

9. Short News

1. Mt. Aconcagua

Rank- Highest peak in South America and the highest mountain outside of Asia.

Geography- Located in the Andes range (Argentina), near the border with Chile.

Height- Approximately 6,961 meters (22,838 ft).

Tectonic Setting- Formed by the subduction of the Nazca Plate under the South American Plate.

Seven Summits- It represents South America in the "Seven Summits" challenge.

Geological Origin- It is of volcanic origin but is currently a dormant/extinct volcano.

2. Chicory

Definition- A plant whose root is roasted and ground to serve as a coffee additive or substitute.

Characteristics- Naturally caffeine-free with a woody, earthy taste; it provides a darker color to coffee.

New FSSAI Rule- All blended coffee packets must prominently display the chicory content percentage on the front of the pack.

Market Context- Approximately 75% of India's mass-market coffee is a coffee-chicory blend; the legal limit for chicory in such blends is 49%.

Economic Factor- Significantly cheaper than pure coffee beans, making it a popular cost-cutting additive for commercial brands.

3. Micro Minority Tag

Concept- Refers to very small communities within the six officially notified religious minorities seeking targeted welfare and protection.

Constitutional Status- The term "Micro Minority" is not explicitly recognized in the Constitution.

Legal Framework- Minority status is governed by the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

Syro-Malabar Church- A prominent Eastern Catholic Church in Kerala tracing its roots to St. Thomas the Apostle (evangelized India between 42-72 AD).

Current Issue- The Syro-Malabar Church is seeking this status to ensure equitable access to scholarships and institutional safeguards for its members.

4. Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2026

Nature- A joint Special Forces exercise between the Indian Army and the US Army (Green Berets).

16th Edition- Currently underway at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.

History- Inception in 2010; held annually, alternating between the two nations.

Objective- To improve interoperability and joint tactical drills between elite units.

Related Drills- Other India-US exercises include Yudh Abhyas (Army), Cope India (Air Force), and Malabar (Multilateral Navy).

5. Vasai Cathedral- UNESCO Award

Award- Won the Award of Merit at the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

History- The Our Lady of Grace Cathedral in Vasai (Maharashtra) is 475 years old, built during the Portuguese era.

Architecture- Portuguese Ecclesiastical style; built using traditional stone and mud mortar without modern cement.

Significance- Restored through a ₹4.5 crore project funded entirely by the local community, serving as a model for participatory conservation.

UNESCO Awards Categories-

1. Award of Excellence (Highest)
2. Award of Distinction
3. Award of Merit (Won by Vasai)
4. Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts

6. Parliamentary Friendship Groups (PFGs)

Initiative- 64 PFGs involving over 60 countries constituted by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

Goal- To institutionalize parliamentary diplomacy and maintain continuous dialogue with foreign legislatures.

Composition- 704 total MPs from both Houses; each group has 11 MPs and must include at least one woman.

Bipartisan Representation- Groups include members from both the Treasury (Government) and Opposition benches to reflect democratic pluralism.

Key Leaders- India-France- Shashi Tharoor

1. India-Israel- Ravi Shankar Prasad
2. India-USA- Baijayant Panda
3. India-Australia- Akhilesh Yadav

7. Overseas Citizenship of India

What is the OCI Scheme?

Origin- Launched in 2005 to connect the Indian diaspora (Persons of Indian Origin) with their roots.

Who is eligible? Any foreign citizen who was a citizen of India on or after January 26, 1950, or was eligible to become one at that time.

The Status- An OCI is not a dual citizen (India does not allow dual citizenship). They are foreign passport holders who are granted permanent residency-like benefits.

Core Benefits for OCI Holders

Lifelong Visa- They get a multi-purpose, multiple-entry lifelong visa to visit India.

Police Exemption- Unlike other foreigners, they do not need to register with local police (FRRO) regardless of the length of their stay.

Parity with NRIs- Traditionally, they enjoyed parity with Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in many economic and educational fields (though this was restricted in 2021).

Key Restrictions and Rules (Amended 2021)

The Ministry of Home Affairs updated the rules to treat OCIs more like foreign nationals in sensitive areas-

Special Permits Required- OCIs must get a "Special Permit" for-

1. Research or Missionary work.
2. Journalistic or Tablighi activities.
3. Visiting Protected, Restricted, or Prohibited areas (e.g., certain parts of NE India or border zones).

Economic Status- Under FEMA (2003), they are now largely treated as foreign nationals for financial and educational matters, ending their automatic parity with NRIs in these specific sectors.

Eligibility and Rights Limitations

Not everyone can become an OCI, and they do not enjoy full political rights-

Category	Restrictions
Banned Origins	Cannot apply if parents or grandparents were citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh.
Military Bar	Foreign military personnel (serving or retired) are ineligible.
Political Rights	No Right to Vote. Cannot be an MP, MLA, or hold constitutional posts (President, Judge, etc.).
Employment	Generally barred from government jobs.

The Supreme Court's Recent Ruling

The Court recently clarified the status of OCIs in the legal profession-

The Case- An OCI sought to practice law in India on par with NRIs.

The Verdict- The Court ruled that Citizenship is mandatory to enroll as an advocate under Section 24 of the Advocates Act.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

The Logic- OCI status provides "privileges," but it is not a substitute for citizenship. Since an OCI holds a foreign passport, they cannot demand the same professional rights as Indian citizens.

