



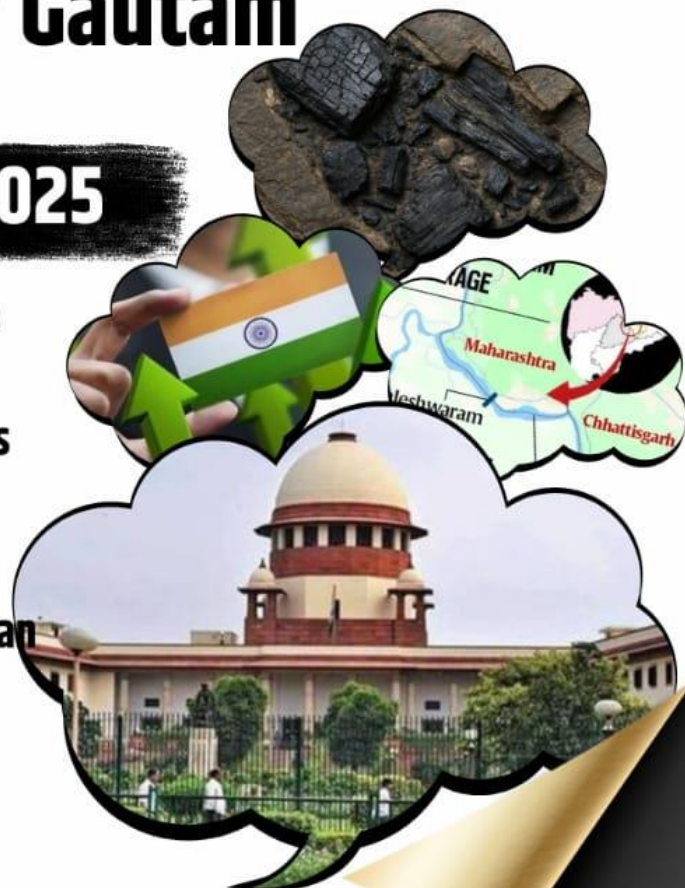
Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 Supreme Court Judges Publicly Declare Assets – A Milestone in Judicial Transparency

Context: In a landmark move toward **judicial accountability**, **21 sitting judges** of the **Supreme Court of India**, including the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, have voluntarily disclosed their **financial assets and liabilities** on the apex court's official website.



Background: Evolving Discourse on Judicial Ethics

- **Judicial accountability** has long been debated in India, especially regarding **financial transparency** and **ethical standards**.
- **Judges**, unlike legislators or civil servants, are **not legally required** to publicly declare their assets.
- The current disclosures stem from a **Full Court Resolution**, signaling a commitment to **public confidence** and **openness**.

Timeline of Key Developments:

Year	Event
1997	First Full Court Resolution under CJI J.S. Verma recommends judges disclose assets to the Chief Justice.
2009	A new Full Court resolution allows voluntary disclosure of assets on the Supreme Court website.
2009	The Delhi High Court rules that such declarations are “information” under Section 2(f) of the RTI Act, 2005 .
2019	A Constitution Bench declares the CJI a ‘ public authority ’ under the RTI Act , supporting the public interest in asset disclosure.
2025	The Supreme Court begins proactively publishing judges’ assets, including familial ties, on its website.

Significance of Asset Declaration:

- **Promotes Transparency:** Demonstrates a commitment to **ethical conduct** and **clean governance**.
- **Builds Public Trust:** Counters perceptions of **elitism**, **opacity**, or **bias** in the judiciary.
- **Upholds Constitutional Morality:** Reflects the values of **integrity**, **accountability**, and **responsibility** in line with the **Preamble** and **Directive Principles** (Part IV) of the Indian Constitution.

Why Judicial Integrity Matters:

Guardian of the Constitution:

- The judiciary safeguards **fundamental rights**, ensures **rule of law**, and maintains **institutional checks and balances**.

Ensuring Accountability:

- Lack of transparency may lead to **judicial corruption**, **delays**, or **misuse of authority**.



- Asset declarations help **deter conflicts of interest** and enhance **public scrutiny**.

Institutional Stability:

- In times of **political crisis** or **social unrest**, a **trustworthy judiciary** acts as a **pillar of democracy** and reinforces **national unity**.

Concluding Thoughts:

Transparency and ethical conduct are **not optional** in a democracy—they are the **lifeblood of judicial legitimacy**. The Supreme Court's move to disclose judges' assets is a **progressive step** toward a **more accountable, inclusive, and respected judiciary**.

A **strong and transparent judiciary** isn't just a constitutional ideal—it is a **moral imperative** for **democratic governance** and **societal harmony**.



2 Human Development Report 2025 – UNDP Insights

Context: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has released the Human Development Report (HDR) 2025, titled:

“A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI”

The report emphasizes how **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is reshaping the future of **human development**, while highlighting India's progress in **health, education, and income**.



Human Development Index (HDI): Concept and Dimensions

Conceived by **Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq** in **1990**, HDI is a composite index used to measure a country's **socio-economic development** through:

1. Health:

- Measured by **Life Expectancy at Birth**
- Related to **SDG-3: Good Health and Well-being**

2. Education:

- Assessed by **Mean Years of Schooling (SDG-4.4)**
- And **Expected Years of Schooling (SDG-4.3)**

3. Standard of Living:

- Measured via **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita**
- Adjusted for inequality (SDG-8.5)

HDI Categories:

Development Level	HDI Value
Low Human Development	Below 0.550
Medium Human Development	0.550 – 0.699
High Human Development	0.700 – 0.799
Very High Development	0.800 and above

Limitations & Complementary Indices:

HDI doesn't account for **inequality, poverty, security, or empowerment**. To bridge these gaps, UNDP also uses:

1. **Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)**
2. **Gender Inequality Index (GII)**
3. **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**

Global HDI Rankings (2023 Snapshot):

- **Top Ranked: Iceland (0.972)**, followed by **Norway and Switzerland**
- **Lowest: South Sudan** (Rank 193, HDI: 0.388)

India's HDI Performance:

- **HDI Rank: 130th** (up from 133rd in 2022)
- **HDI Value: 0.685** (from 0.676)
- India remains in the **Medium Human Development** category.



- **53% HDI growth** since 1990, **outpacing** global and South Asian averages.

Comparison with Neighbours:

Country	Rank
China	75th
Sri Lanka	78th
Bhutan	127th
India	130th
Bangladesh	130th
Nepal	145th
Myanmar	149th
Pakistan	168th

India's Human Development Achievements:

Health:

- **Life Expectancy** rose from **58.6 years (1990)** to **72 years (2023)**
- Key Programs: **Ayushman Bharat, Janani Suraksha Yojana, Poshan Abhiyaan**

Education:

- **Mean years of schooling** increased from **8.2 to 13 years**
- Boosted by: **Right to Education Act, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, NEP 2020**

Income:

- **GNI per capita** surged from **\$2,167 (1990)** to **\$9,046 (2023)**
- **135 million people** escaped **multidimensional poverty** (2015–2021)

Key Challenges Highlighted in HDR 2025:

AI and Human Development:

- AI should **augment human potential**, not replace it.
- Calls for **bold policy measures** to ensure **AI benefits everyone**.

Widening Global Inequalities:

- **Rising inequality** is slowing global progress.
- **India's HDI loss due to income inequality: 30.7%** (among the highest in Asia)
- Persistent **gender disparities** in education, healthcare, and employment.

Key Policy Recommendations:

Three Action Areas:

1. **Complementarity Economy** – Foster collaboration between **humans and AI**
2. **Innovation for Capability Expansion** – Use AI to enhance **human creativity and productivity**
3. **Invest in Social Systems** – Prioritize **inclusive education, universal healthcare, and social protection**

Conclusion: The **HDR 2025** emphasizes that **human development is a matter of choice**—and in the **AI era**, we must choose to build a **fair, inclusive, and sustainable future**. India's progress is commendable, but the road ahead demands **deeper reforms, ethical AI use, and inclusive policies** to truly empower all citizens.

3

India Tightens Security Rules for Satellite Communication Service Providers

Context: India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has rolled out **stricter security and operational guidelines** for satellite communication (satcom) firms to enhance **data security, national sovereignty**, and the **integration of indigenous technologies**.

India Satellite Communication Guidelines: Latest Updates

The new norms impact companies such as **Starlink (Elon Musk)**, **Amazon's Project Kuiper**, **Eutelsat OneWeb**, and **Jio Satellite**. The guidelines focus on:

- **Data localisation**
- **NavIC integration**
- **Metadata collection**
- **Blocking non-compliant websites**
- **Local infrastructure mandates**



Key Compliance Requirements for Satcom Companies:

1. Local Manufacturing Mandate:

- Companies must submit a **phased manufacturing plan**.
- **20% indigenisation** of the **ground segment** is required within **five years** of commercial launch.

2. Integration of NavIC:

- Mandatory on a **best-effort basis** initially.
- **Full transition to NavIC** required by **2029**.
- Supports **India's autonomous navigation capability**.

3. Data Localisation Norms:

- All **user data** must be **stored within India**.
- No traffic should **route through foreign gateways, PoPs, or space systems** not authorized by India.
- **Data mirroring or decryption** outside India is strictly **prohibited**.

4. Website Blocking & Traffic Control:

- Firms must implement systems to **block access** to **government-identified websites**.
- Operators must comply with instructions to **restrict services** to individuals or regions during **emergencies or conflict**.

5. Law Enforcement Compliance:

- Satcom firms must:
 - Share **metadata** upon request.
 - Report any **foreign/unregistered terminals** operating in India.
 - Offer **real-time location tracking** (latitude–longitude) of all **user terminals**.

6. India-Based Infrastructure Mandate:

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- All key infrastructure must be **India-hosted**, including:
 - **Data centers**
 - **DNS resolution**
 - **Lawful interception systems**
 - **Network control & monitoring tools**

Special Security Provisions:**Special Monitoring Zones (SMZs):**

- Includes areas:
 - Within **50 km of international borders**
 - Coastal areas up to the **Exclusive Economic Zone (200 nautical miles)**
- Subject to **heightened surveillance** by security agencies.

Clearance for Communication Services:

- Launch of **voice or data communication services** requires **separate national security clearances**.

Strategic Intent Behind the Guidelines:

These guidelines reflect India's commitment to:

- **Digital Sovereignty**
- **Strengthening National Security**
- **Promoting Indigenous Technologies** (e.g., NavIC)
- **Boosting Local Manufacturing** in telecom and satellite infrastructure

Current Regulatory Landscape:

- **Starlink** is awaiting **final security clearance** to begin operations in India.
- Partnerships already formed with **Airtel** and **Jio**.
- The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** is finalizing a **satellite spectrum allocation framework**, which will further shape the satcom landscape.

4

The Maldives: A Fragile Paradise in the Indian Ocean

Context: The **Maldives** is a **sovereign archipelagic nation** located in the **Indian Ocean**, consisting of **26 natural atolls** and over **1,000 coral islands**. The country lies to the **south-southwest of India**, and its **northernmost atoll** is strategically positioned close to the Indian subcontinent.

One of the notable maritime boundaries of the Maldives is the **Eight Degree Channel**, a crucial sea lane that separates the island of **Minicoy** (part of **India's Lakshadweep Islands**) from the northern Maldives. This channel is vital for **commercial and strategic navigation**.

**Unique Geographical Features of the Maldives:**

- **Coral Origins:** The entire nation is **formed by coral reefs**. It is among the few countries with **no rivers or mountains**, giving it a flat and fragile topography.
- **Reef Ecosystem:** The Maldives boasts the **seventh-largest coral reef system** in the world, contributing about **3.14%** of the **global coral reef coverage**. These reefs support a vibrant ecosystem and are a major tourist attraction.
- **Rising Sea Concerns:** With an **average elevation of only 1.7 meters** above **mean sea level**, the Maldives is one of the **most vulnerable nations** to **sea-level rise** caused by **climate change**. A one-meter rise in sea level could submerge most of the inhabited islands.

Why HADR Exercises Matter:

The joint HADR drill is not just a **military engagement**, but a **humanitarian partnership** aimed at improving **interoperability** in crisis situations like **cyclones, tsunamis, or coastal flooding**. These efforts equip both nations with shared strategies for **search and rescue operations, medical aid, and logistics support** during disasters.

Did You Know?

- The Maldives is the **lowest-lying country** in the world.
- The nation's **exclusive economic zone (EEZ)** spans over **900,000 sq. km**, despite its small land area—making its **marine resources** highly valuable.
- It was the **first country** to hold an underwater cabinet meeting (in 2009) to highlight the threat of **climate change**.

5 Kaleshwaram Project Under Scrutiny: Structural Damage Raises Safety Concerns

Context: In a recent development, the **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)**—India’s apex body for dam safety—has reported “**irreparable structural damage**” in **three key barrages** of the **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)**. These findings have raised **serious concerns** over the long-term safety and sustainability of one of the **world’s largest lift irrigation systems**.



Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project: Engineering Marvel of Telangana:

The **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)** is a **multi-purpose mega infrastructure project** located on the **Godavari River** in **Kaleshwaram, Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, Telangana**. This project is designed to provide **irrigation water, drinking water, and industrial supply** to vast areas across the state.

- **Coverage:** It aims to serve **45 lakh acres** across **20 out of Telangana’s 33 districts**, including the twin cities of **Hyderabad and Secunderabad**.
- **Scale:** KLIP is currently the **world’s largest multi-stage lift irrigation project**, with a network that includes **seven links, 28 construction packages**, and an **extensive canal system** spanning more than **1,800 km**.

Hydrological and Geographical Significance:

The project taps water from the **confluence** of the **Pranhita and Godavari rivers**, situated in northern Telangana. The **Pranhita River** is formed by the **joining of the Wardha, Wainganga, and Painganga rivers**, making it part of the **seventh-largest river basin** in the Indian subcontinent.

- **Total Water Lifted:** The project targets the **lifting and distribution** of approximately **240 TMC (Thousand Million Cubic Feet)** of water.
- **Utilization:** Water is allocated for **agriculture, municipal water supply, industrial use, and rural drinking water**.

Current Challenge: Damaged Barrages Raise Alarms

The NDSA's report has highlighted **structural failures** in three crucial **barrages**, potentially threatening the project's **long-term viability** and **public safety**. The damages are reportedly **beyond repair**, prompting calls for urgent **inspection, retrofits, or reconstruction** of key components.

Safety experts and civil engineers have voiced concerns about the **quality of construction, design standards, and monitoring mechanisms**, calling for a thorough **technical audit**.

Did You Know?

- KLIP uses **massive pumps** to lift water to heights of over **600 meters**, a feat that requires **enormous energy** and **sophisticated engineering**.
- The project’s **cost** has been estimated at over **₹80,000 crore**, making it one of the **most expensive** irrigation ventures in India.



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- If fully operational and structurally sound, KLIP has the potential to **transform** Telangana's **agrarian economy** and ensure **water security** for decades.

Conclusion: A Moment of Reflection and Action

While the **Kaleshwaram Project** remains a **symbol of engineering ambition**, the recent findings serve as a **stark reminder** of the importance of **structural integrity**, **transparent governance**, and **sustainable planning**. Timely **intervention and accountability** will be crucial to protect both **public investment** and **regional livelihoods** dependent on this grand initiative.



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Ancient Flames in Stone: Scientists Discover Palaeofire Evidence in the Godavari Basin

Context: In a remarkable discovery, scientists have found **evidence of palaeofires**—ancient wildfires dating back to the **Permian Period (~250 million years ago)**—in the **Godavari Basin**, shedding light on the role of wildfires in shaping Earth's **climate, ecosystems, and coal formation** over millions of years.

What Are Palaeofires?

Palaeofires are **wildfires from prehistoric times**, preserved in the **geological record**. These fossilized fire events provide crucial insights into:

- **Past vegetation dynamics**
- **Atmospheric oxygen levels**
- **Climate evolution**
- **Coal and carbon cycle formation**

The study, which spans from the **Late Silurian Period (443.8–419.2 million years ago)** to the **Quaternary Period (2.58 million years ago to present)**, shows how wildfires have continuously shaped Earth's landscapes and **carbon storage processes**.

Cutting-Edge Techniques Reveal Ancient Fire Signatures:

Researchers employed **advanced scientific methods** to analyze ancient **sedimentary rocks** for signs of wildfire activity:

- **Palynofacies Analysis** – Studied microscopic organic debris in sediments.
- **Raman Spectroscopy** – Examined the chemical composition of charcoal.
- **FTIR Spectroscopy** – Identified organic molecular structures.
- **Rock-Eval Pyrolysis** – Measured hydrocarbon generation potential of the samples.

These methods enabled scientists to identify **three key types of organic matter**:

1. **Translucent Organic Matter (TrOM):** Includes pollen grains and plant fragments.
2. **Palaeofire Charcoal (PAL-CH):** Solid evidence of past wildfires.
3. **Oxidised Charcoal (OX-CH):** Likely transported charcoal altered after the fire.

Key Discoveries and Geological Implications:

- The team successfully **differentiated between in situ (on-site) and ex situ (transported) charcoal**—resolving a major geological puzzle about the origin of charcoal in **coal seams**.
- **Stratigraphic layers** revealed clear patterns:
 - **Regressive phases** (falling sea levels): Well-preserved, concentrated charcoal deposits.
 - **Transgressive phases** (rising sea levels): More dispersed and oxidised charcoal, showing greater environmental reworking.
- The **Permian Period's high oxygen levels** made the planet **highly fire-prone**, increasing both the **intensity and frequency** of wildfires. These fires likely influenced **peat formation**, a precursor to coal.

India's Contribution: The Raniganj Coalfield Case:





- The **Raniganj Coalfield** in eastern India was among the **first regions** to show **macroscopic charcoal** in coal seams, confirming the existence of palaeofires in ancient **peat-forming environments** (known as **palaeomires**).

Why It Matters Today:

Understanding palaeofires helps us better comprehend the **global carbon cycle**, including how **carbon was stored** in ancient environments and how wildfires contributed to **long-term carbon sequestration**. This has direct relevance to:

- **Climate change studies**
- **Carbon cycling models**
- **Modern wildfire risk assessments**

Did You Know?

- Earth's highest atmospheric oxygen levels (~35%) occurred during the **late Paleozoic era**, making the **Permian Period one of the most fire-active epochs** in Earth's history.
- Fossil charcoal, though small, is incredibly **resilient**, and can **preserve fire evidence for hundreds of millions of years**.

This research not only **connects India's ancient geological past with global Earth history**, but also offers **valuable lessons** for managing carbon and understanding the potential **long-term impacts of wildfire activity** in our rapidly changing climate.

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