

7. Shortnews

1. Apatani Tribe

The traditional practice of facial tattoos and wooden nose plugs among Apatani women of Arunachal Pradesh now survives only among elderly women.

About Apatani Tribe

The Apatanis are one of the prominent Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, known for their unique cultural practices, sustainable agricultural systems, and strong community identity.

Location and Habitat – They primarily inhabit the Ziro Valley in the Lower Subansiri district, a bowl-shaped valley nestled in the lower ranges of the eastern Himalayas.

Nature Worshiper – The Apatanis are among the few tribes in the world who continue to worship nature. They worship the sun and the moon.

Festivals and Activities – The elders in the tribe propagate knowledge through folk stories, songs, couplets in the form of Miji-Migun, Busi-Ayu and also extensive and elaborate festivals like Marun, Myako, Dree, and Yapung.

Language – Tani

Natural healing – The tribe has extensive knowledge of herbal remedies to cure most of their ailments.

Distinctive Cultural Practices – Apatanis are traditionally recognised for women wearing facial tattoos (Tippei) and wooden nose plugs (Yaping Hullo), symbolising both protection and identity. The practice began as a protective measure to make women appear less attractive to invaders, later evolving into a symbol of tribal beauty and social dignity. In the early 1970s, the Government of India banned the practice, citing social hindrances for women seeking urban education and employment opportunities.

Economic Activities of Apatanis – The Apatanis are skilled in wet rice cultivation. Apatani wet rice cultivation is a sophisticated, highly evolved agro-ecosystem known for its integrated system of wet rice farming and fish farming (pisciculture).

2. Personalised Adaptive Learning

An evaluation study has found that the Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL) software used in Andhra Pradesh government schools led to a doubling of learning rates among students who used it. The study was carried out independently by Nobel laureate Michael Kremer. Andhra Pradesh government partnered with ConveGenius.AI in 2019 to introduce CG PAL for Classes 6–9.

Personalized Adaptive Learning

Definition – A learning approach that adapts to the individual needs of each learner.

Customization – Enables students to learn according to their own learning level, preferences, and style.

Shift from Traditional Methods – Moves away from one-size-fits-all teaching to a more flexible and adaptive learning model.

Key Features of PAL Software

Gamified Learning – The software gamifies math concepts and adapts content according to each student's grade-level knowledge and problem-solving style.

Personalised Learning Path – Students are provided with a customised learning path, allowing instruction to be tailored to their individual learning levels.

Learning Outcomes and Gains

Overall Learning Gains – Students using PAL achieved progress equivalent to 1.9 years of schooling compared to peers without the intervention.

Grade-wise Impact – Younger students (Grades 6 and 7) showed larger improvements.

Class Size & Access – Students in smaller classes with greater access to tablets (42.3 hours vs 30.6 hours) recorded higher gains.

Gender Differences – Girls engaged with the software more than boys, resulting in larger learning gains.

Usage Correlation – Average usage was 35.3 hours over 17 months, with learning outcomes positively correlated to the time spent on the software.

3. Pacific Islands Forum

Pacific Islands leaders began a week-long summit in the Solomon Islands to address regional security and climate challenges, amid rising tensions between the United States and China.

Key Focus Areas of the Summit

Security Concerns – The summit addresses growing geopolitical tensions in the region, particularly between the United States and China. China's pressure to block Taiwan's participation led to the Solomon Islands cancelling the attendance of donor partners, including China, Taiwan, and the United States.

Climate Change and COP31 – Leaders are expected to support Australia's bid to host the COP31 United Nations climate summit.

About Solomon Islands

Location – An island country in Melanesia, Oceania, comprising six major islands and over 900 smaller islands, located northeast of Australia.

Neighbouring Countries & Territories –

West – Autonomous Region of Bougainville

South-West – Australia

South-East – New Caledonia and Vanuatu

East – Fiji, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna

North – Federated States of Micronesia and Nauru

Topography & Climate – Mainly mountainous and forested, with some plains. The climate is tropical, moderated by cooling sea winds.

Capital – Honiara, located on Guadalcanal, the largest island.

Ethnic Groups – Melanesian 93%, Polynesian 4%, Micronesian 1.5%, other 1.5%.

Pacific Island Countries

Geographical Groups – Comprise three major groups – Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

Definition – Refers to 14 countries scattered across the South-West Pacific Ocean.

Member States – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Significance of the Summit

Geopolitical Importance – Highlights the strategic role of the Pacific Islands in global geopolitics, particularly in balancing influence between major powers.

Climate Vulnerability – Emphasises the islands' exposure to climate change and their efforts to secure international support for adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

About the Pacific Island Forum

Formation – Established in 1971, PIF is an intergovernmental organisation comprising 18 member states in the Pacific region.

Member States (18) – Pacific Island Countries + Australia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and New Zealand.

Key Members – Australia and New Zealand are the largest and wealthiest members of the organisation.

Objectives – To promote economic growth, improve political governance, foster regional cooperation, and strengthen climate and maritime security across the Pacific region.

Vision – A resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity where all Pacific peoples can live free, healthy, and productive lives.

4. Witness Protection Scheme

In *Phireram vs State of U.P.* (2025), the Supreme Court criticised the Allahabad High Court for issuing template orders in bail cancellation cases, wrongly relying on the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018.

Supreme Court's Observations

Bail cancellation must be decided on merits and principles of law, not by directing parties to Witness Protection. Nearly 40 applications since April 2025 were disposed of using identical “cyclostyled” orders. Treating the Witness Protection scheme as a substitute for bail cancellation undermines judicial scrutiny and weakens trial safeguards.

Distinction Between Bail Cancellation & Witness Protection

Bail Cancellation – Preventive and supervisory role of courts; ensures accused do not intimidate witnesses or tamper with evidence.

Witness Protection – It is remedial and curative. It provides safety once threats materialise through measures like escorts, anonymity, or relocation. SC clarified that the two are complementary, not interchangeable.

About Witness Protection scheme, 2018 – The Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 is India’s first holistic framework, approved by the Supreme Court, to safeguard witnesses against threats and intimidation.

Objective – To ensure fair trial by protecting witnesses from harassment, threats to life, property, and reputation, thereby upholding the rule of law.

Competent Authority – A District Standing Committee chaired by the District & Sessions Judge, with the District Police Chief and Head of Prosecution as members.

Categorisation of Witnesses as per threat perception –

Category A – Threat to life of witness/family.

Category B – Threat to safety, reputation, or property.

Category C – Moderate threat involving harassment or intimidation.

Protection measures – It ranges from police escort, identity concealment, video testimony, relocation, anonymity, and new identity.

5. Gen Z Protest in Nepal

Recently, Nepal witnessed violent Gen Z protests after a social media ban, leading to 19 deaths and the resignation of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli.

Gen Z

Generation Z refers to people born between 1996 and 2010. They’re the second-youngest generation, between millennials and Generation Alpha.

About the Gen Z Revolution in Nepal

The Gen Z agitation marks the first large-scale street mobilisation of Nepal’s under-28 youth against entrenched political elites and corruption.

Reasons for the Revolution

Social Media Ban – The government banned 26 major platforms (including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and X) for non-compliance with registration rules.

Corruption Allegations – Almost all senior political leaders face corruption charges, eroding youth trust in democratic institutions.

Lack of Jobs and Opportunities – With 82% of the workforce in informal employment, limited job creation has forced many Nepali youth to seek work abroad.

Generational Frustration – Young citizens resent the dominance of 70-plus leaders, fueling anger against “Nepo Babies” and entrenched privilege.

Erosion of Press Freedom – The ban was perceived as a move to curb dissent and self-expression.

Social Media Regulation in India

Data Protection Governance – India enacted the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, establishing the Data Protection Board to safeguard citizen data.

Content Moderation Rules – The 2023 IT Rules amendment mandates online intermediaries to remove government-flagged “false information.” Critics highlight risks of excessive state control, as the fact-checking process lacks full independence from the executive.