout at 60% of the payout admissible to the holder will be given to the legally wedded spouse.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Contribution:</b> Unlike the old pension scheme, UPS is contributory in nature, wherein employees will be required to contribute 10 percent of their basic salary and dearness allowance while the employer's contribution (the central government) will be 18.5 percent.</li> </ul>



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<p><b>Project PARI (Public Art of India)</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Culture, through the Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) and National Gallery of Modern Arts (NGMA) are committed to the sustainability and maintenance of public art installations created under the Public Art of India (PARI) project.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project PARI (Public Art of India) aims to <b>stimulate dialogue, reflection, and inspiration, contributing to the dynamic cultural fabric of the nation.</b></li> <li>It provides a platform to uplift the aesthetic and cultural outlook of Delhi while adding grandeur to the rich historical legacy of our national capital.</li> <li>The proposed sculptures being created for Project PARI include wide-ranging ideas such as <b>paying tributes to nature, ideas inspired by the Natyashastra, Gandhi ji, toys of India, hospitality, ancient knowledge, Naad or Primeval Soun, Harmony of life, Kalpataru – the divine tree, etc.</b></li> <li>To ensure the longevity and preservation of these valuable artistic contributions, the LKA, as the nodal agency, has implemented a comprehensive preservation strategy.</li> <li><b>This strategy encompasses:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Regular Inspection and Maintenance:</b> Periodic assessments are conducted to identify and address any conservation needs promptly.</li> <li><b>Environmental Protection:</b> Measures are taken to safeguard artworks against environmental factors, minimizing deterioration.</li> <li><b>Restoration and Conservation:</b> Expert interventions are employed to repair and restore any wear or damage, ensuring the integrity of the installations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Women artists have been an integral part of Project PARI and their participation in large numbers is a testimony of <b>Bharat's NARI SHAKTI.</b></li> <li>This initiative is being executed by the <b>Lalit Kala Akademi, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>National Policy on Biofuel</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Policy on Biofuels – 2018, as amended in 2022, inter-alia advanced the target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol to Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26 from 2030.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2018 policy, amended in 2022, <b>aims to reduce dependence on imports by encouraging fuel blending.</b></li> <li>It emphasises the production of <b>second-generation biofuels derived from forest and agricultural residues and increasing capacity for the production of fuel additives, and R &amp; D in feedstock.</b></li> <li>As a part of the policy, <b>Ethanol Blending Programme (EPB), is</b></li> </ul>



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	<p>undertaken with an enhanced focus on bioethanol, biodiesel and bioCNG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It guides us to achieve the <b>target of 20% ethanol blending in India by 2025-26.</b></li> <li>• The <b>National Biofuel Coordination Committee</b> is the agency to coordinate this blending programme.</li> </ul> <p><b>Learn more about:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biodiesel:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Biodiesel is a liquid fuel produced from vegetable oils and animal fats through transesterification.</li> <li>○ B20 (commonly used due to cost-effectiveness, low emissions and compatibility with conventional engines) is a blend containing 20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel.</li> <li>○ B100 (less commonly used) is a pure biodiesel.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Bioethanol:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bioethanol is ethyl alcohol (Ethanol) generated through microbial fermentation of plant materials like corn, sugarcane or agricultural residues.</li> <li>○ E10 (10% ethanol mix) is the most common blend, while E20 is India's target blend. E100, pure ethanol, is being explored by India and other countries as a potential petrol replacement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Biogas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Biogas is a renewable fuel produced by anaerobic digestion of organic matter, such as food or animal waste, in an oxygen-free environment, either naturally occurring or intentionally created for industrial use.</li> <li>○ It mainly consists of methane, with trace amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>S, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Eri Silk	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Ltd. (NEHHDC) under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, has obtained Oeko-Tex certification for eri silk from Germany.</li> <li>• Oeko-Tex is a worldwide certification for textiles such as yarns, fabrics, buttons, linens, terry cloth, thread, and other accessory materials that tests for harmful substances in raw, semi-finished and finished textile materials and products.</li> <li>• The Oeko-Tex certification ensures that the final product is safe for human use.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is renowned as the <b>world's only vegan silk, where, unlike other silks, the moth inside the cocoon is not killed.</b></li> <li>• This method, which <b>does not involve killing the moth, makes Eri silk a symbol of compassion and sustainability within the textile industry.</b></li> <li>• It is the product of the domesticated silkworm, Philosamia ricini</li> </ul>

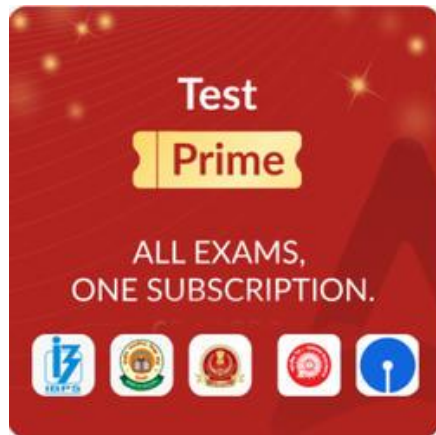


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	<p>that feeds mainly on castor leaves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In India, this culture is practiced mainly in the <b>north-eastern states and Assam</b>. It is also found in Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa.</li> <li>• It is a <b>Geographical Indication (GI) tagged product from Assam</b>.</li> </ul>
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