

6. Short News

Diego Garcia Island

Iran launched two ballistic missiles toward the joint US-UK military base on Diego Garcia — the longest-ranging missile attack Tehran has carried out since the conflict began.

It is one of only two critical US bomber bases in the Indo-Pacific region, the other being Andersen Air Force Base in Guam

About Diego Garcia Island

1. **Location-** Diego Garcia is approximately 3,000 km from both the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait at the mouth of the Red Sea and the Malacca Strait near the South China Sea. This strategic location allows long-range bombers to reach the two critical maritime chokepoints.
2. It forms part of the Chagos Archipelago, which is part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Positioned approximately 1,600 km south of India and 3,500 km east of Africa, it lies strategically between major international shipping routes.
3. **Geography-** Diego Garcia is an atoll, characterized by a coral reef encircling a central lagoon. The island has a horseshoe shape, with the lagoon open to the sea on the northern side.
4. **Strategic Importance-** Diego Garcia hosts a naval and military base, leased by the United Kingdom to the United States since 1971. It serves as a key hub for military operations and surveillance in the Indian Ocean region.
5. **Ecological Significance-** The atoll is home to diverse marine life, including endangered coral species and tropical fish.
6. It is a Ramsar site. The part of the atoll which is not included in the Ramsar site is the area which, under a 1976 UK/USA agreement, is set aside for military uses as a US naval support facility. Its isolated location helps preserve the unique biodiversity of the region.
7. **Chagossian Displacement-** The island was once inhabited by the Chagossian people, descendants of African slaves and Indian laborers, who were forcibly relocated by the UK in the 1960s and 1970s.

Home Voting Facility

The Election Commission of India has extended postal ballot and home voting facilities to voters aged 85+ and PwDs to enhance electoral inclusivity.

1. CEC also allowed electors engaged in essential services such as health, fire, electricity, transport and aviation to avail the postal ballot facility through designated nodal officers. Media personnel authorised for poll-day coverage have also been included in this category

About Home Voting Facility

1. Home voting is an optional facility enabling senior citizens (85+) and Persons with Disabilities ($\geq 40\%$ benchmark disability) to cast votes from their residence, ensuring accessibility and secrecy.
2. **Origin**
 1. Lok Sabha Elections 2024- First nationwide rollout of home voting by ECI as a pilot for inclusive elections.
 2. State Elections- Extended and institutionalised for Assembly elections to deepen participatory democracy.
3. **Procedures**

1. **Application Process**– Eligible voters must submit Form 12D within 5 days of election notification via Booth Level Officer (BLO).
 1. PwDs must attach a valid disability certificate.
2. **Verification & Transparency**– Returning Officer (RO) prepares list and shares with candidates.
 1. Candidates may nominate representatives to observe the process.
3. **Voting at Residence**– Polling teams (officials + security) visit homes as per schedule.
 1. Advance intimation via notice/SMS ensures preparedness.
4. **Secrecy & Integrity**– Voting conducted with strict secrecy protocols.
 1. The entire process is videographed to ensure transparency.

Significance

1. **Inclusive Electoral Participation**– Removes physical and mobility barriers, ensuring the principle of “No voter left behind.”
2. **Strengthening Democracy**– Enhances voter turnout among vulnerable groups, improving representativeness of electoral outcomes.
3. **Administrative Innovation**– Reflects adaptive electoral reforms using technology, logistics, and institutional mechanisms for citizen-centric governance.

National Dental Commission (NDC)

The government has constituted the National Dental Commission to transform dental education and strengthen healthcare quality.

About the National Dental Commission

1. The National Dental Commission is the new apex regulatory body for dental education and profession in India to improve access to affordable oral healthcare and overall quality of dental services in India.
2. It replaced the earlier Dental Council of India (DCI).
3. **Legal Framework**– NDC is a statutory autonomous body established under the National Dental Commission Act, 2023, which replaced the Dentists Act, 1948.
4. **Objective**– To ensure a transparent, accountable, and quality-driven regulatory system aligned with global standards.
5. **Nodal Ministry**– Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
6. **Composition**– Comprises a Chairperson, 8 ex-officio members, and 24 part-time members, all appointed by the Central Government.
7. **Three Autonomous Boards**–
 1. UG & PG Dental Education Board– Regulates dental education
 2. Dental Assessment & Rating Board– Handles accreditation and evaluation
 3. Ethics & Dental Registration Board– Oversees ethics and registration
8. **Key Functions of the National Dental Commission**–
 1. Frame regulations and standards for education, research, and ethics
 2. Conduct assessment and rating of institutions
 3. Promote human resource development in dentistry
 4. NDC will set the guidelines for fees in private dental colleges, improving affordability and transparency.

5. Establish standards for community dental care, education, research, and professional ethics.
9. **State-Level Mechanism-** States must establish State Dental Councils within one year to handle grievances and maintain registers of dentists.

PRARAMBH 2026

The Union Finance Minister launched the PRARPRARAMBH 2026 campaign in New Delhi.

About PRARAMBH 2026

1. PRARPRARAMBH is a nationwide awareness campaign by the Income Tax Department on the Income Tax Act, 2025.
2. **Full Form-** PRARAMBH stands for Policy Reform and Responsible Action for Mission Viksit Bharat.
3. **Objective-** To promote a simple, stable, and taxpayer-friendly regime, reducing disputes and encouraging voluntary compliance.
4. **Multi-Platform Outreach-** Covers print, TV, radio, digital, social media, and MyGov initiatives, ensuring wide public engagement.
5. **Multilingual Communication-** Information disseminated through brochures, FAQs, and videos in 10 regional languages, besides English and Hindi.
6. **Digital Transformation-** Launch of Income Tax Website 2.0 with improved usability and efficient service delivery.
7. **Kar Saathi-** AI chatbot 'Kar Saathi' introduced to assist taxpayers on Act, rules, and forms.
8. **Citizen-Centric Approach-** Guided by "Nagrik Devo Bhava", focusing on empathetic, trust-based, and technology-driven tax administration.

INCOME TAX ACT, 2025

1. Income Tax Act, 2025 will come into force from 1 April 2026, replacing and modernising provisions of the earlier Income Tax Act, 1961.
2. **Objective-** Aims to create a simpler, clearer, and more user-friendly tax system, reducing complexity and legal ambiguities.
3. **Reduced Litigation & Better Compliance-** Recasts provisions to minimise disputes, promote voluntary compliance, and shift taxpayer behaviour towards trust-based engagement.

KRISHI SAKHI INITIATIVE

Recently, Krishi Sakhi Initiative was launched in alignment with the recognition of year 2026 as the 'International Year of the Woman Farmer' by the United Nations through Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

About Krishi Sakhi Initiative

1. The Krishi Sakhi Initiative is a women-centric outreach programme launched by the Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited.
2. **Objective-** To empower women farmers and work towards achieving inclusive growth.
3. **Nodal Ministry-** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
4. **Features of the Initiative**
 1. **Awareness & Outreach Activities-** Month-wise campaigns including workshops, social media outreach, and walkathons to promote women's participation in agriculture.

2. **Capacity Building & Assistance**– Ground-level training sessions educating women farmers about crop insurance schemes and risk mitigation strategies.
3. **Eligibility & Target Group**– Primarily targets women farmers, rural households, and women stakeholders engaged in agriculture and allied sectors.
4. **Benefits & Support**– Enhances access to crop insurance, improves financial security, and builds resilience against agricultural risks.
5. **Community Engagement Measures**– Includes sanitation, hygiene awareness campaigns, and publication of articles/interviews to recognize women's contributions.

Significance

1. **Gender Inclusivity in Agriculture**– Promotes equitable participation of women in agricultural decision-making and economic activities.
2. **Financial Protection & Risk Reduction**– Encourages adoption of crop insurance, reducing vulnerability to climate and market risks.
3. **Rural Development & Empowerment**– Strengthens socio-economic status of women farmers, contributing to inclusive rural growth.
4. **Alignment with Global Goals**– Supports international focus on women farmers, reinforcing India's commitment to gender equality and sustainable agriculture.

STOCKHOLM WATER PRIZE 2026

Kaveh Madani won the Stockholm Water Prize 2026 for linking water science with policy, diplomacy, and global outreach.

About Kaveh Madani

1. Kaveh Madani is Director at the United Nations University Institute for Water Environment and Health and the Youngest recipient and first UN official honoured for linking water science with policy, diplomacy and public outreach.
2. **Key Contributions**– He introduced the concept of “water bankruptcy” and advanced integration of science with policy, diplomacy, and public engagement under political constraints.

“Water Bankruptcy” is a critical state where a region or country has consumed its water resources beyond sustainable replenishment rates, specifically by depleting its “groundwater savings” or fossil aquifers.

About Stockholm Water Prize

1. The Stockholm Water Prize is a prestigious global award recognising excellence in water conservation and management.
2. **Organised By**– Stockholm Water Foundation, Sweden.
 1. It is additionally supported by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, International Water Association, Water Environment Federation and the City of Stockholm.
3. **Origin**– Instituted in 1991, inspired by Sweden's sustainable water management achievements.
 1. It was first awarded to David W Schindler.
4. **Criteria**– Honours individuals/organisations for scientific innovation, policy impact, and sustainable water resource management.

5. Indian Awardees

1. **Rajendra Singh (2015)**– Revived traditional johads in Rajasthan, restoring water security in thousands of villages giving him recognition as the “Waterman of India”.
2. **Bindeshwar Pathak (2009)**– Promoted sanitation and public health through Sulabh movement, improving water-linked hygiene.

Significance

1. **Global Recognition**– Encourages innovation and leadership in addressing water scarcity and sustainability challenges worldwide.
2. **Policy Impact**– Bridges science and governance, promoting evidence-based water management strategies.
3. **Awareness & Sustainability**– Enhances global awareness on water security, climate resilience, and environmental protection.

