

7. Short News

1. Dolphin Population Survey

The second rangewide population estimation of riverine and estuarine dolphins in India was launched from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, under Project Dolphin. The first nationwide dolphin population estimates were released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the National Board for Wildlife meeting in Gir (March 2024) Gujarat.

About the Survey

Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Nodal Agency- The survey is being coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun

Collaborating Partners- The exercise is being coordinated by the WII, in collaboration with State Forest Departments and conservation partners including WWF India, Aaranyak and the Wildlife Trust of India

Geographical Coverage-

1. **Phase One-** Main stem of the Ganga from Bijnor to Ganga Sagar and Indus River.
2. **Phase Two-** Brahmaputra River, Major tributaries of the Ganga, Sundarbans, River systems in Odisha.

Species Covered

1. Primary Species- Ganges River Dolphin and Indus River Dolphin
2. New Inclusion- For the first time, the survey will also include the Irrawaddy Dolphin in the Sundarbans and Odisha

Findings from the Previous Survey (2021–2023)

Population Estimate- Around 6,327 riverine dolphins were recorded.

Distribution- Ganges River Dolphins in the Ganga, Yamuna, Chambal, Gandak, Ghaghara, Kosi, Mahananda and Brahmaputra systems. A small population of Indus River Dolphins in the Beas

High-Concentration States- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar recorded the highest numbers, followed by West Bengal and Assam, highlighting the importance of the Gangetic basin.

About Project Dolphin

Project Dolphin is a national conservation initiative of the Government of India aimed at the protection and conservation of both riverine and oceanic dolphin species found in Indian waters.

Launch- 15 August 2020 by PM Narendra Modi

Duration- The project is envisaged as a long-term 10-year initiative

Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Community Participation- The project promotes the involvement of local communities, fishermen, and other stakeholders, recognising their role in reducing human-induced threats and ensuring sustainable conservation outcomes

2. Research, Development & Innovation (RDI) Funding Scheme

The deployment of funding under the Research, Development & Innovation (RDI) fund for industry-backed projects is set to begin by the end of January 2026.

About the Research, Development & Innovation (RDI) Funding

Purpose- It aims to fund high-risk, high-impact research while fostering collaborations between laboratories, startups, and industry.

Corpus- The RDI scheme has a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore.

Launch- The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in July 2025 and formally launched in November 2025.

Nodal Ministry- The scheme is implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Funding Mechanism- Two-Tiered Mechanism-

1. A Special Purpose Fund (SPF) held under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) custodianship.
2. Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) who allocate funds to projects.

First Second-Level Fund Managers- The Technology Development Board (TDB) and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have been approved as the first SLFMs under the RDI Fund.

3. Each will receive an initial allocation of ₹2,000 crore in the first quarter (₹4,000 crore total) to begin issuing calls for proposals from startups, companies, and industry.
4. TDB- Projects across all RDI Sunrise and strategic sectors.

BIRAC- Projects in biotechnology and allied areas.

Focus on Industry-Backed Projects & High TRLs- The RDI funding will focus on innovation-driven ventures and projects backed by industry that have crossed Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 or higher.

5. High TRL means projects that have moved beyond early proof-of-concept into development and scaling.

Priority Areas & Objectives- The RDI Scheme is designed to

1. Encourage private sector participation in research and innovation.
2. Finance transformative technologies and high-impact ventures.
3. Promote strategic sectors such as energy, climate, deep technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, digital economy, and more.
4. Strengthen technology self-reliance and global competitiveness.

Strategic Oversight- The scheme's strategic direction is provided by the Governing Board of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) (chaired by the Prime Minister).

3. Ev Causing Copper Crunch

Global EV sales rose from 0.55 million (2015) to ~20 million (2025), pushing EV-related copper demand above 1.28 million tonnes. Charging infrastructure and grid upgrades further amplify copper consumption beyond vehicles themselves.

EV Influence on Copper Demand - Electric vehicles require 4–5 times more copper than internal combustion engine vehicles due to batteries, motors, wiring, and power electronics. Copper demand elasticity with EV sales has mostly remained above 1, indicating demand growth faster than vehicle adoption.

About Copper

Copper (Cu) is a critical industrial and strategic metal, indispensable for electrification, renewable energy systems, and modern infrastructure.

Major Ores- Chalcocite (Cu_2S), Chalcocite (Cu_2S), Bornite, Malachite

Properties- Excellent electrical and thermal conductivity. It is highly ductile, malleable, corrosion-resistant and easily recyclable

Applications

1. Electrical wiring, EV batteries and motors
2. Power grids, transformers, and charging stations
3. Electronics, construction, renewable energy systems

Global Production

1. Major producers are Chile, Peru, China, DR Congo and the United States.
2. Chile is the world's largest copper producer (~27% of global output). Chile hosts the world's largest mines Escondido and Collahuasi.

Production in India

1. Major Deposits- Singhbhum (Jharkhand), Balaghat (Madhya Pradesh), Jhunjhunu & Alwar (Rajasthan).
2. Minor Deposits- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu.
3. Largest Producer- Madhya Pradesh is India's largest copper producer accounting for around 70% of the nation's copper concentrate production. Copper has emerged as the backbone of the EV-led energy transition, making resource security, recycling, and innovation central to future decarbonisation efforts.

4. Central Silk Board

The Ministry of Textiles has enhanced the financial approval limit of the Central Silk Board (CSB) from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore.

About Central Silk Board

Statutory Body- Established in 1948 by an Act of Parliament (Central Silk Board Act, 1948)

Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Textiles

Headquarters- Bangalore, Karnataka

Mandate

1. Research and development in sericulture
2. Technology dissemination
3. Quality improvement
4. Promotion of silk production and exports

Silk Sector in India

Global Position- India is the second-largest producer of silk in the world and also the largest Consumer of Silk.

Livelihood Support- Provides employment to about 9.76 million people, mainly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Production Trends- 41,121 metric tonnes in FY25

Mulberry silk accounts for the largest share.

Major Producing States- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir. Non-mulberry silks are produced in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Orissa and north-eastern states.

Export Performance

1. Exports in FY25- Silk and silk products worth USD 246 million.
2. Export Basket- Raw silk, silk yarn, fabrics, garments, silk waste and handloom products.
3. Key Export Markets- UAE, United States, China, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong and Canada

Types of Silk

Mulberry Silk

1. Mulberry silk is produced from silkworms that feed exclusively on mulberry leaves.
2. It is known for its softness, smooth texture, and high natural sheen, making it ideal for luxury sarees and premium textiles.

3. Nearly 92% of India's total raw silk production comes from mulberry silk.

Non-Mulberry Silk

1. Non-mulberry silk, also called Vanya silk, is obtained from wild silkworms that feed on forest trees such as oak, castor, and arjun.
2. It has a course, earthy texture with relatively lower lustre, but is valued for its strength, durability, and eco-friendly nature.

