



# Daily Current Affairs

## 🎯 To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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GS Paper 3 – Economic Development

## 1 India's Remittance Landscape is Shifting: A Surge from Advanced Economies

**Context:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Remittances Survey reveals a striking transformation in India's remittance ecosystem. Over the last decade, India has not only retained its position as the **world's top recipient of remittances**, but also witnessed a **major shift in remittance sources**—from the Gulf to the West.



### Growth in Remittance Inflows:

- India's remittances more than **doubled** from \$55.6 billion in 2010-11 to \$118.7 billion in 2023-24.
- This remarkable surge marks a shift from a **trickle to a flood**, reflecting both **migration trends** and **changing global economic dynamics**.

### Who's Sending the Money?

#### Key Trends in Remittance Sources:

##### 1. Rise of Advanced Economies (AEs):

- Advanced Economies now account for over 50% of India's total remittance inflows.
- Top contributors:**
  - United States (27.7%)
  - United Kingdom
  - Singapore (6.6% in FY24 — its highest share to date)
  - Canada
  - Australia
- The U.S. alone contributed nearly 28% of all remittances in FY24, up from 23.4% in FY21 and 22.9% in FY17.

##### 2. Decline of GCC Countries:

- Historically dominant Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are **seeing a decline**:
  - UAE's share fell from 26.9% (2016-17) to 19.2% (2023-24)
  - Saudi Arabia and Kuwait's shares also dropped
- Reasons for the decline:**
  - Covid-19 pandemic impacts:** job losses, salary cuts
  - "Saudisation" policies:** Nationalisation programs like **Nitaqat** aimed at reducing foreign workers
  - Reduced wage growth and slower economic recovery in oil-dependent nations

#### Demographic & Geographic Insights:

##### State-Wise Distribution:

- 50% of remittances go to **Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu**
- Other states like **Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat** receive **below 5%**

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## Size of Remittances:

- 28.6% of total remittances are **above 5 lakh**
- 40.6% are **16,500 or less**, indicating a broad range of earners

## Why the Shift Toward Advanced Economies?

### Reasons for Rise in AE Remittances:

- **Higher Wages & Purchasing Power:** Especially in the U.S., Canada, UK
- **Skilled Migration:** Surge of Indian professionals in **STEM, finance, and healthcare**
- **Growing Student Population Abroad:** Contributing via **loan repayments** and **family support**
- **Stable Job Markets** in developed economies with more opportunities for high-skilled workers

### Reasons for Decline in GCC Remittances:

- **Economic Downturns** post-Covid
- **Job Losses**, especially among **blue-collar workers**
- **Nationalisation Policies** prioritising locals over expatriates
- **Shrinking wage premiums** for Indian workers in construction, hospitality, and health sectors

## What the Future Holds:

### Emerging Trends:

- **Rising right-wing politics** may **tighten immigration policies** in AEs
- Migrants may remit more money home to diversify financial risks, rather than invest in uncertain host economies
- **India's demographic advantage** will likely continue, with the country remaining the **world's largest labor supplier** until 2048

### Policy Recommendations for India:

To maximize remittance inflows and safeguard migrant welfare, India should:

1. **Skill Harmonization:** Align domestic training with **international job market requirements**
2. **Protect Low-Skilled Workers:** Prevent **exploitation** and **forced deskilling**
3. **Bilateral & Multilateral Agreements:** For **safe, legal, and regulated migration** pathways
4. **Engage with Destination Countries:** Establish **long-term frameworks** to ensure fair treatment and integration of Indian workers abroad

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## 2 Greenland in the Spotlight: Arctic Sovereignty and Strategic Interests

**Context:** Greenland (**Capital: Nuuk**), the world's **largest island**, has once again found itself at the center of **geopolitical tensions**. In response to renewed interest from the **United States** regarding potential acquisition, **Denmark's Prime Minister** has firmly rejected any notion of annexation. Instead, Denmark has called for **stronger Arctic defense cooperation**, underlining the importance of respecting Greenland's **semi-autonomous status** within the **Kingdom of Denmark**.

### Geopolitical Significance of Greenland:

- Location:** Situated in the **North Atlantic Ocean**, Greenland occupies a vital position in the **Arctic region**, acting as a bridge between **North America and Europe**.
- Neighbors:** Its nearest neighbor is **Canada's Ellesmere Island**, located just **16 miles** to the north, while **Iceland** is its closest European neighbor.
- Arctic Circle:** Roughly **two-thirds** of Greenland lies above the **Arctic Circle**, making it crucial for **polar research and climate studies**.



### Natural and Strategic Resources:

- Greenland Ice Sheet:** Covering nearly **80%** of the island, this is the **second-largest ice sheet** in the world after Antarctica. It holds about **8%** of the world's **fresh water**, making it a potential **future water source**.
- Rare Earth Elements (REEs):** Greenland is rich in **strategic minerals**, including **REEs** critical for **green technologies** like wind turbines and electric vehicles.
- Energy Reserves:** The island is believed to have untapped reserves of **oil and natural gas**, increasing its relevance in future **energy security** debates.
- Fisheries:** Its surrounding waters are home to **rich marine biodiversity**, supporting a vital **fishing industry** and **global seafood supply**.
- Climate Change Hotspot:** Greenland is a key area for understanding **global warming**, with ice melt contributing significantly to **sea level rise**.

### Strategic and Military Importance:

- US Military Presence:** The **Thule Air Base**, a critical American military installation, underscores Greenland's role in **Arctic defense** and **missile early warning systems**.
- Trans-Arctic Shipping:** As **climate change** opens up new **northern sea routes**, Greenland could become a hub for **future Arctic shipping**, significantly shortening global trade routes between **Europe and Asia**.

### Why Greenland Matters:

Greenland's unique blend of **strategic location**, **natural resources**, and **environmental importance** makes it a focal point in emerging **Arctic geopolitics**. As global powers shift their gaze northward, Greenland will continue to play a **pivotal role** in shaping the **future of the Arctic**.

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**3 Cabinet Approves Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)**

**Context:** In a major step toward securing and developing India's remote border areas, the **Union Cabinet has approved the "Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)"** for the **financial years 2024–25 to 2028–29**. This ambitious initiative builds on the success of VVP-I, and reflects India's strategic commitment to a **"Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047**.

**What is VVP-II?****A Strategic Expansion of Rural Border Development:**

- **Scheme Type:** A **Central Sector Scheme** with **100% funding by the central government**, unlike VVP-I, which was a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- **Coverage:** Targets **strategic villages along international land borders (ILBs)** across **17 states and union territories, excluding northern border blocks** already covered under VVP-I (2023–24).
- **Vision:** To transform isolated border villages into **vibrant, secure, and self-reliant communities**, playing a key role in both **development and national security**.

**Key Objectives of VVP-II:**

- **Enhance Quality of Life:** Improve **basic infrastructure** and **public services** in remote villages.
- **Boost Livelihoods:** Create **sustainable income opportunities** through **value chains, SHGs, and cooperatives**.
- **Strengthen Security:** Encourage local participation to serve as the **"eyes and ears"** of internal security forces, helping to **curb trans-border crimes**.
- **Preserve Culture & Promote Tourism:** Celebrate local festivals, heritage, and organize **awareness drives** to foster cultural pride and rural tourism.

**Salient Features of VVP-II:****Robust Infrastructure Development:**

- Development of **all-weather roads** under **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana – Phase IV (PMGSY-IV)**.
- Investments in **housing, sanitation, drinking water supply, electricity, and SMART classrooms** to modernize education.

**Livelihood & Value Chain Enhancement:**

- Promotion of **local crafts, agriculture, and animal husbandry** through **cluster-based models**.
- Financial and capacity-building support for **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** and **cooperatives**, tailored to **border-specific challenges**.

**Converging Welfare Schemes:**

- Seamless integration of central and state **welfare schemes** to ensure **last-mile delivery** and **universal coverage**.
- Implementation under a **"whole-of-government" approach**, promoting synergy across ministries.

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- Hosting of **local fairs, festivals, and national day celebrations** to preserve **traditional customs** and attract **tourism**.
- Encouragement of **home-stay tourism** and **eco-tourism models** in scenic border regions.

## Implementation Through PM Gati Shakti:

- Execution of the programme will be monitored and facilitated via the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan**, ensuring **efficient inter-departmental coordination** and **timely delivery** of infrastructure projects.

## Why VVP-II Matters:

Greenlighting **VVP-II** represents more than just rural development—it marks a bold move towards:

- **Securing India's borders** through **development-led security**.
- **Empowering remote populations** and **bridging regional disparities**.
- **Transforming border villages** into **models of innovation, resilience, and cultural pride**.

As India marches toward **Viksit Bharat@2047**, initiatives like VVP-II are critical to ensure that **no citizen is left behind**, especially those in the most remote corners of the nation.



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## 4 Bihar Gears Up to Host Khelo India Youth & Para Games in 2025

**Context:** In a major boost to the sports ecosystem, Bihar is all set to host the **Khelo India Youth Games** and the **Khelo India Para Games** in **May 2025**. This marks a significant moment for the state, as it steps into the national sporting spotlight under the flagship **Khelo India** initiative.

Launched in **2018**, the **Khelo India programme** is a landmark movement aimed at **reviving India's sports culture**, **fostering youth engagement**, and **nurturing future Olympians**.



### Core Pillars of the Khelo India Mission:

#### Talent Identification & Sports Competitions:

- Organizes a series of national-level competitions including the **Youth Games**, **University Games**, and **Winter Games**.
- Acts as a **talent-scouting platform**, enabling the government and federations to spot and groom **young sporting prodigies**.

#### Sports Infrastructure Development:

- Undertakes the **construction and upgradation of sports facilities** across the country.
- Focuses on creating **world-class training environments** in both urban and rural areas to **bridge accessibility gaps**.

#### Khelo India Centres & Sports Academies:

- Establishes **specialized training centers** and **national sports academies**.
- Provides **high-performance coaching**, **sports science support**, and **mentorship** to athletes across disciplines.

#### Fit India Movement:

- Promotes a **healthy lifestyle** and **daily physical activity** through nationwide campaigns, fitness assessments, and school-level initiatives.
- Encourages citizens to embrace fitness as a **core component of national development**.

#### Inclusivity & Cultural Integration:

- Advocates **gender equality**, **disability inclusion**, and the promotion of **indigenous sports** like **Kalaripayattu**, **Mallakhamb**, and **Gatka**.
- Ensures that **sports become a unifying force**, accessible to all sections of society.

#### Significance of Bihar Hosting the Games:

- Bihar's hosting of these events will **boost regional sports culture**, inspire local youth, and **upgrade state-level infrastructure**.
- It will also provide an **economic and tourism boost**, as thousands of athletes, coaches, and spectators are expected to participate.
- Hosting the **Khelo India Para Games** reflects a strong commitment to **inclusive sports**, celebrating the **spirit and talent of differently-abled athletes**.

#### Khelo India: Shaping India's Sporting Future

The **Khelo India programme** is more than just a sports initiative—it is a **nation-building effort** that blends **youth empowerment**, **national pride**, and **global aspirations**. With Bihar now joining the ranks of host states, the movement continues to gain momentum toward building a **fit, inclusive, and sports-driven India**.

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## 5 Star-Rating System for Environmental Clearances Withdrawn by Environment Ministry

**Context:** In a significant development, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** has formally **withdrawn** the **Star-Rating System** that was designed to evaluate the performance of **State Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs)**. This move comes after **legal scrutiny** and an order by the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, raising questions about the balance between **administrative efficiency** and **environmental protection**.



**Background: What Was the Star-Rating System?**

**Launched On:** January 17, 2022

**Objective:** To incentivize faster environmental clearances and promote the Ease of Doing Business by evaluating SEIAAs on their efficiency and timeliness in processing applications.

**Origin:** The system was initiated after a November 2021 high-level meeting chaired by then Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

**How the Star-Rating Worked:**

**Key Evaluation Criteria:**

- Time taken to process and grant **environmental clearances**.
- Adherence to the prescribed timelines under the **EIA Notification 2006**.
- Performance metrics at both **pre-approval** and **approval** stages.

**Rating Scale:**

- Ratings ranged from **0 to 7 stars**, based on performance.
- Applied to **Category B projects**, which are assessed by SEIAAs.
- **Category A projects** remained under the **central MoEF&CC's jurisdiction**.

**Technology Integration: The PARIVESH Platform**

- The rating system was embedded in the **PARIVESH 1.0** platform—India's **single-window digital interface** for environmental clearance processes.
- There were plans to **migrate and enhance** the system under **PARIVESH 2.0**, including revised scoring criteria. However, these plans are now **suspended** following the withdrawal.

**Legal Challenge and NGT Intervention:**

Petitioner: *Meenava Thantai*, a fishermen's collective from Tamil Nadu.

**Key Concerns Raised:**

- The system was alleged to be **arbitrary** and **legally unsound**.
- Critics argued it **diluted environmental scrutiny** by prioritizing speed over substance.
- Feared a **weakened Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process**, particularly for ecologically sensitive areas.

**NGT Verdict:**

- On **March 27, 2025**, the NGT declared the **January 2022 Office Memorandum (OM)** introducing the star-rating as **inoperative**.

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- The MoEF&CC acknowledged the concerns and stated that a revised set of performance evaluation criteria may be introduced after careful review.

## Broader Implications:

### Key Issues in Environmental Governance:

- Balancing development with ecological integrity.
- The increasing role of the National Green Tribunal in ensuring judicial oversight over environmental policy.
- Debates over "Ease of Doing Business" vs. "Environmental Safeguards".

### Lessons and Way Forward:

- The withdrawal signals the need for more nuanced and inclusive frameworks.
- Future models must integrate scientific rigor, transparency, and stakeholder engagement, rather than relying solely on quantitative efficiency metrics.

### Conclusion: Rethinking Ratings in Environmental Oversight

While the **Star-Rating System** aimed to promote **administrative efficiency**, it raised valid concerns about the **quality of environmental decision-making**. The government's decision to withdraw the system demonstrates its recognition of the **complexity of environmental governance**.

Looking ahead, the Centre may develop a **revised framework** that blends **performance measurement** with **robust environmental safeguards**, ensuring that **India's ecological priorities** are not overshadowed by procedural speed.

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GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology

## 6 Audible Enclaves and Parametric Array Loudspeakers (PAL)

**Context:** In a world filled with **ambient noise and auditory distractions**, delivering sound precisely to a **targeted individual** without disturbing others has long been a challenge. Traditional sound waves, being **longitudinal** in nature, **propagate through compression and rarefaction**, but also **spread out due to diffraction**. This leads to **dispersion**, especially at higher frequencies, making **focused sound transmission** nearly impossible in noisy environments.



However, emerging technologies like **Audible Enclaves (AE)** and **Parametric Array Loudspeakers (PAL)** are **revolutionizing sound delivery** by creating **highly directional and private auditory zones**.

### What Are Audible Enclaves (AE)?

**Audible Enclaves** are **localized sound pockets**, formed through a clever use of **nonlinear acoustics**.

- **How It Works:** Two **high-frequency ultrasonic waves**, which are **individually inaudible**, intersect at a specific point. Due to **nonlinear interaction in the air**, they generate an **audible signal only at that precise location**.
- **Privacy & Focus:** This allows for **personalized sound delivery**—only the intended listener hears the message, while others remain **undisturbed**.
- **Benefit:** Enhances **privacy**, enables **customized experiences**, and avoids audio pollution in public or shared spaces.

### Parametric Array Loudspeakers (PAL): Sound in a Straight Line:

**PAL technology** takes a similar concept and pushes it further with **ultrasound modulation**.

- **Mechanism:** PAL devices emit **high-frequency ultrasonic waves** modulated with an **audio signal**. As the wave travels through the air, it **self-demodulates**, converting into an **audible beam** of sound.
- **Precision:** The sound beam is **highly directional**, behaving almost like a **laser for audio**, making it perfect for delivering messages to a specific individual or area.
- **No Sound Leakage:** The surrounding environment remains silent, making it ideal for **crowded or quiet environments**.

### Where Are PAL and AE Used?

- These futuristic audio technologies are finding **real-world applications** across diverse sectors:

#### Museums & Exhibitions:

- Offer **personal audio commentary** to individual visitors without disrupting others.

#### Retail Environments:

- Play **targeted product ads or messages** to shoppers standing near specific shelves or displays.

#### Immersive Entertainment & Gaming:

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- Create **3D soundscapes** that follow players or viewers, enhancing **augmented reality** and **virtual reality** experiences.

## Public Announcements in Crowded Spaces:

- Use **discreet messages** for specific locations (e.g., airport gates) without disturbing the entire area.

## Assistive Technology for the Visually Impaired:

- Provide **navigational audio cues** or contextual instructions that are **non-intrusive and precise**.

## Security and Defense:

- Deliver **confidential instructions or alerts** in sensitive zones or during covert operations.

## The Future of Audio is Directional:

With technologies like **Audible Enclaves** and **Parametric Array Loudspeakers**, we're entering an era where **sound is no longer bound by traditional limitations**. These innovations promise a future where **audio becomes personal, focused, and intelligent**—empowering users with **clarity, privacy, and immersive experiences** like never before.



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