

8. Short News

1. National Initiative on Water Security

The Government of India has launched the National Initiative on Water Security under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to prioritize and fund water conservation works.

About the Initiative

Launch – A joint initiative by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Jal Shakti aimed at combating depleting groundwater resources.

Objective – To ensure a mandatory allocation of MGNREGA funds specifically for water conservation and harvesting, thereby strengthening long-term rural water security.

Fund Allocation Mechanism – In 'over-exploited' and 'critical' blocks, 65% of MGNREGA funds must be spent on water-related works. In 'semi-critical' blocks, the mandatory allocation is 40%. Even in water-sufficient blocks, a minimum of 30% of MGNREGA funds must be dedicated to water conservation.

Complementary Initiatives – This initiative is supported by other national campaigns such as 'Catch the Rain' and the construction of 'Amrit Sarovars' (which has already seen over 68,000 reservoirs built or rejuvenated).

2. Authentication Mechanisms for Digital Payment Transactions

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued new guidelines mandating Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) for all digital payment transactions, which will be effective from April 1, 2026.

Key Features of the New Guidelines

Mandatory 2FA – All digital payments will require two distinct forms of user identification to be authorized.

Dynamic Factor Requirement – For transactions where a card is not physically present, at least one of the two authentication factors must be dynamic—that is, uniquely created for that specific transaction (like an OTP).

Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)

Definition – It is an identity and access management security method that adds an extra layer of protection beyond just a password, making it much harder for unauthorized users to gain access.

Mechanism – The process combines any two of the following three distinct factors –

1. Something you know – A password, PIN, or secret question.
2. Something you have – A physical device like a registered mobile phone or a hardware token.
3. Something you are – A biometric identifier like a fingerprint, facial recognition, or an iris scan.

3. World Food India (WFI) 2025

India recently hosted World Food India (WFI) 2025 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, a premier event for the global food processing industry.

About World Food India

Introduction – It is the flagship international event of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), first launched in 2017.

Aim – To showcase India's potential and position it as a Global Food Hub by attracting investments and fostering partnerships across the entire food value chain.

WFI 2025 Highlights

Participation – The event featured participation from over 90 countries and more than 2,000 exhibitors.

Partner and Focus Countries – New Zealand and Saudi Arabia were Partner Countries, while Japan, UAE, Vietnam, and Russia were designated as Focus Countries.

Strategic Importance – The event aligns with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision by promoting innovation, sustainability, and farmer income growth. It reinforces India's economic strength as the world's largest producer of milk, onions, and pulses, and the second largest in many other categories.

4. Foreigners Tribunals

The Supreme Court has decided to examine a petition that challenges the standard of proof required by Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) in Assam when determining a person's citizenship status.

About Foreigners Tribunals

Legal Basis – They are created under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, which was issued under the Foreigners Act, 1946.

Nature and Composition – FTs are quasi-judicial bodies. Their members are appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs and can be retired judges or experienced advocates.

Jurisdiction and Powers – Their sole function is to decide whether a person is a foreigner (illegal migrant) or not. They possess powers similar to a civil court, including summoning witnesses, taking evidence under oath, and ordering the production of documents.

5. Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recently cancelled the FCRA licence of the Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), an NGO founded by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk.

About FCRA, 2010

Aim – To regulate the acceptance and use of foreign contributions by Indian entities and to prohibit such funds from being used for activities detrimental to the national interest.

Key Provisions

Registration – Any NGO, trust, or society wanting to receive foreign funds must register with the MHA and obtain a valid FCRA certificate.

Prohibited Recipients – The Act prohibits certain individuals and entities from receiving foreign funds, including election candidates, journalists, judges, government servants, and political parties.

2020 Amendment – Key amendments prohibited the transfer of foreign funds (sub-granting) from one NGO to another and reduced the cap on using foreign funds for administrative expenses from 50% to 20%.

Monitoring – The MHA is the nodal ministry that monitors the implementation of the FCRA.

6. Coffee Board of India

The Coffee Board of India is conducting awareness programs for coffee growers to help them comply with the new EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which requires proof that coffee has not been grown on deforested land.

About the Coffee Board

Nature – It is a statutory organization established under the Coffee Act, 1942.

Nodal Ministry – It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key Functions – The Board focuses on research, development, market intelligence, promotion of Indian coffee, and welfare measures for coffee growers.

Key Facts about Indian Coffee

Global Standing – India is the seventh-largest coffee producer globally, with exports reaching \$1.29 billion in FY 2023–24.

Growing Regions – Indian coffee is primarily grown in the ecologically sensitive Western and Eastern Ghats.

Top Producing State – Karnataka is the largest coffee-producing state in India, followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.