

9. Short News

1. New Astronomical Telescopes of India

Union Budget 2026 sanctioned two new telescopes and an upgrade to an existing facility in Ladakh.

National Large Solar Telescope (NLST)

Location- Merak region near Pangong Tso, Ladakh.

Features- 2-metre aperture solar observatory operating in visible and near-infrared wavelengths.

Objective- To study solar dynamics, magnetism, and space-weather processes.

Status- Will be India's third ground-based solar observatory (after Kodaikanal and Udaipur).

National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT)

Location- Hanle, Ladakh.

Features- 13.7-metre aperture segmented-mirror telescope.

significance- Will be one of the world's largest optical-infrared telescopes.

Objective- Deep-space observations of stellar evolution, galaxies, and cosmic origins.

Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT) Upgrade- Existing facility at Hanle will be upgraded for better imaging sensitivity.

Strategic Location- Hanle Dark Sky Reserve- India's only Dark Sky Reserve offering minimal light pollution and high-altitude clarity.

Electromagnetic Spectrum- The complete range of radiation from radio waves to gamma rays. Telescopes use specific bands (like infrared or X-ray) to see different cosmic phenomena.

2. Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025

India improved its rank to 91st (from 96th) in the 2025 index.

Publisher- Released annually by Transparency International.

Methodology

1. Ranks 182 countries based on perceived public sector corruption.
2. Scale- 0 (Highly Corrupt) to 100 (Very Clean).
3. Based on expert assessments and business surveys.

Global Findings

1. Top Performers- Denmark (89), Finland (88), Singapore (84).
2. Worst Performers- South Sudan, Somalia, Venezuela.
3. Global Average- Dropped to a new low of 42, indicating worsening global corruption.

India's Performance

1. Rank- 91st.
2. Score- 39 (Improved by 1 point).
3. Concerns- Report highlights risk to journalists reporting on corruption in low-scoring countries.

3. Exercise Vayushakti-26

Indian Air Force (IAF) to conduct this major drill on 27 February 2026.

Venue- Pokhran Air-to-Ground Range, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

Nature of Exercise- Triennial event (held once every three years). Demonstrates full-spectrum combat capability (offensive and defensive).

Key Participants- Over 100 aircraft including Rafale, Su-30 MKI, Tejas, Mirage-2000, and Apache helicopters. Deployment of systems like Akash, SpyDer, and Counter-UAS.

Focus Areas

1. Airspace dominance, precision strikes, and drone warfare.
2. Network-centric operations using the Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS).
3. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) demos.

Significance- Showcases indigenous capabilities under Aatmanirbhar Bharat and strengthens deterrence near the western border.