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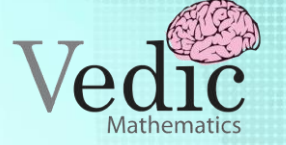
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## National News

### NSO Makes Government Data AI-Ready With New MCP Server



This initiative by the **National Statistics Office (NSO)**, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**), marks a significant shift in how public data is consumed. By leveraging the **Model Context Protocol (MCP)**, India is among the first to create a standardized "plug-and-play" bridge between official government statistics and modern AI models.

#### What is the MCP Server?

The Model Context Protocol (MCP) is an open-standard framework (originally developed by Anthropic) that allows AI assistants like **Claude**, **ChatGPT**, and **Cursor** to securely connect with external data sources.

Instead of an AI "guessing" or relying on outdated training data, the MCP server acts as a **universal power socket**. Your AI tool "plugs in" to the NSO server and can pull live, verified numbers directly into your conversation or analysis workflow.



## Key Features & Benefits

The launch of this beta server specifically addresses the "last mile" problem of data analysis:

- **No More Bulky Downloads:** Users can query specific data points via natural language without downloading and cleaning massive CSV or PDF files.
- **Reduced Hallucinations:** Because the AI fetches data directly from the official MoSPI API in real-time, the risk of the AI making up statistics is significantly reduced.
- **Automation-Ready:** Developers and researchers can integrate this server into their own custom applications to automate monthly economic reports or live dashboards.
- **Technology Agnostic:** It works across different AI platforms, supporting a "Democratizing AI" approach.

## Datasets Available in Beta

The beta version currently includes **seven major data products**, covering the core pillars of the Indian economy:

Category	Dataset Included
Labour	Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)
Inflation	Consumer Price Index (CPI) & Wholesale Price Index (WPI)
Industry	Index of Industrial Production (IIP) & Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)

Category	Dataset Included
Economy	National Account Statistics (NAS / GDP)
Environment	Environmental & Energy Statistics

## How to Access It

For those looking to test the system, the NSO has made the technical documentation and server details public:

- **Portal:** [eSankhyiki Portal](https://eSankhyiki Portal)
- **MCP Server URL:** <https://mcp.mospi.gov.in>
- **Open Source:** The source code for this pilot is available on the [NSO-India GitHub](https://github.com/NSO-India), encouraging community-led innovation.

This move is a foundational step toward **Viksit Bharat**, ensuring that as India moves toward 2047, its policy-making is grounded in high-velocity, AI-ready data.

This development marks a significant milestone in how government data interacts with emerging technology. By bridging the gap between raw datasets and Large Language Models (LLMs), the NSO is effectively turning static spreadsheets into a live knowledge base.

## Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. What is the primary purpose of the NSO's launch of the MCP Server for the eSankhyiki portal?**

- A) To replace manual data entry with automated bots.
- B) To make government data "AI-ready" for direct integration with applications.





C) To restrict data access to registered government officials only.

D) To increase the subscription fees for accessing national statistics.

**2. Which protocol is being utilized to allow AI tools to connect directly with official datasets without downloading files?**

A) HTTP 2.0 Standard

B) Model Context Protocol (MCP)

C) Statistics Exchange Protocol (SEP)

D) Open Data Connectivity (ODC)

**3. According to the announcement, the shift to an AI-enabled data ecosystem is intended to support which of the following?**

A) Centralized data control

B) Static data dissemination

C) Transparency and participatory governance

D) Reducing the frequency of data collection

**4. What is a key technical benefit for users mentioned in the new eSankhyiki update?**

A) Access to physical paper records of all surveys.

B) The ability to analyze data without downloading bulky files.

C) Integration with social media platforms for viral sharing.

D) Faster internet speeds for rural data centers.

## Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	B (To make government data "AI-ready")
2	B (Model Context Protocol)
3	C (Transparency and participatory governance)
4	B (Analyze data without downloading bulky files)

## NATIONAL NEWS

**Airbus Opens Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Aviation in This Coastal State**



The inauguration of the **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** at Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) on **February 4, 2026**, represents a cornerstone in India's journey toward becoming a global aerospace hub. This collaboration between **Airbus** and GSV, a central university under the Ministry of Railways, moves beyond theoretical education into high-impact, industrial-grade research.



## The Core Mission: Greening the Skies

While the CoE covers various aerospace domains, its "North Star" is sustainability. A primary research focus is the development of **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)**, specifically targeting the conversion of **Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)** into jet fuel.

- **Circular Economy:** By using urban waste as a feedstock, the project aims to solve two problems at once: waste management and aviation decarbonization.
- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat:** The goal is to create a locally sourced, indigenous supply chain for SAF, reducing India's reliance on imported fossil fuels.

## Key Pillars of the Partnership

The CoE is the culmination of a holistic roadmap established between Airbus and GSV since 2023. It rests on three main pillars:

### 1. Advanced Research & Innovation

- **Joint Study Agreement (JSA):** Dedicated grants for R&D in sustainable aviation solutions.
- **Future Tech:** Support for student-led innovations in **Artificial Intelligence**, digital twin simulations, and smart manufacturing (Industry 4.0).

### 2. Human Capital Development

- **Scholarship Program:** Airbus provides full scholarships to **45 meritorious students**, with a progressive mandate to reserve **one-third of seats for women** to foster diversity in aerospace.

- **Academic Leadership:** The establishment of an **Airbus Chair Professorship** ensures that curriculum development for undergraduate and postgraduate programs remains industry-relevant.

### 3. Industry Integration

- **Proximity to Manufacturing:** Located in **Vadodara**, the CoE is strategically placed near the **C295 Final Assembly Line**, the first "Make in India" aerospace program in the private sector.
- **Skill Pipeline:** The center serves as a "talent factory," providing students with hands-on training that aligns with the needs of global aerospace giants.

## Quick Facts: Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)

Feature	Details
Established	2022 (Act of Parliament)
Focus	Entire transport & logistics sector (Rail, Air, Sea, Road)
Chancellor	Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw (Union Minister)
Unique Model	Industry-driven curriculum with direct corporate partnerships

"The inauguration of the CoE is a tangible step to realize our mission for aerospace sector growth... converting an industry-driven, innovation-led vision into reality."

— **Prof. (Dr.) Manoj Choudhary**, Vice Chancellor, GSV.





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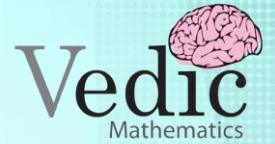
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## Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. In which city was the Airbus Centre of Excellence (CoE) inaugurated in February 2026?**

- A) Bengaluru, Karnataka
- B) Vadodara, Gujarat
- C) Hyderabad, Telangana
- D) Noida, Uttar Pradesh

**2. Which specific area is mentioned as a "major focus" for the new Centre of Excellence to help reduce carbon emissions?**

- A) Supersonic Passenger Travel
- B) Satellite Launch Vehicles
- C) Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)
- D) Low-cost Carrier Logistics

**3. The partnership between Airbus and Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) primarily aligns with which national goal?**

- A) Space Tourism Expansion
- B) Maritime Trade Dominance
- C) Green Technologies and Self-Reliance
- D) Agricultural Automation

**4. What are the three primary pillars of the Airbus-GSV initiative?**

- A) Manufacturing, Sales, and Marketing
- B) Research, Innovation, and Talent Development

C) Military Defense, Cybersecurity, and Ethics

D) Urban Planning, Civil Engineering, and Architecture

## Answer Key

Question	Correct Answer
1	B) Vadodara, Gujarat
2	C) Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)
3	C) Green Technologies and Self-Reliance
4	B) Research, Innovation, and Talent Development

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### India-GCC FTA Terms of Reference Signed



On February 5, 2026, India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reached a landmark milestone by signing the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** at Vaniya Bhawan, New Delhi. This document serves as the official roadmap and "rulebook" for formal negotiations toward a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.





The signing was presided over by Union Minister **Piyush Goyal**, signaling a major push to integrate India's manufacturing and services strength with the Gulf's capital and energy resources.

### Strategic & Economic Context

The GCC—consisting of **Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain**—is currently India's **largest merchandise trading partner** as a bloc.

- **Trade Volume (FY 2024-25):** Bilateral trade reached **\$178.56 billion**, surpassing India's trade with the EU (\$136B), the US (\$132B), and China (\$127B).
- **Energy Reliability:** The GCC meets roughly **35% of India's oil imports** and **70% of its gas requirements**.
- **Investment Power:** GCC sovereign wealth funds have invested over **\$31 billion** in India (as of late 2025).

### What the FTA Covers

Unlike traditional trade deals that focus only on goods, this proposed pact is **comprehensive** and "AI-ready," covering:

#### 1. Goods & Market Access

- **India's Gain:** Elimination of duties on labor-intensive exports like **textiles, leather, gems & jewellery**, and **engineering goods**.
- **GCC's Gain:** Predictable access to India's massive consumer market for **petrochemicals** and refined products.

#### 2. Services & Digital Trade

- A dedicated focus on **skilled professional mobility**, allowing Indian IT, healthcare, and engineering professionals easier access to Gulf markets.
- Cooperation in **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, including the integration of UPI with Gulf payment platforms.

### 3. Energy & Sustainability

- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** Engaging GCC nations to participate in the second phase of India's SPR.
- **Green Energy:** Joint research into **Green Hydrogen** and solar energy technologies.

### Geopolitical Significance: The IMEC Link

The India-GCC FTA is considered the "economic engine" for the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**. By standardizing trade rules through this FTA, India and the Gulf nations are creating the legal infrastructure needed to move goods, data, and energy seamlessly from the Indian coast to European markets, bypassing traditional bottlenecks.

### Comparison: Current vs. Post-FTA

Feature	Current Status	Post-FTA (Expected)
Tariffs	Subject to high MFN rates	Near-zero for priority sectors
Energy Ties	Transactional (Buyer-Seller)	Strategic (Investment-Led)
Logistics	Fragmented	Integrated (via IMEC)

"This FTA will be a force multiplier for global good, bringing predictability and stability to our 5,000-year-old trading relationship."





— **Piyush Goyal**, Union Minister for Commerce & Industry.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. In February 2026, India and the GCC signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) primarily to:**

- A) Establish a joint military task force.
- B) Begin formal negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- C) Create a unified currency for digital trade.
- D) Build a trans-continental high-speed railway.

**2. Which of the following is a major export from India to the GCC nations?**

- A) Crude oil and LNG.
- B) Petrochemicals and gold.
- C) Engineering goods, rice, and textiles.
- D) Heavy mining equipment and raw timber.

**3. From the perspective of India's energy security, the FTA with the GCC is crucial because it ensures stable supplies of:**

- A) Coal and Iron ore.
- B) Crude oil and LNG.
- C) Solar panels and wind turbines.
- D) Uranium for nuclear power.

**4. Beyond physical goods, the India-GCC agreement aims to open doors for which of the following sectors?**

- A) Agricultural land acquisition.
- B) Services, logistics, and digital trade.
- C) Space exploration and deep-sea mining.
- D) Wildlife conservation and tourism only.

**5. What is the primary objective of the "Terms of Reference" (ToR) mentioned in the context of this trade deal?**

- A) To immediately abolish all import duties.
- B) To provide a framework and predictability for formal negotiations.
- C) To limit the number of migrants moving between regions.
- D) To fix the price of gold for the next decade.

### Answer Key & Quick Reference

Question	Correct Answer	Key Reason
1	B	ToR is the procedural starting point for formal FTA talks.
2	C	India's strengths lie in manufacturing (engineering) and agriculture (rice/textiles).
3	B	The GCC is India's primary source for fossil fuels.
4	B	Modern trade deals prioritize the "Digital Economy" and services.
5	B	ToR sets the "rules of the game" for how the deal will be discussed.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### US Congress Approves \$200 Million Security Aid for Baltic States Amid Rising Russia Tensions



On February 3, 2026, the U.S. Congress officially approved a **\$200 million** security assistance package for the Baltic States—**Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**. This funding, cleared under the **Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Defense Appropriations Act**, ensures the continuity of the **Baltic Security Initiative (BSI)**, a program that was facing potential cuts just a year ago.

The package was signed into law by President Trump, signaling a firm bipartisan commitment to NATO's easternmost frontier despite shifting priorities in Washington.

#### Strategic Significance & Regional Deterrence

The funding comes at a critical juncture as NATO monitors a surge in Russian "hybrid operations" along the **Suwalki Gap**—the 60-mile strip of land connecting Poland to the Baltics.

- **Interoperability:** The funds are primarily used to modernize Baltic defense systems to

be 100% compatible with U.S. and NATO standards.

- **Frontline Readiness:** As Russia moves toward a "total war" economy (with defense spending estimated at over **7% of its GDP**), these funds help smaller allies maintain a credible "tripwire" defense.
- **Economic Leverage:** By providing this aid, the U.S. incentivizes Baltic nations to continue their record-high defense spending. Estonia and Latvia have both committed to investing **over 5% of their GDP** in defense for 2026.

#### Detailed Breakdown of Assistance

The **\$200 million** core allocation for the BSI is supplemented by additional programs to address specific high-tech gaps:

Component	Amount	Purpose/Use Case
<b>Baltic Security Initiative (BSI)</b>	\$200 Million	Joint procurement of air defense, coastal surveillance, and intelligence systems.
<b>Foreign Military Financing (FMF)</b>	\$10 Million+	Specifically earmarked for <b>Estonia</b> to replenish <b>HIMARS</b> ammunition and Javelin missiles.
<b>Modernization Support</b>	Part of BSI	Developing layered air defense and "Military Schengen" mobility zones for faster troop movement.







### Key Defense Assets Targeted

The Baltic nations have prioritized several specific American-made platforms for this funding cycle:

- **HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems):** Critical for long-range precision strikes.
- **P-8A Poseidon Support:** Enhanced maritime surveillance in the Baltic Sea.
- **Anti-Drone Systems:** Countering the increased use of autonomous swarm drones seen in recent regional conflicts.

### Global Context: A "Cold Peace"

The approval is a direct response to a "synchronized escalation" of Russian activities in early 2026, including:

1. **Airspace Violations:** Increased frequency of Russian jets entering Baltic corridors without transponders.
2. **Cyber Offensive:** Poland and the Baltics reported seeing **2,000–4,000 cyberattacks daily** targeting energy and logistics hubs in early 2026.
3. **The "Shadow Fleet":** Continued tension over Russian oil tankers in the Baltic Sea bypassing international sanctions.

"The Baltics are on the frontlines with Russia... they punch way above their weight in defense spending. This funding ensures they aren't standing alone."

— **Rep. Don Bacon**, Co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. Which legislative act authorized the USD 200 million security assistance package for the Baltic States?**

- A) The NATO Mutual Defense Act
- B) The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Defence Appropriations Act
- C) The Eastern European Security Initiative
- D) The Baltic Deterrence Act of 2025

**2. Which three nations are collectively known as the "Baltic States" receiving this funding?**

- A) Poland, Lithuania, and Estonia
- B) Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
- C) Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland
- D) Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine

**3. What is the primary geopolitical reason cited for this specific funding increase?**

- A) Expanding trade routes in the Baltic Sea
- B) Internal political instability within the European Union
- C) Increased Russian military activity along NATO's eastern flank
- D) Modernizing the naval fleets of Mediterranean allies

**4. Where are the Baltic States geographically located in relation to NATO's territory?**



- A) On the Southern flank
- B) On the Western flank
- C) On the Eastern flank
- D) In the Central European corridor

### Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	B (FY 2026 Defence Appropriations Act)
2	B (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania)
3	C (Increased Russian military activity)
4	C (Eastern flank)

## BANKING/ECONOMY

### RBI MPC Doubles Collateral-Free Loan Limit for Micro, Small Firms



In a major push for financial inclusion, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced during the February 2026 Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting that the limit for collateral-free

loans to **Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs)** will be doubled.

This is the first revision to this limit in **16 years** (the last change was in 2010), primarily to adjust for inflation and the growing capital needs of India's "growth engine" sector.

### Key Changes at a Glance

The new regulations shift the landscape for small business financing, effective from the next financial year.

Feature	Old Limit	New Limit (Starting April 1, 2026)
Mandatory Collateral-Free Limit	₹10 Lakh	₹20 Lakh
Discretionary Limit (Good Track Record)	Varies	Up to ₹25 Lakh
Coverage	Select MSEs	All MSEs and PMEGP units

### Strategic Highlights

- Mandatory Compliance:** Banks are now **mandated** not to ask for collateral security for any MSE loan up to ₹20 lakh.
- PMEGP Integration:** The revised limit also extends to all units financed under the **Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)** administered by KVIC.
- Flexibility for Lenders:** Banks have the discretion to push this limit to **₹25 lakh** for borrowers with a strong financial position and clean repayment history.



- **Voluntary Collateral:** Interestingly, the RBI clarified that if a borrower *chooses* to pledge gold or silver voluntarily for these loans, it will not be seen as a violation of the mandate.

### Why Now? The Economic Impact

The MSME sector contributes roughly **30% to India's GDP** and **45% to exports**, yet many small units struggle with the "credit gap" because they lack land or property to offer as security.

1. **Combating Inflation:** Governor Malhotra noted that the ₹10 lakh limit, set in 2010, had lost its real value. Doubling it is essentially "indexing for inflation."
2. **Reducing Informal Borrowing:** By easing access to formal bank credit, the RBI aims to pull small entrepreneurs away from high-interest informal moneylenders.
3. **Synergy with Budget 2026:** This move complements the **₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund** announced in the Union Budget, creating a multi-layered support system for small businesses.

"MSMEs are the growth engines of our economy. This revision will channel a higher dose of formal credit to units with limited collateral, supporting last-mile delivery."

— **Sanjay Malhotra**, RBI Governor.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. What is the new limit for collateral-free loans for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) as announced by the RBI in February 2026?**

- A) ₹10 lakh
- B) ₹15 lakh
- C) ₹20 lakh
- D) ₹25 lakh

**2. When will the revised limit for collateral-free MSE loans come into effect?**

- A) February 1, 2026
- B) April 1, 2026
- C) June 1, 2026
- D) Immediately

**3. Which body within the Reserve Bank of India is responsible for making this policy announcement?**

- A) Board of Financial Supervision
- B) Payment and Settlement Systems Board
- C) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)
- D) Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

**4. Prior to the February 2026 announcement, what was the mandatory limit up to which banks were required to offer collateral-free loans to MSEs?**

- A) ₹5 lakh



- B) ₹10 lakh  
C) ₹12 lakh  
D) ₹20 lakh

**5. The increase in the collateral-free loan limit primarily aims to benefit which sector?**

- A) Large Scale Industries  
B) Agriculture and Allied Activities  
C) Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs)  
D) Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)

**Answer Key**

Question	Answer
1	C) ₹20 lakh
2	B) April 1, 2026
3	C) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)
4	B) ₹10 lakh
5	C) Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs)

**BANKING/ECONOMY**

**Kotak Mahindra Bank Issues India's First Fully Digital FPI License**



On **February 8, 2026**, Kotak Mahindra Bank became the first custodian in India to operationalize a fully digital **Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI)** registration and onboarding process. By issuing the first two FPI licenses through this method, the bank has effectively eliminated the need for physical paperwork and "wet signatures" (physical ink signing) in one of the most complex regulatory areas of Indian finance.

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**The Digital "Frictionless" Workflow**

The breakthrough was made possible by **SEBI's** (Securities and Exchange Board of India) unified digital workflow, which went live in January 2026.

Historically, foreign investors had to print, sign, and physically courier voluminous documents across borders to their custodians in India. The new system integrates the entire journey:

- Online Application:** Submission via the **Common Application Form (CAF)** portal.
- Digital Signatures:** Investors now use **Digital Signature Certificates (DSCs)** issued by



Indian authorities, integrated directly into the portal.

3. **e-KYC:** Electronic verification of identity for authorized signatories.
4. **Instant Issuance:** The custodian (Kotak) reviews and issues the license digitally, significantly cutting down onboarding time from weeks to just a few days.

### Why This Matters for the Indian Economy

FPIs are a major source of liquidity for Indian capital markets. In a global environment where capital is highly mobile, "Ease of Doing Business" is a competitive necessity.

- **Speed to Market:** Digital onboarding allows global funds to capture market opportunities in India much faster.
- **Operational Risk:** Removing the physical handling of documents reduces the risk of loss, forgery, or manual data entry errors.
- **Aatmanirbhar & Digital India:** It aligns India's regulatory infrastructure with global standards found in hubs like Singapore or London, making India a more attractive destination for "patient capital."

### The Broader Reform Context: SWAGAT-FI

This digital leap by Kotak Mahindra Bank is part of a larger SEBI initiative launched in early 2026 called **SWAGAT-FI (Single Window Automatic and Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors)**.

### Key Features of the 2026 FPI Regime:

Feature	Traditional System	New Digital/SWAGAT System
Onboarding Time	15-30 Days	3-5 Days
Documentation	Physical/Wet-ink	100% Digital (DSC/e-Sign)
KYC Cycle	Frequent manual reviews	Harmonized with RBI (less frequent)
Registration Validity	3-year block	10-year block (for trusted categories)

"This milestone marks India's transition to a modern, paperless capital market ecosystem. By removing the 'wet signature' barrier, we are providing a truly frictionless experience for global capital."

— **Sachin Samant**, President, Banking & Financial Institutions Group, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

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India's financial markets have taken a major digital leap. Kotak Mahindra Bank has issued the country's first fully digital Foreign Portfolio Investor licence. The entire process, from application to approval, was completed online using electronic signatures. This move highlights India's growing focus on ease of doing business, faster onboarding, and attracting global capital through technology-driven reforms in the financial sector.



## Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. Which bank issued India's first-ever fully digital Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) license?**

- A) HDFC Bank
- B) ICICI Bank
- C) Kotak Mahindra Bank
- D) State Bank of India

**2. What technology was primarily used to facilitate the end-to-end digital approval and application process?**

- A) Blockchain-based smart contracts
- B) Electronic signatures
- C) Biometric iris scanning
- D) Physical verification via courier

**3. The digital issuance of FPI licenses is a strategic move aimed at improving which of the following?**

- A) Ease of Doing Business
- B) Faster onboarding of global investors
- C) Attracting global capital
- D) All of the above

**4. How does the "fully digital" process differ from the traditional FPI licensing method?**

- A) It requires a physical visit to the SEBI headquarters.
- B) It eliminates the need for physical paperwork from application to approval.

C) It only applies to domestic institutional investors.

D) It is managed by the Ministry of External Affairs instead of banks.

**5. In the context of this news, what does the acronym "FPI" stand for?**

- A) Financial Primary Investment
- B) Foreign Portfolio Investor
- C) Fixed Portfolio Income
- D) Formal Private Institution

## Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	C) Kotak Mahindra Bank
2	B) Electronic signatures
3	D) All of the above
4	B) It eliminates the need for physical paperwork
5	B) Foreign Portfolio Investor

## STATE NEWS

### SC on Vice-Chancellor Appointments

In a significant legal development on **February 4, 2026**, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, led by **Chief Justice Surya Kant**, set aside an interim stay by the Madras High Court regarding the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in Tamil Nadu.







In a significant legal development on **February 4, 2026**, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, led by **Chief Justice Surya Kant**, set aside an interim stay by the Madras High Court regarding the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in Tamil Nadu.

The ruling essentially restores the State government's power to move forward with the legislative process—though not with actual appointments—while the High Court re-evaluates the case.

### The Core Conflict: State vs. Governor

At the heart of this dispute are **10 amendment Acts** passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly. These laws aim to shift the power to appoint and remove Vice-Chancellors from the **Governor** (acting as Chancellor) to the **State Government**.

- **The State's Argument:** The elected government should have the final say in academic leadership to ensure harmony with state policies.
- **The Opposition/Petitioner's Argument:** The move allegedly violates **UGC (University Grants Commission) Regulations**, which provide a specific framework for VC appointments to maintain academic autonomy.

### Why the Supreme Court Intervened

The Supreme Court's decision to stay the High Court's order was based primarily on **procedural fairness** rather than the merits of the law itself.

1. **"Tearing Hurry":** The Supreme Court questioned why a **Vacation Bench** of the Madras High Court stayed the laws in May 2025 without giving the State government a "reasonable opportunity" to file a counter-affidavit.
2. **Technical Grounds:** The Bench noted that since the case involved a challenge to the constitutionality of a statute, it should not have been suspended at an interim stage without a full hearing.
3. **The State's Assurance:** A key factor in the Supreme Court's decision was an undertaking given by the Tamil Nadu government that it **will not make any actual VC appointments** until the High Court delivers its final verdict.

### What Happens Next?

The matter has been sent back to the Madras High Court with strict instructions:

Direction	Timeline/Detail
<b>Expedited Decision</b>	The High Court must decide the case <b>within six weeks</b> .
<b>Bench Assignment</b>	The Chief Justice of the Madras HC will hear the matter or assign it to a specific bench.
<b>Status of Appointments</b>	16 out of 22 state-run universities currently remain "headless" (without a permanent VC).





### Recent Legal Context

This clash is a continuation of a long-standing battle. In **April 2025**, the Supreme Court had used its powers under **Article 142** to declare that these 10 Bills were "deemed to have received assent" because the Governor had delayed acting on them for years. This latest ruling ensures that the *legality* of those now-active laws is settled through proper judicial process.

"The State cannot keep its universities headless... but the High Court must hear the State before nullifying a statutory law."

— Observation by the Supreme Court Bench.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. The Supreme Court recently stayed an interim order from which High Court regarding the appointment of Vice-Chancellors?**

- A) Kerala High Court
- B) Madras High Court
- C) Bombay High Court
- D) Delhi High Court

**2. What was the primary reason the Supreme Court stayed the High Court's interim order?**

- A) To allow the Governor to make the final decision.
- B) To ensure the State government is given a reasonable opportunity to present its case.
- C) To permanently uphold the amended provision.

D) To transfer all university appointments to the Central Government.

**3. Within what timeframe has the Supreme Court directed the High Court to decide on the matter?**

- A) Two weeks
- B) Four weeks
- C) Six weeks
- D) Three months

**4. The legal dispute involves an "amended provision" that would allow which entity to appoint Vice-Chancellors in Tamil Nadu?**

- A) The University Grants Commission (UGC)
- B) The State Government
- C) The President of India
- D) A private search committee

**5. What is the legal effect of the Supreme Court "staying" the High Court's interim order?**

- A) The High Court's order is permanently cancelled.
- B) The High Court's order is temporarily suspended.
- C) The State Government loses its power to argue the case.
- D) The Vice-Chancellors are immediately dismissed.







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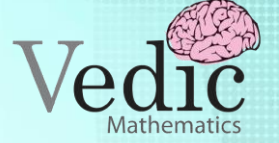
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## Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	B) Madras High Court
2	B) To ensure the State government is given a reasonable opportunity
3	C) Six weeks
4	B) The State Government
5	B) The High Court's order is temporarily suspended



## Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

### Q.1. Where was the recent Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) 2026 held?

- A. Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi
- B. Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
- C. Pragati Maidan, New Delhi
- D. Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

1. B

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with children from across the country for the ninth edition of "Pariksha Pe Charcha." At the Prime Minister's residence in Delhi, Modi first presented Assamese scarves to the children and then answered their questions. In the first episode, Modi advised the children to abandon foreign goods and adopt indigenous products. He also urged them to fulfill the dream of building a developed India in 25 years.

### Q.2. Which organization is implementing the Yuva Sahakar Yojana and Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojana?

- A. NABARD
- B. NITI Aayog
- C. National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)
- D. Ministry of MSME

2. C

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is implementing two major initiatives—the Yuva Sahakar Scheme and the Swayamshakti Sahakar Scheme—to promote innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable livelihoods in India's cooperative sector. Both schemes are fully funded and supported by NCDC, a statutory body under the Ministry of Cooperation. These initiatives reflect the Government of India's focus on cooperative-led growth, youth entrepreneurship, and women's economic empowerment.

### Q.3. Which state recently launched an automated property mutation system to speed up land and property transactions?

- A. Kerala
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. Karnataka
- D. Telangana

3. C

The Karnataka government has announced the launch of an automated property conversion





system. This is a major step aimed at expediting land and property transactions across the state. This initiative is part of a larger effort to digitize Karnataka's land records and revenue administration. By allowing automatic updates of ownership information after property registration, this reform aims to reduce delays, remove bureaucratic bottlenecks, and increase transparency in the real estate system.

**Q.4. Which is the first state in India to recently announce a special "senior budget"?**

- A. Kerala
  - B. Himachal Pradesh
  - C. Odisha
  - D. Maharashtra
4. A

Kerala is considered the first state in India to introduce a special "elderly budget," or a budget dedicated to senior citizens. The Kerala government has made special provisions in its plans and budget for the care, protection, and social welfare of the elderly, a historic step to address the needs of the state's growing elderly population.

**Q.5. Who recently launched India's first cooperative-based ride-hailing service, 'Bharat Taxi'?**

- A. Nitin Gadkari
- B. Amit Shah Shah
- C. Piyush Goyal

D. Ashwini Vaishnav

5. B

India's Union Home and Cooperative Minister Amit Shah launched the country's first cooperative-based ride-hailing service, "Bharat Taxi," in New Delhi. The service is run by Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited, under the Ministry of Cooperatives, to compete with Ola and Uber.

**Q.6. Who was recently awarded the 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma 'Soldier of Humanity' Award 2025?**

- A. Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck
- B. Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck
- C. Tshering Tobgay
- D. Lotay Tshering

6. B

The 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma 'Soldier of Humanity' Award 2025 was presented to Her Majesty Queen Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck of Bhutan. The prestigious award was presented to her in February 2026 at the Bodoland University in Kokrajhar, Assam, for her humanitarian service, social development, and community welfare.

**Q.7. With which organization did India recently sign the Terms of Reference for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?**

- A. ASEAN
- B. European Union







C. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

D. SAARC

7. C

India has officially signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The agreement aims to facilitate trade in goods and services, promote investment, and ensure energy security, deepening economic ties between India and the six-member GCC bloc (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain).

**Q.8. Mount Aconcagua, which was recently in the news, is located in which country?**

A. Chile

B. Argentina

C. Peru

D. Bolivia

8. B

Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh flagged off a prestigious Indian mountaineering expedition to Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, the highest peak in South America. This joint mission is being conducted by the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) and the Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering and Winter Sports (JIM&WS). This expedition demonstrates India's growing focus on adventure training, physical endurance, and leadership development. It also strengthens India's presence in global high-altitude mountaineering.

**Q.9. How much gold did the RBI recently purchase in 2025?**

A. 73 tonnes

B. 40 tonnes

C. 10 tonnes

D. 4 tonnes

9. D

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) significantly reduced its gold purchases in 2025, purchasing only about 4 tonnes, significantly less than the 72.6 tonnes (or 73 tonnes in some reports) added in 2024. Despite the lower purchase rate, total gold holdings reached a record 880.2 tonnes by the end of 2025.

**Q.10. What percentage of FDI does the recent Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025 allow in the insurance sector?**

A. 49%

B. 74%

C. 100%

D. 51%

10. C

The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025, also known as the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment to Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, increases the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the Indian insurance sector from 74% to 100%. This will allow full foreign ownership of Indian insurance companies, with the aim of attracting capital and boosting the industry's growth.





**Q.11. Which mutual fund recently launched the "InvesTap Nxt" digital investment platform?**

- A. HDFC Mutual Fund
- B. ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund
- C. SBI Mutual Fund
- D. Axis Mutual Fund

11. C

SBI Mutual Fund has launched its new AI-powered digital investment platform, 'InvestTap Next.' The announced next-generation platform offers enhanced user experience, conversational AI, and portfolio insights through an account aggregator.

**Q.12. SBI recently secured a \$1 billion social loan from which institution?**

- A. World Bank
- B. Asian Development Bank
- C. Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG)
- D. JICA

12. C

The State Bank of India (SBI) has secured a USD 1 billion syndicated social loan from MUFG Bank of Japan and Taipei Fubon Commercial Bank. This 5-year loan is primarily arranged by MUFG to empower women and finance women-owned businesses.

**Q.13. Which bank recently launched the "Rooftop Solar Finance" product?**

- A. HDFC Bank
- B. State Bank of India
- C. Axis Bank
- D. Punjab National Bank

13. C

Axis Bank launched a 'Rooftop Solar Finance' product specifically for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in February 2026. This scheme provides unsecured loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹2 crore to MSMEs to enable them to use solar energy and reduce energy costs.

**Q.14. Which district recently became the first in India to receive 100% insurance coverage under "Insurance for All by 2047"?**

- A. Udaipur
- B. Alwar
- C. Kota
- D. Ajmer

14. B

Alwar district in Rajasthan has become the first district in India to achieve 100% insurance coverage under the "Insurance for All by 2047" initiative. This achievement was achieved in collaboration with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the Ministry of Finance, demonstrating financial security and coverage at the grassroots level.





**Q.15. Which company recently delivered the first two unmanned surface vessels (USVs) to the Indian Navy?**

- A. Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders
- B. Larsen & Toubro
- C. Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt. Ltd.
- D. Bharat Dynamics Limited

15. C

Sagar Defence Engineering Private Limited, a Mumbai-based firm specializing in advanced maritime systems, has achieved a major milestone by delivering the first two Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) to the Indian Navy. These vessels are part of a larger order of 12 units, reflecting India's growing efforts towards indigenous defense manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

## FACTS ABOUT BHARAT

Often referred to as the "Scotland of the East" due to its rolling hills and pleasant climate, Shillong holds a unique position in India's history as a bridge between the colonial past and a vibrant, indigenous future.

### A Timeline of Shillong's Rise

Shillong's journey from a cluster of villages to a modern state capital is marked by resilience, especially following the devastating Great Assam Earthquake of 1897.

Year	Landmark Event
1864	Developed as a civil station for the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
1874	Became the capital of the Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam.
1897	An <b>8.1 magnitude earthquake</b> leveled the city; it was subsequently rebuilt with "Assam-style" earthquake-resistant architecture.
1972	Officially inaugurated as the capital of the newly formed state of <b>Meghalaya</b> .

### Geography & Culture: "The Abode of Clouds"

Shillong is not just a political hub; it is the cultural heart of the **Khasi people**.

- **Matrilineal Society:** Unlike most of India, the Khasis follow a matrilineal system where lineage and inheritance are traced through the mother, making Shillong a center for unique social empowerment.
- **The Shillong Peak:** Standing at **1,965 meters**, it is the highest point in the state, offering a panoramic view of the entire city and the distant Himalayan peaks.
- **Waterfalls & Lakes:** The city is famous for landmarks like **Elephant Falls** and the man-made **Uiam Lake** (Barapani), which serves as a major tourist attraction and a source of hydroelectric power.

### Strategic Importance in 2026

In the current geopolitical and economic landscape, Shillong serves as a vital node for India's **Act East Policy**:



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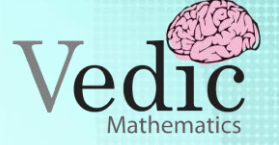
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- **Education Hub:** Known as the "Educational Capital of Northeast India," it houses prestigious institutions like **IIM Shillong** and the **North Eastern Hill University (NEHU)**.
- **Smart City Evolution:** Under the Smart Cities Mission, Shillong has integrated modern waste management and traffic solutions while preserving its iconic pine-covered landscape.
- **North Eastern Council (NEC):** Headquartered here, the NEC is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the entire North Eastern Region.

**Did you know?** Shillong is also famous for its vibrant music scene and is often called the "**Rock Capital of India**," hosting international festivals that draw crowds from across the globe.

- C) East Khasi Hills
- D) Ri-Bhoi District

**3. In which year did Shillong officially become the capital of the newly formed state of Meghalaya?**

- A) 1864
- B) 1897
- C) 1947
- D) 1972

**4. What major event in 1897 forced the complete rebuilding of Shillong?**

- A) A massive fire
- B) A devastating earthquake
- C) A colonial war
- D) A severe flood

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. What does the name "Meghalaya" translate to in English?**

- A) Land of the Rising Sun
- B) The Abode of Clouds
- C) Home of the Khasi
- D) The Misty Mountains

**2. Shillong serves as the headquarters for which specific district?**

- A) West Garo Hills
- B) Jaintia Hills

**5. Before becoming the capital of Meghalaya, Shillong served as the capital for which province?**

- A) Manipur
- B) Assam
- C) Nagaland
- D) Tripura







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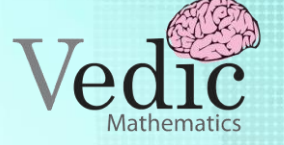
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### Answer Key

Question	Correct Answer
1	B) The Abode of Clouds
2	C) East Khasi Hills
3	D) 1972
4	B) A devastating earthquake
5	B) Assam

### Dear Aspirants,

"We trust that this current affairs preparation will be beneficial for your upcoming examination. Consistent daily study of current affairs is highly recommended. Should you have any suggestions for improvement or feedback regarding the class, please feel free to communicate them. Your ideas are valuable, and we welcome your assistance in helping us to provide enhanced support in the future."

We wish best for your studies & Exams

### Best Wishes

Murthy sir (MSM)

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