

# TODAY'S NEWS

## On the right path

Elections will address the yearning for substantive democracy in J&K

**W**ith the Election Commission of India (ECI) announcing the dates for elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in three phases between September 18 and October 1 – a major lacuna in the conduct of democracy in the province has been addressed. The absence of an elected and functioning State legislature, along with the abrogation of special status and the bifurcation of the erstwhile State, followed by J&K's demarcation into a Union Territory (UT) had resulted in significant dependency and alienation among the people. The absence of a legislature to express concerns and the muting of dissent by arresting students, journalists, lawyers among other civil society representatives under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Public Safety Act have been recipes for furthering the alienation. In its judgment that upheld the abrogation of special status – a flawed one – the Supreme Court had also ordered that elections to the Legislative Assembly had to be held by September 30, 2024, besides expressing its opinion on the need to restore statehood as soon as possible. The EC has done well to heed the first directive. The absence of an elected legislature has meant that the people have lacked a voice to articulate their concerns even as they have yearned for their rights of electoral participation. This is evident in the participation levels in the local body and parliamentary elections since 2019 – the numbers are much higher than in earlier elections, especially in the Valley. In the last held Assembly elections nearly a decade ago, the mandate was split on communal lines with the Jammu and Kashmir People's Party winning nearly all of the seats that it contested in Jammu, and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the National Conference (NC) and the Congress winning most of the seats in the Valley. Much water has flowed down the Jhelum after the formation of the coalition government between the PDP and the BJP, an unmitigated disaster for the valley. The NC and Congress had fought the 2019 general election as part of the INDIA bloc and there is the likelihood of an alliance between these parties and smaller ones in these elections. The need for like-minded parties, that agree on changing the status quo in the valley, bringing back statehood and promoting secular governance, to come together, is not only for electoral tactical purposes. It is an imperative in order to ensure that the democracy in the province, which has been beset with fresh waves of terrorism in Jammu and south Kashmir, is not commodified. An election that is contested on communal lines, would help bring back peace to India's northernmost province.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in three phases between September 18 and October 1, **addressing a significant gap in the region's democratic process**. The lack of an elected State legislature, following the abrogation of J&K's special status and its reconstitution as a Union Territory, had led to **widespread alienation**. The Supreme Court, while upholding the abrogation, had directed that Legislative Assembly elections be held by September 30, 2024, and the ECI has adhered to this directive.

The **absence of a legislature** has **deprived the people of a platform to voice their concerns**. Participation in local body and parliamentary elections has increased since 2019, indicating a **desire for electoral involvement**. In the last Assembly elections, results were split along communal lines, with the BJP dominating in Jammu and the PDP, NC, and Congress winning in the Valley. The NC and Congress, part of the INDIA bloc in the 2024 general election, may form an alliance for the upcoming elections, emphasizing the need for secular governance and the restoration of statehood. This approach is crucial to preventing the communalization of the region, which has seen renewed terrorist activities, and to promote peace by focusing on civic issues and rights.

## Regressive move

Reducing work hours of women is not the way to ensure their safety

**T**he last thing that a rape and murder need are platitudes, and a predictably tiresome one is being proffered after the brutal killing of a woman doctor on duty at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Hospital on August 9. One of the guidelines issued by the West Bengal government calls for minimising night duty for women. How will this dictum – "wherever possible, night duty may be avoided for women to the extent possible" – secure safety at the workplace? This regressive move will only end up removing women from the workforce, instead of ensuring a step towards violence. With the labour force participation rate for urban women in India, ages 15 and above, pegged at an abysmal 25.2% in April-June 2024, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey's quarterly bulletin, the government at the Centre and States must ensure that women, employed as health-care professionals, go and factory workers, call centre staff, auto drivers, hotel duties and journalists, are able to work safely, anywhere, and at anytime. Reducing their time at work will only lead to women being idle and thus financial independence. The other guidelines, as part of the programme called 'Pratishtha Shakti (Empowerment of the night)', include the call for separate rest rooms and toilets for women, creating safe zones with CCTV, and a special mobile phone app – measures which should have been already in place.

The Supreme Court, taking suo motu cognisance of the Kolkata case, in its judgment on Tuesday announced a national task force to look into the safety of doctors and medical professionals. Gender violence should be a matter of serious concern in every sphere, not least the informal sector, where women are employed in large numbers. The sweeping changes brought into the system after the 2012 Delhi rape, such as harsher laws and stringent punishment, have not been enough. The National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) annual report of 2022, the latest one available, shows that 4.45 lakh cases of crimes against women were registered, which is equivalent to nearly 51 FIRs every hour. Protocols can't be put on paper, the Chief Justice of India D.V. Chandrachud said. In 2007, when the Court was confirming the death penalty of four men, who were accused in the 2012 Delhi rape, Justice R. Bhatnagar had said that apart from effective implementation of laws, a change in the mindset of the society at large and creating awareness in the public on gender justice would go a long way to combat violence against women. Campaigns led by women after the R.G. Kar rape, to "reclaim the night" in Kolkata and other cities across the country should serve as wake-up calls to governments, and society, to do it right by women.

The West Bengal government's **decision to minimize night duty for women**, following the rape and murder of a woman doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Hospital, is seen as a **regressive move** that fails to ensure women's safety at the workplace. Instead of protecting women, reducing their work hours **could push them out of the workforce and undermine their financial independence**.

With urban women's labor force participation already low at 25.2% as of April-June 2024, measures like separate restrooms, safe zones, and mobile apps are necessary but should have been in place earlier.

The Supreme Court has announced a **national task force** to address the safety of doctors and medical professionals, emphasizing that gender violence is a serious issue across all sectors. Despite harsher laws introduced after the 2012 Delhi rape case, the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** reported 4.45 lakh crimes against women in 2022, highlighting the ongoing crisis.

The **article calls** for a **societal shift in mindset and genuine enforcement of safety protocols**, as seen in women's campaigns to "reclaim the night" in response to the Kolkata incident.

**Reducing women's work hours** in the name of safety only serves to **shrink their presence** in the workforce, rather than confronting the **deeper societal issues** that perpetuate violence against them.



## A ground plan for sustainable mass employment

**The** higher employment of the rural population, the document says, is an essential condition for sustainable growth. It is a condition that must be met for the country to achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation by the year 2047 and higher growth rate of the GDP.

The document is a ground plan for sustainable mass employment. It is a plan that is based on the following principles:

- Education and employability:** The document emphasizes the need for a comprehensive education system that focuses on developing the skills and employability of the rural population. It calls for a focus on vocational training and skill development.
- Healthcare and nutrition:** The document stresses the importance of ensuring that the rural population has access to quality healthcare and nutrition. It calls for a focus on primary healthcare and community health centres.
- Infrastructure and connectivity:** The document highlights the need for improving the infrastructure and connectivity of the rural areas. It calls for a focus on roads, bridges, and communication networks.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation:** The document encourages the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in the rural areas. It calls for a focus on providing support and resources to rural entrepreneurs.

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The article outlines **a comprehensive 12-point plan** for creating **sustainable mass employment** in India, emphasizing the importance of **ensuring dignity through fair wages and quality opportunities**.

### The key points include:

- 1. Community-led skilling:** Engage local communities to identify and meet skilling needs, ensuring ownership and effectiveness.
- 2. Convergence of services:** Integrate education, health, skills, nutrition, and employment at the local level, particularly with women's collectives, for better outcomes.
- 3. Vocational education:** Introduce vocational courses alongside traditional college degrees to improve employability.

- 4. Standardized healthcare training:** Ensure uniform quality in nursing and allied health courses to meet international standards.
- 5. Support for working women:** Create community cadres for crèche care to enable women to work without fear.
- 6. Investment in technical institutions:** Upgrade ITIs and polytechnics to serve as skill hubs and improve vocational education.
- 7. Entrepreneurship education:** Introduce enterprise and technology skills in schools to foster innovation and business acumen.
- 8. Co-shared apprenticeships:** Partner with industries to share apprenticeship costs and ensure relevant job readiness.
- 9. Support for women-led enterprises:** Streamline working capital loans to help women entrepreneurs scale their businesses.
- 10. Skill accreditation:** Implement a universal accreditation program for skill providers, co-sponsored by the state and industry.
- 11. Targeted MGNREGA funds:** Use MGNREGA funds in deprived areas to support income-generating initiatives and improve livelihoods.
- 12. Expansion of apprenticeships:** Increase the scale of apprenticeships, focusing on skill acquisition and ensuring wages of dignity.

These initiatives aim to create a higher-order economy with improved productivity, quality of life, and dignified employment for all.

## 'Telecom Act allows licensing of OTT apps'

**Across Deep**  
New Delhi

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has stated that over-the-top (OTT) communication platforms like WhatsApp are classified as **access services** under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**. This stance supports telecom firms' push for licensing requirements for these platforms.

However, digital rights groups oppose this, citing concerns over **privacy** and **Net Neutrality**, which advocates for equal treatment of all internet traffic. COAI argues that this classification would create a "level playing field" for telecom services.

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## West Asia crisis spells tough choices for China, Russia

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, chief of Hamas's political bureau and the group's negotiator with Israel, has sent shockwaves across the Middle East. The region is bracing for an outbreak of violence that is expected to be more intense than the exchange between the two sides in April. The region's major powers, Russia and China, have maintained a cautious level of silence and vigilance.

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The **assassination** of **Ismail Haniyeh**, Hamas's chief, in Tehran has **heightened tensions between Israel and Iran**, potentially leading to a broader conflict. Despite this, Russia and China, Iran's close allies, have maintained a cautious distance due to their divergent goals and individual strategies.

**China** has actively engaged in diplomacy, including mediating between Saudi Arabia and Iran and supporting Palestinian factions. It views the Palestinian issue as a colonial injustice and supports Arab positions, though it remains wary of Iran's nuclear ambitions.

**Russia**, on the other hand, has been deeply involved in the Syrian conflict, supporting Bashar al-Assad and maintaining a military presence in Syria. It aligns with China and Western nations in opposing Iran's potential nuclear weapons capability, though its tactical undermining of Western power contrasts with China's more cautious approach.

The **U.S.** remains committed to its positions in the region, including in Syria and Iraq, to counterbalance Russian and Chinese influence.

The **article highlights** the **complex interplay of regional politics**, where Iran's response to Haniyeh's killing could further destabilize the already volatile situation.

### Note:

**Hamas** is a **Palestinian Islamist militant organization** with political and military wings, seeking to establish an Islamic state in Palestine and known for its opposition to Israel.

## Creating employment in the long run

The article discusses the challenges of creating employment in the long run, particularly in the context of the Indian economy. It highlights the need for structural reforms and investment in infrastructure to create sustainable jobs.

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The article **criticizes** the Finance Minister's **recent budget announcements on employment**, highlighting their lack of practical impact and failure to address the underlying job crisis. It points out the shortcomings of the proposed **internship scheme**, which excludes micro and small businesses and imposes unrealistic targets on large companies.

The article also notes that despite claims of job creation, recent data and surveys reveal **minimal improvements in employment rates**, with many jobs being in **agriculture or self-employment** due to a lack of alternatives.

It suggests that instead of ineffective measures and incentives, the government should focus on **long-term investments in public services and green jobs** to address the employment crisis and improve overall quality of life.

## Several schemes implemented for handloom sector: Textile Ministry

The Ministry of Textiles has implemented several schemes to support the handloom sector, including the National Handloom Development Programme and the Raw Material Supply Scheme. These initiatives aim to improve the livelihoods of handloom weavers and promote the growth of the sector.

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In response to Congress's Sonia Gandhi's criticism that the Centre has failed to promote India's handloom sector, the Union Textile Ministry highlighted its efforts, including the **National Handloom Development Programme** and **Raw Material Supply Scheme**.

The Ministry emphasized its support for handloom workers through financial aid, infrastructure development, and marketing initiatives, despite Gandhi's concerns about GST burdens and rising costs impacting the sector.

Aspect	National Handloom Development Programme	Raw Material Supply Scheme
<b>Objective</b>	Promote the handloom sector and support handloom workers.	Ensure a steady supply of raw materials for handloom production.
<b>Key Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial assistance for looms and accessories</li> <li>- Solar lighting units</li> <li>- Construction of workshops</li> <li>- Product and design development</li> <li>- Marketing of handloom products domestically and overseas</li> <li>- Technical and common infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supply of raw materials (yarns, dyes, chemicals)</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Margin money assistance</li> <li>- Interest subvention on loans</li> <li>- Credit guarantee fees on loans</li> <li>- Insurance cover (life and accidental)</li> <li>- Scholarships for workers' children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides raw materials to weavers</li> </ul>
<b>Major Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgraded looms and accessories</li> <li>- Enhanced infrastructure for production and marketing</li> <li>- Support for design and product innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to essential raw materials</li> <li>- Reduced cost burden on raw materials</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges Addressed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Infrastructure and marketing gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raw material shortages and cost fluctuations</li> </ul>

## Senior Army leaders deliberate on road map for Viksit Bharat



Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi led a significant meeting with senior Army leaders to outline the future course of the Indian Army during the **Amrit Kaal**, aligning with **India's vision to become a developed and leading global player by 2047**.

The discussions, marking Gen. Dwivedi's first high-level meeting since his appointment on June 30, focused on transforming the Army into a modern, agile, technology-enabled force.

Key goals included reorganizing Army structures, optimizing command efficiencies, and enhancing multi-domain capabilities across land, air, cyber, and space to support national interests.



**Jupiter probe to stage first lunar-orbit double fly-by manoeuvre**

European scientists attempted a pioneering **double slingshot maneuver** using the moon and Earth's gravity to guide the **JUICE probe** towards **Jupiter**, aiming to reach it **by 2031**.

A **double slingshot maneuver** involves using the gravity of two celestial bodies in succession to alter the trajectory and speed of a spacecraft. In this technique:

- **First Slingshot:** The spacecraft passes close to a celestial body, like a moon or planet, using its gravity to gain speed and adjust its path.
- **Second Slingshot:** Shortly after, the spacecraft performs a similar maneuver with another celestial body, further adjusting its speed and trajectory.

This technique helps to save fuel and achieve precise orbital adjustments, enabling spacecraft to reach distant destinations, such as Jupiter in the case of the JUICE mission.

Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (JUICE) Probe	
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Mission Lead</b>	European Space Agency (ESA)
<b>Launch Date</b>	April 14, 2023
<b>Mission Duration</b>	Approximately 8 years
<b>Objective</b>	Explore Jupiter and its moons: Callisto, Europa, Ganymede
<b>Key Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Camera System</li> <li>- Spectrometers</li> <li>- Magnetometer</li> <li>- Particle Detectors</li> </ul>
<b>Mission Phases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gravity Assists</li> <li>- Orbit Insertion</li> <li>- Moon Flybys</li> <li>- Orbit Around Ganymede</li> </ul>
<b>Scientific Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze Jupiter's atmosphere and magnetosphere</li> <li>- Study moons' surfaces and subsurfaces</li> <li>- Assess potential for life</li> </ul>
<b>Expected Arrival</b>	Jupiter in 2031
<b>Importance</b>	Provides insights into Jupiter's system and icy moons, aiding future exploration



## On the ethanol blending programme



India is progressing towards its goal of **blending 20% ethanol with petrol by 2025-26**, with current blending rates at 13-15% and ethanol production capacity increasing.

However, there are concerns about the **food vs. fuel debate**, as maize imports have risen due to restrictions on using sugarcane products for ethanol, though there are claims of adequate food stocks.

The shift towards **2G and 3G ethanol**, which uses **non-food sources**, is suggested to mitigate food security issues.

Ethanol production capacity has surged, with India nearing its target, but the government faces challenges including water use for sugarcane, the impact on maize prices, and varying State responses. While some States like Uttar Pradesh support the ethanol blending program, others like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra

face barriers related to local economics and resource availability. The broader impact on fuel efficiency and vehicle performance also remains a consideration.

## After years of impasse, India, Malaysia raise strategic partnership, discuss entry to BRICS



India and Malaysia upgraded their bilateral relations to a **“Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”** during a meeting between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Anwar Ibrahim.

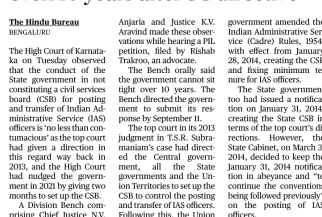
This upgrade from their previous “Enhanced Strategic Partnership” includes collaborations on BRICS membership and discussions on geopolitical issues.

The visit, marking the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister since 2018, **aims to repair ties strained by past disagreements**. Both leaders emphasized the importance of stability in the Indian Ocean region and mutual respect for international laws.

## Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

Aspect	Description
Enhanced Cooperation	Expanded collaboration in various sectors such as trade, defense, technology, and culture.
Joint Initiatives	Implementation of joint projects and initiatives that address common challenges and goals.
Strategic Alignment	Deeper alignment on geopolitical and security issues, often including coordinated policies and mutual support on international platforms.
Regular Dialogue	Increased frequency of high-level meetings and consultations to ensure ongoing collaboration and address emerging issues.
Mutual Benefits	A focus on achieving mutual benefits through shared interests and strategic objectives, often formalized through agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs).

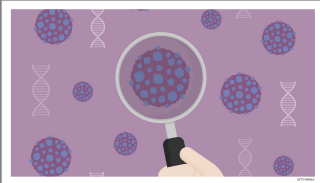
## Karnataka HC questions State for not setting up civil services board even 10 years after SC directive



The High Court of Karnataka criticized the State government for not setting up a **civil services board (CSB)** for IAS officer postings and transfers, **despite a Supreme Court directive** from 2013 and a reminder from the High Court in 2021.

The court termed the delay as "contumacious" and directed the government to respond by September 11.

The CSB was **mandated by a 2013 Supreme Court ruling** and subsequent amendments **to ensure proper management of IAS officers' postings and tenures**.



## How blood-based tests for cancer screening could save lives

A landmark study shows that blood-based tests can detect cancer up to 12 years before it is diagnosed, potentially saving lives.

**Researchers** have found that blood-based tests can detect cancer up to 12 years before it is diagnosed, potentially saving lives. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that blood-based tests can detect cancer up to 12 years before it is diagnosed, potentially saving lives. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that blood-based tests can detect cancer up to 12 years before it is diagnosed, potentially saving lives.

## Cancer in India and Screening

• **Prevalence:** Cancer accounts for 18% of deaths from non-communicable diseases in India, making it the **second leading cause** of mortality. In 2022, 1.4 million new cases were reported, expected to rise by 12% by 2025.

• **Common Cancers:** Among women, breast, cervical, ovarian, and colorectal cancers are most prevalent; among men, lung, esophageal, colorectal, and stomach cancers are most common.

## Importance of Screening

• **Early Detection:** Essential for effective treatment and cost reduction. Late detection significantly reduces survival rates and increases care costs.

• **Global Trends:** Many countries have established national screening programs for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers. However, in India, screening is limited and has a very low uptake (0.2-2%).

## Challenges

• **Barriers:** Include anxiety, embarrassment, lack of support, and limited health infrastructure. Campaigns to increase screening uptake have had only modest impacts.

## Blood Tests for Cancer Detection

- **MCED Tests:** Multi-cancer early detection tests can identify signals from up to 50 cancer types, including those without reliable early screening methods. They are still new and not FDA-approved in the U.S. or approved in India, where they are available as Laboratory-Developed Tests (LDTs).
- **Cost and Risks:** MCED tests cost up to ₹15,000 and can have high false positive rates. Combining MCED tests with traditional methods can reduce false positives and detect additional cases.

## Recommendations

- **Support:** Provide comprehensive instructions and decision support tools for patients receiving positive results. Access to counselling services and interactive platforms is recommended for managing psychological impacts and ensuring proper follow-up and decision-making.

## Indian Government Steps to Tackle Cancer

Initiative/Program	Details
National Cancer Control Program (NCCP)	Launched in 1975, the NCCP aims to reduce cancer incidence and mortality through preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic services.
National Cancer Grid (NCG)	Established in 2012, this network of cancer centers aims to create uniform standards of cancer care across the country.
National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke (NPCDCS)	Launched in 2010, this program focuses on the early detection and treatment of cancer and other non-communicable diseases.
Cancer Screening Programs	Initiatives like the National Breast Cancer Screening Program and National Cervical Cancer Screening Program aim to increase early detection rates.
Ayushman Bharat Scheme	Provides health insurance coverage up to ₹5 lakh per family per year, which includes cancer treatment.
Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)	Conducts research and supports various cancer research projects and initiatives to improve treatment and detection methods.
State-Level Initiatives	Several states have launched their own cancer control programs and awareness campaigns tailored to local needs.
Public Awareness Campaigns	Programs to educate the public about cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment options.
Funding and Support for Cancer Research	Provides grants and funding for research institutions working on cancer treatment and prevention.
Training and Capacity Building	Programs to train healthcare professionals in cancer care and management to improve service delivery.

## "News Highlights: Key Updates in Brief"

- **Maria Branyas**, the **world's oldest person** at 117, has died; she was among the few of her age to survive severe COVID-19.
- The **Supreme Court** has established a **National Task Force** to enhance safety measures for medical professionals in response to the rape and murder of a junior doctor in Kolkata.
- The **UPSC** has canceled the **lateral recruitment** process for middle and senior-level officials due to concerns about the absence of reservations for SC, ST, and OBC communities, following protests and is aimed at ensuring the process aligns with social justice principles.
- A two-year-old child in Tikrikilla, **Meghalaya**, is suspected to have **vaccine-derived polio**, not wild polio. This rare condition arises when a **weakened vaccine-virus mutates** and causes paralysis. Despite India being declared **polio-free in 2014**, health officials are on high alert and are conducting further tests on the child's samples.
- The Supreme Court denied an aged couple's request for "passive euthanasia" for their comatose son, Harish Rana, who has been bedridden for 11 years. Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud ruled that **since Rana is not on life support**, ending his life would constitute **active euthanasia**, which is illegal. The Court acknowledged the couple's hardship but upheld that their request did not meet the criteria for passive euthanasia.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, along with Defence Minister Minoru Kihara and Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, held a **"2+2" dialogue** in Delhi, emphasizing the growth of the India-Japan partnership within a free and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Jaishankar highlighted the evolution of their relationship into a special strategic and global partnership, driven by expanding mutual interests. Singh stressed that this partnership is vital for India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047 and enhancing domestic defense capabilities.
- A **landslide** in Gangtok district, **Sikkim**, damaged six houses and an NHPC building at the Teesta-V hydropower site, with the area previously hit by a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in October 2023.
- The Centre has launched a pilot project to rename 60 fair price shops as **Jan Poshan Kendra** to offer a diverse range of nutrition-rich food items and increase income for ration dealers in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to **Poland** and **Ukraine** will emphasize cultural ties, trade, and defense. The visit to Poland, the **first by an Indian PM in 45 years**, highlights Poland's role as a **gateway to Europe** and its importance in bilateral trade and defense cooperation. Poland, a significant partner in Central and Eastern Europe, has been supportive of India, including helping evacuate Indian students from Ukraine. Indian investments in Poland span various sectors, and Polish businesses are interested in India but lack clear guidance on entering the market.
- On August 19-20, European scientists planned a groundbreaking double slingshot maneuver for the **JUICE probe**, using the moon's and Earth's gravity to set the spacecraft on course for Jupiter. This complex maneuver aims to save propellant and efficiently guide JUICE, launched by the **European Space Agency (ESA)** to study Jupiter's moons. If successful, JUICE will reach Jupiter in 2031, using additional gravity assists from Venus, Earth, and potentially other celestial bodies. This mission, following NASA's Galileo mission, aims to explore Jupiter and its moons, including studying their potential to support life.
- **Poland** and **Hungary** are leading the rapid **solar growth** in Central/Eastern Europe, highlighting affordable solar technology and strong regional clean energy policies.
- The **Waorani Indigenous people** and environmental groups in Ecuador protested at the Energy Ministry, demanding an end to oil drilling in **Yasuni National Park**.

## Practice Mains Question

1. Evaluate the ₹2 lakh crore employment schemes aimed at skilling 4.1 crore youth. How effective are decentralized community action, vocational education, and apprenticeships in creating sustainable and dignified employment? Suggest improvements based on evidence. (250 words)
2. Analyze the effectiveness of the West Bengal government's response to the recent violence against women, including the reduction of night duties. How can governments and societies better address gender violence and ensure the safety and participation of women in the workforce?
3. As India races towards its ethanol blending targets, the balancing act between food security and fuel sustainability reveals the intricate dance between progress and prudence. Examine. (150 words)

BPSC POINT



## Practice Prelims Question

### 1. Which of the following statements are true regarding India's ethanol blending and production policy?

1. India aims to blend 20% ethanol with petrol by 2025-26, with a significant increase in ethanol production capacity.
2. Ethanol blending has led to increased maize imports, raising concerns about the impact on food security and prices.
3. Tamil Nadu has seen significant adoption of fuel ethanol in its distilleries due to high liquor market profitability.

- A) 1 and 2  
B) 1 and 3  
C) 2 and 3  
D) 1 only

**Answer: A) 1 and 2**

#### Explanation:

1. India aims to blend 20% ethanol with petrol by 2025-26, with a significant increase in ethanol production capacity.
  - This is correct. India has set a target to blend 20% ethanol with petrol by 2025-26 and has been increasing its ethanol production capacity to meet this goal.
2. Ethanol blending has led to increased maize imports, raising concerns about the impact on food security and prices.
  - This is correct. The increased use of maize for ethanol production has led to a rise in maize imports, affecting food security and driving up prices.
3. Tamil Nadu has seen significant adoption of fuel ethanol in its distilleries due to high liquor market profitability.
  - This is incorrect. Tamil Nadu has not seen significant adoption of fuel ethanol due to the state's focus on liquor production and political sensitivities regarding the use of rice for ethanol.

### 2. Who was Maria Branyas?

- a) The world's youngest person  
b) The world's oldest person  
c) The world's oldest active athlete  
d) The first person to survive severe COVID-19 at 117

**Answer: b) The world's oldest person**

3. Which of the following financial metrics is excluded from the calculation of EBITDA?

- a) Interest
- b) Taxes
- c) Depreciation
- d) Net Income

**Answer:** d) Net Income

**Explanation:** EBITDA stands for Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization. It is a measure of a company's operating performance that excludes interest expenses, taxes, and depreciation. Net Income is the final profit after all these expenses have been deducted, so it is not included in the EBITDA calculation.

4. Yasuni National Park, located in Ecuador's Amazon region, has been a focal point for environmental and Indigenous activism. Which of the following statements about Yasuni National Park is/are correct?

1. Yasuni National Park is known for its rich biodiversity and is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth.
2. The Waorani Indigenous people have protested against oil drilling activities within Yasuni National Park.
3. The Ecuadorian government has fully banned all forms of oil drilling within Yasuni National Park.

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 2 and 3 only
- C) 1 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

**Answer:** A) 1 and 2 only

**Explanation:** Yasuni National Park is renowned for its exceptional biodiversity, making it one of the most biodiverse regions globally (Statement 1). Indigenous groups, such as the Waorani, have indeed protested against oil drilling in the park (Statement 2). However, the Ecuadorian government has not fully banned oil drilling in Yasuni National Park; rather, there have been ongoing disputes and proposals related to drilling activities (Statement 3 is incorrect).



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**"Understanding current affairs is crucial for UPSC/ State PSC preparation, as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, ensuring that candidates are well-informed, relevant, and capable of making insightful analyses on contemporary issues."**

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