



# Daily Current Affairs



## To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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## Cashless Treatment Scheme for Road Accident Victims: A Lifesaving Initiative

**Context:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has announced a groundbreaking **nationwide cashless treatment scheme** designed to offer **immediate medical assistance** to victims of road accidents across India. This initiative aims to address the critical need for timely intervention, particularly during the "**golden hour**", a crucial period following a traumatic injury when prompt medical care can save lives.



### Background:

- **Pilot Program:** The scheme stems from a **pilot initiative** launched on **March 14, 2024**, initially implemented in **Assam, Punjab, Haryana, and Puducherry**.
- **Golden Hour Focus:** The pilot phase was successful in establishing an efficient framework for providing **urgent medical care** to accident victims during the **first hour after an incident**, when immediate treatment is vital.
- **Expansion to Nationwide Coverage:** Based on its success, the scheme has been expanded to encompass the entire country.

### Key Features of the Scheme:

1. **Nationwide Coverage:**
  - Offers **cashless treatment** to all **road accident victims** at hospitals under the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**.
  - Covers **trauma and polytrauma cases** for up to **₹1.5 lakh per accident** for a period of **seven days**.
2. **Streamlined Implementation:**
  - Managed by the **National Health Authority (NHA)** in collaboration with **police, hospitals, and state health departments**.
  - Utilizes advanced systems like the **e-Detailed Accident Report (eDAR)** and the **NHA's Transaction Management System** to ensure smooth registration and claim processing.
3. **Support for Hit-and-Run Cases:**
  - Provides **2 lakh compensation** to families of victims in **hit-and-run fatalities**, offering much-needed financial relief.

### Why This Scheme Matters:

1. **Alarming Statistics:**
  - India reported a staggering **1.80 lakh road accident fatalities in 2024**, including:
    - **30,000 deaths** from individuals not wearing helmets.
    - **10,000 child deaths** near educational institutions.
2. **Comprehensive Coverage:**
  - Ensures **inclusivity** by covering all accident victims, regardless of financial background or circumstances, thereby broadening access to critical care.
3. **Efficient and Technology-Driven:**



- Reduces **bureaucratic delays** by leveraging technology and integrating multiple stakeholders for faster claim settlements and medical assistance.

#### 4. Financial Relief for Families:

- The scheme alleviates the **economic burden** on families by covering **treatment costs** and offering compensation for **hit-and-run victims**.

#### Additional Facts and Insights:

- **Global Perspective:** Road traffic injuries are a major public health concern worldwide, with over **1.3 million deaths annually** according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. Initiatives like this place India at the forefront of addressing the issue comprehensively.
- **Road Safety Initiatives:** In addition to this scheme, the government is actively promoting **road safety awareness campaigns**, encouraging the use of helmets and seat belts, and implementing stricter traffic laws.
- **Economic Cost of Accidents:** Road accidents cost the Indian economy approximately **3% of its GDP annually**, making this scheme not only a humanitarian initiative but also an economic necessity.

#### Conclusion:

The **Cashless Treatment Scheme for Road Accident Victims** is a transformative step toward enhancing **road safety**, ensuring **timely medical intervention**, and reducing the **economic and emotional toll** on victims and their families. By combining **technology**, **collaboration**, and **compassion**, the initiative reaffirms the government's commitment to saving lives and fostering a safer India.

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## Polar Vortex and Winter Storms: Understanding the Phenomenon in the USA

**Context:** The United States recently experienced one of the **most severe winter storms** in over a decade. This extreme weather event has been linked to disruptions in the **polar vortex**, a critical atmospheric system influencing global weather patterns.



### What is the Polar Vortex?

The **polar vortex** is a **massive area of low-pressure and frigid air** that rotates around the Earth's **polar regions**. It acts as a containment system for Arctic cold air and exists in two distinct layers of the atmosphere:

#### 1. Tropospheric Polar Vortex:

- Found in the **lowest layer of the atmosphere** (up to 10–15 km).
- Primarily responsible for **weather-related phenomena** and temperature fluctuations.

#### 2. Stratospheric Polar Vortex:

- Located in the **upper atmosphere** (15–50 km).
- Strongest during **autumn** and typically dissipates in the **summer months**.

### How Does the Polar Vortex Trigger Extreme Cold?

- Under **normal conditions**, the **polar vortex** is **strong and stable**, keeping the **jet stream** (a fast-flowing air current in the upper atmosphere) moving in a smooth, circular motion around the Arctic.
- This stabilizes the separation between **cold Arctic air** and **warmer air in southern regions**.
- However, when the **polar vortex weakens**, the **jet stream becomes wavy**, allowing **cold Arctic air** to escape southward.
- This results in **frigid temperatures** across regions as far south as **Florida**, often accompanied by heavy snowfall and freezing winds.

### Impacts of the Polar Vortex:

#### 1. Cold Air Outbreaks:

When the **polar vortex expands or shifts**, it pushes Arctic air southward, affecting regions like the **USA, Europe, and Asia**. This leads to **extreme cold weather events**, causing widespread disruptions.

#### 2. Ozone Depletion:

- In the **Antarctic region**, the polar vortex traps cold air, which contributes to **ozone depletion**.
- Low temperatures enable the formation of harmful **chlorine compounds**, which break down the ozone layer, leading to the infamous **ozone hole** over Antarctica.

#### 3. Impact on Aviation:

The **intensification of the polar vortex** affects **aviation operations**, with freezing temperatures and increased **winter precipitation** causing flight delays, cancellations, and safety concerns.

#### 4. Impact on India:

A **weakened polar vortex** amplifies the activity of **western disturbances** in India, leading to:

- Heavy snowfall in the **western Himalayas**.
- Unseasonal rainfall in northern plains, disrupting agriculture.



- Cold waves in parts of central and northern India.

### Additional Insights and Global Perspective:

#### 1. Climate Change and Polar Vortex:

- **Rising global temperatures** may increase the frequency of weakened polar vortex events, making extreme winter storms more common.
- Studies suggest that Arctic warming influences the **jet stream**, leading to prolonged cold snaps in mid-latitude regions.

#### 2. Economic and Social Impact:

- Severe winter storms disrupt **transportation, energy supply, and daily life**, resulting in billions of dollars in economic losses.
- Prolonged exposure to extreme cold can lead to **health issues**, including hypothermia and frostbite, particularly among vulnerable populations.

#### 3. Preparation and Mitigation:

- Improved **weather forecasting** and early warning systems can help mitigate the impact of such extreme weather events.
- Enhancing **infrastructure resilience**, such as insulating power grids and bolstering transportation systems, is vital in regions prone to polar vortex disruptions.

### Conclusion:

The **polar vortex** plays a pivotal role in shaping global weather patterns, particularly in winter. Its disruption, as seen during the recent **severe winter storm in the USA**, underscores the importance of understanding this atmospheric phenomenon. As **climate change** continues to influence weather systems, better preparedness and scientific insights will be crucial to minimizing the impact of such extreme events on lives and livelihoods.

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## 3 Understanding Sections 33 and 81 of the Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954

**Context:** The debate around repealing Sections 33 and 81 of the Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954, has resurfaced following allegations that the Union government has not fulfilled its promise to address these contentious provisions.

### The Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954: An Overview

The **Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954** was enacted to reform the **Zamindari System** and unify tenancy laws in Delhi. It aimed to modernize agricultural land management and abolish outdated land revenue systems.

#### Key Highlights:

- The Act repealed older laws, such as:
  - **Punjab Tenancy Act, 1887**
  - **Agra Tenancy Act, 1901**
  - **Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887**
- It established two types of land tenure holders:
  1. **Bhumidhar:** Full ownership rights.
  2. **Asami:** Limited rights, often tenants.
- Villages declared as **urban areas** no longer fall under this Act. Instead, they are governed by the **Delhi Municipal Act, 1957**, and the **Delhi Development Act, 1954**.

#### Provisions of Sections 33 and 81:

##### Section 33: Restriction on Land Transfers:

- **Prohibits** the **sale, gift, or transfer** of agricultural land if it reduces the owner's total holding to less than **8 acres**.
- **Objective:** Prevent fragmentation of agricultural holdings to maintain **economic viability** for farming.
- **Exceptions:**
  - Transfers allowed to **religious or charitable institutions**.
  - Land donations under the **Bhoodan movement**.

##### Section 81: Ejection for Non-Agricultural Use

- Landowners can be **ejected** if agricultural land is used for **non-agricultural purposes** like housing or commercial activities.
- Such land is **transferred to the Gram Sabha**.
- **Permitted uses:**
  - **Agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, pisciculture, and poultry farming.**

#### Why Are These Provisions Contested?





1. **Outdated Provisions:** Delhi has transitioned from a primarily agricultural economy to an **urban and industrial hub**. These provisions are now seen as **irrelevant** to modern needs.
2. **Hindrance to Urban Development:**
  - Restrictions under Section 33 delay infrastructure projects and housing expansion in **rapidly urbanizing areas**.
  - Section 81 discourages the **adaptive reuse of agricultural land** for urban purposes.
3. **Bureaucratic Complexities:** Obtaining permissions for land-use changes involves **lengthy procedures** and **bureaucratic red tape**, often leading to **corruption**.
4. **Economic Implications:** Farmers with small landholdings face **reduced economic opportunities** as they are unable to sell or repurpose their land freely.

### Proposed Reforms and the Way Forward:

#### 1. Modify Section 81:

- Instead of transferring ownership to the **Gram Sabha**, impose **monetary penalties** for the unauthorized use of agricultural land.
- Encourage compliance without displacing landowners.

#### 2. Provide Support to Farmers:

- Offer **alternative livelihood opportunities** for farmers with small landholdings.
- Introduce financial and technical support for modernizing agricultural practices.

#### 3. Facilitate Controlled Development:

- Establish a **balanced framework** that preserves agricultural lands while enabling controlled **urban expansion**.
- Simplify the process for obtaining permissions to **reduce bureaucratic hurdles**.

#### 4. Leverage Technology:

- Use **geospatial mapping** to identify areas suitable for urban development without disrupting viable farmland.
- Create a **centralized digital platform** for transparent and efficient land-use applications.

### Additional Insights:

1. **Urbanization Trends in Delhi:** Delhi's population growth and urban sprawl demand **large-scale infrastructure** and affordable housing. Reassessing land policies is crucial to meet these needs.
2. **Global Practices:** Countries like **Japan and South Korea** have successfully balanced agricultural preservation with urban development through zoning and land-use policies.
3. **Environmental Considerations:** Retaining green spaces and agricultural lands can help combat **urban heat islands** and promote **ecological balance**.

### Conclusion:

Sections 33 and 81 of the Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954, reflect policies suited to an agricultural past but now pose challenges to **modern urban development**. Reforming these provisions can pave the way for **balanced growth, economic opportunity, and sustainable land use** in Delhi, ensuring benefits for both rural and urban stakeholders.

## 4 Government Revises Gold Import Data Amid Reporting Discrepancies

**Context:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently corrected gold import figures for November 2024, reducing the reported value by \$5 billion. This adjustment lowered the trade deficit and spotlighted challenges in ensuring accurate trade statistics, raising concerns about the credibility of India's economic data.



### Understanding the Reporting Error:

#### What Went Wrong?

- The overreporting resulted from a **technical glitch** during the transition from **SEZ Online** to the **Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE)** system.
- Double counting** occurred:
  - Imports into **Special Economic Zones (SEZs)**.
  - Clearances to **Domestic Tariff Areas (DTAs)**.

#### Corrected Figures:

- Gold imports for November 2024 were revised from **\$14.8 billion** to **\$9.9 billion**.
- Consequently, the **trade deficit** narrowed from **\$38 billion** to **\$33 billion**.

### Technical Challenges in Data Transition:

#### Migration to ICEGATE:

- Designed to **streamline export-import (EXIM) declarations** and ease business operations.
- However, **SEZ Online** and **ICEGATE** initially transmitted data separately, leading to discrepancies.

#### Ongoing Issues:

- Persistent **technical glitches** continue to impact data accuracy.
- The government is working on **reconciliation efforts** to align data from both platforms and eliminate errors.

### Broader Implications of Data Discrepancies:

#### Credibility at Stake:

- Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI)** highlighted that frequent data revisions weaken the credibility of India's **economic statistics**.
- Lack of clear explanations creates uncertainty for **investors, businesses, and policymakers**.

#### Concerns About Wider Errors:

- Potential errors in reporting for other **commodities** or **time periods** have been flagged.
- This raises the need for **proactive reviews** and more stringent **data accuracy measures**.

### Gold Import Trends and Revised Data Significance:

#### India's Gold Imports:

- India is the **second-largest gold consumer globally**, heavily reliant on imports to meet domestic demand.
- Key suppliers include **African nations, Peru, Switzerland, and the UAE**.





### Factors Driving Gold Demand:

1. **Festive and Wedding Seasons:** A key factor in seasonal gold purchasing.
2. **Central Bank Purchases:** Increased global acquisitions of gold by central banks have pushed demand higher.
3. **Policy Shifts:**
  - July's **import duty reduction** diverted gold purchases from the **grey market** to official channels.
  - India's **gold jewellery exports** are projected to surpass **\$12 billion in 2025**.

### Market Stability:

- The revised data **eased concerns** about a potential **import duty hike**.
- Post-revision, no evidence of an **unusual surge** in gold demand was detected, stabilizing market expectations.

### Conclusion: Building Trust in Trade Statistics

The revision of gold import figures underscores the importance of:

1. **Robust Data Management Systems:** Addressing technical shortcomings to ensure accuracy.
2. **Transparency in Reporting:** Offering clear explanations to maintain trust in official data.
3. **Proactive Error Detection:** Regular reviews to preempt similar discrepancies in other sectors.

Accurate trade statistics are critical for maintaining **economic stability**, **investor confidence**, and **policy credibility**. As India advances its digital infrastructure, ensuring the **reliability of economic data** will play a pivotal role in fostering global trust and domestic growth.

### Did You Know?

- India's **gold demand** typically peaks during **Diwali**, **Akshaya Tritiya**, and the **wedding season**.
- The **grey market** previously accounted for nearly **30% of gold trade** until recent policy reforms curtailed illegal imports.

## 5 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas: Celebrating the Global Impact of Indian Diaspora

**Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention**, celebrating the invaluable contributions of the **Indian diaspora**.

With the theme **“Diaspora’s Contribution to a Viksit Bharat (Developed India)”**, the event emphasized the global influence of Indians abroad and their role in India’s journey toward becoming a developed nation.



**What is Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)?**

**Significance:**

PBD is celebrated on **January 9**, the day **Mahatma Gandhi** returned to India from South Africa in **1915**, symbolizing the **return of Indian talent and service to the homeland**.

This biennial event fosters connections between the **Indian government** and the global Indian community, highlighting their achievements and engaging them in India’s development.

**Background:**

- Initiated in **2003** by former Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.
- Based on recommendations from the **High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora** led by **LM Singhvi** in **2002**.
- Organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in partnership with the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** and other stakeholders.

**Format and Evolution:**

Initially an **annual event**, PBD was restructured in **2015** to be celebrated **every two years** for a more focused and impactful engagement.

**Spotlight on Indian Diaspora:**

**Global Presence:**

- USA:** 54 lakh
- UAE:** 35 lakh
- Canada:** 28 lakh
- Saudi Arabia:** 24 lakh
- Total Overseas Indians:** Over **3.5 crore**, including **NRIs** and **OCIs**.

**Economic Contributions:**

- Indian diaspora remitted a record **\$125 billion** to India in **2023**, demonstrating their pivotal role in the country’s economy.

**Diplomatic Influence:**

- Diaspora members are increasingly influential in countries like the **US, Canada, and UK**, often serving as bridges to strengthen bilateral ties.
- Events like **“Howdy Modi”** in Texas (2019) highlight the diaspora’s political clout and cultural unity.

**Categories of Overseas Indians:**

1. **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)**: Indian citizens living abroad.
2. **Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)**: Foreign nationals of Indian origin meeting specific criteria under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
3. The **Persons of Indian Origin (PIO)** category was merged with OCI in **2015** for streamlined identification.

## Key Highlights of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas:

### Chief Guest:

- **Christine Carla Kangaloo**, President of **Trinidad & Tobago**, addressed the convention virtually.

### Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards (PBSA):

This prestigious award honors **overseas Indians** for significant contributions globally.

- **27 awardees** from **24 countries**, including notable recipients like:
  - **Lekh Raj Juneja (Japan)**: Recognized for advancements in **Science & Technology**.
  - **Robert Masih Nahar (Spain)**: Honored for **Community Service**, particularly in promoting cricket in Catalonia.
  - **Syed Anwar Khursheed (Saudi Arabia)**: Commended for excellence in **Medical Services**.

### PM Modi's Vision and Message:

#### A Call for Global Peace:

- PM Modi urged the world to move from **"Yuddha" (war)** to **"Buddha" (peace)**, emphasizing India's ethos of peace and humanity.
- He cited **Ashoka's transformation** in Dhauli, Odisha, as a testament to India's commitment to non-violence.

#### India's Expanding Global Role:

- India's leadership in representing the **Global South** and advocating for initiatives like granting the **African Union a permanent G20 membership**.
- Reinforced the principle of **"humanity first"** in international relations.

### Recognizing Historical Contributions:

- Highlighted diaspora journeys like the migration of **Gujaratis to Oman** 250 years ago.
- Proposed a **database on Girmitiyas** (indentured laborers) to document their migration stories and achievements.

### Vision 2047:

- PM Modi inspired the diaspora to contribute toward making India a **developed nation** by its **100th year of independence**.
- Urged collaborative efforts to celebrate and protect their cultural and economic legacies.

### Conclusion:

The **18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** served as a testament to the **Indian diaspora's global influence**, their economic and cultural contributions, and their unwavering connection to India.

With India's ambitious vision of becoming a developed nation by **2047**, the diaspora remains a **pillar of support**, embodying the spirit of **"Viksit Bharat"** and strengthening India's stature on the world stage.

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## Indonesia Joins BRICS as a Full Member: Expanding the Bloc's Global Influence

**Context:** Indonesia has officially become the **11th member of BRICS**, effective from **January 2025**. This expansion highlights BRICS' growing influence among **emerging economies** and its efforts to reshape the global economic and political landscape.

### Understanding BRICS:

#### What is BRICS?

**BRICS** is an **informal intergovernmental grouping** of major emerging economies that collaborates to enhance global influence and foster cooperation.

#### Current Members:

- **Founding Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China.
- **New Members:** South Africa joined in **2010**, followed by Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia in **2024**.
- **Notable Absence:** Argentina, initially expected to join in 2024, withdrew its membership plans.

#### Background:

- The **first BRIC Summit** was held in **Russia** in **2009**, emphasizing economic collaboration among emerging powers.
- Over time, the bloc has evolved to address global issues beyond economics, such as **energy security**, **climate change**, and **multilateral reforms**.

### Significance of BRICS:

#### Economic Powerhouse:

- BRICS represents approximately **35% of global GDP** and **46% of the world's population**, making it a key driver of the global economy.
- The bloc encourages **trade and investment** among emerging economies, reducing dependence on Western markets.

#### Counterbalancing Western Dominance:

- BRICS serves as a **platform for emerging economies** to challenge the **G7** and other Western-led financial systems.
- Promotes a **multipolar global order**, reducing reliance on the **US and Europe** in shaping international policies.

#### Reducing Dollar Dependence:

- BRICS is actively promoting **local currency usage** in international trade and finance to minimize reliance on the **US dollar**.
- This move enhances the **strength of local currencies**, reduces exposure to dollar-related vulnerabilities, and fosters **economic sovereignty**.

#### Advocacy for Global Reforms:

- BRICS pushes for greater representation of **developing nations** in global institutions like the **IMF** and the **United Nations**.





- It seeks to ensure a **fairer global order**, addressing the imbalance in decision-making power.

#### Collaboration on Global Challenges:

- The bloc focuses on **sustainable development, technological advancements, and infrastructure building**.
- Joint efforts address pressing issues like **climate change, energy security, and global health crises**.

#### Energy and Resource Security:

- Many BRICS nations are key players in the global energy market, either as major producers (e.g., Russia, Saudi Arabia) or consumers (e.g., India, China).
- Strategic partnerships within the bloc aim to ensure **energy security and sustainability**.

#### Championing Multilateralism:

- BRICS emphasizes **collective problem-solving**, strengthening **multilateral institutions** and discouraging unilateral actions.

#### Challenges Facing BRICS:

##### Economic Diversity:

- BRICS members have vastly different economic structures, ranging from **industrial giants** like China and India to **resource-dependent economies** like Brazil and Russia.
- Divergent priorities on issues like **trade policies** and **economic reforms** often complicate decision-making.

##### Political Differences:

- While BRICS members share a vision of a **multipolar world**, their **political ideologies** and alliances vary widely.
- Border tensions (e.g., **India-China disputes**) and geopolitical alignments (e.g., **Russia's isolation** due to the Ukraine conflict) pose challenges to unity.

##### Geopolitical Rivalries:

- Rivalries between member states, such as **China and India**, affect the bloc's cohesion.
- Competing external alliances, like **India's ties with the US** and **Russia's pivot to China**, further complicate collective decision-making.

##### Dependence on Western Markets:

- Despite efforts to create **independent financial systems**, many BRICS economies remain reliant on **Western-dominated trade networks**.
- Transitioning to a non-dollar system requires overcoming these deep-rooted dependencies.

#### Why Indonesia's Inclusion Matters:

##### Strengthening Regional Representation:

- Indonesia's membership enhances BRICS' presence in **Southeast Asia**, a region of strategic importance.
- As a growing economy with significant natural resources, Indonesia adds weight to the bloc's economic and energy discussions.

##### Boosting Global Credibility:



- With Indonesia onboard, BRICS gains a broader **geopolitical footprint**, bolstering its claims as a representative of the **Global South**.
- This addition aligns with BRICS' goal to become a more inclusive and powerful voice for emerging economies.

**Looking Ahead:**

The inclusion of Indonesia reflects BRICS' expanding influence and its commitment to reshaping the global economic order.

However, to remain effective, the bloc must address **internal challenges**, build **consensus among diverse economies**, and continue driving **reforms in global governance**.

With **11 member nations**, BRICS is poised to become a **major player** in steering the world toward a **more equitable and multipolar future**.

**Did You Know?**

- BRICS collectively accounts for over **50% of global energy consumption**, making it a critical player in shaping energy policies.
- The bloc's proposed **BRICS Development Bank** (New Development Bank) aims to fund infrastructure projects across member nations, reducing reliance on Western financial institutions.

  
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