



7. Short News

Force Majeure

Context- Amid the Iran–United States–Israel conflict (2026), Gulf nations invoked force majeure on energy exports due to war-induced disruptions.

About Force Majeure

1. Force majeure is a legal clause in contracts that allows parties to suspend or terminate obligations when extraordinary, uncontrollable events prevent performance without liability.
2. Origin- The term originates from French, meaning “superior force,” and is widely used in international trade, insurance, and commercial contracts.
3. Conditions for Invocation
 1. Events are beyond human control (war, natural disasters, government actions).
 2. The event is unforeseeable and unavoidable.
 3. It makes contractual performance impossible, not merely difficult.
 4. There is no reasonable alternative to fulfil obligations.

Significance in the Present Context

1. Energy Supply Disruptions- Gulf countries like Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait halted oil and gas exports due to risks around the Strait of Hormuz.
2. Global Market Impact- Supply shocks triggered price volatility, with oil prices surging amid uncertainty.
3. Domino Effect- Buyers and downstream companies also invoke force majeure, disrupting global supply chains.
4. Economic Implications- Leads to inflationary pressures, energy insecurity, and increased reliance on strategic reserves.

Force majeure, though a contractual tool, has become a critical factor linking geopolitical conflicts with global economic stability.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025

Context- Sahitya Akademi announced the 2025 awards across 24 languages, recognising outstanding literary works.

About Sahitya Akademi Award

1. The Sahitya Akademi Award is India's premier literary honour, recognising outstanding books of literary merit in languages recognised by the Akademi.
2. Origin- Instituted in 1954, the award aims to promote Indian literature and foster cultural unity through linguistic diversity.
3. Organised By- It is conferred annually by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, functioning under the Ministry of Culture.
4. Eligibility and Categories- Awards are given only to India Citizen who has published work across 24 Indian languages in genres such as Poetry, Novel, Short Stories, Essays, Literary Criticism, Autobiography and Memoir.
 1. They are awarded for 22 languages recognized under the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution plus English and Rajasthani
 2. Awards were finalised by independent juries for each language.



3. Each award carries a copper plaque, shawl, and ₹1 lakh prize.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025

1. A total of 24 authors were awarded across recognised languages.
2. Categories included 8 poetry, 6 short stories, 4 novels, 2 essays, 1 literary criticism, 1 autobiography, and 2 memoirs.
3. Prominent Awardees
 1. Navtej Sarna (English, *Crimson Spring* – Novel)
 2. Mamta Kalia (Hindi, *Jeete Jee Allahabad* – Memoir)
 3. Sa. Tamilselvan (Tamil, Literary Criticism)
4. Significance
 1. Reflects India's linguistic and cultural diversity.
 2. Encourages regional literature and new voices.
 3. Strengthens literary traditions and national integration.

Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary

Context- A faunal survey by the Zoological Survey of India has discovered 9 new species in Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary.

1. The study recorded a total of 977 species across 21 faunal groups, highlighting the sanctuary as a major biodiversity hotspot.
2. Out of these, 511 species are vertebrates, including bird species, reptiles, mammals, amphibians, and fish species.
3. 466 species are invertebrates including butterflies, spiders, land snails, and aquatic insects, reflecting a healthy and balanced ecosystem.

About the Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary

1. Location- Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Tamil Nadu in the southern Western Ghats. It is part of the Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve, notified in 2021.
2. Ecosystem- The sanctuary includes diverse habitats such as montane shola forests, grasslands, and tropical evergreen forests.
3. Biodiversity- It supports rich biodiversity, including numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.
4. The region exhibits high endemism, with many species unique to the Western Ghats ecosystem.
5. The sanctuary plays a key role in watershed protection, ecological balance, and climate regulation.

New Species discovered in Megamalai

1. These species mainly belong to lesser-known invertebrate groups, indicating underexplored biodiversity.
2. Key examples include a jumping spider, mayflies, a damselfly, bark lice, and cockroach species.
3. Some species are endemic to the Megamalai-Periyar region, showing high regional uniqueness.
4. Many discovered species acts as bio-indicators, helping assess water quality and ecosystem health.

HONEY BEE ATTACKS

Context- Rising incidents of honey bee attacks across India, including fatalities, have prompted Uttar Pradesh to consider classifying such attacks as a state-notified disaster.

About Honey Bee Attack



1. Honey bees attack mainly as a defensive response to protect their hive, triggered by disturbance or perceived threat rather than unprovoked aggression.
2. Key Species Involved- The primary species involved is *Apis dorsata*, which builds large open hives and forms highly defensive colonies.
3. Common Triggers- Include loud noise, throwing objects, drones, fire, smoke, and close human proximity, especially while trekking or near forts.
4. Sensitivity to Smells- Bees are also sensitive to strong smells like perfumes, lotions, and oils, which can attract and agitate them.
5. Health Risks- A swarm attack is dangerous because multiple stings can cause toxic shock, and in some individuals may trigger Anaphylaxis, which can be fatal.

Apis dorsata (Giant Rock Bee)

1. *Apis dorsata* is a species of wild honey bee commonly found in South and Southeast Asia.
2. Nesting Behaviour- It builds large, single, open-air hives on cliffs, tall trees, and structures like forts and buildings.
3. Colony Size- Colonies are very large (up to ~60,000 bees), making their swarms highly powerful.
4. Defensive Nature- The species is highly defensive and aggressive when disturbed, quickly mobilising large numbers of bees.
5. Ecological Importance- They play an important role in pollination and ecosystem balance, but pose risks when their hives are disturbed.

Dimethyl Ether (DME)

Context- Scientists at CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory developed indigenous DME technology, aiming to scale production amid LPG shortages in India.

About Dimethyl Ether (DME)

1. Dimethyl Ether (DME) is a clean-burning synthetic fuel considered a viable alternative to LPG and diesel.
2. Chemical Properties
 1. Chemical formula- CH_3OCH_3 (simplest ether).
 2. Produced mainly via dehydration of methanol.
 3. Burns with low emissions—minimal soot, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur oxides (SO_x), and particulate matter.
 4. Has high cetane number with efficient combustion.
 - Higher Cetane number means shorter ignition delay, faster ignition, and smoother operation.
 5. Can be stored and transported similarly to LPG under moderate pressure.
3. Applications
 1. Used as a cooking fuel substitute for LPG.
 2. Alternative fuel in diesel engines and power generation.
 3. Acts as a propellant in aerosols and in industrial applications.

Significance of Scaling DME Production

1. Energy Security- Reduces dependence on imported LPG, especially during supply disruptions.
2. Environmental Benefits- Supports clean energy transition with lower emissions.



3. Industrial Growth– Promotes indigenous technology and manufacturing ecosystem, enabling large-scale commercial deployment.

Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden

Context– Recently, Jammu & Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah inaugurated Asia’s largest tulip garden in Srinagar, marking the start of spring tourism.

About Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden

1. The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden is the largest tulip garden in Asia, showcasing millions of flowers annually.
 1. It was established in 2007 to boost tourism and floriculture in Kashmir.
 2. Tulip varieties are largely sourced from the Netherlands.
2. The Tulip Festival is an annual celebration organized by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir at the Garden.
3. Location– Situated at the foothills of the Zabarwan Range, overlooking the Dal Lake in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir.
4. Features
 1. Spread over ~74 acres with 1.8 million tulips.
 2. Hosts 70–75 tulip varieties along with hyacinths, daffodils, muscari, ranunculus.
 3. Bloom lasts 3–4 weeks during spring.
 4. Includes Tulip Festival, online booking, and improved amenities.
5. Significance
 1. Marks the beginning of spring tourism season in Kashmir.
 2. Enhances eco-tourism, local economy, and employment.
 3. Promotes Kashmir as a global floriculture destination.

About Tulips (*Tulipa gesneriana*)

1. Tulips belong to genus *Tulipa* under the Liliaceae family and are popular ornamental flowering plants.
2. Native Habitat
 1. Native to Central Asia (Pamir, Hindu Kush, Tian Shan regions).
 2. Later spread to Persia, Ottoman Empire, and Europe.
3. Growing Conditions
 1. Require cold dormancy (2–9°C) followed by cool spring.
 2. Prefer well-drained sandy loam soil; sensitive to waterlogging.
4. Key Features
 1. Cup/star-shaped flowers with six tepals.
 2. Wide color range.
 3. Grow from bulbs planted in autumn, bloom in spring, and become dormant in summer.

USCIRF

Context– India rejected the latest report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), calling it biased and based on selective narratives.

1. The 2026 Annual USCIRF Report has once again recommended that India be designated as a “Country of Particular Concern”.

About USCIRF



1. USCIRF is an independent U.S. federal body that monitors religious freedom globally.
2. It was created in 1998 under the International Religious Freedom Act.
3. Annual Reports- Publishes annual reports assessing religious freedom conditions worldwide.
4. Parameter of Evaluation
 1. Severity of Violations- Whether religious freedom violations are systematic, ongoing, and egregious, including violence, imprisonment, torture, or discrimination.
 2. State Involvement or Tolerance- Violations are committed by the state or tolerated/ignored by authorities.
 3. Legal and Policy Framework- Domestic laws restrict religious freedom and their alignment with international human rights standards.
 4. Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)- Protection of freedom to practice, change, and propagate religion as per Article 18 of UDHR.
 5. Treatment of Minorities- Extent of discrimination or protection provided to religious minorities in public and private spheres.
 6. Trend Over Time- Religious freedom conditions are improving or deteriorating based on consistent patterns over time.
5. Recommends classification of countries as-
 1. Countries of Particular Concern (CPC)- Designated for countries where systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom are observed.
 2. Special Watch List (SWL)- Includes countries where serious violations of religious freedom exist but do not meet the CPC threshold.
6. Independent Body- Established by the U.S. Congress; functions independently of the State Department.
 1. Mandate based on international human rights standards, including Article 18 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
 - Article 18 of the UDHR guarantees everyone the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
7. Non-Binding Recommendations- Provides policy recommendations to the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
 1. Its recommendations are advisory and non-binding.

Key Concerns Raised by India

1. Biased and Selective Reporting- India argues USCIRF relies on questionable sources and ideological narratives, not objective facts.
2. Selective Targeting of India- Repeated focus on India seen as motivated criticism, undermining USCIRF's credibility.
3. Ignoring Diaspora Issues- India highlights attacks on Indian diaspora and Hindu temples in the U.S., which receive inadequate attention.

CUBA

Context- Amid a nationwide blackout triggered by U.S. oil blockade, U.S. President Donald Trump suggested "taking Cuba," intensifying geopolitical tensions.

About Cuba



1. Introduction- Cuba, with capital Havana, is the largest island nation in the Caribbean and part of the Greater Antilles archipelago.
2. Location- Cuba is located in the northern Caribbean, at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea.
3. Borders (Maritime)- Cuba shares maritime boundaries with the United States, Mexico, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Haiti.
4. Archipelagic Structure- Cuba comprises the main island, Isla de la Juventud, and over 4,000 smaller islands and cays.
5. Relief & Mountains- Cuba features plains and hills with mountain ranges like Sierra Maestra, hosting its highest peak Pico Turquino.
6. Climate- Cuba experiences a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons, influenced by maritime conditions and prone to hurricanes.
7. Vegetation & Land Use- Fertile plains support agriculture, while forests and mangroves dominate coastal and mountainous regions.
8. Water Bodies- Major rivers include the Cauto River and Toa River, supporting irrigation and ecosystems.
9. Resources- Cuba is rich in minerals like cobalt, nickel, iron ore, petroleum, and has significant agricultural and forest resources.
10. Geopolitical Importance- Cuba's proximity to the United States and location near key sea lanes makes it a critical geopolitical and maritime hub in the Caribbean.

