



Daily Current Affairs

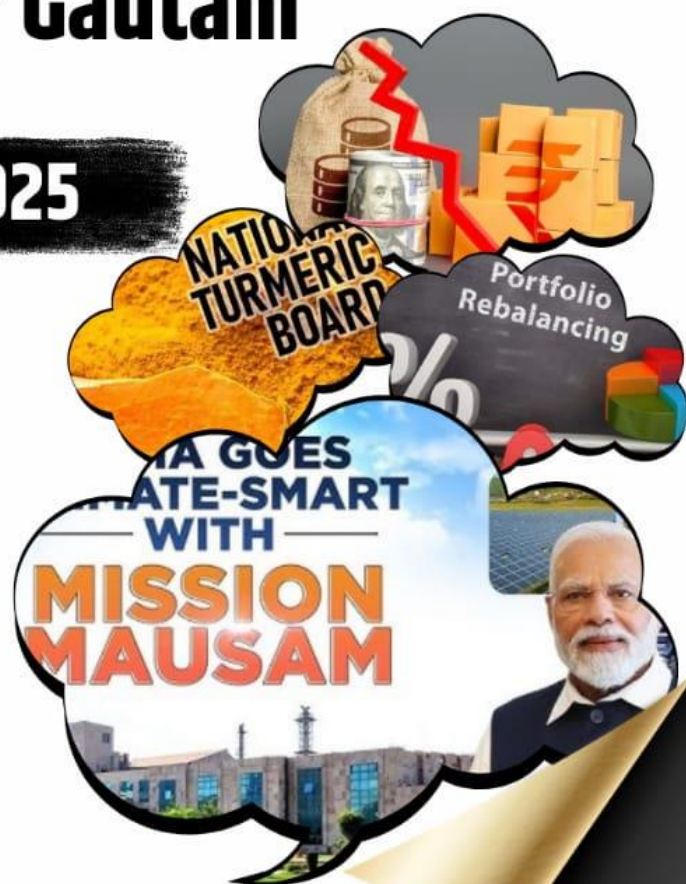


To The Point

by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 Centre Urges States to Ensure Compliance with Forest Rights Act (FRA)

Context: The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has directed states to establish a mechanism to ensure compliance with the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** and address grievances of forest-dwelling communities.

Key Directives from the Centre:

1. **Objective:** Protect forest-dwelling communities from unlawful evictions under the FRA.
2. **Reason:** Multiple complaints from villages in **tiger reserves** across Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and West Bengal about pressure to vacate lands without due recognition of rights under the FRA and Wildlife Protection Act.
3. **Details Sought from States:**
 - A report on villages within tiger reserves.
 - Details of tribes and forest-dwelling communities residing in such villages.
 - Data on forest rights claims received, approved, and rejected.
 - Processes for seeking consent and compensation mechanisms.



Forest Cover in India (ISFR 2023):

- **Total Forest and Tree Cover:** 8,27,357 sq. km, constituting 25.17% of India's geographical area.
- **Top States by Forest Cover:**
 1. **Madhya Pradesh:** 77,073 sq. km
 2. **Arunachal Pradesh:** 65,882 sq. km
 3. **Chhattisgarh:** 55,812 sq. km
- **Maximum Increase in Cover:** Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan.

Forest Protection Laws in India:

1. The Indian Forest Act, 1927:

- Aimed at managing timber and other forest resources.
- Empowers state governments to declare forests as **reserved** or **protected**.

2. Forest Conservation Act, 1980:

- Regulates diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.
- Requires **central government approval** for such diversions.
- Ensures sustainable forest management and conservation.

3. Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:

- Recognizes the rights of **Scheduled Tribes** and **Traditional Forest Dwellers** over forest resources.
- **Key Provisions:**
 - **Individual and Community Rights:** Include cultivation, habitation, grazing, fishing, and access to water bodies.



- **Developmental Rights:** Allocation of forest land for basic infrastructure.
- **Role of Gram Sabha:** Empowers local communities in decision-making and forest conservation.
- **Habitat Rights:** Special provisions for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** and pastoral communities.

Challenges in FRA Implementation:

1. **Bureaucratic Delays:** Slow processing and inadequate resources hinder progress.
2. **Resistance from Forest Officials:** Concerns over losing control of forest resources.
3. **Awareness Gap:** Many communities remain unaware of their rights.
4. **Land Title Issues:** Disputes and outdated records complicate claims.
5. **Forced Evictions:** Conservation efforts often prioritize wildlife protection over community rights.
6. **Weak Forest Rights Committees (FRCs):** Inefficient functioning due to lack of training and political interference.
7. **Inconsistent Political Will:** Uneven implementation across states.

Way Forward:

1. **Awareness Campaigns:** Educate communities and train FRCs for effective claims management.
2. **Streamlined Processes:** Simplify procedures for claims verification and land demarcation.
3. **Collaboration with Forest Authorities:** Train officials to balance conservation with community rights.
4. **Technological Integration:** Use advanced mapping tools to resolve land disputes and update records.
5. **Protection Against Evictions:** Focus on safeguarding rights instead of displacement.
6. **Regular Monitoring:** Implement transparent mechanisms to track progress and address grievances.

Conclusion:

Ensuring the **rights of forest-dwelling communities** while promoting sustainable forest management is crucial. By strengthening institutional mechanisms and fostering cooperation, India can strike a balance between conservation and the welfare of indigenous communities.

2 Rupee Declines to an All-Time Low of 86 Against the US Dollar

Context: The Indian rupee has hit a historic low, crossing the **86 mark against the US dollar**, reflecting significant currency depreciation.

Understanding Currency Depreciation:

Currency depreciation refers to a decline in the value of a country's currency relative to another currency. The Indian rupee has periodically weakened, particularly against the **US dollar**, influenced by various domestic and global factors.



Key Reasons for Rupee Depreciation:

1. **Rising Crude Oil Prices:** Increased global crude oil prices lead to higher **import bills**, exerting downward pressure on the rupee.
2. **Outflows by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs):** Global economic uncertainties have caused FPIs to withdraw investments, reducing the availability of foreign currency in India.
3. **Increased Demand for US Dollars:** A surge in dollar demand from foreign banks has accelerated the rupee's depreciation.
4. **Weak Domestic Markets:** Underperformance of **equity and bond markets** has reduced India's appeal to foreign investors.

Impact of Rupee Depreciation:

1. **Exports and Imports:**
 - **Positive:** Makes Indian goods cheaper and boosts exports.
 - **Negative:** Increases the cost of imports, particularly for essential commodities like crude oil and machinery.
2. **Foreign Debt Servicing:** For companies and governments with foreign currency loans, a weaker rupee raises debt repayment costs, straining financial resources.
3. **Inflation:** Higher import costs lead to increased consumer prices, affecting **purchasing power** and driving inflation.
4. **Investor Sentiment:** A declining currency reduces **investor confidence**, impacting **foreign direct investment (FDI)** and increasing capital outflows.

How the RBI Manages Rupee Value:

1. **Forex Market Intervention:** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** buys or sells dollars to stabilize the rupee and mitigate excessive volatility.
2. **Monetary Policy Adjustments:** **Higher interest rates** attract foreign investments, supporting the rupee.
3. **Forex Reserve Management:** The RBI maintains a buffer of foreign exchange reserves to manage currency fluctuations effectively.

Way Forward:

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1. Encouraging Long-Term Investments:

- India must focus on attracting **foreign direct investment (FDI)** over volatile foreign portfolio investments (FPI) to stabilize the rupee.

2. Maximizing Remittance Inflows:

- Policies that simplify remittance processes for **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)** can increase foreign currency inflows and bolster the rupee.

3. Boosting Export Competitiveness:

- Strengthen sectors like **technology, pharmaceuticals, textiles**, and manufacturing to enhance export potential and improve India's trade balance.

Conclusion:

The depreciation of the rupee presents challenges, but it also creates opportunities for export growth. By focusing on **long-term economic policies**, fostering **global competitiveness**, and effectively managing foreign exchange, India can navigate currency fluctuations and achieve financial stability.



3

Rebalancing India's Debt Market

Context: The NITI Aayog Vice Chairman, Suman Bery, recently emphasized the urgent need to **balance the government debt market and corporate debt market** in India to ensure sustainable economic growth.

What is the Debt Market?

The **debt market**, also called the **bond market** or **fixed-income market**, is a platform where entities like governments and corporations raise funds by issuing debt instruments.

Key Debt Instruments:

- **Government Securities (G-Secs)**
- **Corporate Bonds**
- **Certificates of Deposit (CDs)**
- **Debentures**

The debt market is critical for providing capital for infrastructure, operations, and development projects.

Current State of India's Corporate Debt Market

While India's **corporate debt market** has witnessed growth, it remains significantly underdeveloped compared to the **government securities (G-Secs) market**.

- **Government Debt:** Raised ₹11.63 lakh crore in FY25.
- **Corporate Debt:** Raised ₹7.3 lakh crore in the first nine months of FY25.

This disparity reflects the **dominance of G-Secs**, driven by **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)** mandates requiring banks to invest heavily in government bonds.

Challenges in Developing the Corporate Debt Market:

1. **Dependence on Bank Lending:** Corporates predominantly rely on **bank credit**, which limits diversification in funding sources.
2. **Regulatory Complexities:** Complicated regulations and limited **credit rating penetration** discourage smaller firms from issuing bonds.
3. **Investor Preference:** **Low-risk options**, like G-Secs and fixed deposits, are favored over corporate bonds by Indian investors.
4. **Market Infrastructure Gaps:** Lack of active secondary markets and market-making mechanisms restrict trading activity.
5. **Creditworthiness Issues:** Many smaller corporates struggle to achieve ratings that would attract investors.

Steps to Strengthen the Corporate Debt Market:

1. **Mandatory Corporate Bond Issuance:** SEBI requires large corporations to raise at least **25% of incremental borrowings** via corporate bonds.
2. **Credit Enhancement Tools:** **Partial credit guarantees** by organizations like IIFCL boost investor confidence.





3. **Tax-Friendly Instruments:** Promotion of tax-efficient tools such as **Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)** and **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)**.
4. **Retail Investor Participation:** Introduction of initiatives like **Bharat Bond ETFs** to attract retail investors into corporate bonds.
5. **Enhanced Credit Rating Framework:** Greater transparency and reliability in credit ratings ensure better risk assessment for investors.

Path Forward:

1. **Boosting Liquidity:** Encourage institutional investors, such as **insurance companies** and **pension funds**, to participate in secondary markets.
2. **Increased Retail Engagement:** Promote **awareness campaigns** on the benefits of corporate bonds and launch **investor-friendly products**.
3. **Improved Credit Access:** Support **small and medium enterprises (SMEs)** with easier access to credit ratings and **partial guarantees**.
4. **Leveraging Technology:** Utilize **digital platforms** to simplify the issuance, trading, and accessibility of corporate bonds.

Conclusion:

A well-balanced debt market is essential for fostering **economic resilience** and promoting **inclusive growth**. By addressing existing challenges and implementing strategic reforms, India can build a robust corporate debt market that complements its thriving government debt segment.

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4 Mission Mausam: Revolutionizing Weather Forecasting in India

Context: The Prime Minister inaugurated Mission Mausam to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), ushering in a new era of advanced weather forecasting and disaster preparedness.

About Mission Mausam:

Objective:

To upgrade India's weather forecasting capabilities by incorporating cutting-edge technologies for more precise predictions and effective dissemination.

Key Features:

1. **Budget Allocation:** 2,000 crore allocated for the first two years of implementation.
2. **Focus Areas:** Enhancing weather surveillance, refining modelling techniques, and improving forecasting accuracy.
3. **Beneficiary Sectors:** Agriculture, aviation, defence, disaster management, tourism, and healthcare will benefit from more reliable weather predictions.
4. **Implementation Phases:**
 - **Phase 1 (2025–March 2026):** Expand observational infrastructure and conduct simulation experiments.
 - **Phase 2 (2026 onwards):** Deploy satellites and aircraft for more precise observations.
5. **Supervising Institutions:**
 - Mission Mausam will be led by three institutions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences:
 - India Meteorological Department (IMD)
 - Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune
 - National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Noida

Cloud Chamber: A Key Component:

What is a Cloud Chamber?

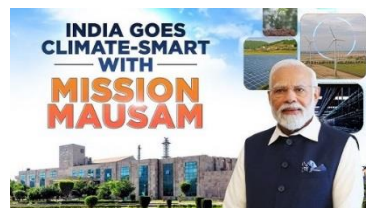
- A state-of-the-art facility to be established at IITM, Pune.
- It is a cylindrical or tubular chamber where water vapor and aerosols are injected under controlled humidity and temperature conditions to simulate cloud formation.

Purpose:

- Study the formation of cloud droplets and ice particles under realistic conditions to better understand monsoon behavior.

The Need for Mission Mausam:

1. **Enhanced Forecasting:** Improve weather forecast accuracy by 5-10% and provide predictions at the panchayat level with a 10-15 day lead time.
2. **Advanced Technology:** Leverage AI, machine learning, and supercomputers to develop better weather models.





3. **Air Quality Management:** Improve **air quality forecasts** for metro cities by up to **10%**.
4. **Real-Time Updates:** Reduce the frequency of **nowcasting** updates from three hours to one hour for near-instant updates.

Significance of Mission Mausam:

1. **Addressing Extreme Weather Events:** With rising incidents of **cloudbursts**, **lightning**, and **heavy rainfall**, this mission will significantly improve disaster preparedness.
2. **Weather Modification Techniques:**
 - Explore innovations like **cloud seeding** (used in the US, China, and UAE) to:
 - **Induce rainfall** in drought-prone regions.
 - **Prevent floods** by dispersing excessive rainfall.
3. **Localized Solutions:** Tackle challenges such as **simultaneous droughts and floods** by enabling more localized and precise interventions.

India Meteorological Department (IMD):

- **Established:** 1875.
- **Role:** The principal government agency for all meteorological and weather-related activities.
- **Governance:** Functions under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.

Conclusion:

Mission Mausam is a transformative initiative aimed at addressing India's **climatic challenges** and enhancing **disaster resilience**. By integrating advanced technologies and localized approaches, it promises to revolutionize how India predicts, manages, and responds to weather-related events.

5 Israel-Hamas Draft Ceasefire Deal: A Path Toward Resolution

Context: Hamas has agreed to a draft **ceasefire agreement** for the **Gaza Strip**, including the release of numerous hostages.

Key Highlights:

Mediation Efforts:

- The ceasefire proposal has been mediated by the **United States, Egypt, and Qatar** over the past year.
- The agreement requires final approval from the **Israeli Cabinet**.



What is Hamas?

- **Hamas** is the largest **Palestinian Islamist militant group** and one of the primary political parties in the region.
- It governs more than **two million Palestinians** in the **Gaza Strip**.
- **Foundation:** Established during the late 1980s amid the first Palestinian uprising against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.
- **Designation:** Hamas is considered a **terrorist organization** by **Israel, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom**, and several other countries.

Understanding the Israel-Palestine Conflict:

1. Historical Roots:

- Stemming from the mid-20th century, the conflict began when **Britain facilitated the establishment of a Jewish homeland** in present-day **Israel**.
- The Palestinians claim territories, including the **West Bank and Gaza Strip**, that Israel currently occupies.

2. Peace Efforts:

- Agreements such as the **Oslo Accords** and **Abraham Accords** have aimed to normalize relations, but the stalemate over a **two-state solution** persists.

Details of the Ceasefire Agreement:

Three-Phase Plan:

1. Phase One:

- Gradual release of **33 hostages** over six weeks in exchange for **Palestinian women and children prisoners** in Israel.
- Israeli forces will withdraw from population centers during this **42-day phase**.

2. Phase Two:

- Hamas will release the remaining hostages, including **male soldiers**, in exchange for additional prisoner releases.
- Israel will implement a **complete withdrawal** from Gaza.

3. Phase Three:

- The remains of deceased hostages will be returned.



- A **three-to-five-year reconstruction plan** for Gaza will be executed under **international supervision**.

Future Governance of Gaza:

1. Complex Governance Issue:

- The governance of Gaza has not been addressed in the talks due to its intricate nature.

2. Israel's Position:

- Israel has declared that **Hamas** will have no role in Gaza's future governance.
- It also opposes the involvement of the **Palestinian Authority** (established under the Oslo Accords).

3. International Perspective:

- The global community insists that Gaza must be governed by **Palestinians**.
- However, attempts to identify alternatives within **civil society** or among **clan leaders** have been largely unsuccessful.

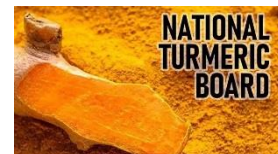
Conclusion:

The **Israel-Hamas Draft Ceasefire Deal** represents a critical step toward addressing a prolonged and devastating conflict. While significant hurdles remain, especially regarding Gaza's governance, this draft agreement offers a pathway to **de-escalation**, **hostage recovery**, and the **reconstruction of Gaza** under international guidance.

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6 National Turmeric Board: A New Era for the Golden Spice

Context: The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry recently inaugurated the National Turmeric Board in New Delhi, with **Palle Ganga Reddy** appointed as its first Chairperson.



Overview of the National Turmeric Board:

About the Board:

- The **National Turmeric Board** is a **dedicated body** established to promote the **cultivation, research, and exports** of turmeric.
- It aims to ensure **holistic growth** in the turmeric sector and improve the livelihoods of farmers.
- **Headquarters:** Located in **Nizamabad, Telangana**.
- **Ministry:** The Board operates under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

Primary Goals:

- **Enhance Turmeric Production:** Increase the output of turmeric through improved practices and technology.
- **Support Farmers:** Focus on farmer welfare by promoting sustainable practices and providing better market access.
- **Boost Exports:** Enhance **global exports** of turmeric and its **value-added products**.

Core Functions:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Educate about the **medicinal and nutritional benefits** of turmeric.
- **Research and Development:** Foster innovations to **increase yield** and improve the **logistics and supply chain** to reach **new markets**.

About Turmeric: The Golden Spice

Botanical Information:

- **Scientific Name:** *Curcuma longa*
- **Family:** Zingiberaceae (ginger family)
- **Region:** Native to the **Indian subcontinent** and **Southeast Asia**.
- **Common Name:** Known as the **“Golden Spice”** due to its distinct yellow color and wide usage in cooking and medicine.

Growing Conditions:

- **Temperature:** Thrives in temperatures between **20°C to 30°C** with high **annual rainfall**.
- **Farmers:** Turmeric is cultivated by farmers across **20 Indian states**, including **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Meghalaya**.

Turmeric Production in India:

India's Role in Global Turmeric Trade:

- India is the **largest producer, consumer, and exporter** of turmeric globally.



- The country cultivates **30 varieties** of turmeric and accounts for over **70% of global turmeric production**.

Production Statistics:

- **Cultivation Area:** India has a total cultivation area of **3.05 lakh hectares**.
- **Production:** In **2023-24**, India produced **10.74 lakh tonnes** of turmeric.
- **Global Trade:** India holds more than **62%** of the global turmeric trade. In **2023-24**, **1.62 lakh tonnes** of turmeric and its products were exported, valued at **226.5 million USD**.

The Path Forward:

The **National Turmeric Board** is set to revolutionize the turmeric sector by not only enhancing production but also creating awareness about its **health benefits** and **medicinal properties**. This move will also facilitate more **efficient exports**, bringing India closer to its goal of leading the global market for **turmeric** and its **value-added products**.

