

7. Short news

1. Exercise Khanjar

The 13th edition of the joint military Exercise KHANJAR (KHANJAR-XIII) has begun between India and Kyrgyzstan.

About Exercise KHANJAR

Initiated in 2011, it is an annual exercise conducted alternately in both countries.

Location- the 13th edition of the Exercise KHANJAR took place in Misamari, Assam

Participating Forces- Involves elite Special Forces units, India's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Kyrgyzstan's Scorpion Brigade.

Primary Aim- To enhance interoperability between the Special Forces of both nations.

The exercise focuses on joint operations in urban warfare and counter-terrorism scenarios under a United Nations mandate.

Broader Objectives- Strengthens bilateral defence cooperation, deepens the enduring military partnership, and reflects the growing strategic ties between India and Kyrgyzstan for regional and global security.

The previous (12th) edition was held in March 2025 in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan.

2. India-U.S. Trade Deal

Commerce and Industry Minister clarified that the recently announced India-U.S. trade deal will exclude sensitive agricultural items and dairy.

Key Highlights

Tariff Reduction- The United States has agreed to reduce its 25% reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods to 18% and remove the additional 25% penalty tariffs imposed on India for importing Russian oil.

Comparative Advantage- The revised tariff rate gives India an edge over Vietnam, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and several Southeast Asian economies facing 19% tariffs, while the EU, UK, Japan, and South Korea face lower rates of 10 – 15%.

India-US Trade Relations

Bilateral Trade (FY25)- In FY25, the bilateral trade between India and the US stood at a record US\$ 132.2 billion as against US\$ 119.71 billion in FY24.

Trade Balance- In FY25, India had a trade surplus of US\$ 40.82 billion with the US.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)- USA is the 3rd largest investor in India with cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows of US\$ 70.65 billion from April 2000-March 2025.

Major exports from India to the US- India's export to the US increased from US\$ 77.51 billion in FY24 to US\$ 86.51 billion in FY25. India's exports to the US were led by electrical machinery, precious and semi-precious stones and metals, pharmaceutical products, machinery and mechanical appliances, mineral fuels, and iron and steel articles

Major imports by India from the US- Imports from the US to India rose to US\$ 45.69 billion in FY25 from US\$ 42.19 billion in FY24. India's imports from the United States in FY25 were primarily concentrated in mineral fuels and oils, precious and semi-precious stones and metals, nuclear reactors and machinery, and electrical equipment, indicating strong energy and technology linkage.

Education and Human Capital Ties- The United States remains one of the most preferred destinations for Indian students pursuing higher education. As of September 2023, around 3.2 lakh Indian students were studying in the US, predominantly in STEM-related graduate programmes. Indian

students contribute approximately USD 7.7 billion annually to the US economy, according to the US State Department

3. World Cancer Day 2026

On World Cancer Day 2026, India confronts a rising cancer burden while scaling up prevention, early detection, affordable treatment, and indigenous research initiatives.

About World Cancer Day

World Cancer Day is observed annually on February 4 to raise global awareness about cancer prevention, early diagnosis, and equitable access to treatment.

Origin- It was first observed in 2000 following the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium held in Paris, France, under the leadership of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

Theme - "United by Unique" (2025–2027 campaign) emphasises patient-centred and personalised cancer care, recognising that every cancer journey is different.

Significance- The day mobilises governments, civil society, and health systems worldwide to reduce cancer mortality, promote healthy lifestyles, and prioritise cancer control in public policy.

India and Cancer

Rising Cancer Burden- India records over 1.5 million new cancer cases annually, projected to rise to more than 2.45 million by 2045, with higher incidence among middle-aged and elderly populations.

Common Cancers and Causes- Breast, oral, and cervical cancers account for a major share. Key drivers include tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets, obesity, and environmental pollution.

Major Challenges- Over 75% of patients are diagnosed at advanced stages, reflecting gaps in awareness, screening, and early detection.

Government Initiatives- National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) was launched in 1975 and later integrated into the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS), which has been operational since 2010 under National Health Mission.

Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY, National Cancer Grid, affordable drug schemes to provide access to treatment. Indigenous innovations like CAR-T cell therapy (NexCAR19) aim to strengthen prevention, treatment, and research.

World Cancer Day 2026- underscores the urgency of early detection, lifestyle change, and health-system strengthening as India prepares to tackle a rapidly growing cancer burden.

4. WHO HEALTH EMERGENCY APPEAL 2026

Recently, the World Health Organization reduced its health emergency appeal to \$1 billion amid declining donor support and mounting global health risks.

2026 Health Emergency Appeal- seek fund to provide essential, life-saving health care to millions of people living through conflict, displacement, and disasters

Key Changes in Funding

Reduced Emergency Appeal- WHO has cut its 2026 health emergencies appeal by one-third to \$1 billion, reflecting shrinking voluntary donor contributions and fiscal uncertainty.

Shifting Donor Landscape- The United States' withdrawal from the World Health Organization in January 2026 has deepened funding concerns, though recent emergency funding has relied more on the European Union, Germany, and Saudi Arabia.

Move Towards Sustainable Financing- Under the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (2025–2028), the World Health Organization is prioritising predictable assessed contributions and replenishment-based financing to reduce dependence on earmarked donations.

Different World Health Organization Programmes

Polio Eradication- Through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (2022–2026), vaccination efforts continue in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia, targeting the last reservoirs of the virus.

Malaria Control and Vaccination- The High Burden to High Impact approach has enabled malaria vaccine rollouts in 24 African countries, including Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi.

Neglected Tropical Diseases- Progress includes “Zero by 30” rabies elimination and Guinea-worm eradication, with Egypt declared malaria-free and seven countries eliminating at least one neglected tropical disease.

Immunisation and Digital Health- The Immunization Agenda 2030 strengthens coverage against measles, human papillomavirus, and typhoid, while U-WIN digital platforms in India enhance vaccine tracking.

Pandemic Preparedness- The adoption of the Pandemic Agreement and amended International Health Regulations aims to ensure equitable access to vaccines and rapid emergency response.

Impact of Decline in Funding

Strain on Health Systems- Funding cuts have disrupted essential services in low- and middle-income countries, even as 4.6 billion people lack access to basic healthcare.

Workforce and Capacity Gaps- The world faces a projected shortage of 11 million health workers by 2030, worsened by reduced international assistance.

Rising Global Health Risks- Underfunding threatens preparedness against pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, and climate-driven disease outbreaks, weakening collective global health security.

5. Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary

A recent faunal survey has significantly expanded biodiversity records in Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala. The Survey was conducted by the State Forest department with support from the Society for Tropical Ecology and Research (STEAR), Nilambur, and the Travancore Natural History Society (TNHS), Thiruvananthapuram.

Key Findings of the Survey

Expansion of Avian Diversity- The survey recorded 171 bird species, including eight species documented for the first time, raising the sanctuary's total bird count to 247 species.

Rich Insect and Odonate Records- Researchers documented 177 butterfly species and 42 odonate species, with several new additions, taking total butterfly diversity to 223 species and odonates to 63 species.

Evidence of Ecological Continuity- Observations of altitudinal butterfly migration and frequent elephant movement highlight strong habitat connectivity and ecological integrity.

About Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary

Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Malappuram district of Kerala, on the western slopes of the Nilgiris.

1. It derives its name from the Karimpuzha River, a tributary of the Chaliyar.
2. It was officially established in 2020.

Ecological Significance- Spread over 227.21 square kilometres, the sanctuary lies within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and forms part of the Nilambur Elephant Reserve. It also shares boundaries with Silent Valley National Park and Mukurthi National Park.

Unique Topography - Its altitude ranges from 40 metres to 2,550 metres, enabling the presence of all seven forest types found in Kerala, from evergreen rainforests to montane grasslands.

Flora and Fauna- The sanctuary supports teak, rosewood, bamboo, endemic orchids, and endangered fauna such as the Nilgiri tahr, lion-tailed macaque, tiger, elephant, and Malabar mahseer.

Communities- It is also home to the Cholanayakan tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.

