



25 Mar 2025

## National and International News

<p><b>Equalisation Levy</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government is considering scrapping the digital tax on online advertisements starting from April 1.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalisation Levy was first introduced by the Finance Act, 2016, at the rate of 6 per cent on payments for digital advertising services received by non-resident companies without a permanent establishment (PE) in India, if these exceeded Rs 1 lakh a year.</li> <li>It is aimed at taxing business to business transactions.</li> <li><b>Eligibility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Companies with a turnover of over Rs. 2 crore, will pay this levy on the consideration received for online sales of goods and services.</li> <li>Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose of the levy is to ensure fair competition, reasonableness and exercise the ability of governments to tax businesses that have a close nexus with the Indian market through their digital operations</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Applicability of Equalisation Levy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalisation Levy is a direct tax, which is withheld at the time of payment by the service recipient.</li> <li>The two conditions to be met to be liable to equalisation levy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The payment should be made to a non-resident service provider;</li> <li>The annual payment made to one service provider exceeds Rs. 1,00,000 in one financial year.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>India-US Relations</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market access for agricultural produce, a sector that has been long-protected in Indian imports, may be on the agenda as a U.S. delegation, led by Brendan Lynch, the U.S. Trade Representative's point person for South and Central Asia, prepares to engage.</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> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
MGNREGA	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Rural Development has released guidelines to address the issue of the high rate of job card deletions under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MGNREGA is the abbreviation for the <b>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005.</b></li> <li>• It is a law passed by the Indian government in 2005 that guarantees the "<b>right to work</b>" to rural citizens of India.</li> <li>• Under this, the government assures a <b>minimum of 100 days of unskilled manual work to an adult member of an eligible rural household.</b></li> <li>• The main objective of the MGNREGA is to <b>provide employment to rural citizens and improve their economic conditions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Eligibility Criteria:</b> For receiving the benefits of the MGNREGA Scheme, the following eligibility criteria are to be met by the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Citizen of India</li> <li>○ 18 years of age at the time of application</li> <li>○ Rural Household</li> <li>○ Willing to do unskilled work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Guaranteed Employment:</b> The MGNREGA program guarantees 100 days of unskilled employment to all willing rural citizens, at the government-set minimum wage.</li> </ul>
Tuberculosis	Why in news?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department of Biotechnology, under the Ministry of Science and Technology, has completed the genomic sequencing of 10,000 samples, which is a third of the target of 32,500 samples of Mycobacterium tuberculosis — the bacterium responsible for tuberculosis (TB).</li> <li>This effort aims to enhance the understanding of drug-resistant TB and capture the unique genomic features of the bacterium in India.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Union Government has announced the launch of Data-Driven Research to Eradicate TB- “Dare2eraD TB”.</li> <li>It was launched under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.</li> <li>The initiative was announced on the occasion of World TB Day (24th March).</li> <li>Dare2eraD TB will be the umbrella TB program comprising of following key initiatives;</li> <li>InTGS - Indian Tuberculosis Genomic Surveillance Consortium.</li> <li>InTBK Hub- Indian TB Knowledge Hub- Webinar Series.</li> <li>Host Directed therapies against TB and developing an evidence-based regimen for treating extra-pulmonary Tuberculosis.</li> </ul> <p><b>About TB:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuberculosis (TB) is a <b>bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person.</b></li> <li>It mainly affects the lungs, but it can affect any part of the body, including the tummy (abdomen), glands, bones and nervous system.</li> <li>India’s National TB Elimination Programme is strengthened to meet the goal of ending the TB epidemic by 2025 from the country, five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030.</li> <li>The <b>National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination(2017-2025)</b> was developed to achieve the goal.</li> <li>Though the National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025) outlined a paradigm shift in approach and strategy to achieve the ambitious goal, by 2020, it became clear that the NSP will not be able to meet these objectives.</li> <li>A new <b>National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination (2020-2025)</b> to end TB was launched.</li> </ul>
PM VIKAS scheme	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PM VIKAS scheme focuses on the upliftment of minority communities.</li> </ul>

**Key Points:**

- The PM VIKAS Scheme launched under the Ministry of Minority Affairs is a central sector scheme that provides skill development, leadership training and entrepreneurship to minorities and artisan communities all over India.
- The scheme is divided into four components and is expected to benefit around 9 lakh candidates during the 15th Finance Commission Cycle (2025-26).
- **The PM VIKAS Scheme also consolidates five already existing schemes:**
  - Seekho aur Kamao
  - USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development)
  - Hamari Dharohar
  - Nai Roshni
  - Nai Manzil
- **The key objectives of the PM VIKAS Scheme are:**
  - Skill Development: Delivering targeted skill training in demand-driven courses to enhance employability and livelihood opportunities for minority and artisan communities.
  - Educational Support: Providing formal education and certification for school dropouts up to 8th, 10th, and 12th grades through open schooling, thereby improving literacy rates within these communities.
  - Leadership and Entrepreneurship: Empowering women from minority and artisan backgrounds by training 2 lakh women, including the development of 10,000 business mentors ('Biz Sakhis').
  - Cultural Preservation: Safeguarding and promoting traditional arts, crafts, literature, documents, and manuscripts to ensure their relevance in modern markets.
  - Infrastructure Development: Establishing sustainable model art and craft villages that blend arts with tourism and commerce, fostering livelihoods, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities.



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