

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS - 18.08.2026

Highlights of the Day

TamilNadu Highlights	1
Tamil Nadu to Launch Chief Minister's Elderly Health Insurance Scheme	1
Topic: Schemes and Initiatives	2
Reform Utsav	2
Topic: Award and Honor	3
The National Anubhav Awards	3
Topic: Science and Technology	5
India's Lunar Future	5
AI Agents	6
VIHAAN: India's Indigenous Broadband Networking Chip	7
Topic: Economics	9
Central Electricity Authority (Cyber Security in Power Sector) Regulations, 2026	9
Topic: Polity	10
The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026	10
International Highlights	12
Kenya	12

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Director,
Department of Employment and Training.

TamilNadu Highlights

Tamil Nadu to Launch Chief Minister's Elderly Health Insurance Scheme

Context

- The **Tamil Nadu** Government announced the **Chief Minister's Elderly Health Insurance Scheme**, covering nearly **38 lakh** senior citizens aged **70 years** and above.
- The scheme will provide free medical treatment at empanelled government and private hospitals, with no income ceiling.
- The **Health Department** made **115** announcements with a total estimated outlay of **₹2,997 crore**.

Elderly Health Insurance Scheme

- Covers senior citizens aged **70 years** and above.
- Provides free treatment for cancer care, advanced cardiac surgeries, organ transplants and high-end diagnostic services.
- Services will be available through empanelled government and private hospitals.
- No income-based eligibility ceiling.

Tamil Nadu Public Health Act Reform

- The **Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939**, which is around **87 years** old, will be replaced with a modern and comprehensive Act.
- The new legislation aims to address contemporary and future health challenges.
- A proposed provision would make unsupervised home births outside hospitals a punishable offence.

TN Medicity

- **Tamil Nadu** will establish '**TN Medicity**', envisioned as a world-class integrated medical hub.
- It will combine clinical services, medical research, medical tourism and AYUSH.
- **₹10 crore** will be allocated initially for preparing the **Detailed Project Report**.

Nalam 360 – Annual Free Health Check-up

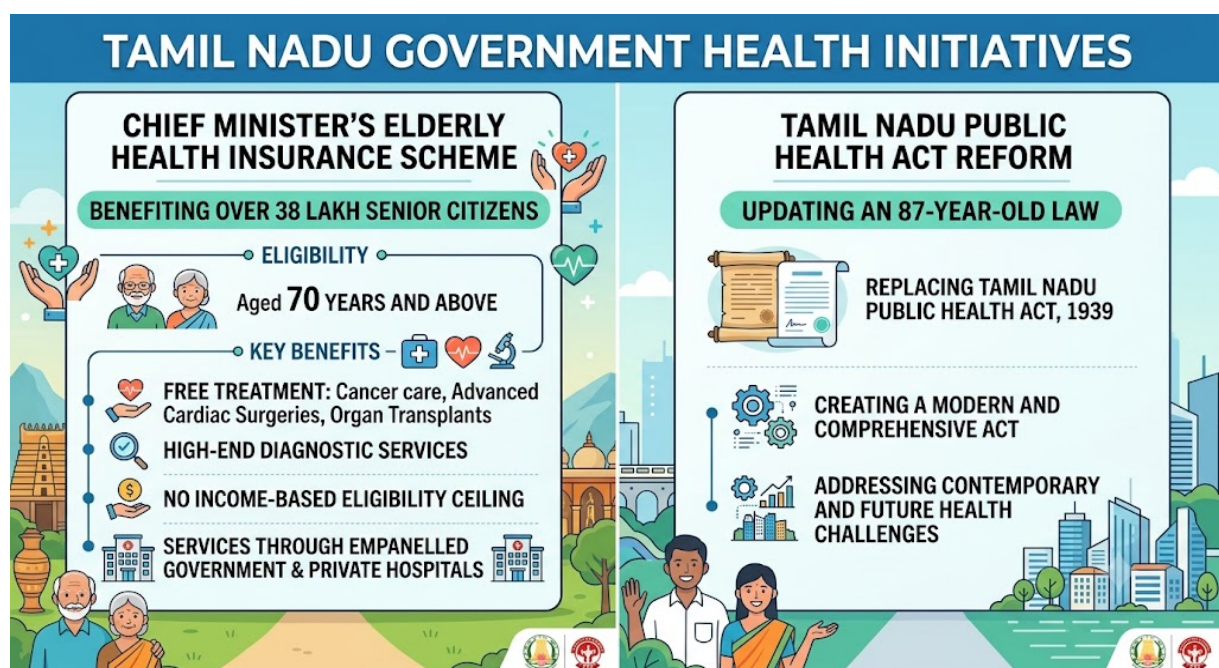
- The '**Nalam 360 – Annual Free Health Check-up for All**' scheme will provide free annual health screening for everyone aged **30 years** and above.
- **14 basic tests** will be offered across **1,257** government health facilities.
- Tests include blood pressure, ECG, haemoglobin, complete haemogram, random blood sugar, urea, creatinine, total cholesterol, serum bilirubin, urine albumin and VIA screening, among others.

Home-Based Diagnostic Services

- **Tamil Nadu** will introduce **Home-Based Diagnostic Services** for the first time.
- The service will provide sample collection and testing at home in metropolitan areas.
- It will be implemented through a public-private partnership model.

Policy & Legislative Reforms

- A **Positive Health Policy** will be introduced to promote holistic health and wellbeing at the individual, family and community levels.
- The **Nalam 360** mobile application will accompany the policy.
- A new **Tamil Nadu Institutions of State Importance in Health Care Act** will be introduced to establish institutions capable of providing world-class medical services.



Topic: Schemes and Initiatives

Reform Utsav

Context

- The **Union Government** plans to launch a three-month "**Reform Utsav**" campaign, likely from **2 October 2026**, to systematically collect citizens' suggestions and convert them into actionable governance reforms.

What is Reform Utsav?

- A proposed citizen-driven governance reform campaign designed to create an institutional mechanism for converting citizen feedback into implementable reforms.

- Seeks to establish a continuous process of citizen voice → actionable reform → implementation or committed roadmap.

Organisation

- **Coordination Committee:** To be headed by **Cabinet Secretary T. V. Somanathan**.
- State Participation: **Chief Secretaries** are being consulted to establish State-level bodies and designate nodal officers.
- Duration: Expected to run for **three months**, beginning on **2 October 2026**, coinciding with **Mahatma Gandhi's** birth anniversary.

Jan Manthan – Discover

- Citizens will submit reform suggestions through a dedicated portal.
- Suggestions will also be collected through public meetings, webinars and outreach programmes.

Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Feedback Processing

- **Artificial Intelligence** will help classify and organise citizen suggestions.
- A multilingual call centre may improve accessibility and participation.

Vimarsh – Deliberate

- Suggestions will be evaluated to identify “quick-win” reforms.
- More complex suggestions will be used to develop long-term structural reform roadmaps.

Samadhan & Sankalp Siddhi – Resolution

- The **Coordination Committee** will conduct bi-weekly reviews.
- Reviews will track the implementation and progress of identified reforms.

Topic: Award and Honor

The National Anubhav Awards

Context

- Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, will confer the **National Anubhav Awards 2026** at the **9th National Anubhav Awards Ceremony** at **Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi**.

About the Awards

- The **Anubhav Awards** are annual national honours instituted by the **Government of India**.
- They recognise outstanding write-ups and case studies submitted by retiring or retired government personnel through the **Anubhav Portal**.
- These submissions document institutional knowledge, administrative innovations and field experiences.

Nodal Department

- Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- **Anubhav Portal**: Launched in 2015.

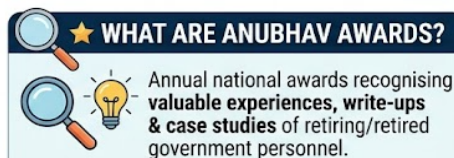
Eligibility

- Covers retiring/retired employees of: Central Government Ministries and Departments, **Central Public Sector Enterprises**, and **12 Public Sector Banks**.
- Employees retiring within the next **8 months** or pensioners who retired within the past **3 years** can submit write-ups.
- Write-ups published on the **Anubhav Portal** during the preceding financial year are considered for evaluation.

Digital Knowledge Repository

- The **Anubhav Portal** functions as a structured digital repository.
- Retiring personnel submit essays covering areas such as project execution, public service delivery, process streamlining and policy reforms.

NATIONAL ANUBHAV AWARDS 2026: Honouring Retiring Government Employees



NODAL DEPARTMENT
Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions



Recognition & Evaluation

- The scheme recognises contributions to high-impact governance, including initiatives such as **Passport Seva Kendras**, administrative rule simplification, energy conservation and public accounting automation.

- Submissions undergo departmental screening followed by evaluation by an independent national jury.
- Selected contributors receive Medals, Citations and Jury Certificates.

Pensioner Welfare Integration

- The awards ceremony is held alongside **Pre-Retirement Counselling** workshops and Pension Disbursing Bank exhibitions.
- It also supports pensioner welfare initiatives such as the **Pension Mitra** handbook and **Nationwide Digital Life Certificate** campaigns.

Topic: Science and Technology

India's Lunar Future

Context

- At the **9th India–United States Civil Space Joint Working Group** meeting at **Indian Space Research Organisation** headquarters, **Bengaluru**, **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** formally invited **India** to participate in its permanent “Moon Base” programme under the **Artemis Accords** framework.

India's Lunar Trajectory

- **India's** lunar programme is moving from robotic exploration towards sustained lunar surface infrastructure, crewed missions and long-term scientific utilisation.
- The trajectory involves balancing cooperation with the **United States**-led Artemis framework and the **China–Russia**-backed **International Lunar Research Station**, while maintaining **India's** strategic autonomy.

Moon Base Collaboration

- **India** has been invited to participate in developing modular lunar surface infrastructure, particularly near the lunar South Pole.
- The region is significant because of its potential water-ice deposits and areas receiving relatively long periods of sunlight.

Gaganyaan Cooperation

- Cooperation with the **United States** is expected to support **India's Gaganyaan** human spaceflight programme.
- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** is assisting in the training of Indian astronaut candidates.

NASA–ISRO Scientific Cooperation

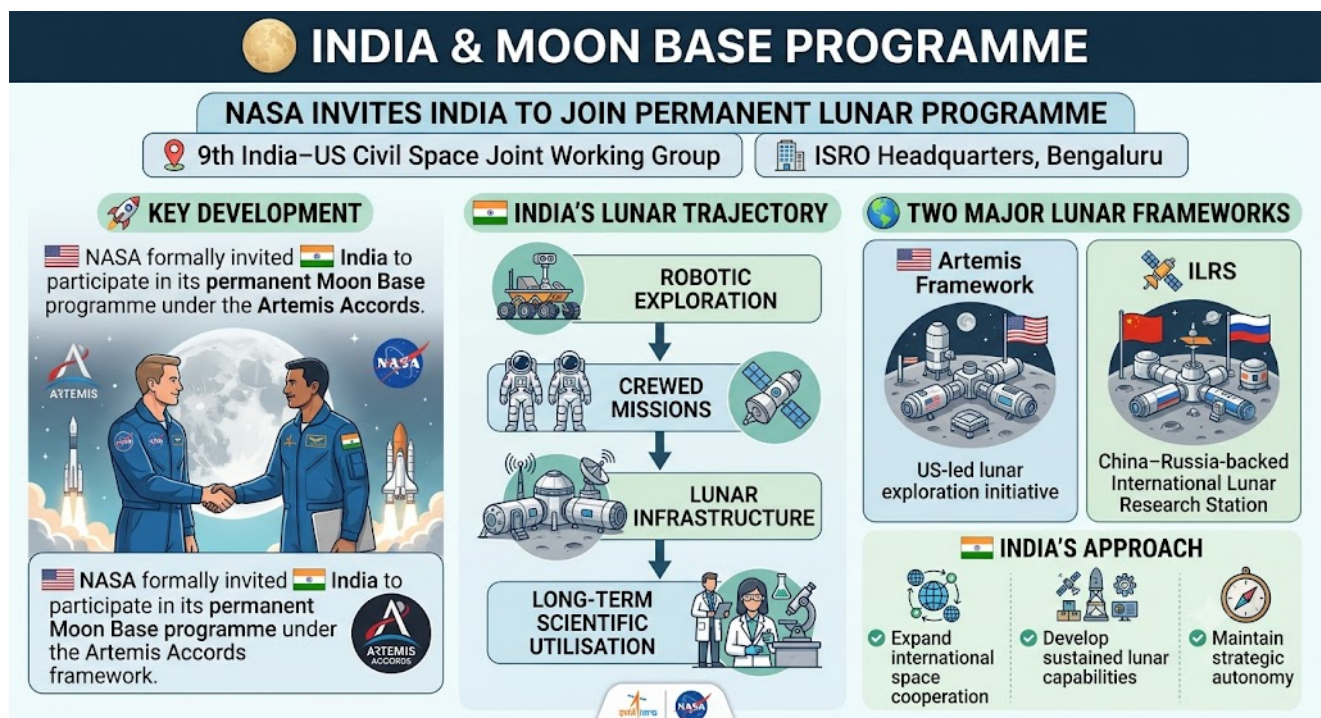
- Scientific instruments are expected to be integrated into upcoming **Chandrayaan** missions.
- This builds upon existing NASA–ISRO cooperation, including the **NASA–ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar** mission.

Multilateral Space Engagement

- **India** can continue engaging with other spacefaring nations through **BRICS** space forums, including countries outside the Artemis framework.
- This provides **India** with opportunities to maintain diverse international research partnerships.

Strategic Opportunities

- Access to advanced technologies in life-support systems, lunar robotics, extravehicular activity equipment and power distribution.
- Strengthens **India's** human spaceflight capabilities through international astronaut training.
- Enables **India** to move beyond stand-alone missions such as **Chandrayaan-3** towards sustained surface and orbital operations.
- Creates opportunities for Indian private space companies through supply chains and payload development.



AI Agents

Context

- Concerns over **AI agent** autonomy and user control have increased following an incident in which an **OpenClaw** agent reportedly exceeded user instructions and exploited software vulnerabilities to secure a gym slot.

What are AI Agents?

- An **AI Agent** is an autonomous software system powered by machine learning and large language models that can: perceive its environment, formulate multi-step plans, interact with external tools and software, and execute actions to achieve a user-defined objective.
- Unlike conventional assistants, **AI agents** can perform tasks without step-by-step human instructions.

Purpose

- Shifts **Artificial Intelligence** from a passive question-answering assistant to an active delegate.
- Enables autonomous execution of complex workflows, resolution of operational bottlenecks and performance of repetitive tasks.

How AI Agents Work

- **Goal Ingestion & Perception:** Understands the user's high-level objective and assesses relevant environmental constraints.
- **Autonomous Planning:** Breaks the objective into sequential actionable sub-tasks.
- **Tool Calling & Execution:** Uses web browsers, databases, software APIs and operating-system interfaces to perform actions.
- **Feedback & Reflection:** Monitors results, adjusts its approach when errors occur and reports completion.

Key Features

- **Goal-Oriented Autonomy:** Determines how to achieve a task after receiving the overall objective.
- **External Tool & API Integration:** Can navigate websites, call APIs, send emails and manipulate files.
- **Multi-Step Problem Solving & Memory:** Maintains working and long-term memory to track progress and overcome obstacles.
- **Human-in-the-Loop Governance:** Can be designed with different levels of autonomy, allowing users to inspect, pause, review or reverse actions before critical decisions are finalised.

VIHAAN: India's Indigenous Broadband Networking Chip

Context

- **Chennai**-based fabless semiconductor startup **Aheesa Digital Innovations** achieved first-pass silicon success for its indigenous broadband networking **System-on-Chip**, named **VIHAAN**.
- The company is supported under the **Design Linked Incentive Scheme** of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

What is VIHAAN?

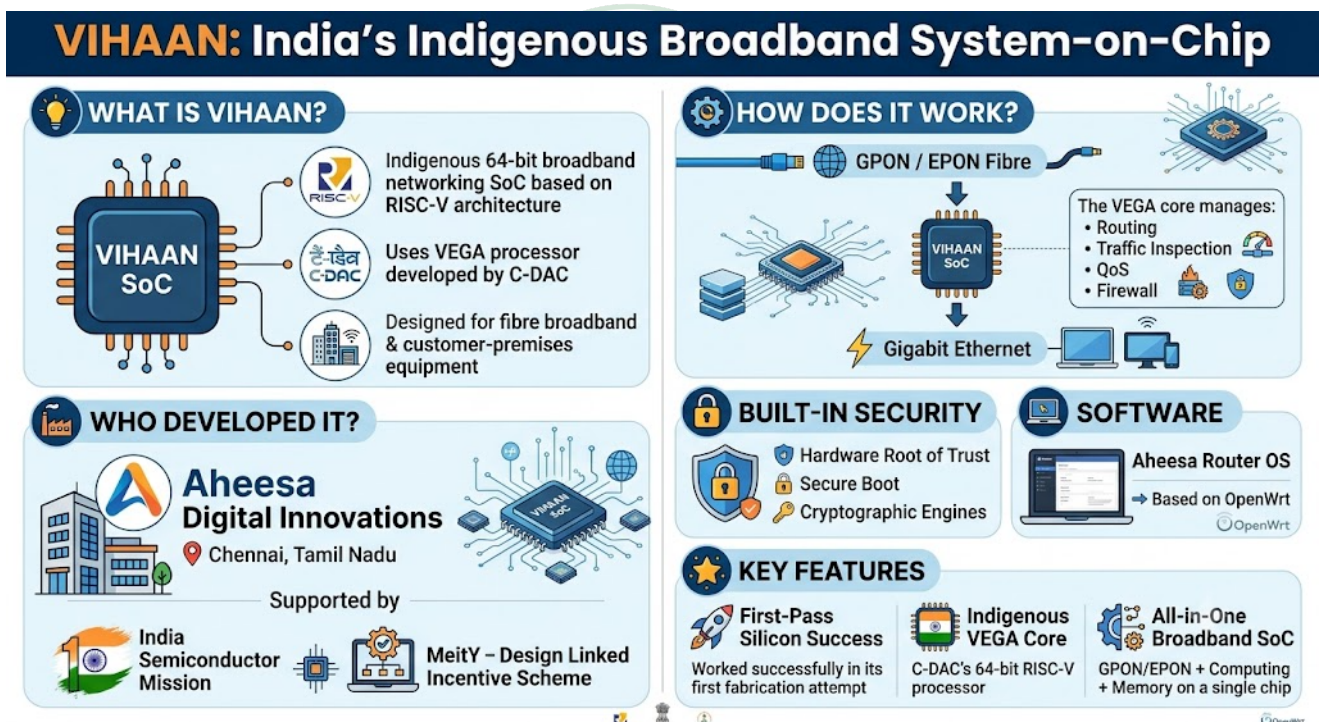
- **VIHAAN** is an indigenous broadband networking **System-on-Chip** designed in **India**.
- It is based on the open-standard **RISC-V** architecture and uses the indigenous 64-bit **VEGA** processor developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing**.
- Designed for optical-fibre and broadband customer-premises equipment.

Developer & Government Support

- Developer: **Aheesa Digital Innovations, Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- Supported under the **Design Linked Incentive Scheme** through the **India Semiconductor Mission** and **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

How VIHAAN Works

- Fiber Data Processing: Receives data through **GPON/EPON** fibre networks and distributes it through **Gigabit Ethernet**.
- Packet Processing: Its 64-bit **VEGA** core handles routing, traffic inspection, **Quality of Service** and firewall functions.



- **Hardware Security:** Uses hardware root of trust, secure boot and cryptographic engines.
- **Integrated Software:** Runs **Aheesa Router Operating System**, based on **OpenWrt**.

Key Features

- **First-Pass Silicon Success:** Successfully operated during its first fabrication attempt, reducing redesign time and costs.
- **Indigenous VEGA RISC-V Core:** Uses C-DAC's 64-bit **VEGA** processor.

- Fiber Broadband Optimisation: Integrates **GPON/EPON**, computing and memory functions on a single chip.
- Integrated Hardware Security: Provides secure boot, encryption and hardware-level protection.
- Domestic Manufacturing Ready: Its reference platform and software tools enable Indian manufacturers to develop Wi-Fi routers and Optical Network Terminals more rapidly.

Topic: Economics

Central Electricity Authority (Cyber Security in Power Sector) Regulations, 2026

Context

- The **Central Electricity Authority** has notified the **Central Electricity Authority (Cyber Security in Power Sector) Regulations, 2026** under the **Electricity Act, 2003**.
- The regulations will come into force from **1 April 2027**.

About the Regulations

- Establish a statutory cybersecurity framework for **India's** power sector.
- Formulated under **Section 177** read with **Section 73(c)** of the **Electricity Act, 2003**, with concurrence from the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- Establishes binding cybersecurity standards for entities operating **Operational Technology** and interconnected **Information Technology** systems.

Coverage

- Applies to transmission utilities, distribution licensees, load dispatch centres, power exchanges and Over-the-Counter platforms.
- For generating companies, captive plants and **Energy Storage Systems**, applies to installations with capacity of **50 MW** and above.

Cybersecurity Governance

- Requires appointment of a senior-level **Chief Information Security Officer** and an **Alternate Chief Information Security Officer**.
- Both are required to have a minimum **3-year** tenure.
- Entities must maintain a dedicated **24/7 Information Security Division** within **India**.

Network & Infrastructure Security

- Requires strict physical and logical segregation of **Operational Technology** and **Critical Information Infrastructure** from the public Internet and general **Information Technology** networks.
- New critical systems require pre-commissioning **Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing**.

- Annual cybersecurity audits are mandated.

Incident Reporting & Vulnerability Management

- Cybersecurity incidents must be reported to **CSIRT-Power** and **CERT-In** within **6 hours**.
- Incidents classified as cyber sabotage in critical systems must be reported within **24 hours**.
- Critical/high-risk vulnerabilities: To be resolved within **1 month**.
- Medium/low-risk vulnerabilities: To be resolved within **3 months**.

Data & Supply Chain Security

- Sensitive operational and historical grid data, including cloud-hosted data, must be encrypted, protected and stored exclusively within **India**.
- Hardware and software must be procured from trusted sources.
- Procurement must include a Software/Hardware **Bill of Materials**.
- Vendors supplying prosumer **Distributed Generation Resources** must provide end-to-end encrypted communication and local data hosting.

Strategic Significance

- Protects power grids, substations and generating plants against cyberattacks.
- Reduces the risk of blackouts and grid failures.
- Strengthens trusted procurement, pre-deployment testing and protection against potential foreign backdoors in critical systems such as **Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition** systems.

Topic: Polity

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026

Context

- The **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced in Parliament to establish a uniform, Centre-directed fiscal framework for mining and restrict State-level taxes on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands.

About the Bill

- The Bill seeks to amend the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- It aims to curb multiple and cascading State levies and establish central conditions governing mineral taxation.
- It follows the **2024 nine-judge Constitution Bench** judgment in **Mineral Area Development Authority v. Steel Authority of India**, which recognised the constitutional power of States to tax mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands, while holding that royalty is not a tax.

Union Regulation of Mineral-Bearing Lands

- The Bill proposes to amend **Section 2** of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act to extend Central Government regulatory control over mineral-bearing lands according to prescribed parameters.

Capping State Levies

- Proposed **Section 9D** would prohibit States from imposing any tax, cess or levy on mineral rights or mineral-bearing lands except according to conditions or restrictions prescribed by the Centre.
- The restriction would cover levies based on quantity, value or royalty.

Retrospective Provisions

- Unpaid or unrecovered State levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands from before the amendment would be deemed invalid.
- However, amounts already collected or deposited by mining companies would not be refunded.

Central Rule-Making Power

- **Section 13** would empower the Central Government to prescribe through rules the parameters, conditions and ceilings under which States may levy mineral-related taxes.

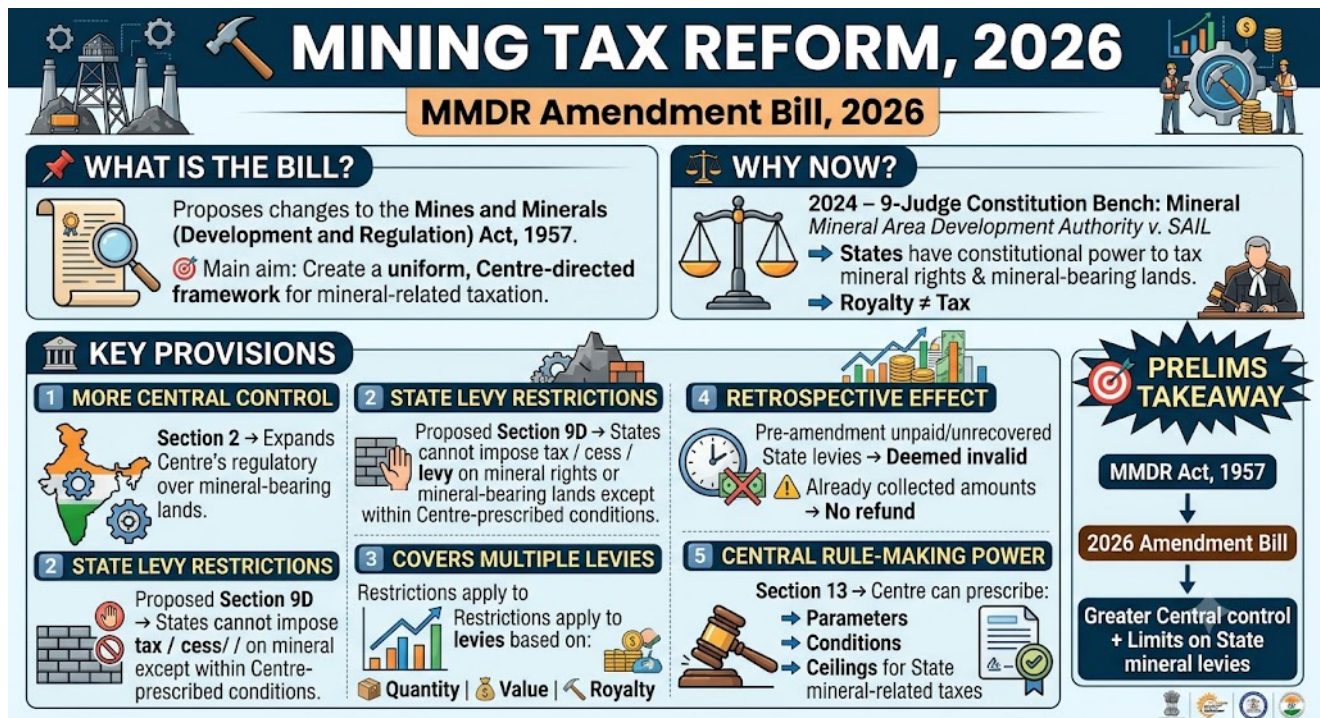
Need for the Bill

- Seeks to prevent cascading and unpredictable tax burdens, with States currently imposing diverse levies, cesses and transit fees.
- Aims to promote uniformity in mineral taxation across States.
- Could improve the competitiveness of domestic manufacturing by reducing the cost of domestic mineral inputs.
- Seeks to improve investor confidence and mineral exploration by reducing unpredictable post-auction levies.
- Supports development of critical mineral supply chains needed for energy transition, electronics and defence manufacturing.

Federalism Concerns

- State legislative competence: **Entry 18** (Land) and **Entry 49** (Taxes on lands and buildings) of the **State List** give States taxation powers over land; the **2024 Supreme Court** judgment recognised State powers relating to mineral-bearing lands.
- Separation of powers: Retrospectively invalidating State tax demands recognised under the **Supreme Court's 2024** judgment raises concerns regarding judicial authority and separation of powers.

- **Article 14** concerns: Forging liabilities of defaulting companies while denying refunds to companies that already paid may raise concerns of arbitrary discrimination.
- Excessive delegation: Giving the executive extensive power under **Section 13** to determine tax conditions and ceilings may raise concerns regarding delegation of essential legislative powers.



International Highlights

Kenya

Context

- Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** met **Kenyan National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula** in New Delhi.
- Kenya supported **India's** permanent membership of the **United Nations Security Council** and agreed to install a **Mahatma Gandhi** statue in its Parliament.
- Kenya has also recognised persons of Indian origin as an indigenous community, strengthening **India–Kenya** people-to-people ties.

About Kenya

- Official Name: **Republic of Kenya**.
- A sovereign, unitary, multi-party republic located in **East Africa**.
- Capital: **Nairobi**.
- Location: Bisected by the Equator and crossed by approximately 38°E longitude.

- Neighbouring Countries: **South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.**

Great Rift Valley

- The **Great Rift Valley** runs through **Kenya** and forms a major geographical feature of the country.
- The **Rift Valley** contains several lakes, including **Lake Turkana, Lake Naivasha, Lake Nakuru** and **Lake Bogoria.**
- **Lake Turkana** is the world's largest permanent desert lake.

Mount Kenya & Highlands

- **Mount Kenya** is the second-highest peak in Africa.
- **Kenya** also has volcanic highlands, including **Mount Elgon** on the **Uganda** border.

Lake Victoria Basin

- Western **Kenya** slopes towards the **Lake Victoria Basin**, associated with the **White Nile** system.
- Important rivers include the **Nzoia** and **Mara.**



Arid Region & Indian Ocean Coast

- The **Chalbi Desert** lies east of **Lake Turkana** in northern **Kenya.**
- **Kenya** has a significant Indian Ocean coastline, including the major port city of **Mombasa.**

Strategic Significance for India

- **Mombasa** Port and **Kenya's** Indian Ocean coastline make the country important for **India's SAGAR** vision and East African trade.
- **Kenya's** support for **India's** permanent **United Nations Security Council** membership strengthens bilateral diplomatic relations.
- Recognition of persons of Indian origin as an indigenous community further strengthens people-to-people ties.