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PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA



Press Council of India

- It is a statutory quasi-judicial autonomous authority, re-established in 1979 under the Press Council Act, 1978.

- **Objectives**

- Preserving the freedom of the press.
- Maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India.

- **Composition:**

- **Chairman:** The Chairman, typically a retired Supreme Court judge, is nominated by a committee that includes the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and an elected representative from the 28 members.
- **Other Members:** Of the 28 members, 13 represent working journalists, which include six editors and seven other working journalists, other than editors of newspapers.
 - 6 members represent newspaper owners or managers, with two each from large, medium, and small newspapers.
 - One member comes from the news agency sector.
 - In addition, the Press Council of India comprises 5 representatives from Parliament—3 nominated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and 2 by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
 - 3 members representing education, law, and literature are nominated by the University Grants Commission, Bar Council of India, and Sahitya Akademi.
- **Powers of Press Council of India:**
 - Helping newspapers to maintain their independence;

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- **Building up a code of conduct for journalists** and newspapers according to high professional standards;
- **Reviewing any development** which is likely to restrict the supply and dissemination of news of public interest and importance;
- Reviewing such cases where assistance has been received by any newspaper or news agency in India from foreign sources, as referred to it by the Central Government;
- It **adjudicates the complaints** either against the Press for violation of journalistic ethics or by the Press for interference with its freedom.

THE 2026 NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS

The 2026 Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded to **Francis Halzen**, a Belgian-American scientist, for designing an elaborate detection system **beneath the Antarctic ice sheets to capture neutrinos** — tiny, elusive subatomic particles often called "ghost particles."

What Are Neutrinos?

- Neutrinos are very small subatomic particles, produced mainly in nuclear reactions inside stars.
- They are among the most abundant particles in the universe, second only to photons (light particles).
- Despite their abundance, they reveal enormous amounts of information about the cosmos precisely because of a frustrating property: they are extremely difficult to detect.
- **Why Detection Is So Hard?**
 - Neutrinos have an extremely low propensity to interact with matter. The Nobel Prize committee itself described them as the "**shyest particle**."
 - They are also **electrically neutral**, so they don't respond to electromagnetic fields the way charged particles do.
 - Nearly 65 billion neutrinos pass through a human fingernail every second, completely unnoticed.

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- Detection happens only on the rare occasions they do interact with matter — perhaps one in billions or trillions.
- This is why neutrino observatories worldwide are very large facilities, built in extremely isolated, often underground locations, designed to maximise interaction chances and minimise background noise.

Why This Matters: Multi-Messenger Astronomy

- The detection of extra-galactic neutrinos has opened an entirely new source of information about the **universe**, adding to the tools scientists already use.
- **Evolution of Cosmic Observation Tools**

Visible light — the original and only tool for a long time.

Full electromagnetic spectrum detectors (and cosmic ray detectors) — developed subsequently.

Gravitational waves (detected in 2015) — opened an entirely new observational window.

Extra-galactic neutrinos — adds yet another dimension of possibility.

- Together, these different signal types enable "multi-messenger astronomy" — the ability to study the same cosmic event using multiple independent types of signals.

Indian Context: The Stalled INO Project

- The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) project was initially planned for Kerala, then relocated to Tamil Nadu.
- However, the project ran into opposition from local and political groups over land acquisition and environmental concerns. A new location has yet to be finalised.

Conclusion

Halzen turned a cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice into humanity's most unlikely telescope — one built not to capture light, but its opposite: particles that refuse to interact with anything at all.

By finally catching neutrinos from beyond our galaxy, IceCube has added a new, nearly unblockable channel for reading the universe.

India's own stalled neutrino project is a reminder that even in fundamental science, the hardest obstacles aren't always physics — sometimes they're land and politics.

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ADVANCED HIGH-ALTITUDE PARACHUTE



Recently, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted the maiden live jump of the indigenously developed Advanced High-Altitude Parachute (AHAP) at Nyoma (Mudh DZ) in Ladakh.

- It is a static-line parachute system for the mass drop of paratroopers.
- **Developed By:** It has been designed and developed by DRDO's Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), Agra.
- The system has been manufactured by **Ordnance Parachute Factory (OPF)**, Kanpur.
- **Certification:** It is certified by the **Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC)**, RCMA Kanpur.
- **Features:** The parachute offers multiple deployment modes and an operational **altitude range of up to 18,000 feet**, with a rate of descent suited to the tactical requirements of the Indian Defence Forces **in high-altitude terrain**.
- Static-line parachute jumps at such altitudes pose significant challenges due to high opening shock and rate of descent.

What is the Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification?

- It is the **certification agency of Defence Research and Development Organisation**.
- **Function:**
 - Its primary function is the **certification of military aircraft and airborne systems**.
 - The Airworthiness function is implemented through the **fourteen Regional Centres of Military Airworthiness (RCMAs)** located across India.
 - CEMILAC, along with RCMAs with a specific core competence carries out airworthiness certification of **military airborne products** designed and developed by DRDO laboratories, other government agencies, **ordnance factories, defence public sector units and private industries**.

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NATIONAL PNG DRIVE 3.0 - EXPANDING PIPED GAS FOR A CLEANER ENERGY TRANSITION

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) launched National PNG Drive 3.0 on October 1, 2026, to accelerate the adoption of Domestic Piped Natural Gas (D-PNG).

Why the Push for PNG?

- The government views PNG as an important component of India's transition towards **cleaner, reliable and affordable** energy
- It can -
 - Facilitate a shift from **LPG** to piped natural gas;
 - Improve utilisation of existing gas infrastructure;
 - Reduce dependence on more carbon-intensive fuels;
 - Support India's broader energy-transition and Net-Zero objectives; and
 - Strengthen the role of natural gas in India's energy mix.
- The push has gained significance amid disruptions in global energy supplies, including the **West Asia crisis**, which highlighted the importance of energy security and diversification.
- Natural gas currently accounts for roughly **6%** of India's primary energy mix, while the government has articulated a long-term objective of increasing its share to **15% by 2030**.

Infrastructure Potential:

- India has already developed a substantial CGD infrastructure network. According to the government, around **6.88 lakh inch-km** of pipeline has been laid, creating potential for approximately 1.3 crore additional connections.
- However, infrastructure alone does not guarantee adoption. The programme therefore stresses -
 - Coordinated material planning among CGD entities, regulators and suppliers;
 - Availability of gas meters, valves, GI pipes and MDPE pipes;

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- Expansion of pipelines into residential complexes and government colonies;
- Improved consumer awareness; and
- Reliable and affordable supply.

Key Challenges:

- **Uneven consumer awareness:** Awareness about PNG remains uneven across geographical areas. Consumers in mature CGD markets are generally more familiar with PNG than those in emerging markets.
- **Affordability and upfront costs:** High initial costs associated with obtaining connections can discourage households, particularly in emerging CGD areas.
- **Network and last-mile connectivity:** Expanding pipelines into low-density rural and semi-urban areas can involve high capital costs and uncertain demand.
- **Dormant connections:** A major challenge is converting registered but unbilled/inactive connections into regular consumers.
- **Business viability:** CGD companies need sufficient consumer density and sustained demand to recover infrastructure investments.

Policy Response and Way Forward:

- The government has introduced **incentives** to encourage CGD entities to expand D-PNG adoption.
 - From September 1, 2026, eligible CGD entities can receive an **additional allocation** of 200 Standard Cubic Metres (SCM) of lower-priced APM (Administered Price Mechanism) gas for each incremental billed domestic-PNG connection beyond the prescribed threshold.
 - The measure is intended to improve the commercial **viability** of new connections.
- The strategy should **combine** infrastructure expansion, consumer awareness, affordability measures, reliable supply and digital service delivery.
- The recently launched **MyPNG Portal** can further support consumer-centric service delivery by providing a unified digital interface for PNG-related services.

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WHY CHARGING FOR UPI CHANGES THE MATH

- In a decade, India's **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has transformed from a digital experiment into critical economic infrastructure.
- It has changed how consumers, merchants, banks and governments conduct transactions by reducing dependence on cash and creating a fast, accessible and traceable payment ecosystem.
- The proposed **0.4% Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)** on specified merchant transactions above ₹2,000 marks a significant shift from UPI's earlier zero-MDR model.

Risks of Behavioural Change

- The introduction of MDR could alter merchant and consumer behaviour. Some merchants may encourage customers to use cash or alternative payment instruments.
- If this happens on a significant scale, several benefits created by UPI could diminish.
- A return to cash would revive **cash-handling expenses**, reconciliation difficulties, logistical costs and reduced digital visibility.

Towards a Sustainable UPI Model

- UPI must remain secure, resilient, innovative and **financially sustainable**.
- The objective should not simply be to make UPI self-financing by imposing charges.
- Instead, policymakers should determine the appropriate balance between **direct payment-system** revenue and economy-wide benefits.
- The sustainability model could involve a combination of carefully designed MDR, targeted government support, incentives for small merchants and continued investment in infrastructure.
- Charges should also be calibrated so that they do not discourage digital adoption or push merchants back towards cash.

Conclusion

- UPI represents more than a payment mechanism; it is a **public digital infrastructure** that generates economy-wide benefits.

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- Its value extends beyond the balance sheets of NPCI, banks and payment providers to include lower transaction costs, greater formalisation, improved credit access, tax compliance and enhanced economic efficiency.
- Therefore, the success of the new MDR regime should not be measured merely by the revenue it generates.
- The decisive test is whether it increases **India's overall economic return** from UPI after accounting for behavioural changes and wider social and economic benefits.

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS AUTHORITY



- It will function as a **specialised institutional mechanism** for research, planning, project appraisal, monitoring and impact assessment across transportation and logistics.
- **Key responsibilities of Integrated Transport & Logistics Authority:**
 - **National Apex Institution:** ITLA will function as the apex body for integrated transport and logistics planning, research, project appraisal and monitoring, policy support and data analytics.
 - **Long-Term National Transport Master Plan:** ITLA will prepare a comprehensive National Transport Master Plan with a planning horizon of ten years or more,
 - It covers roads, railways, ports and shipping, civil aviation, inland waterways, coastal shipping, urban mobility and logistics.
 - **Integrated Planning Framework:** ITLA will evaluate short-term sectoral plans (5 years or so) and annual plans of transport Ministries to ensure their alignment with the National Transport Master Plan and promote multi-modal infrastructure development.
 - It advises and assists in the review and updating of the National Logistics Policy (2022)
 - **Promote Research & Innovations** in transport and logistics sectors.

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VEERANGANA DURGAVATI TIGER RESERVE (VDTR)



• It is spread across three districts, i.e. Sagar, Damoh and Narsinghpur, of Madhya Pradesh.

- It encompasses areas within the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Durgavati Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The entire Sanctuary is **situated on a plateau**, forming part of the **upper Vindhyan range**.
- The Reserve is classified under the **Deccan Peninsula biogeographic region**.
- It covers an area of 2,339 sq.km.
- It is named for **Rani Durgavati**, the **queen of the Gondi people**.
- The reserve boasts a diverse landscape, with hills, valleys, rivers, streams, waterfalls, and grasslands.
- **Rivers:**
 - It straddles parts of the **Narmada and Yamuna River basins**.
 - The **north-flowing Kopra River, Bamner River, and Bearma River**, which are **tributaries of the Ken River**, are the major rivers of this protected area.
 - Some smaller streams flow south to the Narmada River in the south of the Reserve.
- The **Singorgarh Fort** is located within the reserve.
- **Vegetation:** It mainly consists of **Dry deciduous**
- **Flora:** The chief floral elements include **Teak, Saja, Dhaora, Ber, Amla**, etc.
- **Fauna:**
 - **Tiger, leopard, wolf, jackal, Indian fox**, striped hyena, Nilgai, Chinkara, Chital, Sambhar, Black Buck, Barking deer, Common Langur, Rhesus Macaque, etc.
 - It is one of the few remaining strongholds for the **White-Rumped and the Indian Vultures**, **critically endangered** raptors of India.