

## 7. Short News

### 1. Latvia & Political Crisis

Latvian Prime Minister Evika Silina announced her resignation after her left-leaning coalition partner, the Progressives Party, pulled support from the government following controversies over stray Ukrainian drones.

**Geographical Context** – It is a small country located in Northern Europe, forming one of the three Baltic states along with Estonia and Lithuania.

**Borders & Ties** – Shares physical borders with Estonia, Russia, Belarus, and Lithuania; holds linguistic links with Lithuania and historical/religious ties with Estonia.

**Capital City** – Riga is the largest city, internationally celebrated for its historic Old Town and striking Art Nouveau architecture (a UNESCO World Heritage site).

**Global Alliances** – Demonstrating its shift from its Soviet past, Latvia officially joined both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) in 2004.

**Recent Tensions** – Regional security fears have escalated after multiple stray military drones crossed into its airspace near the Russian border.

### 2. Bhojshala Complex Dispute

The Madhya Pradesh High Court officially declared the long-disputed Bhojshala complex in Dhar district to be a Hindu temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati).

**Historical Origins** – Founded around 1000–1055 A.D. by Raja Bhoja, the most prominent ruler of the Paramara dynasty, as a prestigious center for Sanskrit learning.

**Structural Change** – The site was later converted into the Kamal Maula Mosque under Muslim rule, yet it physically retained key elements from its original layout.

**Architectural Elements** – The current mosque structure still houses carved pillars, decorative ceilings, and highly valuable stone inscriptions from the original college.

**Key Inscriptions** – Epigraphical finds at the site include structured Sanskrit grammar tables, hymns dedicated to Vishnu, and fragments of the Sanskrit drama Karpuramanjari.

**Court Directives** – The High Court quashed a 2003 order that allowed Friday Namaz, handed supervisory control to the ASI, and directed the state to consider alternative land for the local Muslim community.

### 3. PM-SHRI Schools Scheme

The government of West Bengal has signed a formal agreement with the Central Government to implement the PM-SHRI schools' scheme within the state.

**Core Objective** – Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) aims to upgrade existing elementary, secondary, and senior secondary schools into high-quality model schools.

**Governance & Reach** – The initiative encompasses diverse institutions managed by the central government, state governments, and various local administrative bodies.

**Financial Structure** – It functions as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a massive budget allocation of ₹27,360 crore spanning five years (2022–23 to 2026–27).

**NEP 2020 Implementation** – These schools will explicitly showcase all key features of the National Education Policy 2020 and serve as mentors to nearby local schools.

**Modern & Green Upgrades** – Focuses on creating "Green Schools" (solar power, waste management) alongside integrating modern ICT smart classrooms and digital libraries.

### 4. Jaggery Sector in India

Jaggery (gur) production has taken center stage as a vital agro-processing industry driving value addition and boosting rural livelihood incomes.

**Nature of Product** – It is a traditional, unrefined, completely natural sweetener manufactured by boiling and concentrating raw sugarcane juice without chemical filters.

**Deep Historic Roots** – Indigenous to India, its production tracks back to the Vedic period (1400–1000 BCE) alongside early sugarcane agriculture in northeastern India.

**Global Knowledge Transfer** – Historical texts show that in 647 AD, a Chinese imperial mission visited Magadha specifically to study advanced Indian sugarcane processing methods.

**Dominant Production** – India holds a massive global monopoly, manufacturing over 70% of the world's total jaggery supply.

**Leading Indian States** – Within domestic lines, Uttar Pradesh leads production with 48.5%, followed closely by Maharashtra (24.1%) and Karnataka (10.5%).

## 5. Saranda Forest & Tribal Rights

The Jharkhand government filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against an order directing it to notify the Saranda elephant forests as a wildlife sanctuary.

**Geographical Magnitude** – Located near Jamshedpur, Saranda stands proudly as the single largest Sal Forest reserve in Asia.

**Topography & Connectivity** – Famously called the "land of seven hundred hills," it links green patches across Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh to form a massive wildlife corridor.

**Rich Biodiversity** – The ecosystem belongs to the Chotanagpur biogeographic zone, acting as a home to endangered flying lizards and migrating herds of elephants.

**Tribal Dependence** – Supports several indigenous communities (Ho, Munda, Uraon, and Santhal) who survive by gathering wild forest produce like honey, mahua, and bamboo.

**Cultural Sanctuary** – Holds immense spiritual value due to sacred groves known locally as "Sarna," where tribal communities host ancient rituals tied directly to nature.

## 6. Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme

Recent government hikes on import duties for precious metals have restarted a heated policy debate regarding the revival of the now-discontinued SGB scheme.

**Basic Definition** – Launched in late 2015, SGBs are state-backed securities denominated in grams of physical gold, issued by the RBI on behalf of the Government.

**Core Benefit** – The program allows retail individuals to safely invest in gold market values without the operational security risks of holding physical bars or jewellery.

**Investor Payouts** – Subscribed individuals receive a guaranteed fixed interest rate of 2.5% per annum (paid semi-annually) alongside market-linked gold capital returns.

**Maturity Conditions** – The bonds carry a structural maturity lifecycle of eight years, with early exit options allowed after the fifth year.

**Tax Exemptions** – To attract individual investors, any capital gains accumulated at the final eight-year redemption phase are fully exempt from long-term capital gains tax.

## 7. Ebola Outbreak & Global Emergency

The WHO has declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) due to a deadly Ebola outbreak spreading across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and reaching Uganda.

**Medical Profile** – Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a highly severe, frequently fatal zoonotic illness that first emerged in Central Africa in 1976.

**Pathways of Infection** – Transmitted initially from infected wild hosts like fruit bats to humans, it spreads within communities through direct contact with infected blood and bodily fluids.

**The Bundibugyo Strain** – While the Zaire strain has active vaccines, the current 2026 outbreak is driven by the *Bundibugyo ebolavirus* variant, which lacks approved vaccines or targeted therapies.

**Clinical Symptoms** – The viral incubation period ranges from 2 to 21 days, manifesting as sudden fever, extreme fatigue, severe vomiting, and internal/external hemorrhaging.

**Compounding Challenges** – Conflict, local militia presence, and regional displacement in the eastern DRC are making it extremely difficult for rapid response teams to isolate cases.

## 8. SMILE Space Mission

The European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) are jointly advancing the development of the cutting-edge SMILE space mission.

**Acronym Meaning** – SMILE stands for Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer.

**Primary Science Objective** – It aims to closely track how the stream of charged solar particles (solar wind) collides with the Earth's protective magnetic shield.

**Space Weather Forecasting** – By monitoring coronal mass ejections (CMEs), the satellite will significantly enhance global capabilities to predict intense, electronic-disrupting solar storms.

**Pioneering Imaging** – It is specifically designed as the first spacecraft to map Earth's magnetic boundaries (the magnetopause and polar cusps) using specialized soft X-ray cameras.

**Advanced Instrument Array** – The spacecraft payload features four specialized instruments – the Soft X-ray Imager (SXI), Ultraviolet Imager (UVI), Light Ion Analyser (LIA), and a Magnetometer (MAG).

## 9. Undersea Cable Threats

Rising geopolitical friction around the strategic Strait of Hormuz has spotlighted systemic vulnerabilities threatening India's international internet and cloud operations.

**What They Are** – Undersea (submarine) cables are dense networks of fibre-optic wires laid deep on ocean floors that form the backbone carrying over 95% of international internet traffic.

**Superiority over Satellites** – Submarine infrastructure is globally favoured because it delivers exponentially higher data capacities at faster speeds and significantly lower costs than satellites.

**Chokepoint Vulnerability** – Critical international networks connecting India to West Asia and Europe—such as FALCON, GBI, and Tata-TGN Gulf—all travel directly through the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

**Inherent Risks** – Because these lines sit on ocean floors, they remain highly prone to physical damage via maritime ship anchors, deep-sea fishing, earthquakes, or intentional state sabotage.

**Strategic Security Concerns** – Any localized disruption in these maritime channels can cripple digital communication, paralyze stock exchanges, and stall domestic banking services.

## 10. Million Minds Tech Park & GREMI City Campus

The union home minister formally inaugurated the newly constructed Million Minds Tech Park and the GREMI City Campus in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

**The Tech Park Mission** – Designed to build a world-class workspace to nurture entrepreneurship, scale startups, and attract multinational Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

**Niche Technology Domains** – The park focuses heavily on advanced deep-tech areas, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing, semiconductors, and space technologies.

**Economic Footprint** – Spread over a vast 65-acre complex, the infrastructure layout is projected to create more than 63,000 high-value technology jobs within the next five years.

**GREMI Campus Focus** – The Ganesh Real Estate Management Institute (GREMI) was built to supply specialized leadership and professional talent for urban planning and real estate.

**Regional Growth Ambition** – The twin projects are strategically placed to elevate Ahmedabad into the elite tier of Indian technology capitals alongside Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

## 11. Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) Programme

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid the foundation stone for a massive, ₹15,803-crore AMCA core integration and flight-testing facility at Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh.

**Aircraft Classification** – AMCA is India's indigenous 5th-generation, twin-engine, stealth multirole fighter jet designed exclusively for the Indian Air Force.

**Development Agencies** – The aircraft is being jointly designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

**Planned Variants** – The initial AMCA Mk1 will run on imported American GE-F414 engines, while the future AMCA Mk2 will use an indigenous engine currently under development.

**Puttaparthi Site Scale** – The newly initiated complex spans 650 acres and places India into a very selective, elite club of nations capable of handling complex 5th-generation flight validations.

**Economic Ripple Effect** – The core installation will create 7,500 direct manufacturing jobs, with connected ancillary defence industries expected to attract up to ₹1 lakh crore in local investments.

## 12. Committee on Empowerment of Women (2026-27)

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla officially constituted the parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women for the working legislative term of 2026-27.

**Historical Timeline** – The committee was established for the first time on April 29, 1997, during the tenure of the 11th Lok Sabha.

**Structural Composition** – It is a joint parliamentary body made up of 30 members – 20 nominated from the Lok Sabha and 10 nominated from the Rajya Sabha.

**Tenure Details** – The operational lifespan of the committee is strictly capped at one year, requiring a mandatory fresh reconstitution by parliament every year.

**Non-Partisan Mandate** – Selected members work collectively across political party divisions to critique, evaluate, and fine-tune central welfare policies for women.

**2026-27 Leadership & Profile** – Prominent BJP MP Daggubati Purandeswari has been appointed as the Chairperson, alongside celebrated members like Sudha Murty, P.T. Usha, and Hema Malini.

## 13. Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

The rapid cross-border spread of the Bundibugyo Ebola variant in Central Africa forced the WHO Director-General to invoke its highest global alert level by declaring a PHEIC.

**Legal Framework** – A PHEIC is a formal, legally binding emergency declaration governed under the guidelines of the International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005.

**Definition Criteria** – It is triggered only when an extraordinary health crisis poses a documented risk of international disease spread, necessitating a unified global response.

**Activation Protocol** – The final declaration authority rests solely with the WHO Director-General, acting directly on data provided by an emergency committee of medical experts.

**Operational Impact** – Once active, it legally opens up pathways for international funding, coordinates cross-border quarantine protocols, and deploys global medical supply pipelines.

## 14. Advanced Defence & Drone Hub Projects in Andhra Pradesh

Alongside the AMCA foundation ceremony, the Union government initiated four major defense projects and eight drone initiatives to turn the region into a defense manufacturing capital.

**Investment Metrics** – These allied projects are bringing in an estimated immediate investment of ₹4,145 crore and are poised to create 6,000 technical industrial jobs.

**Kurnool Drone City** – A group of eight domestic drone manufacturing companies have officially signed pacts to set up a massive "Drone Hub" complex in Kurnool.

**Naval Weapons Production** – The foundation stone was laid for a ₹480-crore Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) facility in Anakapalli district to build advanced underwater naval combat systems.

**Defense Energetics Unit** – Agneyastra Energetics (a subsidiary of Bharat Forge) is establishing a massive ammunition energetics plant with a targeted capital layout of ₹1,500 crore.

**Policy Vision** – These combined aerospace installations directly fulfil India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat mission by shifting domestic military reliance away from heavy foreign imports.