

Polity

National Panchayati Raj Day 2025:

- It is **celebrated on 24th April** in India to spread awareness about the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institution.
- The day **marks the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- It is organised **by Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- National Panchayat Awards are given.
- PM will also confer **Special Category National Panchayat Awards 2025**. These include-
 1. **Climate Action Special Panchayat Award (CASPA)** – to encourage Panchayats to act as climate-responsive local governments;
 2. **Atma Nirbhar Panchayat Special Award (ANPSA)** – to promote Atmanirbharta through augmentation of Own Source Revenue (OSR) by Panchayats;
 3. **Panchayat Kshamta Nirman Sarvottam Sansthan Puraskar (PKNSSP)** – to recognize excellence in capacity building and training of Panchayati Raj representatives and functionaries. This award was instituted by the Ministry in 2023 and first awards were conferred in 2024.

(PIB)

International Developments

World Trade Organization:

- It is **successor to General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, which was created in 1947.
- **Following completion of Uruguay Round (1986–94)** of multilateral trade negotiations, **WTO began operations on January 1, 1995**.
- An agreement to phase out the use of import quotas and to reduce tariffs on merchandise trade, negotiated by 23 countries in Geneva in 1947, came into force as the GATT on January 1, 1948.
- **GATT 1994 became an integral part of the agreement that established the WTO. Other core components include** the General Agreement on Trade in Services (**GATS**), which attempted to supervise and liberalize trade; the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (**TRIPS**), which sought to improve protection of intellectual property across borders.
- **These agreements were signed in Marrakech, Morocco, in April 1994**, and, following their ratification, the contracting parties to GATT treaty became charter members of the WTO.
- **WTO has six key objectives:** (1) to set and enforce rules for international trade, (2) to provide a forum for negotiating and monitoring further trade liberalization, (3) to resolve trade disputes, (4) to increase the transparency of decision-making processes, (5) to cooperate with other major international economic institutions involved in global economic management, and (6) to help developing countries benefit fully from the global trading system.
- **Whereas the GATT focused almost exclusively on goods—though much of agriculture and textiles were excluded—the WTO encompasses all goods, services, and intellectual property**, as well as some investment policies. In addition, permanent WTO Secretariat, which replaced the interim GATT Secretariat, has strengthened and

formalized mechanisms for reviewing trade policies and settling disputes.

- Unlike IMF and World Bank, both of which use weighted voting, **each WTO member has only one vote**.
- **As in earlier GATT system, however, most decisions are made by consensus**. Unless one or both of the parties files a notice of appeal or WTO members reject the report, it is **automatically adopted and legally binding after 60 days**.
- At present, **WTO consists of 164 members (including European Union)**.
- **India has been member of GATT since 1948 and a founding member of WTO**.
- **Ministerial Conference (MC) sits at the top of the structural organisation of the WTO**. It is the supreme governing body that **makes final decisions on all matters**.
- It is **constituted by representatives of all the member countries**, who are usually, Ministers of Trade of the respective countries.
- It **usually meets after every 2 years**.
- **General Council is the highest-level decision-making body of WTO**. It is in Geneva, Switzerland (headquarter of WTO). It also acts as **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) as well as Trade Policy Review Body**.
- Administration of WTO is conducted by the **Secretariat, headed by Director General (DG)**.
- **Director General (DG) is appointed by Ministerial Conference (MC) for a tenure of four years**.
- **Director General (DG) is assisted by four Deputy Directors from different member countries**.
- **Most Favoured Nation:** If a Member grants to a country a special favour (e.g. a lower customs duty on any of its products) it must grant the same favour immediately and unconditionally to all WTO members. The MFN principle applies to trade in goods, trade in services, as well as trade-related aspects of intellectual property.
- **Exceptions to MFN Rule:** Countries can set up a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that applies only to goods traded within the group, discriminating against goods from outside**. They can give developing countries and LDCs a special access to their markets. **In services, countries are allowed (in limited circumstances) to discriminate**.

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Science & Technology

Tiangong space station:

- **China launched three astronauts aboard Shenzhou-20 spaceship to the Tiangong space station** for a six-month mission, replacing the current crew.
- **Tiangong (Chinese for "Heavenly Palace") is first space station built by China**.
- It is **currently in low Earth orbit (LEO)**, and it is expected to be operational until 2028.
- It is a **three-module space station**. The core module, Tianhe, launched in April 2021, followed by the Wentian and Mengtian experiment modules in 2022.
- **China is only the third country to have put both astronauts into space and build a space station**, after Russia and the US.

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mayonnaise:

- **Tamil Nadu government has banned** manufacture, storage, distribution, and sale of **mayonnaise made using raw eggs, citing public health risk.**
- Mayonnaise has traditionally contained **three basic ingredients: oil, egg yolk, and an acid, usually lemon juice or vinegar.**
- Egg yolks are stirred together with oil to create a thick pale yellow sauce. In the end, a dash of acid is added.
- The **protein in the egg acts as an emulsifier** (a substance that binds two immiscible liquid to form a stable mixture) for the oil and water, also from the egg (some 50% of the yolk is water).
- **Mayonnaise is believed to be originated in France or Spain.**
- Eggs are known to carry innumerable pathogens, which are usually neutralised in the cooking process (through the application of heat). But **mayonnaise uses raw eggs.**

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Ecology & Environment

uBreathe Life:

- **Technology Development Board (TDB), under the Department of Science and Technology (DST),** extending financial support to **M/s Urban Air Labs Private Limited, Gurugram,** for their project titled “Development & Commercialization of a Made in India Efficient Wall-Mounted Air-Purification System for Indoor Premises.”
- Core technology harnessed in this product **blends natural plant-based filtration with advanced engineering.** Based on the ‘Urban Munnar Effect’ and a patented innovation called ‘Breathing Roots’, the system enhances the natural air-purifying capacity of leafy indoor plants.
- Air from the room is pulled toward the plant leaves, then directed into the soil-root zone, where the purification process intensifies.
- Device features a centrifugal fan that creates suction pressure, allowing the purified air—processed through the roots—to be released in 360 degrees across indoor space.
- **Fitted within a specially designed planter box, the ‘uBreathe Life’ system stands out as a compact, aesthetic, and effective wall-mounted solution** tailored for homes, offices, hospitals, and other indoor environments.

(PIB)

Geography/Places in the News

Kyiv:

- 12 killed in Russia’s deadliest attack on Ukraine capital city Kyiv.
- City has a port on the Dnieper (Dnipro) River and a large railroad junction.

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Lengpui airport:

- CISF takes over security of Lengpui airport in Mizoram.
- It is a **domestic airport serving Aizawl,** capital of Mizoram.
- It is **the first in India to be constructed by a State Government.**
- It is one of the airports in India that **has a table top runway (others being Kozhikode, Shimla, Mangalore)** which

creates an optical illusion that requires a very precise approach from pilot.

Madagascar:

- France’s President seeks ‘forgiveness’ for colonialism in Madagascar.
- It is island country lying off the southeastern coast of Africa.
- **Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world,** after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo.
- **Madagascar’s population is primarily related not to African peoples but rather to those of Indonesia,** more than 3,000 miles (4,800 km) to the east.
- **Malagasy people, moreover, do not consider themselves to be Africans, but, because of the continuing bond with France** that resulted from former colonial rule, island developed political, economic, and cultural links with the French-speaking countries of western Africa.
- Capital city of **Antananarivo (formerly Tananarive).**
- It is separated from the African coast by the 400-km wide **Mozambique Channel.**
- It was **under French colonial rule** from 19th century until 1960, when it gained full independence.
- The hot, wet season extends from November to April and the cooler, drier season from May to October.
- **Climate is governed by combined effects of the moisture-bearing southeast trade and northwest monsoon winds** as they blow across central plateau.
- About **seven-eighths of the island is covered with prairie grasses** and bamboo or small thin trees.
- Because of the island’s isolation, **many zoologically primitive primates have survived and evolved into unique forms.** About **40 species of lemurs** are indigenous to Madagascar.
- **Language and culture point unequivocally to Indonesian origins,** but there is no empirical evidence of how, why, or by what route the first settlers came to the island.
- **More than nine-tenths of the population is Malagasy,** which is divided into about 20 ethnic groups. The largest and most dominant of the groups is the **Merina people,** who are scattered throughout the island.
- Most inhabitants of Madagascar **speak Malagasy,** the national language, which is written in the Latin alphabet.
- Some **two-fifths (42%) of the population practices traditional religion,** which is based upon ancestor worship.

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Terms in the News

Kashmiriyat:

- It is the **centuries-old indigenous tradition of communal harmony and religious syncretism** in Kashmir Valley.
- **Emerging around 16th century,** it is **characterised by religious and cultural harmony, patriotism** and pride for their mountainous homeland of Kashmir.
- It exemplifies joint Hindu-Muslim culture, festivals, language, cuisine and clothing in Kashmir Valley.

Text neck:

- It is a repeated stress injury as well as pain, sustained from excessive watching or texting on handheld devices for long periods of time.