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Daily Current Affairs

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Declaration on the Establishment of India-Thailand Strategic Partnership

India-Thailand Strategic Partnership

- **Historical Background** : India and Thailand share a long history of warm and cordial relations, with diplomatic ties established in 1947.
 - Both countries celebrated the **75th anniversary of these relations in 2022**.
- **Cooperation areas** : bilateral ties cover a broad range of areas, including trade, investment, defence, security, connectivity, culture, tourism, education, science, and technology, as well as people-to-people exchanges.
 - Thailand's 'Act West' policy complements India's 'Act East' policy, and Thailand is an important maritime neighbor to India.
- **Multilateral framework** : Regionally, Thailand plays a key role in various multilateral frameworks with India, such as ASEAN, the East Asia Summit (EAS), BIMSTEC, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and ACMECS, reinforcing their strong and strategic partnership.

Cont.

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- **Defence Cooperation:** India and Thailand's defence ties are formalized through the Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation, signed on January 25, 2012.
 - These include regular defence dialogues, joint maritime patrols, annual staff talks, training exchanges, and participation in trilateral/multilateral military exercises.
 - **Economic & Commercial Cooperation:** Bilateral trade between India and Thailand has significantly increased in recent years.
 - In FY 2023-2024, Thailand was India's 21st largest trading partner, with a total trade value of approximately USD 14.94 billion.
 - In 2024, India became Thailand's 11th largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching around USD 17.5 billion.
 - **Cultural and Tourism Cooperation and Connectivity:** The Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Bangkok, opened in 2009, promotes cultural ties.
 - The India-Thailand Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2022-2027 was signed in December 2022.

Cont.

- **Tourism:** India and Thailand are closely connected by over 400 weekly flights across 15 Indian cities.
 - In 2024, around 2.1 million Indian tourists visited Thailand, making up 6% of the total foreign visitors.
 - To enhance people-to-people ties, India offers a 30-day e-tourist visa to Thai nationals, and Thailand has extended a 60-day visa-free entry for Indian passport holders.
- **Education Cooperation:** The MoU on Education Cooperation was signed in 2005. India offers about 75 scholarships annually to Thai nationals and 1,000 Ph.D. fellowships to ASEAN countries, including 100 for Thailand.
- **Indian Diaspora in Thailand:** The Indian-origin population in Thailand is estimated at 4-5 lakh, including over 25,000 NRIs.
- **Latest Developments:** Both countries discussed a wide range of bilateral issues, including defence, trade, education, health, culture, and security.
 - Several MoUs were exchanged, and a new India-Thailand Strategic Partnership was established, aimed at strengthening their relationship across

Major Historical & Diplomatic Milestones

Year	Milestone	Description
1971	Liberation of Bangladesh	– India played a pivotal role in the Bangladesh Liberation War, leading to the creation of Bangladesh from East Pakistan. India recognized Bangladesh on December 6, 1971.
1972	Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace	– A 25-year treaty that laid the foundation for long-term cooperation.
1974	Indira-Mujib Accord (Land Boundary Agreement)	– An agreement to resolve border disputes. However, full ratification and implementation happened decades later.
1996	Ganges Water Sharing Treaty	– A 30-year water-sharing treaty signed for the Ganges at Farakka, ending a longstanding water dispute.
2010	Joint Communiqué	– Both countries agreed on enhanced cooperation in trade, security, and connectivity.
2011	Teesta River Agreement (Drafted)	– Though a draft was finalized, it remains unsigned due to political resistance in India.
2015	Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) Implemented	– The 1974 agreement was ratified and implemented, resolving the issue of enclaves and adverse possessions.
2017	Defence Cooperation Agreement	– India extended a \$500 million Line of Credit for military hardware (significant step toward strategic partnership).
2021	50 Years of Diplomatic Relations	– India and Bangladesh celebrated 50 years of friendship and the birth centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's founding leader.
2022–2024	Rail and Water Connectivity Revival	– Initiatives such as the reopening of old rail links (e.g., Chilahati–Haldibari) and improved inland water trade have been revived.

Key Regional Groupings Common To India and Bangladesh

- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)BIMSTEC:
- It aligns with **India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies.**
- **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Initiative (BBIN):**
 1. Currently India, Bangladesh, and Nepal are working together, as Bhutan has opted out of implementation.
- **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM):** It is **part of China's BRI framework** and was conceptualized to improve trade and connectivity between the four nations.
 1. Bangladesh has supported the corridor but is mindful of India's reservations.
- **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):** Focus on maritime security, blue economy, disaster risk management, and trade.
- **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC):** A program under the Asian Development Bank (ADB), SASEC includes India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Myanmar.

BIMSTEC Summit 2025

- **Theme: “BIMSTEC: Prosperous, Resilient, and Open”**
- **Focus on** shared growth amid global uncertainties.
- **The BIMSTEC Summit** is the first in-person meeting **in seven years**.
- The **chairmanship** of the regional grouping was **handed over to Bangladesh**.

About BIMSTEC

- It is a regional cooperation organization formed in **1997** with the signing of the **Bangkok Declaration**.
 - It unites South and **Southeast Asian nations bordering the Bay of Bengal**.
- **Founding Members (1997):** Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand.
- **Current Members:** It comprises seven member states, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- **Objective:** To help countries in their economic growth, to support social development, and to encourage development in other areas, like science, technology and economic development.

BIMSTEC

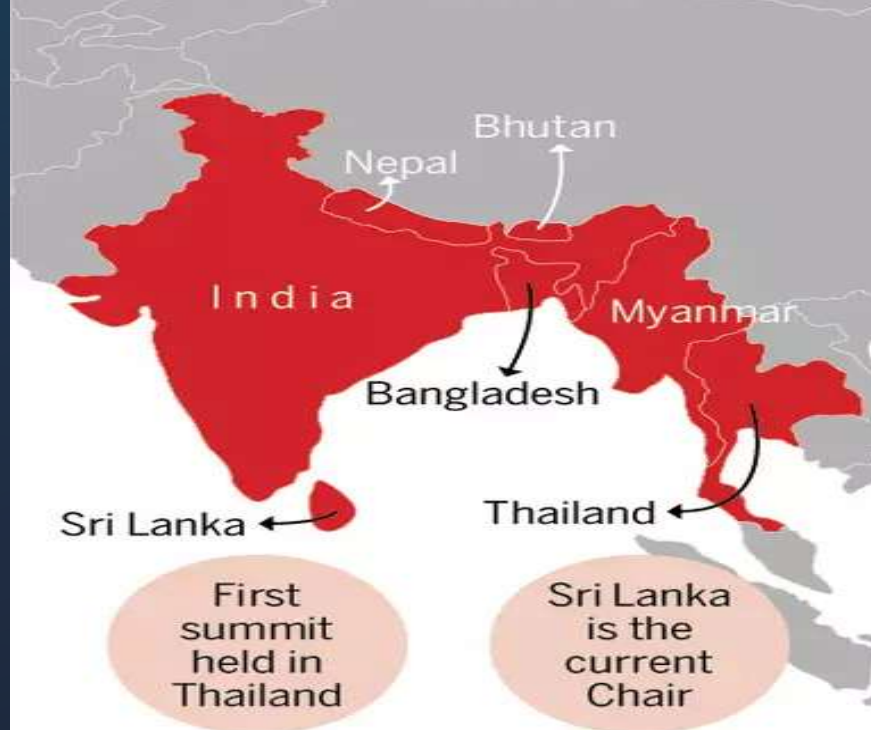
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



Stands for **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

Founded in 1997 through **Bangkok Declaration**

7 MEMBER COUNTRIES



Importance of BIMSTEC

- Accounts for **22%** of the world's population
- Combined GDP of **\$2.7 trillion**
- One-fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year
- Six focus areas—trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries

BIMSTEC

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

MRC MARITIME RESEARCH CENTER
FOUNDATION FOR UNDERWATER DOMAIN AWARENESS

NIR DHWANI TECHNOLOGIES



OBJECTIVE

To accelerate the economic growth and social progress in the sub-region through joint endeavors in a spirit of equality and partnership.



MAIN SECTORS OF COOPERATION

Trade & Investment, Transport & Communication, Energy, Tourism, Technology, Fisheries, Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-Terrorism & Transnational Crime, Environment & Disaster, Management, People-to-People, Contact, Cultural Cooperation, Climate Change,

6 JUNE 1997

is the establishment date of BIMSTEC.



FACTORS

- BIMSTEC has headquarters in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.
- BIMSTEC countries house **1.73 billion** people
- BIMSTEC has combined GDP of **\$ 4.4 trillion**.
- The current Secretary General of the **BIMSTEC** is Ambassador **Tenzin Lekphell** from **Bhutan**.

BIMSTEC comprises of 7 Member Countries.

BIMSTEC is of utmost significance to India as it is major support in implementing its Act East Policy and the development of its ambitious 'Sagar Mala' project.




India is
Getting
More
Remittance
s from
Advanced
Economies

Trickle to a Flood

Trend in Inward remittances by
the **Indian diaspora**

(\$ billion)

2020	79.8	
2021	86.3	
2022	107.5	
2023	110.3	
2024	129.4	

Source: **RBI**



India's Remittances

- **India's remittances have more than doubled** from \$55.6 billion in 2010-11 to \$118.7 billion in 2023-24.
- **U.S. and U.K. Contribution:** Remittances from the U.S. and U.K. nearly doubled to 40% of total inward remittances in FY24, up from 26% in FY17.
- **U.S. as Leading Contributor:** The U.S. became the top source of remittances in FY21, contributing 23.4%. This increased to nearly 28% in FY24.
- **UAE's Role:** UAE is still the second-largest remittance source, contributing 19.2%, with Indian migrants in blue-collar jobs like construction, healthcare, hospitality, and tourism.
- **Singapore's Rising Share:** Singapore's share reached 6.6% in FY24, up from 5.5% in FY17, marking its highest share since then.
- **State-wise Distribution:** Half of the remittances went to Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Other states like Haryana, Gujarat, and Punjab had smaller shares (below 5%).
- **Size of Remittances:** Remittances above ₹5 lakh accounted for 28.6% of total remittances, while 40.6% of the remittances were

India's Coal Boom

Growth in Coal Production and Dispatch

- India's coal production has reached **1047.57 MT** (Provisional) in FY 2024-25.
 - **Coal production** refers to the extraction of coal from mines.
- Coal dispatch has also crossed the **One BT milestone**, with total dispatch reaching 1024.99 MT (Provisional).
 - **Coal dispatch** refers to the process of transporting and distributing that coal to various consumers, including power plants and industrial facilities.
- **Coal imports fell 8.4%** to 183.42 MT in April-December 2024 in the same period of FY 2023-24, saving **\$5.43 billion** in foreign exchange.

Government initiatives

- **Commercial Coal Mining** opened the sector to private players to boost production, efficiency, and competitiveness.
- **Mission Coking Coal** aims to reduce import dependence by enhancing domestic coking coal availability.
- **Safety measures:** Directorate General of Mines Safety revamped the Coal Mines Regulations 1957 into **The Coal Mines Regulations 2017**, addressing modernisation, mechanisation, emergency response, and evacuation planning.
- **Coal Mitra Portal** developed for flexible coal allocation to power plants, ensuring better coal supply management.

Pamban Bridge

Syllabus: GS3 / Economy

In the News:

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** is set to inaugurate the newly constructed **Pamban Bridge**, which replaces the over 100-year-old original structure.

- **Historical Background:**

The **Pamban Bridge connects Rameswaram to mainland India**, stretching across the sea.

Built in **1914**, it was India's **first sea bridge**, playing a key role in trade and pilgrimage routes.

Despite **surviving the devastating 1964 tsunami**, which swept away a train, the old bridge sustained significant damage.

It was subsequently restored by the famed engineer **E. Sreedharan**, with assistance from local fishermen.

The new bridge addresses the structural and operational shortcomings of the original, focusing on **durability, better maritime movement**, and **future capacity** to boost regional connectivity and economic development.

New Bridge Features:

- Constructed by **Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL)**, a **Navratna PSU** under the Ministry of Railways.
- Includes a **72.5-meter vertical lift span** that can rise **17 meters** to let ships pass.
- Stands **3 meters taller** than the old bridge and is designed to handle **heavy freight trains** and modern **semi-high-speed trains** like **Vande Bharat**.
- Measures **2.08 km in length**, with a projected **lifespan of 58 years**.
- It is **India's first Vertical Lift Railway Sea Bridge**, made with advanced materials to withstand **challenging marine conditions**.

Salient features of New Pamban Bridge



Objective

Construction of a new Pamban bridge with Navigational Lift Span

Location

Located in Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu, the new Pamban Bridge will connect Rameswaram island with the Main land



Year of sanction

2019

Anticipated cost

Rs.550 cr

Span configuration

99 x 18.3 m + 1 x 72.5m

Length of the bridge

2.08 Km

Superstructure

72.5m Steel Through Girder for Navigational span & 18.3 m Steel Plate Girders for approach spans

Navigational span

One Vertical lift span of 72.5 m with provision for two tracks

Approach spans

99 Spans of 18.3m Steel Plate Girders fabricated for Single line

Ottawa Convention

Syllabus: GS2 / International Relations

In the News:

Poland, Finland, and the three Baltic nations have declared their intention to **withdraw from the 1997 Ottawa Convention**, citing escalating **security concerns due to Russia**. This withdrawal would enable them to **resume the production, stockpiling, and deployment of anti-personnel landmines**.

About the Ottawa Convention:

Formally titled the **Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction**, this **international treaty bans the use of anti-personnel landmines**. It was **adopted in 1997** during a diplomatic conference in **Oslo** and opened for signatures in **Ottawa** the same year.

The Convention **came into force on March 1, 1999**.

Achievements:

- The treaty has **led to a significant reduction in the production and use** of anti-personnel mines.
- Over **40 million stockpiled landmines have been destroyed** under its framework.
- It has promoted **support for survivors and mine-affected communities**, along with **demining efforts** worldwide.
- These efforts have contributed to a **notable drop in landmine-related casualties**.
- **Significance:**
The Convention has played a **key role in global mine clearance** and integrating **victim assistance into broader disability support frameworks**, thereby enabling **safer, more sustainable land use** in previously affected regions.

150th Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance / International Relations

In the News:

Lok Sabha Speaker **Shri Om Birla** is leading an Indian **Parliamentary Delegation** to attend the **150th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly**, being held in **Tashkent** from **April 5 to 9, 2025**.

About the Assembly:

The central theme is “**Parliamentary Action for Social Development and Justice**,” focusing on key areas such as:

- **Eradicating poverty**
- **Promoting decent work opportunities**
- **Fostering social inclusion**
- **Ensuring the involvement of marginalized communities in governance**

About the IPU:

- The **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** is a **global organization of national parliaments**, established in **1889**.
- It currently has **181 Member Parliaments** and **15 Associate Members**.
- The IPU aims to advance **peace, democracy, and sustainable development** by strengthening **parliamentary diplomacy**.
- Its work focuses on promoting **democratic governance, human rights, gender equality, youth participation, climate action, and sustainable development**.
- The organization is **primarily funded by member contributions** and is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**, with additional offices in **New York** and **Vienna**.

Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure / Internal Security

Context:

The **Union Cabinet** has given the green light to **Phase-II** of the **Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)** to strengthen development in strategically important border regions.

About VVP-II:

- It is a **100% centrally funded** scheme (**Central Sector Scheme**) with a total budget of **₹6,839 crore**.
- **Implementation Timeline:** The programme will run till **FY 2028–29**, covering select border villages in the following **States/UTs:** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir (UT), Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

Objective:

VVP-II aims to:

- Improve **living standards** and **employment opportunities** in border areas
- Strengthen **internal security** by involving residents as the “**eyes and ears**” of border forces
- Integrate border populations more closely with the national mainstream
- Help curb **cross-border crimes**

Key Components:

- Infrastructure development within villages or village clusters
- Support for **value chains** via **SHGs** and **cooperatives**
- Initiatives focused on **border-area outreach**
- Enhancement of **educational infrastructure** including SMART classrooms
- Promotion of **tourism circuits**
- Projects aimed at generating **diverse, sustainable livelihoods**

Importance:

Together with **VVP-I**, this phase represents a major step toward building **self-reliant, secure, and vibrant border communities**, contributing both to **national security** and **inclusive rural development**.

Agasthyamalai Landscape

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Conservation

Context:

The **Supreme Court** has instructed the **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** to conduct a comprehensive survey of the **Agasthyamalai landscape** to detect non-forest activities and encroachments.

Purpose:

The goal is to **restore untouched forest regions**, and ensure the **protection of tiger habitats** and designated wildlife sanctuaries.

Scope of the Survey:

The survey will cover areas including:

- **Periyar Tiger Reserve**
- **Srivilliputhur Sanctuary**
- **Meghamalai Sanctuary**
- **Thirunelveli Sanctuary**

It will involve a **comparative study** of current forest cover against **historic records** to evaluate environmental degradation.

About the Central Empowered Committee (CEC):

- Set up by the **Supreme Court** in 2002, and restructured in 2008 under the **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs. Union of India** case.
- Operates under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- Composed of one **Member Secretary** and three expert civil servant members appointed by the Ministry.

Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve:

- Situated in the **southern Western Ghats**, spanning **Kerala and Tamil Nadu**.
- Recognized as part of **UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves** since 2016.
- Includes:
 - **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve**
 - **Shendurney, Peppara, and Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuaries**
- Home to around **30,000 Kani tribe members** from both Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- **Agasthyamala Peak**, located in Neyyar Sanctuary, rises to **1,868 meters**.
- Culturally significant as a pilgrimage spot with a statue of **sage Agasthya Muni** at the summit.
- Rich in **biodiversity**, it harbors rare species and about **2,000 medicinal plants** used in Ayurveda.

Technology and Innovation Report 2025

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Technology

Context:

The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** has released the **2025 Technology and Innovation Report**, titled *“Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development.”*

About the Report:

The report provides guidance to **policymakers** navigating the evolving field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), aiming to shape policies that promote **inclusive and fair technological development**.

- The **United States** remains the global leader in **private AI investment**, accounting for **\$67 billion** in 2023—around **70% of the global share**.
- **China** ranks second with **\$7.8 billion**, while **India**, at **\$1.4 billion**, stands **10th worldwide** in AI private investment.
- On the **Readiness for Frontier Technologies Index**, India improved its ranking to **36th in 2024**, up from **48th in 2022**.

Key Concerns:

- Just **100 companies**, mostly in the **US and China**, account for **40% of global private R&D investment**, indicating a **concentration of power**.
- Around **118 countries**, primarily from the **Global South**, remain **excluded** from global AI governance dialogues.
- The report warns that **up to 40% of global jobs** could be impacted by AI adoption.

Recommendations:

- Governments should focus on **reskilling and upskilling** the workforce to ensure AI complements rather than replaces human labor.
- To prevent being sidelined, **developing nations** must enhance three critical areas:
 - **Infrastructure:** Ensure **affordable access** to the internet and computing resources.
 - **Data Ecosystems:** Create **robust frameworks** for data collection, sharing, and privacy protection.
 - **Skills Development:** Promote **digital literacy** and **problem-solving capabilities**.

The report advocates for:

- Establishing a **global shared facility** to guarantee **equal access** to AI tools and computing power.
- Introducing a **public AI disclosure framework**, akin to **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)** standards, to enhance **transparency and accountability** in AI usage.

Hamari Parampara Hamari Virasat Initiative

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity and Governance

Context:

The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, in association with the **Government of Jharkhand**, organized a **national-level programme** in New Delhi under the initiative “*Hamari Parampara Hamari Virasat*.”

The event also commemorated the **150th birth anniversary** of **Bhagwan Birsa Munda** as part of *Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh* celebrations.

About the Initiative:

- **Launch Date:** The campaign was launched on **26th January 2025** by the **Department of Panchayati Raj, Jharkhand**, with support from the **Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- **Participation:** Over **3,000 villages** have joined the initiative, committing to uphold and promote **indigenous governance structures and cultural traditions**.

Objectives:

- To **preserve and promote** the **cultural heritage**, including **folk music, festivals, rituals, and traditional self-governance systems** of **Scheduled Tribe communities** residing in **Scheduled Areas**.
- To **document and celebrate** the rich cultural narratives and practices of rural communities across Jharkhand for future generations.
- **Connection with PESA Act (1996):**
This initiative directly supports the aims of the **Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**, which grants **Gram Sabhas** in Scheduled Areas the authority to **protect and promote tribal customs, traditions, and self-rule**.