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GENE BANK



- The Government of India has announced the establishment of the **Second National Gene Bank** to conserve **10 lakh crop germplasm** for ensuring **future food and nutritional security**.
- This initiative is part of the “Investing in Innovations” theme of the **Union Budget 2025-26**.

What is a Gene Bank?

- A **Gene Bank** is a **storage facility** that **preserves seeds, pollen, and plant tissues** to **protect plant species from extinction** and ensure their availability for future use.
- These stored samples help in **crop breeding, scientific research, and biodiversity conservation**.
- Gene banks play a crucial role in maintaining **genetic diversity**, essential for **climate resilience and food security**.

India's First National Gene Bank

- It was established in **1996** by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR)** in **New Delhi**.
- **Current Status:**
 - **Second-largest Gene Bank globally** after the **Svalbard Global Seed Vault** in **Norway**.
 - Houses **4,71,561 accessions** of **2,157 species**.
 - Provides plant genetic resources for use by both the **public and private sectors** involved in **crop improvement and genetic conservation**.

National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)

- **Apex Institution** under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.

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- **Objective:** Conservation, evaluation, and utilization of **plant genetic resources** for sustainable agriculture and food security.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

National Gene Fund

- Established under **Section 45** of the **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 (PPVFR Act)**.
- **Objective:**
 - Ensures **fair distribution** of benefits derived from **genetic resources**.
 - Supports **conservation efforts** and promotes **sustainable farming practices**.

Provides **financial incentives** to **farmers and institutions** engaged in biodiversity conservation

GREENLAND



- **Geographical location:** North Atlantic Ocean, between North America and Europe
- **Capital:** Nuuk
- **Highest point:** Gunnbjørn's Fjeld
- **Climate:** Arctic climate, with temperatures ranging from **-50°C in winter** to **10–15°C in summer**
- **Natural resources:** Minerals, oil, gas, and rare earth elements
- **Strategic importance:** Pituffik Space Base is crucial for US missile defense systems
- **Historical and Political background:** Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark but holds **strategic significance** due to its location between North America and Europe.
 - The island was a **Danish colony** until **1979**, when it gained **home rule**; in **2009**, it achieved **self-governing status**, but **foreign policy, defense, and monetary matters** remain under Denmark's control.

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US Interests in Greenland

- **Strategic military location:** The Pituffik Space Base is crucial for the US ballistic missile warning system due to its position along the shortest route between North America and Europe.
 - The 1951 Agreement allows the US access to the base but requires prior notification to Greenland and Denmark.
- **Natural resources and economic interests:** Greenland is rich in minerals, oil, and natural gas, including rare earth minerals, which are vital for US economic and technological interests.
 - Despite this, most mining companies operating in Greenland are Australian, Canadian, or British.
- **US attempts to acquire Greenland:** In 2019, Trump proposed to buy Greenland from Denmark, but the offer was rejected.
 - In 2025, Trump reaffirmed his belief that the US should control Greenland, arguing it is strategically and economically necessary.

MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE



- **Earthquake:** Sudden shaking or trembling of the Earth's surface due to the release of stored energy in the Earth's crust or upper mantle.
- **Focus (Hypocentre):** The point within the Earth where the earthquake originates.
- **Epicentre:** The point on the surface directly above the focus.
- **Seismograph:** An instrument used to detect and measure

Causes of Earthquakes

- **Fault zones:** Most earthquakes occur along fault lines, where stress builds up due to tectonic movements.
- **Major faults:**

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- **Thrust faults** (Convergent boundary) → **Most powerful** quakes (Magnitude 8+).
- **Strike-slip faults** (Transform boundary) → **Horizontal movement** (e.g., Sagaing Fault, San Andreas Fault).
- **Normal faults** (Divergent boundary) → **Less intense quakes** (Magnitude <7).
- **Volcanic activity:** **Magma movement** inside volcanoes can cause **volcanic earthquakes**.
 - Myanmar has **active volcanoes**, contributing to **seismic activity**.
- **Human-induced earthquakes:** **Mining, dam construction, and deep drilling** can trigger **artificial seismic activity**.

Why Does Myanmar Experience Frequent Earthquakes?

- **Tectonic Setting:** Myanmar lies at the **junction of three major tectonic plates**:
 - **Indian Plate** (moving northward)
 - **Eurasian Plate** (moving southward)
 - **Burma Microplate** (moving eastward)
- The **Sagaing Fault**, a **strike-slip fault**, runs **north-south** through **central Myanmar**, making it **highly prone to seismic activity**.

BIMSTEC



- **BIMSTEC** (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) is a **regional multilateral organization** that connects **South Asia and Southeast Asia**.
- Established through the **Bangkok Declaration in 1997**, it promotes **economic and social progress** in the region.
- **Member Countries**
 - **South Asia:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka.

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- **Southeast Asia:** Myanmar, Thailand.

Evolution of BIMSTEC

- Initially formed as **‘BIST-EC’** (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- Renamed **‘BIMST-EC’** after **Myanmar joined in 1997**.
- In **2004, Nepal and Bhutan joined**, leading to the current name,

Key Features

- **Bridges South and Southeast Asia**, linking the **Himalayan region with the Bay of Bengal**.
- Focuses on **economic growth, trade, technology, energy, security, and connectivity**.
- Acts as an alternative to **SAARC** for **regional cooperation**.

India's role in BIMSTEC

- **Leading initiatives in trade, security, maritime cooperation, and climate action**.
- Key proponent of **BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement** to enhance **regional trade integration**.
- Advocates for **stronger physical and digital connectivity** between BIMSTEC nations.

India's Strategic Vision in BIMSTEC

- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** Prioritising economic and security ties with South Asian neighbors.
 - **Act East Policy:** Strengthening engagements with **ASEAN and Southeast Asia**.
 - **MAHASAGAR Vision:** Enhancing India's role in **global maritime security and economic growth**.
 - This visit marks India's **continued commitment** to its **‘Neighbourhood First’** and **‘Act East’** policies, as well as its **MAHASAGAR Vision** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
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INDIA'S GEOPOLITICAL VISION SHOULD BE LARGER

- India has historically been an influential global player, balancing economic growth with diplomatic relations.
- However, recent geopolitical shifts have raised concerns about India's limited role in resolving international conflicts.
- While India has taken decisive action in regional crises, such as its interventions in Bangladesh (1971), the Maldives (1988), and Sri Lanka (2009), it has recently adopted a cautious stance.
- The question arises: **should India be more proactive in global geopolitics?** Experts argue that India must **recalibrate** its foreign policy, balancing economic ambitions with strategic engagement to secure its position as a major global power.

India's Historical and Current Diplomatic Approach

- India's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) reflected its early commitment to shaping global politics.
- In contrast, its current multi-alignment strategy prioritises bilateral ties over collective geopolitical influence.
- India has made significant contributions to global welfare through initiatives like 'Vaccine Maitri,' climate action, and humanitarian aid.
- However, its reluctance to actively engage in major conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war or the Israel-Palestine crisis, raises questions about its long-term vision as a global power.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic outreach to Russia and Ukraine has been commendable, but India has largely remained a bystander in peace negotiations.
- Its abstention from UNSC votes on the Ukraine war influenced developing nations, yet India has not capitalised on its unique position to mediate effectively.
- Given its economic and diplomatic credibility, **should India not aspire for a seat at the "high table" of global conflict resolution?**

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The Way Ahead for India to Establish Itself as a Key Geopolitical Player

- **Strengthening Regional Policies**
 - India's bilateral relations in West Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia **must be supplemented with active participation in regional frameworks.**
 - While India has maintained strong ties with Central Asian nations, **its reduced engagement in the SCO limits its influence in the region.**
 - Similarly, after opting out of RCEP, **India must find alternative ways to strengthen economic ties with East Asian nations.**
- **Deepening Ties with Europe**
 - With Europe facing internal and external pressures, **India has a strategic opportunity to enhance its presence in the region.**
 - A trade agreement with the U.S. could serve as a foundation for deeper economic and political collaboration with the European Union.
- **Playing a More Proactive Role in Conflict Resolution**
 - India does not need to position itself as a mediator but **should be ready to facilitate dialogue and negotiations.**
 - **Its past role in the Korean War (1951-52)** and its recent diplomatic efforts in the UNSC (2021-22) show that **India can bridge divergent geopolitical interests.**

Conclusion

- **India's ambition to be a global power must go beyond economic growth;** it must also involve strategic geopolitical engagement.
 - The world is undergoing a structural shift, with **rising unilateralism and realignments** in global politics.
 - **By proactively shaping global events** rather than reacting to them, **India can strengthen its influence and secure its place as a key pole in a multipolar world.**
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FIXING INDIA'S HIGHWAY BLACK SPOTS: PANEL CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION

- India has one of the highest numbers of road accidents in the world.
- A significant portion of these fatalities happen on **national highways (NHs)** due to poorly designed or managed road segments called “**black spots**”, specific locations where a high number of accidents and fatalities have been recorded over the years.
- Despite various efforts by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (**MoRTH**) to reduce road deaths, a recent report by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture** reveals worrying gaps in execution.
- According to MoRTH's own data, out of 13,795 black spots identified across India's NHs, long-term rectification has been completed on only 5,036 spots.
- This translates to a **large number of dangerous zones still unaddressed**, posing daily risks to drivers and pedestrians.

About Black Spots:

- A “black spot” is a hazardous location on a national highway identified by the frequency and severity of road accidents, particularly those causing **grievous injuries or deaths across three consecutive years**.
- These spots can occur due to poor road design, lack of signage, bad lighting, sharp curves, or congested junctions.

Three-Tier Action Plan for Fixing Black Spots:

- To address the issue, the panel has recommended a **three-tier prioritisation framework** based on:
 - **Severity** (how often and how serious the accidents are),
 - **Complexity of the fix required**, and
 - **Population exposure** (how many people use the spot regularly).
- The plan includes strict **time-bound interventions**:

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- **Category A black spots** (highest risk):
 - Temporary safety measures must be deployed immediately.
 - Permanent rectification must begin within 30 days of identification.
- **Category B black spots** (moderate risk):
 - Must be fixed within **90 days**.
- **Category C black spots** (lower priority):
 - Deadline of **180 days**.
 - Agencies that fail to meet the timelines should face **penalties**.

MoRTH's Targets and Reality:

- The ministry has set an **ambitious goal to reduce road fatalities by 95% by 2028**.
- As part of this, it has committed to fixing **1,000 black spots in FY 2025–26** and eliminating all identified black spots by FY 2027-28 through better signage, road design, and junction management.
- Short-term solutions (like installing signage, speed breakers, or barriers) are often implemented, but **long-term structural fixes**, such as underpasses, road widening, or redesign—remain slow.

Conclusion:

Fixing black spots on national highways isn't just a technical challenge, it's a matter of **saving lives**. The current pace of work is not in sync with the ministry's stated ambitions.

The parliamentary panel's recommendations provide a **clear and actionable path forward**, focusing on urgency, accountability, and transparency.

To truly make Indian roads safer, **quick identification must be followed by equally fast execution**, because behind every black spot, there's a life that can be saved.
