

ENGINEERS' EXCLUSIVE

Current Affairs

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GPT-6 Astra: OpenAI has released GPT-6 Astra, its newest frontier artificial intelligence (AI) model, claiming gains in computer use, coding, long-running tasks and cybersecurity. 68

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Defence in News

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Missile Transfer of Technology

(ToT) : The Union Defence Minister has approved the transfer of technology (ToT) of all conventional missile systems developed by the DRDO to Indian defence manufacturers to promote indigenous production and further the Aatmanirbharta initiative in defence. 74



Environment & Wildlife

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Glaw Lake: India's 101st Ramsar Site : India's one more wetland, Glaw Lake of Arunachal Pradesh, has entered the global list of protected wetlands as a Ramsar site. 85



Current Economy

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(EGRs): In 2026, the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) introduced Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs). 90

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Ancient **SARNATH** India's 45th UNESCO Buddhist Site of World Heritage Site

India's ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh has been inscribed on the UNESCO world heritage list.

Key Highlights

- The decision was taken during the ongoing meeting of the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's 48th session in Busan, South Korea.
- With 45 sites in the List, India ranks 6th globally and 2nd in Asia Pacific Region for the greatest number of World Heritage Sites.
- The last addition or 'inscription' was in 2024, with the Maratha Military Landscapes located Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

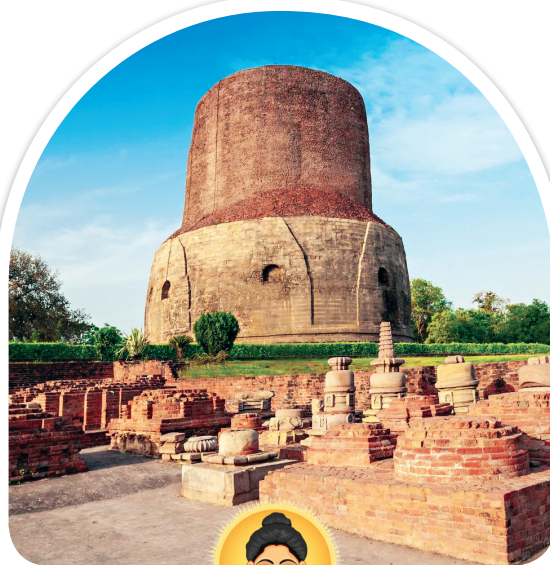
Sarnath

- **Location:** It is situated near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the four major Buddhist pilgrimage sites (others: Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Kushinagar).
- **Historical Importance:**
 - After attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon at Sarnath (around 528 BCE).
 - This event is called "Dhammachakrapravartana" or "Turning of the Wheel of Dharma".
 - It marked the beginning of the Buddhist Sangha (community of monks) and the establishment of the principles of the Noble Eightfold Path.
 - **Historical Nomenclature:** In ancient texts, Sarnath is referred to by various names, including Rishipatana, Ishipatana, and Mrigadava (Deer Park).

Monuments & Structures:

- **Dhamek Stupa:** It was built by Ashoka and commemorates the Buddha's first sermon.
- **Chaukhandi Stupa:** It marks the spot where Buddha met his first disciples.
- **Ashokan Pillar:** It was established by Emperor Ashoka; its lion capital is now the National Emblem of India.
- **Monasteries & remains:** These are the ruins of ancient viharas, temples, and sculptures.

- **Ashoka's Contribution:** Emperor Ashoka visited Sarnath in 3rd century BCE.
 - Built stupas, monasteries, and inscribed edicts promoting Dharma.
 - The Lion Capital of Ashoka from Sarnath was adopted as India's national emblem in 1950.



Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon in the 6th century BCE after attaining enlightenment in Bodh Gaya.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area given legal protection by an international convention administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).



- **The 1972 Convention:** Sites are designated based on the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted in 1972. Currently, there are 1,248 properties across 170 countries on the list.
- India ratified the Convention in 1977 and served as a member of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee from 2021 to 2025 and hosted the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi in July 2024.
- **Selection Basis:** Sites are inscribed based on Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and fulfil one or more of the 10 UNESCO selection criteria.
- India has 69 sites on UNESCO's Tentative List, the mandatory prerequisite for future nomination to the World Heritage List.
- Each State Party can nominate only one site per year for consideration by the World Heritage Committee for inscription.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency for all UNESCO World Heritage matters in India.

Types of Heritage:

- **Cultural:** Historic buildings, archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture.
- **Natural:** Outstanding physical, biological, and geological formations.
- **Mixed:** Sites exhibiting both outstanding natural and cultural values (e.g., Mount Olympus in Greece; Khangchendzonga National Park in India).

Major UNESCO World Heritage Sites Related to Buddhism

- **Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya (Bihar):** The most sacred pilgrimage destination where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.
- **Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh):** The location where the Buddha delivered his first sermon and established the Buddhist Sangha.
- **Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh):** Features the Great Stupa originally commissioned by Emperor Ashoka; renowned globally for intricately carved toranas (gateways).
- **Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra):** 30 rock-cut cave monuments spanning from the 2nd century BCE to the 6th century CE, featuring masterpieces of Buddhist religious art and frescoes.
- **Ellora Caves (Maharashtra):** Contains 34 rock-cut monasteries and temples. The Buddhist caves (1–12) showcase massive structural excavation and peaceful coexistence with Hindu and Jain monuments.
- **Nalanda Mahavihara (Bihar):** One of the world's earliest residential universities, serving as a major center for Buddhist philosophy and learning for over 700 years.
- **Lumbini (Nepal):** The revered birthplace of Lord Buddha in 623 BCE, marked by the iconic Ashoka Pillar.
- **Taxila (Pakistan):** An ancient city and major center of learning that flourished under the Mauryan and Kushan empires. It is home to significant Buddhist ruins, including the Dharmarajika Stupa, and was a pivotal hub for the development of Gandhara Buddhist art where Greek and Indian artistic styles merged.
- **Paharpur (Bangladesh):** Officially designated as the Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur (Somapura Mahavihara). Built in the 8th century by the Pala Dynasty, it was a major intellectual center for Dharmic traditions and one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the Indian subcontinent.
- **Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka):** The Sacred City of Anuradhapura served as the center of Theravada Buddhism for centuries. It houses the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi (a sacred fig tree grown from a cutting of the original Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya) and features massive brick stupas like the Ruwanwelisaya and the Jetavanaramaya, which was one of the tallest structures in the ancient world.
- **Borobudur Temple Compounds (Indonesia):** The world's largest Buddhist temple, built in the 8th and 9th centuries featuring a massive mandala layout and over 2,500 intricate relief panels.
- **Mogao Caves (Dunhuang, China):** Known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, containing a massive trove of Buddhist art, manuscripts, and murals spanning 1,000 years along the Silk Road.
- **Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace (Lhasa, Tibet):** The historic winter residence of the Dalai Lama and the symbolic center of Tibetan Buddhism.
- **Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple (South Korea):** Exceptional 8th-century masterpieces of Buddhist art and architecture from the Silla Kingdom.
- **Bagan (Myanmar):** An ancient capital plain housing over 2,000 surviving Buddhist temples, pagodas, and monasteries built between the 11th and 13th centuries.
- **Angkor Wat (Cambodia):** Originally constructed as Hindu monuments in the Khmer Empire, massive temples like Angkor Wat gradually transformed into active Buddhist sites.

Union Cabinet approved Ladakh Bench of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court



The Union Cabinet has cleared the setting up of a bench of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court in Ladakh.

Key Facts

- The Union Cabinet has cleared the setting up of a bench of the High Court in Ladakh in the jurisdiction of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court.
- The existing High Court provides services to two union territories which are Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. While the principal seats of the court are in Jammu and Srinagar, the setting up of a bench will help citizens get easy access to High Court services in the union territory of Ladakh.
- Geographically, Ladakh is one of the most difficult places in India because of the terrain, weather conditions, and limited accessibility.
- **A High Court bench in Ladakh will:**
 - Decrease the travel time and costs of litigants.
 - Help to improve access to legal services.
 - Help to increase access to High Court processes for locals.
 - Decrease the problems faced by lawyers and litigants.
 - Increase institutional access in the Union Territory.

About Union Territory Status of Ladakh

- Ladakh was carved out as a new Union Territory on 31st October 2019 after the reorganisation of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Through this reorganisation process, two Union Territories J&K and Ladakh were formed while the J&K and Ladakh High Court remained the common High Court for both UTs.
- The formation of a special bench of the High Court in Ladakh marks a major step forward for the institution since the formation of UT Ladakh.

National Maritime Heritage Complex to be setup

India is setting up the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal in Gujarat to display the country's 4,500-year-old maritime history and the legacy of the Indus Valley Civilisation.



Key highlights

- Lothal was a major city of the Indus Valley Civilisation around 2400 BCE. In Gujarati, its name means 'the mound of the dead'.
- The site was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from 1955 to 1960, and a highly developed urban settlement and trading centre was found.
- Archaeologists believe Lothal was strategically placed along a major river system that formed part of the old trade route linking Sindh to Saurashtra in Gujarat.
- Its most important find is the oldest known man-made dockyard in the world, along with an acropolis, lower town, bead factory, warehouses, markets and sophisticated drainage system.
- The engineering skills of Harappans is reflected in the planned canals and dock facilities of the city.
- Lothal is one of the most important trading ports of the ancient world.
- Archaeological evidence suggests that Lothal was connected by trade with far off lands like Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia.
- The Lothal site was nominated, in 2014, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.

About National Maritime Heritage Complex

- It is a Rs 4,000 crore project, which was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2024.
- It is located around 80 km from Ahmedabad.
- It will recreate Harappan streets, markets, dockyards and civic spaces, giving visitors a chance to experience ancient urban life beyond the traditional museum display.
- The museum has been designed on the lines of Harappan architecture with elevated flood-resistant structures and ship-like forms.
- The project aims to create a global cultural and educational destination to showcase India's ancient maritime prowess and the technological advancement of Harappan civilization.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

18th BRICS SUMMIT, 2026



The 18th BRICS Summit, hosted by India in New Delhi recently, adopted the New Delhi Declaration, reaffirming reformed multilateralism amid wars, protectionism and unilateral actions by major powers.

Key Highlights of New Delhi Declaration:

- **Reformed Multilateralism:** Members reiterated support for a more democratic, representative, accountable and effective international order, with the UN at its centre.
- **UNSC Reforms:** BRICS backed comprehensive UN Security Council (UNSC) reform and greater representation of developing countries.
- **China and Russia,** as permanent members, reiterated support for the aspirations of Brazil and India for a greater role, including in the UNSC.
- **Global South:** The grouping reaffirmed its role as a voice for Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs) and Least Developed Countries, particularly from Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- **Trade & Finance:** It opposed unilateral tariffs, non-tariff barriers and coercive sanctions, while supporting WTO reform, restoration of its two-tier dispute-settlement mechanism and greater EMDC representation in the IMF and World Bank.
- **Intra-BRICS Trade:** Members supported deeper economic cooperation, resilient supply chains and practical solutions for cross-border payments and trade settlements in local currencies.
- **Conflicts:** The Declaration condemned unilateral wars and stressed dialogue, preventive diplomacy and peaceful dispute settlement.
- It took a particularly strong position on Palestine and Lebanon, including humanitarian access, Palestinian self-determination and the two-state solution.
- **West Asia Compromise:** References to the U.S.-Israel attacks on Iran, assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iran's retaliatory attacks, including on the UAE, were omitted reportedly as a last-minute compromise between Iran and the UAE.
- **Terrorism:** BRICS strongly condemned the 22 April 2025 terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, in which 26 people were killed, and called for zero tolerance towards terrorism and its financing.



Significance:

- The Summit demonstrated that BRICS can forge consensus despite sharp geopolitical differences.
- Its success rested on high-level participation, emphasis on intra-BRICS trade mechanisms and consensus-building during wartime.
- India's fourth BRICS chairship strengthened its image as a Global South balancer with access to competing geopolitical camps.
- It facilitated the highest-level Iran-UAE bilateral meeting since the war began.
- India's engagement with Iran helped address concerns over its perceived tilt towards the US and Israel, and its meeting with China provided space to reaffirm political will to normalise ties, while outreach to ASEAN and African leaders reinforced India's wider partnerships.
- India hosted over 400 BRICS meetings and engagements across 30 Indian cities, broadening institutional and people-to-people cooperation.

Objectives:

- Promote multipolar world order;
- Reform global financial institutions like IMF, World Bank, UNSC, etc.
- Enhance South-South cooperation;
- Support sustainable development and inclusive growth

BRICS:

- Originally BRIC (2001, coined by Jim O'Neill), and became BRICS in 2010 with the inclusion of South Africa.
- **Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and membership was expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia.

Flash Flood in Nepal



Recently, a flash flood erupted in the Lhende Khola and Bhote Koshi river system in Nepal, highlighting cascading risks for downstream Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Bhote Koshi River valley in Nepal is the main link between Kathmandu and Lhasa in Tibet.

Possible Reasons for Flash Floods

- **Extreme Precipitation & Cloudbursts:** Short-duration, high-intensity rainfall can overwhelm drainage systems and mountain streams.
- **Western Disturbances-monsoon Interaction:** Interaction between large-scale weather systems can intensify rainfall over the Himalayas.
- **Climate Change:** A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, increasing the likelihood of extreme precipitation, while glacier retreat and expanding glacial lakes raise GLOF risks.
- **Geomorphology:** Young, fragile mountains, steep slopes and unstable sediments accelerate runoff and debris flows.
- **Anthropogenic Factors:** Deforestation, unplanned construction, encroachment on floodplains and poorly designed infrastructure reduce natural absorption and obstruct drainage.

India's Vulnerability

- India is highly exposed because of the Himalayan arc, Northeast and Western Ghats, alongside rapidly urbanising cities with inadequate drainage.
- Himalayan states face a compound risk from cloudbursts, landslides and glacial hazards.
- Moreover, transboundary rivers such as the Kosi and Gandak carry upstream risks into densely populated plains, making cooperation with neighbouring countries crucial.

Impacts

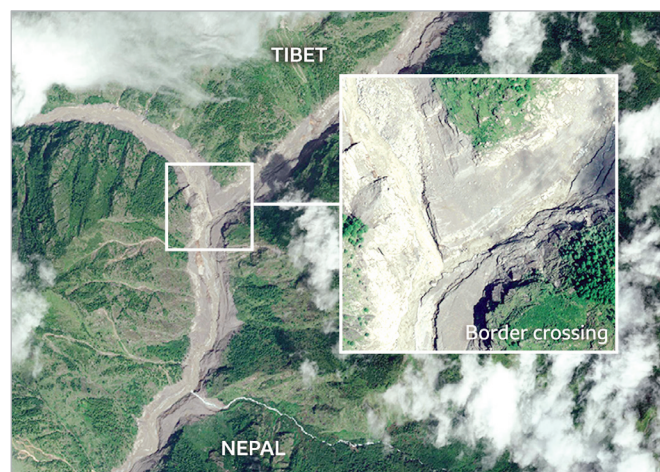
- Flash floods cause loss of life and livestock, destruction of homes, roads, bridges and hydropower assets, and disruption of agriculture and livelihoods.
- They trigger secondary disasters such as landslides and debris flows, contaminate water supplies and disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.
- Repeated disasters can erode development gains and impose substantial fiscal costs.

About Flash Flood

- A flash flood is a sudden, rapid rise and overflow of water, usually occurring within a few hours of intense rainfall, cloudbursts, dam or embankment failure, or the sudden release of water from glaciers or landslide-dammed lakes.
- Their short lead time and high velocity make them particularly destructive unlike gradual riverine floods. Steep terrain, narrow valleys and rapidly responding catchments amplify the hazard.
- It is among the most challenging hydro-meteorological hazards to forecast due to their rapid onset, short hydrological response times, and limited warning, particularly in mountainous and densely populated regions.

Global Efforts & Initiatives

- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) emphasises understanding risk, strengthening disaster governance and investing in resilience.
- The WMO's Early Warnings for All initiative seeks universal protection through effective multi-hazard warning systems.
- International cooperation in the Hindu Kush Himalaya is equally important for data-sharing and glacial monitoring.



Women's Cricket Asia Cup 2026

India defeated Sri Lanka in the Women's Asia Cup 2026 final in Dubai, securing a record-extending eighth Asia Cup title.



Key facts

- It is a biennial international cricket tournament in which national teams from Asia compete for a continental championship.
- The first edition was played in 1984 following the inception of the Asian Cricket Conference, the precursor to the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), in 1983.
- Since 2016, the Asia Cup has alternated its playing format between One-Day Internationals (ODIs) and Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is).
- The ACC launched the women's Asia Cup in 2004.
- As of 2026, the Indian cricket team has won the most men's Asia Cup titles, followed by Sri Lanka.
- The tournament is also considered the most prominent Asian cricket competition and features member countries of the ACC as well as select associate member countries.

FIFA World Cup, 2026

Recently, Spain clinched their second FIFA World Cup title by defeating defending champions Argentina 1-0 in a grueling extra-time encounter at the New York New Jersey Stadium.

Key Points

- **Historic Goal:** Forward Ferran Torres scored the historic match-winner in the 106th minute of the game.
- **Largest Tournament:** The tournament marked the conclusion of the first-ever 48-team FIFA World Cup, co-hosted across three North American nations- the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- **Goalkeeping Brilliance:** Argentine goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez delivered a historic performance, making 11 saves to keep his side level throughout normal time.
- **Disciplinary Turning Point:** In the 93rd minute, Argentine midfielder Enzo Fernández received a red card (second yellow), forcing Argentina to play the entire 30 minutes of extra time with 10 men.
- **Key Awards:**
 - **Golden Ball (Best Overall Player):** Rodri (Spain)
 - **Silver Ball:** Lionel Messi (Argentina)
 - **Bronze Ball:** Kylian Mbappé (France)
 - **Golden Boot (Top Goalscorer):** Kylian Mbappé (France) [10 Goals, 4 Assists]
 - Mbappé made history as the first player ever to win back-to-back FIFA World Cup Golden Boots (following his 2022 accolade).
 - **Golden Glove (Best Goalkeeper):** Unai Simón (Spain)
 - **FIFA Young Player Award:** Pau Cubarsí (Spain)
 - **FIFA Fair Play Trophy:** The Netherlands
- With this victory, Spain has achieved a rare feat in modern football history. They are now the only nation to hold both the Men's FIFA World Cup and the Women's FIFA World Cup titles simultaneously.



Recent

Current Affairs Questions

1. Who were named as recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2026?
(a) Tommy Koh, Bo Kyi and Runa Khan
(b) Abiy Ahmed, Malala Yousafzai and Amartya Sen
(c) Kailash Satyarthi, Wangari Maathai and Muhammad Yunus
(d) Aung San Suu Kyi, Jose Ramos-Horta and Ela Bhatt
2. What is 'Agni Kawach', recently launched in India?
(a) AI-based defence system
(b) AI-integrated industrial process-safety platform
(c) AI-powered agricultural platform
(d) AI-based disaster warning satellite
3. Exercise Veer Guardian 2026 is conducted between India and which country?
(a) Vietnam
(b) Japan
(c) Indonesia
(d) Malaysia
4. Which central scheme targets the modernization and cluster-based infrastructure upgradation of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in India?
(a) PM-VIKAS
(b) PM-SETU
(c) SANKALP
(d) STRIVE
5. Which organisation has introduced the India-first AI models ALU and AMED for agricultural intelligence?
(a) Microsoft Research
(b) Google DeepMind
(c) ISRO
(d) NITI Aayog
6. Where was India's first Carbon Garden inaugurated recently?
(a) Jawaharlal Nehru University
(b) University of Delhi
(c) Banaras Hindu University
(d) Lucknow University
7. Who was crowned Miss World 2026?
(a) Elisabeth Reynes
(b) Taanusiya Chetty
(c) Joheirry Mola
(d) Nikita Porwal
8. Shramika Nivas scheme has been launched by which state government?
(a) Andhra Pradesh
(b) Karnataka
(c) Kerala
(d) Tamil Nadu
9. Mayun Island, that was recently seen in news, is located in which strait?
(a) Strait of Hormuz
(b) Bab el-Mandeb Strait
(c) Malacca Strait
(d) Bosphorus Strait
10. Student Green Brigade Scholarship – EcoSense is a student-focused waste-management initiative of which state?
(a) Kerala
(b) Tamil Nadu
(c) Maharashtra
(d) Madhya Pradesh
11. What is the primary objective of the SHREYAS scheme?
(a) Support higher education for SC/OBC students
(b) To promote entrepreneurship among rural youth
(c) To provide financial assistance for agricultural development
(d) To provide housing facilities to economically weaker sections
12. Patriot Missile Defence System has been developed by which country?
(a) Iran
(b) France
(c) The United States
(d) Israel
13. MERCOSUR is a regional economic organization of which continent?
(a) Africa
(b) North America
(c) South America
(d) Australia

ANSWERS

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (b) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) | 5. (b) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) | 9. (b) | 10. (a) |
| 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (c) | | | | | | | |