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7. Short News

Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra

Context – Recently, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched “Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra.

About Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra

1. It is India's first nationwide AI-powered WhatsApp chatbot that provides free, multilingual, 24×7 research-based advisory services to oilseed farmers on crop cultivation and management.
2. Developed By – Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) through ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR).
3. Launch – Unveiled during the National Oilseeds Conference, New Delhi.
4. Objective – Enhance oilseed productivity and support India's efforts to reduce dependence on edible oil imports.

Key Features of Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra

1. Multilingual Access – Farmers can interact in any Indian language.
2. Instant Advisory – Provides real-time responses using AI-powered knowledge systems, free of cost.
3. No App Installation – Operates entirely within Whatsapp, farmers need no special app or internet browser
4. Crop Coverage – Covers major oilseed crops such as groundnut, mustard, sesame, sunflower, soybean, niger, and others.
5. Comprehensive Guidance – Offers advice on – Variety selection, Crop management practices, Pest and disease control, Irrigation management, post-harvest handling, seed availability.
6. Trusted Scientific Knowledge – Reliable and research-based guidance backed by ICAR-National Soybean Research Institute (ICAR-NSRI), ICAR-Indian Institute of Groundnut Research (ICAR-IIGR), ICAR-Indian Institute of Rapeseed and Mustard Research (ICAR-IIRMR) etc and other knowledge partners.

Higher Ethanol-Blended Petrol Exempted from Central Excise Duty

Context – The Government of India has exempted petrol blended with 22%–30% ethanol (E22, E25, E27, E30) from Central Excise Duty on the blending process.

1. Purpose – To avoid double taxation, as petrol already attracts excise duty and ethanol attracts GST; blending could otherwise result in a dual levy.
2. E85 Fuel – The move comes shortly after India's launch of E85 fuel on 5 June 2026; E85 is reportedly ₹20/litre cheaper than E20 fuel.

Benefits of the Move

1. Promotes Biofuel Adoption – Facilitates future rollout of higher ethanol blends beyond E20.
2. Enhances Energy Security – Reduces dependence on imported crude oil and supports energy self-reliance.
3. Supports Farmers – Increases demand for sugarcane, maize, and grain-based ethanol feedstocks.
4. Attracts Investment – Encourages investments in ethanol production, storage, logistics, and flex-fuel vehicles.

5. Environmental Benefits – Higher ethanol blending can lower fossil fuel use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Timeline of Ethanol Blending in India

1. 2001 – Pilot ethanol blending programme launched in select States to reduce crude oil dependence and promote biofuels.
2. 2003 – Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme formally launched by the Government of India.
3. 2014 – Ethanol blending stood at just 1.53%; major policy reforms such as administered pricing and feedstock diversification were initiated thereafter.
4. 2021 – Government advanced the E20 (20% blending) target from 2030 to 2025-26, accelerating the biofuel roadmap.
5. 2024-25 – India achieved 20% ethanol blending (E20) five years ahead of schedule, becoming the world's third-largest ethanol producer after the US and Brazil.
6. June 2026 – India launched E85 fuel (85% ethanol + 15% petrol) for Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs), marking the next phase of ethanol adoption.

India–Nepal Cross-Border Remittance Mechanism

Context – India and Nepal have launched a real-time cross-border remittance mechanism by linking India's UPI with Nepal's National Payments Interface.

About India–Nepal Cross-Border Remittance Mechanism

1. India and Nepal have operationalised a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Cross-Border Remittance Mechanism to enable seamless digital money transfers between citizens of both countries.
2. The system establishes a direct linkage between India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Nepal's National Payments Interface (NPI).
3. It allows users to transfer money instantly, securely, and in real time through mobile banking applications and digital wallets.
4. Implemented By – NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and Nepal Clearing House Limited (NCHL)
 1. NIPL is the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India responsible for expanding UPI and other Indian payment systems globally.
 2. It collaborated with NIPL to establish the cross-border payment corridor.
5. Key Features
 1. Direct UPI–NPI Connectivity – The mechanism enables direct account-to-account transfers between India and Nepal without relying on traditional banking intermediaries.
 2. Seamless Travel and Remittances – Indian and Nepali citizens can transfer money conveniently without carrying physical cash.
 3. Secure and Real-Time Payments – The linkage ensures secure, transparent, and real-time transfer of funds. It supports financial inclusion by expanding access to affordable digital payment services.
6. Significance – The initiative deepens financial connectivity, promotes digital inclusion, and strengthens India–Nepal economic and people-to-people ties.

About UPI Global Expansion

1. UPI is currently accepted in the following nine international economies.
Singapore, UAE, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Bhutan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia.
2. It has emerged as a key pillar of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) diplomacy.

Bedouin Communities

Context – Amnesty International has accused Israel of forcibly displacing Bedouin and Palestinian herding communities in the West Bank, alleging a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Allegations Regarding Bedouin Communities in the West Bank

1. Forced Displacement and Settler Violence – According to UN data cited in the report, more than 100 communities have experienced full or partial displacement since 2023.
2. Expansion of Settlements – The report highlights the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements and herding outposts, particularly in Area C of the West Bank.
 1. Critics argue that these developments restrict Palestinian access to land and livelihoods.
3. International Law Concerns – Amnesty describes the displacement as a form of forcible transfer and alleges violations of international humanitarian law.
 1. Israel rejects such allegations and maintains that its security forces act against unlawful violence whenever necessary.

About Bedouin and Palestinian Herding Communities

1. Bedouins are traditionally nomadic Arab pastoral communities found across West Asia and North Africa.
2. Traditional Livelihood – Herding communities primarily raise sheep, goats, and camels, relying on grazing lands and access to water resources.
 1. Their economic and cultural identity is closely linked to pastoralism.
 2. These communities often live-in small encampments and depend on open grazing areas.
3. Presence in the West Bank – Many Bedouin communities reside in the semi-arid regions of the West Bank, particularly in Area C, which remains under Israeli security and administrative control.
4. Socio-Economic Vulnerability – Their mobile lifestyle and dependence on common grazing lands make them particularly vulnerable to displacement.
5. Significance – The issue highlights the intersection of humanitarian concerns, land rights, settlement policies, and the broader Israel–Palestine conflict.

International Legal Framework on Genocide

1. Geneva Conventions (1949) – The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols establish rules for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts and prohibit acts such as mass killings, torture, and inhumane treatment that may contribute to genocide.
2. Genocide Convention (1948) – The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) defines genocide and obligates States to prevent and punish acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.
3. Rome Statute (1998) – The Rome Statute of 1998, which established the International Criminal Court, classifies genocide as one of the gravest international crimes and empowers the Court to prosecute individuals responsible for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

13th BRICS Urbanisation Forum

Context – India inaugurated the 13th BRICS Urbanisation Forum in New Delhi under its BRICS Chairship 2026, focusing on inclusive and resilient urban futures. The 18th BRICS Summit will be hosted in New Delhi, India, from September 12–13, 2026.

About BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2026

1. The 13th BRICS Urbanisation Forum was held on 11–12 June 2026 at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, New Delhi, under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

2. Objective - To strengthen cooperation among BRICS nations on sustainable urban development and governance.siw
3. Host - India hosted the Forum for the fourth time after New Delhi (2013), Visakhapatnam (2016), and the virtual edition (2021).
4. Theme - "Cities for People - BRICS Cooperation for Inclusive and Resilient Urban Futures."
5. Participants - The Forum brought together ministers and officials from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the UAE, and Indonesia.