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NATIONAL NEWS

Union Cabinet Approves ₹10,000 Crore Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0



The Union Cabinet's approval of the **Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0)** on February 14, 2026, marks a significant shift in India's strategy from building a broad ecosystem to engineering specific technological capabilities.

This second phase builds on the foundation laid by FFS 1.0 (launched in 2016), which successfully committed its entire ₹10,000 crore corpus to 145 Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), ultimately catalyzing over **₹25,500 crore** in investments for more than 1,370 startups.

Key Strategic Pillars of FoF 2.0

While the first version focused on "quantity" and ecosystem expansion, FoF 2.0 is designed for "quality" and strategic depth:

- **Deep Tech & Advanced Manufacturing:** A primary focus on high-tech areas like AI, robotics, semiconductors, and quantum computing. These sectors require "patient capital"—funds that understand longer gestation periods (often 7–12 years) before commercialization.

- **Early-Growth Stage "Safety Net"**: Specifically targeting the "funding cliff" where many startups fail between the prototype and product-market fit stages.
- **Regional Democratization**: Actively pushing investment beyond major hubs like Bengaluru, Delhi, and Mumbai to ensure innovation thrives in Tier-II and Tier-III cities.
- **Strengthening Domestic VCs**: By supporting smaller, home-grown AIFs, the government aims to reduce the startup ecosystem's heavy reliance on foreign capital.

"crowd in" private investment into high-risk, high-reward sectors that are essential for the **Viksit Bharat @ 2047** vision.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. What is the total corpus approved by the Union Cabinet for the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0)?

- A) ₹5,000 crore
- B) ₹10,000 crore
- C) ₹15,000 crore
- D) ₹20,000 crore

2. Which of the following sectors is a primary focus area for FoF 2.0?

- A) Traditional retail and wholesale trade
- B) Real estate and infrastructure
- C) Deep tech and innovative manufacturing
- D) Import-based consumer goods

3. What is the primary objective of "crowding in" private investments in the context of this scheme?

- A) To replace private investment with government spending
- B) To use government funds to attract and mobilize additional private capital
- C) To limit the number of private investors in the market
- D) To nationalize high-growth startups

4. How does the Fund of Funds (FoF) model typically operate?

Comparative Evolution: 1.0 vs. 2.0

Feature	Fund of Funds 1.0 (2016)	Fund of Funds 2.0 (2026)
Primary Goal	Ecosystem building & numerical growth	Industrial capability & strategic tech
Sector Focus	Sector-agnostic / Broad	Priority: Deep tech & Manufacturing
Geography	Concentrated in metros	Nationwide / Regional clusters
Capital Nature	Passive catalytic finance	Strategic risk capital
Startup Base	From <500 to ~2 lakh startups	Aiming for global tech leadership

Why This Matters Now

The timing of FoF 2.0 is critical. In 2026, venture capital has become more selective globally. By stepping in with a **₹10,000 crore corpus**, the government is acting as a "cornerstone investor," providing the confidence necessary to

- A) The government invests directly in individual startups.
- B) The government provides loans directly to small business owners.
- C) The government invests in Venture Capital (VC) funds, which then invest in startups.
- D) The government provides grants that do not need to be repaid.

5. One of the key goals of FoF 2.0 is to reduce funding gaps in which types of sectors?

- A) Low-risk, high-established sectors
- B) High-risk, innovative sectors
- C) Public sector undertakings
- D) Agriculture-only traditional sectors

Answer Key

Q. No	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The Cabinet specifically cleared a ₹10,000 crore corpus.
2	C	Deep tech and manufacturing are prioritized to boost "innovation-led" growth.
3	B	"Crowding in" refers to using public funds to give private investors confidence to join in.
4	C	An FoF doesn't pick startups; it picks the VC funds that pick the startups.
5	B	High-risk sectors often struggle for private capital, so the FoF helps bridge that gap.

NATIONAL NEWS

Cabinet Clears Mega Urban Challenge Fund with 50% Market Finance Mandate



The **Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)**, approved in February 2026, represents a fundamental shift in how Indian cities are built and managed. Moving away from the "grant-based" dependency of the past, the UCF treats cities as **competitive economic hubs** that must prove their financial and operational viability to receive support.

The 25-50-25 Funding Architecture

The UCF's unique financial structure is designed to turn every ₹1 of taxpayer money into ₹4 of total infrastructure investment.

- **25% Central Assistance (CA):** Provided by the Union Government.
- **50% Market Borrowing (Mandatory):** Cities must raise at least half the project cost via **Municipal Bonds**, bank loans, or **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**.
- **25% Contribution:** The remainder is covered by the State Government, the Urban Local Body (ULB), or additional market finance.

Three Strategic Verticals

The fund focuses on specific project categories to maximize economic impact:

- Cities as Growth Hubs:** High-density, transit-oriented development (TOD) and infrastructure that connects economic nodes (industrial, tourism, or tech corridors).
- Creative Redevelopment:** Revitalizing congested city centers, heritage sites, and "brownfield" areas (abandoned industrial land) using Land Value Capture models.
- Water & Sanitation:** Modernizing water grids, legacy waste remediation, and achieving 100% service saturation with a focus on *Swachhata*.

Bridging the "Credit Gap" for Smaller Cities

A major hurdle for Indian cities is that many lack the credit rating needed to borrow from the market. To solve this, the Cabinet approved:

- Credit Enhancement Corpus (₹5,000 Crore):** Specifically to help **4,223 cities** (mostly Tier-II and Tier-III) improve their creditworthiness.
- Credit Repayment Guarantee Scheme (₹5,000 Crore):**
 - 70% Guarantee:** For first-time loans (up to ₹7 crore).
 - 50% Guarantee:** For subsequent loans.
 - Eligibility:** Small ULBs (<1 lakh population) and cities in North-Eastern or Hilly states.

Summary of Impact

Feature	Traditional Model	Urban Challenge Fund (2026)
Funding Source	Direct Government Grants	Market-linked (Bonds/Loans)
Project Selection	Allocation-based	Competitive "Challenge Mode"
Accountability	Process-oriented	Outcome-oriented (linked to reforms)
City Status	Administrative units	Bankable Asset Class

Key Reform: Funding is strictly tied to milestones. If a city fails to digitize its governance or improve its financial transparency, the subsequent tranches of the ₹1 lakh crore fund will be withheld.

[Urban Challenge Fund & Startup India 2.0 Analysis](#)

This video provides an in-depth breakdown of the 2026 Cabinet approvals, specifically explaining the transition from grant-based to market-linked urban financing and its impact on the economy.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. What is the primary objective of the newly approved ₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)?

- To provide interest-free loans to all rural panchayats.
- To shift urban development from grant-based funding to market-linked, reform-driven growth.

C) To fully fund 100% of urban infrastructure projects through Central Assistance.

D) To privatize all municipal services in Tier-1 cities.

2. Under the UCF scheme, what is the maximum percentage of project costs that will be funded by the Central Government?

A) 10%

B) 25%

C) 50%

D) 75%

3. To qualify for the UCF, what is the minimum percentage of project costs that must be raised through market sources (e.g., municipal bonds, PPPs)?

A) 20%

B) 25%

C) 50%

D) 60%

4. The ₹1 lakh crore Central Assistance is expected to mobilize a total investment of how much over a five-year period?

A) ₹1 lakh crore

B) ₹2.5 lakh crore

C) ₹4 lakh crore

D) ₹10 lakh crore

5. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a market source for raising the required project funds under the UCF?

A) Municipal Bonds

B) Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

C) Bank Loans

D) Personal Income Tax Surcharges

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The fund aims to transition toward a reform-driven and competitive model.
2	B	The Centre provides 25% as Central Assistance (CA).
3	C	At least 50% must be sourced from the market to ensure financial viability.
4	C	The leverage effect of the fund is designed to mobilize ₹4 lakh crore total.
5	D	Tax surcharges are not listed; the focus is on bonds, loans, and PPPs.

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a) 16 b) 1 c) 2 d) 4

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SPORTS

Magnus Carlsen Crowned 2026 FIDE Freestyle World Champion



Magnus Carlsen's victory in the **2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship** is more than just another trophy—it's the completion of his "Triple Crown" (Classical, Rapid, Blitz) with a fourth dimension: **Chess960**.

By defeating Fabiano Caruana **2.5–1.5** in the final (February 15, 2026), Carlsen finally conquered the format that had eluded him in 2019 and 2022.

The Road to the Title

The championship, held at the **Schloss Weissenhaus** resort in Germany, featured a field of the world's top talent, including rising stars like Nodirbek Abdusattorov and Vincent Keymer.

- **The Final (vs. Fabiano Caruana):**
 - **Game 1 & 2:** Both ended in hard-fought draws, though Caruana had significant winning chances in the second game that Carlsen narrowly neutralized.

- **Game 3 (The Turning Point):** Carlsen managed a "Houdini-style" escape. After falling into a nearly lost position due to an ill-judged bishop capture, he exploited late inaccuracies by Caruana to flip the evaluation and win.
- **Game 4:** Needing only a draw, Carlsen maintained a solid, equal position. Caruana missed a subtle knight maneuver late in the game, leading to a simplification and the title-clinching draw.

Career Milestone: 21 World Titles

This victory brings Carlsen's tally of official world titles to **21**, further cementing his status as the greatest multi-format player in history:

Format	Titles
Classical	5
Rapid	6
Blitz	9
Freestyle (Chess960)	1

Tournament Impact & 2027 Qualification

The event was historic as the **first official FIDE-recognized** World Championship in the Freestyle format, organized in partnership with Freestyle Chess Operations.

- **Prize Money:** Carlsen took home the winner's share of **\$100,000** from a \$300,000 total prize pool.
- **The Podium:** 1. **Magnus Carlsen** (Norway)
2. **Fabiano Caruana** (USA)

3. **Nodirbek Abdusattorov** (Uzbekistan) — defeated Vincent Keymer in the 3rd-place playoff.

- **2027 Cycle:** All three podium finishers have automatically qualified for the **2027 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship**.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. Who was crowned the 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Champion?

- A) Fabiano Caruana
- B) Ding Liren
- C) Magnus Carlsen
- D) Hikaru Nakamura

2. Where was the final of the championship held?

- A) Oslo
- B) Weissenhaus
- C) Saint Louis
- D) Chennai

3. What was the final score by which Magnus Carlsen defeated Fabiano Caruana?

- A) 3.0–1.0
- B) 2.0–2.0
- C) 2.5–1.5
- D) 4.0–0.0

4. The 2026 victory marks Magnus Carlsen's _____ world title across all formats.

- A) 10th
- B) 15th
- C) 21st
- D) 25th

5. What is the alternative name for the "Freestyle" chess format used in this tournament?

- A) Blitz Chess
- B) Chess960
- C) Rapid Chess
- D) Bullet Chess

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	C	Magnus Carlsen won the title after a draw in the final game.
2	B	The event took place in Weissenhaus.
3	C	Carlsen secured the title with a 2.5–1.5 victory.
4	C	This win brought his total count of world titles to 21.
5	B	Freestyle chess is the official FIDE recognition of the Chess960 format.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Israel's cabinet approves plan to restart formal land registration in occupied West Bank



On February 15, 2026, the Israeli Cabinet officially approved a plan to restart **formal land registration** in the West Bank for the first time in nearly 60 years. This move, championed by the government's far-right wing, has been described by international observers and Palestinian officials as a significant step toward "de facto annexation."

The Plan: Targeting Area C

The initiative specifically targets **Area C**, which covers roughly **61% of the West Bank**. Under the 1995 Oslo Accords, Israel maintains full civil and security control over this zone.

- **The Mechanism:** The government will reopen the "settlement of land title" process, which has been frozen since the 1967 Six-Day War.
- **Proof of Ownership:** Residents must provide specific, rigorous documentation to prove

ownership. Land that cannot be proven as private property according to Israeli standards may be reclassified as "State Land."

- **The Goal:** The Cabinet set a target to register **15% of Area C** by the year 2030.
- **Budget:** An initial allocation of **NIS 244 million (\$79 million)** has been approved for the 2026–2030 period.

Key Proponents

The policy was advanced through a joint proposal by three influential ministers:

- **Bezalel Smotrich (Finance Minister):** Stated the move would "create legal certainty" and prevent "illegal Palestinian Authority expansion" in Area C.
- **Yariv Levin (Justice Minister):** Called the decision a "revolution" that would deepen Israel's grip on "Judea and Samaria."
- **Israel Katz (Defense Minister):** Emphasized that the process would protect national interests and bring administrative order to the region.

Global Reaction & Controversy

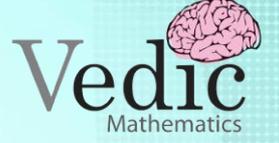
The decision has sparked a wave of condemnation from the international community:

- **United Nations:** Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the move, stating it risks the "dispossession of Palestinians" and undermines the two-state solution.
- **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** Denounced the plan as a "dangerous escalation" and a

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"mega land grab" that violates international law.

- **Regional Responses:** Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar issued statements calling the measure illegal and a threat to regional stability.
- **Civil Society:** The Israeli NGO *Peace Now* warned that since most Palestinian land records are based on Ottoman or Jordanian-era documents that may be incomplete, the new "draconian" requirements will likely result in vast areas being transferred to the state for settlement expansion.

Contextual Shift

This decision follows a series of other measures approved just a week prior, including:

1. Repealing laws that restricted land sales to Israeli settlers.
2. Lifting confidentiality on land registry records.
3. Transferring building permit authority in certain blocs from Palestinian municipalities to Israeli civil administrations.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. The Israeli cabinet's plan to restart formal land registration targets which specific area of the West Bank?

- A) Area A
- B) Area B
- C) Area C
- D) The Gaza Strip

2. Why is the 2026 land registration decision considered historically significant?

- A) It is the first time Israel has authorized such a process since capturing the territory in 1967.
- B) It marks the first time Israel has handed land registration authority to the Palestinian Authority.
- C) It is the first time an international court has supervised West Bank land deeds.
- D) It officially ends the military occupation of the territory.

3. Which three ministers were the primary architects of the land registration proposal?

- A) Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant, and Itamar Ben-Gvir
- B) Bezalel Smotrich, Yariv Levin, and Israel Katz
- C) Isaac Herzog, Yair Lapid, and Benny Gantz
- D) Israel Katz, Eli Cohen, and Ron Dermer

4. Approximately what percentage of the West Bank territory is comprised of Area C, where Israel maintains full military and civilian control?

- A) 25%
- B) 40%
- C) 60%
- D) 83%



5. What is the primary concern raised by critics and international bodies regarding this land registration process?

- A) It will lead to higher property taxes for Israeli settlers.
- B) It acts as a mechanism for de facto annexation and could lead to Palestinian dispossession.
- C) It will slow down the construction of Israeli infrastructure.
- D) It requires the Palestinian Authority to pay for the registration costs.

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	C	The plan specifically targets Area C, which remains under full Israeli control.
2	A	Formal registration has been frozen since the 1967 Mideast War.
3	B	The proposal was advanced by the Finance (Smotrich), Justice (Levin), and Defense (Katz) ministers.
4	C	Area C accounts for roughly 60% (often cited as 61%) of the West Bank.
5	B	Critics, including the UN and Peace Now, view this as a move toward formal

Question	Answer	Explanation
		annexation of occupied land.

NATIONAL NEWS

Bill Gates discusses technology in governance and public health in Andhra Pradesh



Bill Gates' visit to Amaravati on **February 16, 2026**, was a high-profile "tech-diplomacy" event that reaffirmed his long-standing partnership with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. The visit focused on scaling the state's digital infrastructure through AI and real-time data analytics.

Highlights of the Secretariat Visit

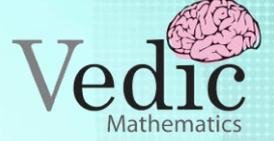
Upon his arrival at the Amaravati Secretariat, Gates was welcomed by CM Naidu, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, and the state cabinet. The discussions revolved around the "Swarna Andhra 2047" vision.

- **Real-Time Governance System (RTGS):** Naidu showcased the RTGS 2.0 center, demonstrating how the state uses data

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lakes and AI for disaster management, welfare monitoring, and civic service delivery.

- **Blockchain for Land Records:** When Gates enquired about security, officials explained how **blockchain technology and QR codes** are being used to make land records tamper-proof.
- **WhatsApp Governance:** Gates reportedly appreciated the state's move to bring government services to citizens' phones via WhatsApp, simplifying administrative hurdles.

Focus on Public Health & "Sanjeevani"

The **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)** has a direct stake in the state's healthcare through the **Sanjeevani Project**, which was a primary topic of discussion.

- **Digital Health Records:** The project, currently piloted in Kuppam (Chittoor district), uses AI to maintain comprehensive digital health records.
- **Affordable Diagnostics:** Gates emphasized the need to prioritize low-cost diagnostic services for the poor, suggesting that "bio-design" medical services could be the next frontier for the state.
- **AI-Driven Reforms:** The state Health Minister confirmed that a high-level advisory group of 10 international experts is now working to overhaul the state's health policy with BMGF support.

Field Visit to Undavalli

Following the Secretariat meetings, Gates visited an agricultural farm in **Undavalli** by the Krishna river.

- **Precision Farming:** He witnessed demonstrations of **drones** being used for pesticide spraying and the **AP-AIMS mobile app**, which uses AI to identify crop pests from photos.
- **Natural Farming:** Gates interacted with local farmers practicing climate-resilient natural farming and sampled local Andhra cuisine.

Historical Context

The meeting was nostalgic for both leaders. Gates recalled their first meeting in **1997**, which famously led to the establishment of Microsoft's first development center outside the US in Hyderabad. He noted that while India is at the forefront of the global digital revolution, Naidu remains "ahead of many global leaders" in his technological thinking.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. Who received Bill Gates at the Gannavaram Airport upon his arrival in Andhra Pradesh?

- A) Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu
- B) Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan
- C) State Minister Nara Lokesh
- D) Governor of Andhra Pradesh

2. Where did the formal discussions between Bill Gates and the Andhra Pradesh government take place?

- A) Rajiv Gandhi International Airport



- B) The State Secretariat in Amaravati
C) Visakhapatnam IT Hub
D) The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation HQ

3. What were the primary themes of the discussions held between Bill Gates and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu?

- A) Agricultural subsidies and rural electrification
B) Space exploration and satellite launching
C) Technology in governance and public health
D) Tourism development and temple restoration

4. Besides the Chief Minister, which other key leader welcomed Bill Gates at the State Secretariat?

- A) Nara Lokesh
B) Pawan Kalyan
C) Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy
D) D.K. Aruna

5. Bill Gates visited Andhra Pradesh in his capacity as the Chairman of which organization?

- A) Microsoft Corporation
B) World Health Organization (WHO)
C) Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
D) UNICEF

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	C	Nara Lokesh and senior officials handled the airport reception.

Question	Answer	Explanation
2	B	The meeting moved to the capital, Amaravati, for official talks.
3	C	The focus remained on leveraging technology for state administration and healthcare.
4	B	Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan was present at the welcoming ceremony.
5	C	He visited as the Chairman of his global philanthropic foundation.

SPORTS

Norway's Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo wins ninth gold medal in cross-country skiing



Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo's victory in the **men's 4 x 7.5km relay** on February 15, 2026, isn't just a win—it is a statistically historic moment that crowns him the **most successful Winter Olympian of all time**.

At just 29 years old, Klaebo has surpassed the legendary "8-gold" ceiling that had stood for decades, and he did it with the flair of a true

champion, even slowing down to salute the crowd at the Val di Fiemme stadium before crossing the finish line.

The New Winter "Gold Standard"

With his **9th career gold medal**, Klæbo has broken the tie with three other iconic Norwegian athletes who previously shared the record.

Athlete	Sport	Gold Medals	Status
Johannes Høsflot Klæbo	Cross-Country Skiing	9	Active (Record Holder)
Marit Bjørgen	Cross-Country Skiing	8	Retired
Bjørn Dæhlie	Cross-Country Skiing	8	Retired
Ole Einar Bjørndalen	Biathlon	8	Retired

IT Milan Cortina 2026: The "Klæbo Games"

Klæbo has been unstoppable in Italy. This relay victory marked his **fourth gold medal** of these Games alone. His path to history in February 2026 included:

- Skiathlon:** A powerful display of versatility.
- Sprint:** Defending his crown in his signature event.
- 10km Interval Start Free:** The win that tied the all-time record on "lucky" Friday the 13th.

- 4 x 7.5km Relay:** The history-making 9th gold, anchored by Klæbo to lead Norway to a 22.2-second victory over France.

A Family Legacy

After the race, an emotional Klæbo credited his 83-year-old grandfather and lifelong coach, **Kåre Høsflot**, who was watching from the stands.

"He's been my coach since I was 15... he's 83, but still the most innovative guy I know. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him." — *Johannes Høsflot Klæbo*

Men's Relay Results (Tesero, Italy)

Rank	Team	Time
 Gold	Norway (Iversen, Nyenget, Hedegart, Klæbo)	1:04:24.5
 Silver	France	+22.2s
 Bronze	Italy	+47.9s

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. How many total gold medals in cross-country skiing has Johannes Hoesflot Klæbo won following his victory in the men's relay?

- 4
- 7
- 9
- 21

2. At which Olympic Games did Klaebo set the new Winter Games record for the most gold medals in cross-country skiing?

- A) PyeongChang 2018
- B) Beijing 2022
- C) Milan Cortina 2026
- D) Oslo 2030

3. In which specific event did Klaebo secure his record-breaking ninth gold medal?

- A) Men's 15km Individual
- B) Men's 4 x 7.5-kilometre relay
- C) Men's Individual Sprint
- D) Men's 50km Freestyle

4. How many gold medals did Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo win specifically during the 2026 Games?

- A) Two
- B) Three
- C) Four
- D) Nine

5. Prior to this victory, with whom did Klaebo share the record for the most gold medals in cross-country skiing?

- A) Three retired Norwegian athletes
- B) Two Swedish and one Finnish athlete
- C) His current relay teammates
- D) No one; he already held the record alone

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	C	His victory in the relay brought his career total to 9 gold medals.
2	C	The record was set during the Milan Cortina 2026 Olympics.
3	B	He anchored the 4 x 7.5-km relay to seal the historic win.
4	C	The relay gold was his fourth gold medal of the 2026 Games specifically.
5	A	He previously shared the record with three retired athletes from his own country, Norway.

STATE NEWS

Strategic Roadmap for Soil Health



On **February 16, 2026**, the Tamil Nadu government reaffirmed its commitment to the "Chief Minister's Mannuyir Kaathu Mannuyir Kaappom" (Protecting Soil, Protecting Life) scheme.

This flagship initiative, originally introduced in the 2024-25 Agriculture Budget, is a ₹206 crore mission aimed at reversing soil degradation and promoting chemical-free, sustainable farming practices across the state.

Strategic Pillars of the Scheme

The roadmap addresses soil health through 22 distinct components, but the primary focus is on biological enrichment:

- **Green Manure Expansion:** A dedicated ₹20 crore has been allocated to distribute green manure seeds (like *Dhaincha*, *Sesbania*, and *Sunn hemp*) to 2 lakh farmers. This is aimed at covering 2 lakh acres of farmland.
- **Startup Fund for Soil Health:** A ₹20 crore startup fund has been established to support innovative soil health technologies and local composting entrepreneurship.
- **Problem Soil Reclamation:**
 - ₹7.50 crore for reclaiming 37,500 acres of alkaline soil.
 - ₹15.00 crore for reclaiming 7,500 acres of acidic soil.
- **Digital Monitoring:** Through the Tamil Mannvalam portal, the state has already distributed over 15.25 million Soil Health Cards (SHC), allowing farmers to access site-specific fertilizer recommendations and nutrient data.

Mechanization and Infrastructure

To ensure the roadmap is practical for small and marginal farmers, the government is providing the necessary tools to incorporate organic matter back into the earth:

- **Custom Hiring Centers:** 90 tractors and 90 rotavators were procured at a cost of ₹10.25 crore to be rented out at nominal rates.
- **Vermicompost Beds:** 10,000 farmers are being provided with two vermicompost beds each (at a cost of ₹6 crore) to encourage the use of cow dung and farm waste.
- **Bio-fertilizer Distribution:** ₹7.50 crore is allocated for the distribution of 5 lakh litres of liquid bio-fertilizers, covering 10 lakh acres.

Summary of Impact

Feature	Target / Allocation	Impact
Total Budget	₹206 Crore	Statewide soil health overhaul
Green Manure Seeds	2 Lakh Acres	Nitrogen fixation & organic matter
Soil Health Cards	15.25 Million issued	Precision nutrient management
Liquid Bio-fertilizers	5 Lakh Litres	10-20% increase in productivity
Problem Soil Fix	45,000 Acres total	Restoration of uncultivable land

Why Green Manure? Leguminous crops like *Dhaincha* fix atmospheric nitrogen into the soil. Incorporating these crops (about 8–25 tonnes of green matter per hectare) can add **60 to 90 kg of Nitrogen per hectare**, drastically reducing the need for expensive synthetic urea.

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. What is the primary objective of the strategic roadmap recently implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu?

- A) To increase the export of chemical fertilizers to neighboring states.
- B) To improve soil health and support sustainable agriculture.
- C) To transition all farmlands into industrial zones.
- D) To reduce the total area of farmland to conserve water.

2. Which specific scheme has been strengthened with a budget of approximately ₹206 crore to enhance soil fertility?

- A) The Green Revolution Initiative
- B) The Sustainable Irrigation Roadmap
- C) The Soil Health and Fertility Scheme
- D) The Farmer Income Support Program

3. What specific agricultural practice is being promoted by the roadmap to improve soil nutrients naturally?

- A) Deep-sea silt excavation
- B) Green manure cultivation
- C) Hydroponic farming
- D) Multi-story greenhouse gardening

4. How much farmland does the Tamil Nadu government plan to cover by spreading green manure seeds?

- A) 50,000 acres

B) 1 lakh acres

/C) 2 lakh acres

D) 5 lakh acres

5. Approximately how many farmers are expected to benefit from the planned distribution of green manure seeds?

- A) More than 2 lakh
- B) Exactly 1 lakh
- C) Roughly 50,000
- D) All farmers in South India

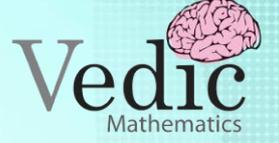
Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The roadmap focuses on soil health and sustainability as the core foundation for farming.
2	C	The Soil Health and Fertility Scheme is the central vehicle for this ₹206 crore investment.
3	B	Green manure is highlighted as the primary method to restore nutrients and fertility.
4	C	The initiative targets an area of 2 lakh acres across the state.
5	A	The scheme is designed to reach and benefit over 2 lakh individual farmers.

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DETAILED ANALYSIS OF RECENT CURRENT AFFAIRS: MULTIPLE CHOICE FORMAT

Q.1. Which company's nOPV2 vaccine was prequalified by the WHO to strengthen global polio eradication?

- A. Serum Institute of India
- B. Biological E Limited
- C. Bharat Biotech
- D. Panacea Biotec

1. B

The World Health Organization (WHO) has pre-qualified for use a new type 2 oral polio vaccine (nOPV2) from the Indian company Biological E. Ltd. This move aims to strengthen efforts to eradicate polio worldwide, as nOPV2 is genetically more stable than the standard vaccine.

Q.2. Andrey Gurov was recently appointed interim Prime Minister of which country?

- A. Germany
- B. Netherlands
- C. Denmark
- D. Bulgaria

2. D

Bulgarian President Ileana Iotova nominated Andrey Gurov, the suspended deputy governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, as Bulgaria's caretaker prime minister. Gurov was tasked with forming a new government to replace the resigned administration and overseeing the

upcoming early parliamentary elections, scheduled for April 19, 2026.

Q.3. At which shooting range was the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2026 held?

- A. Tughlakabad Range, Delhi
- B. Dehradun
- C. Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range, New Delhi
- D. Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar

3. C

India topped the medal table at the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championships 2026 with a historic performance. Held at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi, Indian shooters won a total of 94 medals, including 51 gold, 23 silver, and 20 bronze. Indian athletes continued their impressive performance on the final day, winning six gold, three silver, and four bronze medals. This success underscores India's strong position at the continental level.

Q.4. Under which lens was fiscal discipline emphasized in the Rajasthan Budget 2026-27?

- A. Vision 2030
- B. Vision 2047
- C. Vision 2025
- D. Vision 2050

4. B

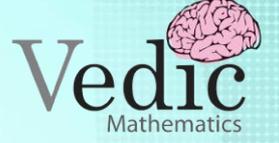
The Rajasthan government presented the state budget for 2026-27 in the Assembly, outlining a roadmap focused on fiscal consolidation, increased capital spending, strengthening agriculture, expanding infrastructure, and social welfare efforts. The budget was presented by



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Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Divya Kumari, who emphasized adhering to FRBM norms while accelerating growth under the state's Vision 2047 strategy.

Q.5. Who will host the International Military Adventure Challenge Cup (IMACC) 2026?

- A. Indian Air Force
- B. Indian Army
- C. ITBP
- D. Indian Navy

5. B

The Indian Army will host the first-ever International Military Adventure Challenge Cup (IMACC) in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas from February 18 to 23, 2026. Military teams from India and seven friendly countries—Bhutan, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia—will participate.

Q.6. Who promotes military sports events under the motto of "Friendship through Sport"?

- A. NATO
- B. UN Peacekeeping
- C. International Military Sports Council (CISM)
- D. SCO

6. C

Military sports events are promoted by the International Military Sports Council (CISM) under the motto "Friendship Through Sport." Founded in 1948, CISM is one of the largest organizations promoting sports and friendship among armed forces worldwide.

Q.7. Which country recently launched the first national biobank dedicated to rare diseases?

- A. India
- B. Japan
- C. Italy
- D. Switzerland

7. A

India recently launched the country's first government-funded national biobank for lysosomal storage disorders (LSDs), a rare genetic disease with a focus on it. This initiative, launched in collaboration with the Ahmedabad-based Foundation for Research in Genetics and Endocrinology (FRIGE), aims to create affordable diagnostics and treatments using data from over 530 patients across 15 states.

Q.8. The National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA) is affiliated to which ministry?

- A. Ministry of Finance
- B. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- C. Ministry of Education
- D. Ministry of Electronics & IT

8. B

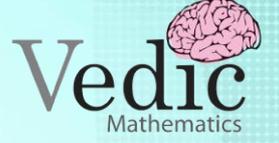
The National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA) is affiliated to the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India. It is a central training institute located in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, responsible for training and capacity building of the Indian Statistical Service (ISS) and other statistical personnel.



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Q.9. According to the NITI Aayog's Trade Watch Report, what is the rank of electronics in India's exports?

- A. Largest export item
- B. Second-largest export item
- C. Third-largest export item
- D. Fourth-largest export item

9. B

According to NITI Aayog's sixth Trade Watch Report (Q2 FY26), electronics has become India's second-largest export segment. It now accounts for 10% of India's total export basket, with mobile phones contributing the most.

Q.10. Who has been appointed as the Chairman of GIFT City, Gujarat?

- A. Hasmukh Adhia
- B. Uday Kotak
- C. Nandan Nilekani
- D. Mukesh Ambani

10. B

The Gujarat government has appointed Kotak Mahindra Bank founder Uday Kotak as the new chairman of GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance-Tec City) in Gandhinagar. He will replace Hasmukh Adhia, who was previously the non-executive chairman. The appointment order was issued by the Urban Development and Urban Housing Department of the Gujarat government.

Q.11. RBI has granted a three-year extension to the MD & CEO of which bank?

- A. Equitas Small Finance Bank

B. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank

C. AU Small Finance Bank

D. Jana Small Finance Bank

11. C

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of Sanjay Aggarwal, the current MD and CEO of AU Small Finance Bank, for a period of three years. His third term will be effective from April 19, 2026, and will continue till April 18, 2029, with the aim of strengthening the bank's universal banking goals.

Q.12. Who achieved a historic third consecutive victory as Prime Minister of Barbados?

- A. Kamla Persad-Bissessar
- B. Mia Mottley
- C. Portia Simpson-Miller
- D. Jacinda Ardern

12. B

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley has secured a historic election victory, securing her third consecutive term in office. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated her on this significant achievement and emphasized the need to further strengthen India-Barbados relations.

Q.13. Which Indian company has received a US license to import crude oil from Venezuela?

- A. Indian Oil Corporation
- B. ONGC
- C. Reliance Industries
- D. BPCL



13. C

Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has received a special license from the US to import crude oil directly from Venezuela. This permission will allow it to directly purchase Venezuela's heavier and cheaper crude oil, despite US sanctions, thereby increasing the capacity of its Jamnagar refinery and reducing costs.

Q.14. Which port became the first major port in India to receive the IGBC Platinum rating?

- A. Chennai Port
- B. Jawaharlal Nehru Port
- C. V.O. Chidambaranar Port
- D. Cochin Port

14. C

In a significant step towards promoting green infrastructure in India, the V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port Authority has become the first major port in India to receive the prestigious IGBC Platinum rating, the highest certification awarded by the Indian Green Building Council. This recognition was given to the port's administrative building for its outstanding performance in sustainability, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly infrastructure.

Q.15. Which state presented the Economic Survey 2025-26 with the target of a \$1 trillion economy?

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Gujarat

15. B

Uttar Pradesh presented its first annual Economic Survey 2025-26 in the state assembly, aiming to become a \$1 trillion economy. Presented by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna, the survey outlines a roadmap to transform the state into a major economic powerhouse through an investment-led growth strategy, improved infrastructure, and investment proposals worth over \$50 trillion.

Intelligence uses what is known to solve problems.

Math Brian Teaser
 $16 \div 2 \div 2 \div 4$
 a) 16 b) 1 c) 2 d) 4

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FACTS ABOUT INDIA

That is a sweet piece of history! India's relationship with sugar goes back thousands of years—so far back that the very words we use for it today have their roots in ancient India.

The process of turning sugarcane juice into granulated crystals was a revolutionary "deep tech" invention of its time.

The Origins of "Sarkara"

The English word "Sugar" is actually derived from the Sanskrit word , which originally referred to ground or candied sugar. Similarly, "Candy" comes from (unrefined sugar).

- **Ancient References:** Sugarcane is mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* (written between 1500–1000 BCE).
- **The Gupta Empire (350–550 CE):** This era is widely credited with discovering the method of turning sugarcane juice into granulated crystals, which were easier to store and transport.

How India "Sweetened" the World

As your facts mention, India didn't just keep the recipe; it exported the expertise:

- **The Buddhist Connection:** Indian sailors and Buddhist monks introduced sugar and its cultivation techniques to China. Around 648 CE, the Chinese Emperor Taizong sent a mission to India specifically to learn the art of sugar refining.
- **Persia and the Islamic Golden Age:** By the 6th century, the Sassanid Empire in Persia adopted Indian sugar technology. Later, the

Arab world spread these techniques across the Mediterranean and into Europe.

- **Greek & Roman Accounts:** When Alexander the Great's companions reached India in 326 BCE, they were amazed to find "honey which is not produced by bees," referring to sugarcane.

Sugar in Modern India (2026)

Fast forward to today, and India remains a global powerhouse in the industry:

Metric	Status
Global Ranking	Largest producer and consumer of sugar in the world.
Ethanol Blending	India uses its sugar surplus to meet its 20% Ethanol Blending (E20) fuel target.
Major Hubs	Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra remain the "Sugar Bowls" of India.

Fun Fact: Before the Indian discovery of crystallization, the world relied almost entirely on honey or fruit for sweetness. Sugar was once so rare in Europe that it was treated as a precious medicine or a luxury spice, often called "White Gold."

Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. Which country was the first to develop techniques for the extraction and purification of sugar?

- A) Brazil
- B) China
- C) India
- D) Egypt

2. Historically, how did many visitors from abroad learn about the cultivation and refining of sugar?

- A) By reading ancient Greek manuscripts
- B) By visiting India and learning from the local techniques
- C) Through trade with Caribbean islands
- D) By observing natural fermentation in European forests

3. According to the text, India's contribution to the global sugar industry was primarily in:

- A) Developing synthetic sugar substitutes
- B) Creating the first sugar-based alcoholic beverages
- C) Developing extraction and purifying techniques
- D) Establishing the first automated sugar factories

Answer Key

Question	Answer	Explanation
1	C	India is credited as the pioneer in developing sugar purification methods.
2	B	Knowledge of sugar refining spread globally through visitors who learned it in India.
3	C	The text specifically highlights the development of techniques to extract and purify sugar.

Dear Aspirants,

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Best Wishes

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