

May - 21

## TNPSC BITS

- ❖ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Ahmedabad–Dholera semi high-speed rail project at an estimated cost of ₹20,667 crore.
  - The double-line railway corridor connecting Sarkhej in Ahmedabad with Dholera in Gujarat will be Indian Railways’ first semi high-speed rail project using indigenously developed technology.
- ❖ Nepal’s Kami Rita Sherpa climbed Mount Everest for the 32nd time, extending his record for the highest number of Everest summits since his first climb in 1994.
  - Lhakpa Sherpa broke her own record with her 11th Everest summit, after becoming the first Nepali woman to successfully climb and descend Everest in 2000.
- ❖ India’s first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered autonomous combat aircraft, “Kaal Bhairava”, developed by Flying Wedge Defence & Aerospace, will be manufactured in Europe for the first time.
- ❖ International Day of Light is observed on 16 May every year to highlight the importance of light and light-based technologies in science and daily life.
  - The theme for the year 2026 is "Light for a Sustainable Future".
- ❖ National Dengue Day is observed on 16 May every year across India to raise awareness about dengue prevention and mosquito control.
  - The theme for the year 2026 is “Community Participation for Dengue Control: Check, Clean and Cover”.

## TAMIL NADU NEWS

### Madras High Court Judge Recommendations

- ❖ The Supreme Court Collegium recommended 19 names for appointment as judges of the Madras High Court.
- ❖ The court, had a working strength of 52 judges against a sanctioned strength of 75
- ❖ The recommendations include 9 judicial officers and 10 advocates from the Bar.
- ❖ The decision was approved during a collegium meeting held on 18 May 2026.
- ❖ The names were proposed earlier between November and December 2025.

- ❖ The recommended judicial officers include the present Registrar General of the Madras High Court.
- ❖ The judicial officers recommended include Dr. P. Murugan, Mrs. M.D. Sumathi, and Mrs. S. Alli.
- ❖ The advocates recommended include Natarajan Ramesh, G.K. Muthukumaar, and Rajnish Pathiyil.
- ❖ The Supreme Court Collegium is headed by the Chief Justice of India and recommends appointments of High Court and Supreme Court judges.



## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **Separate FASTags for Toll-Exempt Vehicles**

- ❖ The Government is planning a separate category of FASTags for toll-exempt vehicles under the Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling system.
- ❖ The proposed system will cover armed forces and authorised government vehicles to enable smooth toll-free movement.
- ❖ Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling uses Artificial Intelligence (AI), satellite tracking, and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) for electronic toll collection without stopping vehicles.
- ❖ Under the proposal, exempt vehicles may use specially configured FASTags that record movement without deducting toll charges.

- ❖ The government is considering either a centralised database of exempt vehicles or dedicated FASTags with unlimited free-pass privileges.



### Indian Ocean Dialogue 2026



- ❖ India hosted the 10th edition of the Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) in New Delhi under the theme “Indian Ocean Region in a Transforming World”.
- ❖ This year India assuming the chairship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for 2025–27.
- ❖ Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) is a Track 1.5 forum that brings together government officials, scholars, think tanks, and civil society experts.
- ❖ The dialogue was first proposed during the 13th IORA Council of Ministers meeting in Perth, Australia, in 2013, and the first session was held in Kerala in 2014.
- ❖ It focuses on maritime security, blue economy, disaster risk management, and trade cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- ❖ The dialogue supports India's MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

### **Kimberley Process Meeting 2026**

- ❖ India hosted the Kimberley Process (KP) Intersessional Meeting 2026 in Mumbai as the Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2026.
- ❖ The meeting focused on strengthening the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the global market.
- ❖ India is one of the founding members of the KPCS, established under the United Nations General Assembly Resolution.
- ❖ India's 2026 Chairship theme is based on the 3Cs — credibility, compliance, and consumer confidence.
- ❖ The Kimberley Process was launched in 2000 by Southern African countries to regulate the trade in rough diamonds.
- ❖ India processes nearly 90% of the world's diamonds and accounts for around 75% of global diamond turnover by value.



### **Global Jaggery Production**

- ❖ India remains the world's largest producer of jaggery (gur), contributing over 70% of global production.

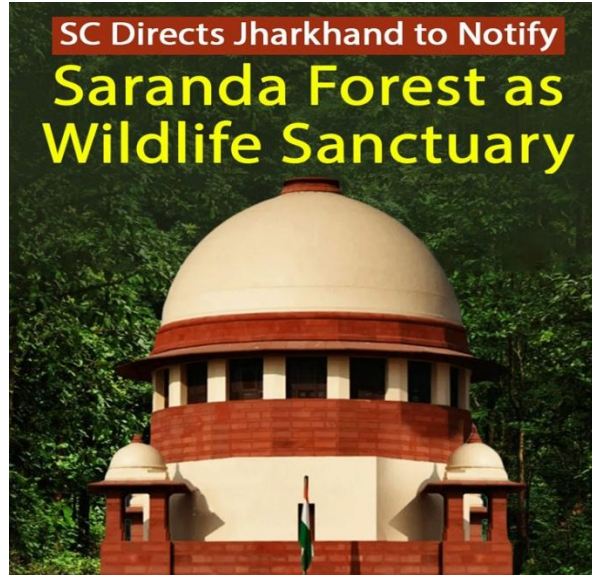
- ❖ Jaggery is a traditional, unrefined natural sweetener made by concentrating sugarcane juice without chemical refining.
- ❖ Nearly 20–30% of India’s sugarcane output is used for jaggery production, supporting around 2.5 million rural livelihoods.
- ❖ Uttar Pradesh contributes 48.5% of India’s sugarcane production, followed by Maharashtra (24.1%) and Karnataka (10.5%).
- ❖ India’s jaggery exports rose from USD 197 million in 2015–16 to USD 406.8 million in 2024–25, showing 106.5% growth in value.



### **Supreme Court on Saranda Forest**

- ❖ The Supreme Court directed Jharkhand to notify 31,468.25 hectares of Saranda Forest as a wildlife sanctuary.
- ❖ Saranda Forest is the largest Sal forest in Asia and is located near Jamshedpur in Jharkhand.
- ❖ “Saranda” means “land of seven hundred hills” and the forest spreads over around 900 square kilometres.
- ❖ The Supreme Court upheld the 1968 notification of the former Bihar government declaring it as the “Saranda Game Sanctuary.”

- ❖ The Court reiterated that mining is prohibited inside national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and within a one-kilometre Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ).



## **ECONOMY NEWS**

### **India's Seafood Exports to the EU**



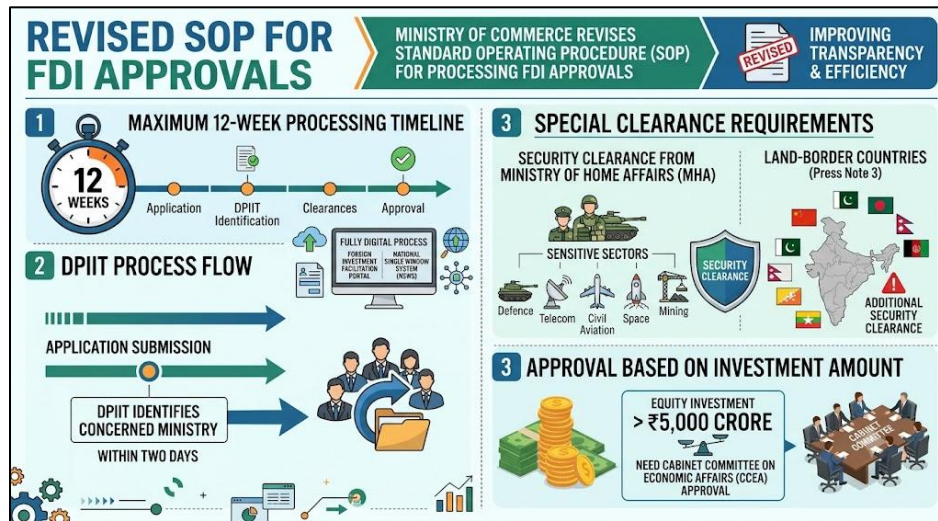
**WHY THIS MATTERS**

- The EU is India's third-largest seafood export destination.
- Farmed shrimp remains one of India's biggest seafood exports to Europe.
- Earlier EU draft regulations had excluded India from the approved export list, creating uncertainty for exporters.

- ❖ The European Union became India's third-largest seafood export market during the Financial Year 2025–26 (FY26), after the United States of America (USA) and China.

- ❖ India exported seafood worth US\$ 1.593 billion to the EU, accounting for 18.94% of total seafood export value.
- ❖ Seafood exports to the EU increased by 41.45% in value and 38.29% in quantity compared to FY25.
- ❖ The EU included India in its revised draft list for the continued export of aquaculture products from September 2026.
- ❖ The achievement reflects efforts by the Marine Products Export Development Authority and the Export Inspection Council to strengthen food safety, residue monitoring, and responsible aquaculture practices.

### Revised SOP for FDI Approvals



- ❖ The Ministry of Commerce revised the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for processing Foreign Direct Investment approvals to improve transparency and efficiency.
- ❖ The revised SOP fixes a maximum processing timeline of 12 weeks for FDI applications and makes the process fully digital through the Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal and National Single Window System.
- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will identify the concerned ministry within two days of application submission.
- ❖ Investments in sensitive sectors such as defence, telecom, civil aviation, space, and mining will require security clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ❖ FDI proposals involving equity investment above ₹5,000 crore will need approval from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

- ❖ Investments from India's land-border countries, including China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Afghanistan, will require additional security clearance.

## REPORTS AND INDICES

### Sand and Sustainability Report

- ❖ The United Nations Environment Programme released the report titled 'Sand and Sustainability: An Essential Resource for Nature and Development'.
- ❖ The report states that sand is the most extracted solid material in the world after water, with global consumption reaching about 50 billion tonnes annually in 2020.
- ❖ Sand mining involves the extraction of sand from riverbeds, beaches, and sea beds mainly for construction and industrial purposes.
- ❖ Excessive sand mining leads to riverbed degradation, groundwater depletion, biodiversity loss, and coastal erosion.
- ❖ The report recommends promoting Manufactured Sand (M-Sand), stronger regulation, and protection of ecologically sensitive areas from mining.

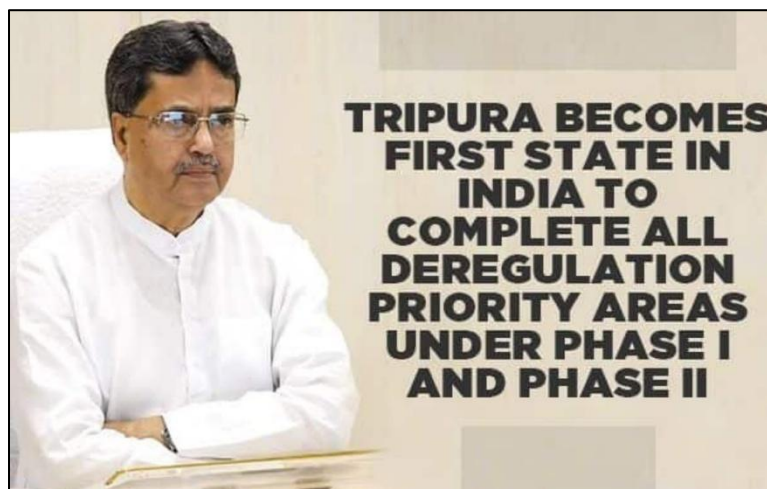


## STATE NEWS

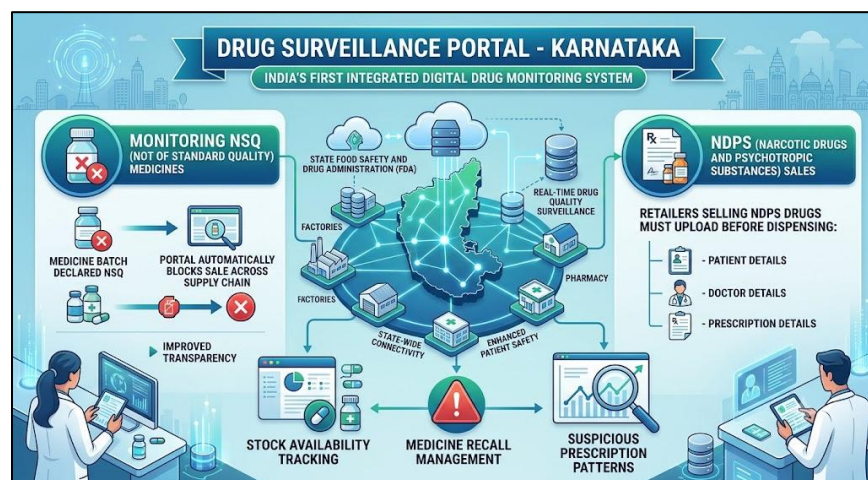
### Compliance Reduction and Deregulation Initiative

- ❖ Tripura became the first state in India to complete all priority areas under Deregulation Phase I and Phase II of the Compliance Reduction and Deregulation Initiative (CRDI).

- ❖ The initiative is led by the Cabinet Secretariat to reduce compliance burdens and improve ease of doing business.
- ❖ Tripura completed all 51 reform areas covering sectors such as land use, labour laws, tourism, environment, and digital governance.
- ❖ The state achieved a 94% score in the Business Reform Action Plan evaluation framework.
- ❖ Tripura attracted investment proposals worth about ₹35,140 crore through 394 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).
- ❖ The reforms include simplified land-use categories, flexible zoning systems, and self-certification for Change of Land Use (CLU) approvals.



## Drug Surveillance Portal - Karnataka



- ❖ Karnataka launched India's first integrated digital portal to monitor Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) medicines and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) drug sales.

- ❖ The system was introduced by the State Food Safety and Drug Administration (FDA) for real-time drug quality surveillance.
- ❖ Once a medicine batch is declared NSQ, the portal automatically blocks its sale across the supply chain.
- ❖ Retailers selling NDPS drugs must upload patient, doctor and prescription details before dispensing medicines.
- ❖ The portal also tracks stock availability, medicine recalls, and suspicious prescription patterns to improve transparency and patient safety.

