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NATIONAL NEWS

India Records Sharp Rise in Tiger Deaths in 2025



In 2025, India faced a complex conservation challenge as its successful efforts to increase tiger numbers met the harsh reality of limited habitat. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) recorded **166 tiger deaths**, marking a sharp 31.7% increase from the 126 deaths reported in 2024.

2025 Mortality Breakdown by State

Madhya Pradesh, often called the "Tiger State," continues to bear the highest burden of mortalities due to its dense population.

State	2025 Tiger Deaths
Madhya Pradesh	55
Maharashtra	38
Karnataka	15
Kerala	13



State	2025 Tiger Deaths
Assam	12

Key Findings and Causes

The 2025 data reveals that the spike in deaths is largely a "crisis of success"—more tigers competing for the same amount of space.

- **Territorial Infighting:** Experts cite habitat saturation as a primary driver. As tiger populations grow in core areas, competition for territory intensifies, leading to fatal clashes between adult males.
- **Vulnerability of Young Tigers:** Out of the 166 deaths, **31 were cubs**. Young tigers and sub-adults are particularly at risk when they disperse from their mother's territory to establish their own, often encountering established, aggressive males or wandering into human-dominated landscapes.
- **Deaths Outside Reserves:** Shockingly, nearly **60% of the deaths** occurred outside the boundaries of protected tiger reserves. These areas often lack the same level of monitoring and safety as core zones.
- **Human-Induced Factors:** While "natural causes" dominated, human-wildlife conflict remains a threat. Electrocution from illegal fences (31 deaths) and road or rail accidents (19 deaths) were significant man-made causes.

The Conservation Dilemma

India currently hosts nearly **75% of the world's tigers** (approximately 3,682 as of the last major census). However, the 2025 figures underscore that population growth alone is not enough.

Without **ecological corridors**—safe passages of forest that allow tigers to move between reserves—young tigers become "trapped" in overpopulated areas or stray into villages, leading to both tiger and human fatalities.

NATIONAL NEWS

E-Bill System Rolled Out to Improve Fertiliser Subsidy Management



On January 1, 2026, the Government of India launched the **Integrated E-Bill System**, a landmark digital reform designed to manage approximately **₹2 lakh crore** in annual fertilizer subsidies. Inaugurated by Union Minister J.P. Nadda, the platform marks a complete shift from manual, paper-based workflows to a fully transparent, system-to-system digital mechanism.

The Shift: From Manual to Digital

The new system replaces a legacy process that relied on physical files and manual scrutiny, which often led to administrative bottlenecks and delayed payments to fertilizer companies.

Feature	Manual System (Pre-2026)	E-Bill System (Current)
Workflow	Physical movement of paper files	100% end-to-end digital workflow
Processing	Multiple approval layers (manual)	Standardized "First-In-First-Out" (FIFO)
Tracking	Limited visibility for companies	Real-time status tracking via portal
Audit Trail	Manual records, prone to errors	Tamper-proof digital audit trail

significantly reducing the risk of fraud or duplication.

Impact on the Agricultural Ecosystem

- **Faster Liquidity:** By accelerating weekly subsidy releases, the system improves the working capital of companies like IFFCO and KRIBHCO, ensuring they can maintain a steady supply of fertilizers to farmers.
- **Transparency:** The centralized dashboard provides senior officials with real-time oversight of public expenditure, ensuring every rupee of the subsidy budget is accounted for.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** It eliminates the need for company representatives to visit government offices for manual follow-ups on pending bills.

How the Integrated System Works

The E-Bill platform is the result of a technical integration between two major government infrastructures:

1. **iFMS (Integrated Fertilizer Management System):** Tracks the production, movement, and sale of fertilizers.
2. **PFMS (Public Financial Management System):** Managed by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) for the final disbursement of funds.

Under this new workflow, fertilizer companies submit claims online. The system automatically validates these claims against predefined financial criteria and logs every action digitally. This ensures that payments are released only after strict system-based verification,

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

France Plans Social Media Restrictions for Children Under 15



Building on its recent experimental policies, France is now moving toward a definitive

legislative framework to restrict digital access for minors. President Emmanuel Macron, in his 2026 New Year's address, signaled that protecting children from "digital violence" is a national priority, drawing direct inspiration from Australia's world-first legislation.

The French Proposal: Key Measures

A draft law, expected to be debated in the National Assembly starting in **late January 2026**, outlines a two-pronged strategy to combat excessive screen time:

- **Social Media Ban for Under-15s:** The government plans to prohibit platforms (including TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat) from providing services to anyone under 15. This is a shift from the 2023 "digital legal age" law, which allowed parental consent; the new proposal seeks a more absolute restriction.
- **High School Phone Ban:** Building on the 2018 ban in primary and middle schools, the new law would extend the prohibition of mobile phone use to **high schools** (lycées) to ensure a distraction-free environment for students aged 15–18.
- **Digital Curfews:** Some lawmakers are advocating for an additional "digital curfew" for older teens (15–18), which would potentially block social media access between **10 PM and 8 AM** to prioritize sleep and mental health.

Global Comparison: The Age Threshold

France's move is part of a "domino effect" following Australia's landmark December 2025 ban.

Country	Age Limit	Status
Australia	Under 16	In Effect (Dec 2025)
France	Under 15	Proposed (Target: Sept 2026)
Norway	Under 15	Under discussion
Malaysia	Under 16	Announced for 2026

The "F1" Analogy

President Macron has famously compared unrestricted social media access to **"letting a child drive a Formula 1 car before learning the rules of the road."** This sentiment reflects the government's stance that the current "self-regulation" by tech companies has failed to protect children from:

1. **Algorithmic Addiction:** Specifically targeting TikTok's "closed feedback loops."
2. **Cyber-harassment:** Reducing the avenues for 24/7 bullying.
3. **Sleep Disruption:** Addressing the 35% rise in adolescent depressive symptoms linked to late-night usage.

Enforcement Challenges

The primary hurdle remains **Age Verification**. France is exploring "Age Assurance" technologies—such as facial estimation or third-party digital ID verification—to ensure compliance without compromising adult privacy. Platforms that fail to implement

"reasonable steps" could face fines similar to Australia's, which reach up to **\$50 million (AUD)**.

SPORTS

Sjoerd Marijne Returns as Coach of Indian Women's Hockey Team



In a major development for Indian hockey, **Sjoerd Marijne** has been reappointed as the head coach of the Indian women's national team as of January 2, 2026. The Dutchman's return marks a significant strategic pivot by Hockey India to revitalize a squad that has struggled with consistency and transition over the past year.

The Return of the "Tokyo Mastermind"

Marijne is a familiar face to the Indian hockey community, having previously served as the chief coach from 2017 to 2021. His tenure is best remembered for guiding the Indian women to a historic **fourth-place finish at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics**, their best performance in over 36 years.

Aspect	Details
New Coach	Sjoerd Marijne (Netherlands)
Predecessor	Harendra Singh (Resigned Dec 2025)
Analytical Coach	Matias Vila (Argentina)
Scientific Advisor	Dr. Wayne Lombard (South Africa)
First Major Assignment	FIH World Cup Qualifiers (March 8-14, 2026)

Context of the Appointment

Marijne replaces **Harendra Singh**, who stepped down in December 2025 citing personal reasons and amid reports of friction with senior players. His reappointment is seen as a "rescue mission" to bring back the tactical discipline and high-performance fitness levels that defined the team's Tokyo run.

- **Restoration of the Support Staff:** In a move to ensure continuity, Marijne will be joined by **Dr. Wayne Lombard**, the scientific advisor credited with the team's elite fitness levels during the 2021 Olympic cycle.
- **A "Crisis of Confidence":** After failing to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics under Janneke Schopman and suffering a relegation in the 2024-25 Pro League under Harendra Singh, the team has slipped in global rankings. Marijne's immediate task is to stabilize the locker room.

Upcoming Challenges

The clock is ticking for the new coaching staff. Marijne is scheduled to arrive in India on **January 14, 2026**, with a national coaching camp starting on January 19 at SAI Bengaluru.

His first major test will be the **FIH Hockey Women's World Cup Qualifiers** in Hyderabad this March. Securing a spot in the World Cup is considered non-negotiable for Hockey India as they look toward the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic cycle.

SPORTS

New Sports Law Begins to Reshape India's Sports Governance



On January 1, 2026, the **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**, partially came into effect, marking the most significant overhaul of sports administration in India's history. This legislative framework replaces the non-binding 2011 Sports Code with a statutory mandate, giving the government legal teeth to enforce transparency and professionalism across all National Sports Federations (NSFs).

The New Power Structure

The Act establishes three core pillars to dismantle "fiefdoms" and political monopolies that have historically plagued Indian sports bodies:

- **National Sports Board (NSB):** The new "super-regulator" (similar to SEBI but for sports). It has the power to grant or cancel the recognition of federations, monitor their bank accounts, and conduct audits. Only NSB-affiliated bodies can receive government funding.
- **National Sports Tribunal (NST):** A specialized judicial body headed by a retired Supreme Court or High Court judge. It aims to resolve sports disputes (like selection row or doping appeals) within a **90-day window**, preventing long-drawn-out court cases that stall athletes' careers.
- **National Sports Election Panel (NSEP):** Comprising retired election officials, this panel will oversee federation elections to ensure they are free, fair, and democratic.

Mandatory Reforms for Federations

To comply with the new law, every sports federation in India must restructure its governance by the end of 2026:

Reform Area	New Requirement
Executive Committee	Capped at a maximum of 15 members .
Athlete Representation	Must include at least two "Sportspersons of Merit"

Reform Area	New Requirement
	(SOMs) and an Athletes' Commission.
Gender Diversity	Mandates a minimum number of women (usually four) in the executive body.
Age & Tenure Caps	Strict upper age limit of 70 years for office bearers (extendable to 75 only if international rules allow).
Transparency	Federations are now officially "Public Authorities" under the RTI Act, 2005.

Why This Matters Now

This reform is a critical part of India's diplomatic and sporting strategy as it prepares to bid for the **2036 Summer Olympics**. By aligning its national laws with the Olympic Charter and international standards (IOC/FIFA), India is signaling to the world that its sports ecosystem is ready for global scrutiny and elite-level hosting.

Note: To ensure a smooth transition, the Sports Ministry has allowed federations with elections due early this year to postpone them until December 2026, when the Act will become fully operational.

BANKING/ECONOMY

**Karthikeyan Manickam Appointed
Chairman of ESAF Small Finance Bank**



On **January 3, 2026**, ESAF Small Finance Bank officially appointed **Karthikeyan Manickam** as its part-time Chairman. A veteran of the Indian banking sector with over 36 years of experience, Manickam succeeds **Ravimohan Periyakavil Ramakrishnan**, who retired from the position.

The appointment comes at a pivotal time for the bank, as it simultaneously announced a major clean-up of its balance sheet by selling nearly **₹1,694 crore** in non-performing assets (NPAs) to improve asset quality.

Professional Background & Expertise

Manickam is a former **Executive Director of the Bank of India**, where he played a key role in shaping large-scale banking strategies. His career highlights include:

- Diverse Sector Leadership:** He has previously served as the Chairman of **Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company** and

held board positions at **Tamil Nadu Grama Bank** and **BOI STAR Investment Managers**.

- **Operational Depth:** His expertise spans critical pillars of banking, including risk management, credit monitoring, recovery, regulatory compliance, and human resource management.
- **Strategic Role:** At ESAF, his primary focus will be providing independent oversight and steering the bank's growth in the competitive retail and microfinance segments.

Reconstitution of Board Committees

Immediately following his appointment, the bank's board approved the reconstitution of five key sub-committees to leverage Manickam's experience. He has been strategically placed in three of the most vital committees:

Committee	Manickam's Role	Primary Objective
Risk Management	Member	Strengthening the bank's internal safety nets and risk appetite.
NRCC	Member	Overseeing nomination, remuneration, and compensation policies.
Stakeholders Relationship	Member	Enhancing transparency and communication with investors.

Why This Appointment Matters

For a Small Finance Bank (SFB), strong corporate governance is essential to maintain the trust of both the regulator (RBI) and the public. By bringing in a former PSU (Public Sector Undertaking) chief, ESAF aims to:

1. **Reinforce Regulatory Compliance:** Ensuring the bank adheres to the strict evolving norms for SFBs.
2. **Bolster Investor Confidence:** Demonstrating a commitment to stable, professional leadership during periods of capital raising and expansion.
3. **Enhance Recovery Focus:** Utilizing his deep background in credit monitoring to manage the bank's asset quality more effectively.

STATE NEWS

Vehicle Registrations in 2025



Vehicle registrations in Tamil Nadu increased by 8.4% in 20 In 2025, Tamil Nadu's vehicle registrations reflected a clear urban-rural divide and a significant shift toward green energy. According to

the latest Vahan dashboard data, here is the specific breakdown of how the 21.18 lakh registrations were distributed across fuel types and key hubs like Chennai.

Fuel-Wise Breakdown (2025)

While petrol vehicles still dominate due to the massive volume of two-wheelers, electric vehicles (EVs) saw the fastest growth rate in the state.

Fuel Type	Registrations (Approx.)	Growth vs 2024
Petrol	17.46 Lakh (75%)	+12.3%
Electric (EV)	1.74 Lakh (8.2%)	+28.8%
Diesel	1.62 Lakh (7.6%)	Marginal Rise
Other (CNG/Hybrid)	0.36 Lakh (1.7%)	Steady

Focus on Chennai: Petrol vs. Electric Cars

Chennai and its satellite RTOs (Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur) accounted for the lion's share of high-value registrations. In the 4-wheeler (car) segment specifically:

- Electric Car Performance:** Chennai leads the state in EV car adoption. Between January and April 2025 alone, Chennai registered **1,614 electric cars**, making up over **41%** of the state's total e-4W sales during that period.
- Petrol/Hybrid Preference:** Despite the EV surge, petrol and strong-hybrid cars remain

the primary choice for long-distance commuters in Chennai. For instance, in **December 2025 alone**, over **3,000 petrol light motor vehicles** were registered in the Chennai South region.

- The "Eco" Hubs:** Within Chennai, the RTOs of **Tambaram, Poonamallee, and Sholinganallur** recorded the highest volumes, driven by the IT corridor and growing suburban infrastructure.

Why EVs are Surging in Tamil Nadu

- Extended Tax Holidays:** The Tamil Nadu government has extended the **100% road tax exemption** for all electric vehicles until **2027**, a move that reduces the on-road cost by 6–10%.
- Charging Infrastructure:** Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai have been designated as **"EV Cities,"** with over 150 new public charging stations added in 2025 alone.
- Manufacturing Influence:** With giants like Ather, Ola Electric, and TVS manufacturing in the state, "local pride" and better service availability have pushed 2-wheeler EV penetration to nearly **7.8%** of all sales.

25 compared to the previous year. A total of about 21.18 lakh vehicles were registered across 147 Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) and Unit Offices (UOs) in the State. More than 40% of registrations were concentrated in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur, Coimbatore, Madurai and Salem districts. Two-wheelers formed the largest share, with around 16.4 lakh registrations in 2025.



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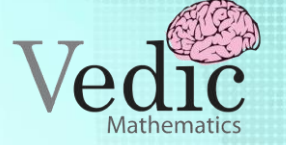
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Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

Q.1. World War II Lieutenant General Harpal Singh recently assumed the position of Director General of:

- A. Indian Army
 - B. Border Roads Organisation (BRO)
 - C. Indian Coast Guard
 - D. CRPF
1. B

Lieutenant General Harpal Singh assumed charge as the 29th Director General of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). Lieutenant General Singh was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers in June 1991. In his illustrious military career spanning over three decades, he has held various important command, staff and leadership assignments in diverse operational situations.

Q.2. Former actor Asia Warlock recently passed away. How old was he?

- A. 65
 - B. 71
 - C. 80
 - D. 85
2. B

Famous actor Isaiah Whitlock Jr. has died at the age of 71. Hollywood is deeply saddened by the death of Whitlock Jr., who rose to fame with the crime drama "The Wire." Whitlock gained recognition with HBO's crime drama "The Wire." In it, he played corrupt politician Clay

Davis, a role that resonated with audiences. This role made Whitlock famous. "The Wire" provided detailed information about drug dealing and criminal politics. Audiences still love this series.

Q.3. In which city was the 14th annual flower show held recently, where two Guinness World Records were set?

- A. Bengaluru
 - B. Ahmedabad
 - C. Mumbai
 - D. Hyderabad
3. B

The 14th International Flower Show was held in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, themed "India: A Saga", where two Guinness World Records were created: the world's largest floral mandala and the world's largest floral portrait of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Q.4. Jallikattu 2026 recently began in which state?

- A. Karnataka
 - B. Andhra Pradesh
 - C. Tamil Nadu
 - D. Kerala
4. C

The annual Jallikattu season in Tamil Nadu is set to begin in early 2026. The state government has approved the first Jallikattu event. This traditional bull-taming sport will take place in Thatchankurichi village in Pudukkottai district. The event promotes Tamil Nadu's cultural





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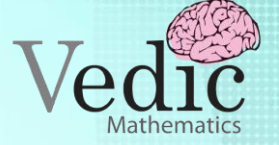
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tradition within established rules and safety standards.

Q.5. With whom has LIC recently partnered to expand insurance coverage in rural India?

- A. Sahaj Insurance Services
 - B. HDFC Life Insurance
 - C. ICICI Prudential Life
 - D. SBI Life Insurance
5. A

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has announced a strategic partnership with Sahaj Insurance Services Private Limited to expand insurance coverage in rural and semi-urban areas. Sahaj's assisted digital service network will provide easy access to LIC's life insurance plans, enabling people to understand, enroll, and manage their policies, especially in areas where insurance awareness has previously been low.

Q.6. Bulgaria recently officially adopted the Euro as its currency, becoming the _____ member of the Eurozone.

- A. 19th
 - B. 20th
 - C. 21st
 - D. 22nd
6. C

Bulgaria has become the 21st country to adopt the euro as legal tender, replacing the lev currency with the euro. This decision demonstrates Bulgaria's commitment to European integration, although it comes amid

political instability within the country and opposition from pro-Russian groups.

Q.7. Who was recently appointed Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Air Command?

- A. Tejinder Singh
 - B. Archana Jain
 - C. Pankaj Tripathi
 - D. Sumit Rastogi
7. A

The Indian Air Force underwent a major leadership change in early 2026. Air Marshal Tejinder Singh assumed the position of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of the South Western Air Command. His appointment reflects the IAF's emphasis on operational experience, strategic planning, and strong leadership at the command level.

Q.8. In which city did the 44th Junior National Kho-Kho Championship recently begin?

- A. Lucknow
 - B. Bhopal
 - C. Bengaluru/Bengaluru
 - D. Patna
8. C

The 44th Junior National Kho-Kho Championship has begun at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium in Gunjur, Bengaluru. Around 1,000 young players from across the country are participating in it.

Q.9. Who has recently been appointed as the Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force?





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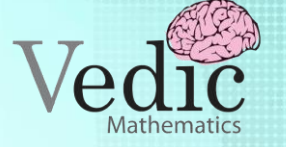
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A. Nagesh Kapoor

B.Niranjan Sharma

C. Akhilesh Gupta

D.Shivani Jain

9. A

Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force. In a statement, the Ministry of Defence said that in his service career spanning over 39 years, Air Marshal Kapoor has held a variety of command, operational, instructional and staff appointments. He has also served in important strategic and diplomatic roles. Air Marshal Kapoor succeeds Air Marshal Narmdeshwar Tiwari, who retired after completing four decades of illustrious service.

Q.10. Who has recently been appointed as the Chief of the Indian Air Force Training Command?

A. Subodh Kumar

B.Karamveer Gupta

C. Mohit Pandey

D.S. Srinivas

10. D

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has appointed Air Marshal S. Srinivas as the new Chief of its Training Command. This appointment marks a major leadership change in the Air Force's training and human resource development sector. His extensive experience as a veteran fighter pilot, flying instructor, and commander of a major training institution is expected to

further strengthen pilot training, safety, and operational readiness.

Q.11. Usman Khawaja was recently associated with which sport and has recently retired?

A. Hockey

B.Football

C.Cricket

D.Tennis

11. C

Usman Khawaja is a cricketer who recently announced his retirement from international cricket (specifically Test cricket) after the 2025-26 Ashes series. He is a veteran Australian opening batsman and made this decision after the final Test match of his career, which was played in Sydney.

Q.12. Who has recently been awarded the IFFCO Sahitya Samman 2025?

A.Maitrei Pushpa

B. Shivam Saxena

C. Anurag Jain

D.Ankita Jain

12. A

Renowned Hindi writer Maitreyi Pushpa has been awarded the IFFCO Sahitya Samman for the year 2025 by the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO). The award was given for her literary contributions based on the realities of rural society and farming. Presented at a ceremony in the capital, Delhi, the award not only captured the attention of the literary world





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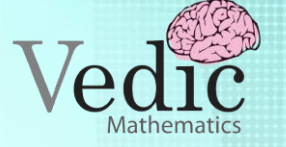
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but also brought to light sensitive literary works related to rural life.

Q.13. Recently in which state Imoinu Eratpa Festival will be celebrated?

- A. West Bengal
- B. Madhya Pradesh/Madhya Pradesh
- C. Bihar
- D. Manipur

13. D

The Imoinu Ertapa festival was recently celebrated in Manipur. This festival falls on the 12th day of the Meitei month. It is an important religious festival for the Meitei community, worshipping Imoinu (Ema Imoinu Ahongbi), the goddess of wealth, prosperity, and home.

Q.14. Under which initiative did President Draupadi Murmu launch the 'Skill The Nation' AI Challenge?

- A. Digital India Mission
- B. Skill India Programme
- C. AI for All Initiative
- D. Skilling for AI Readiness (Soar) initiative

14. D

President of India Draupadi Murmu launched several initiatives under the Skilling for AI (Artificial Intelligence) Readiness (SOAR) programme at an event organised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) in New Delhi. During the event, she launched the '#SkillTheNation Challenge' under the Skilling

for AI Readiness initiative and also inaugurated the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Centre in Rairangpur, Odisha.

Q.15. Who won the recent presidential election in Guinea?

- A. Alpha Condé
- B. Mamady Doumbouya
- C. Umaro Sissoko Embaló
- D. Paul-Henri Damiba

15. B

The political situation in the West African country of Guinea has taken a significant turn. Mamady Doumbouya, the military leader who led the country since a military coup in 2021, has won the presidential election and returned to power. The results were boycotted by major opposition parties, sparking renewed debate about democratic transition and civilian rule.





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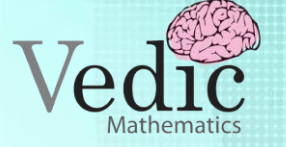
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FACTS ABOUT BHARAT

That is a fantastic summary of how Karnataka got its name! It's fascinating how the state's identity is so deeply tied to its physical geography—from the high Deccan plateau to the famous black soil (regur) that fuels its agriculture.

To add to your "Facts about Bharat" series, here are a few more incredible highlights about the Land of Black Soil and Sandalwood:

Historical & Architectural Marvels

- The Cradle of Stone Architecture: Karnataka is home to Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire and a UNESCO World Heritage site. It's often described as the world's largest open-air museum.
- The Whispering Gallery: The Gol Gumbaz in Vijayapura has the second-largest dome in the world (after St. Peter's Basilica). A single clap inside can be heard echoing up to seven times!

Natural Wealth

- Sandalwood State: Karnataka produces about 70% of India's sandalwood. The fragrance of Mysore Sandal Soap is world-famous.
- Coffee Capital: If you love your morning brew, thank Karnataka! It accounts for over 70% of India's coffee production, with Chikmagalur being the place where coffee was first grown in India.

Modern Achievements

- Silicon Valley of India: Bengaluru is the nation's leading IT exporter and a global hub for technology and startups.
- The Khadi Flag: The Karnataka Khadi Gramodyoga Samyukta Sangha in Hubli is the *only* unit in India authorized to manufacture and supply the official National Flag of India.

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We wish best for your studies & Exams

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