

UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 14-06-2025

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Polity & Governance

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has decided to involve experts from empanelled chartered accountancy (CA) firms for the audit of about 350 Central autonomous bodies beginning this year.

- The *CAG will hire external CA firms to audit around 350 Central autonomous bodies.*
- This frees up the CAG's limited internal resources.
- CA experts will work with CAG teams and CAG remains responsible.
- This is *part of the CAG's broader effort to boost its capabilities and adapt to India's economic growth* and the increasing number of audited entities.
- The CAG is also upskilling its audit staff through partnerships with top institutes.

PM e-Bus Sewa-Payment Security Mechanism (PSM) Scheme

- **Purpose** - The scheme aims to accelerate the adoption of electric buses in Indian cities.
- **Key Challenge Addressed** - It tackles the financial risk for private operators and manufacturers by guaranteeing payments for e-bus services.
- **Working mechanism (Payment Security)** - A dedicated fund (3,435.33 crore rupees outlay) is established.
 - If Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) default on payments to e-bus operators, Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) pays from this fund.
 - CESL then recovers the defaulted amount from the PTAs/State governments.
- **Impact** - This financial safety net encourages private investment in e-bus procurement and operation.
- **Target** - The scheme aims to support the deployment of over 38,000 electric buses across India from FY 2024-25 to FY 2028-29.
- **Coverage** - Provides payment security for up to 12 years.
- **Broader Goals** - Aligns with India's move towards sustainable, green urban mobility, reducing emissions and boosting public transport capacity.

International Relations and Issues

Iran's Nuclear Programme

Recently, the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors voted that Iran's nuclear program had breached a 1974 agreement, a first since 2006.

- **Enrichment Process** – Nuclear weapons require uranium enriched to 90%+ U-235. Iran uses centrifuges for this.
- **Past & Current Enrichment** – By 2010, Iran had 19.75% enriched uranium.
- After the U.S. left the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2018, Iran boosted enrichment to 60%, a critical threshold.
- **Weapons Capability** – Enriching from 60% to 90% requires significantly less effort.
- Experts estimate Iran could potentially produce weapons-grade uranium and a functional warhead within months, possibly even weeks, once 60% enriched uranium is available.
- **Uranium Stockpiles** – Some estimates suggest Iran already possesses enough uranium for 5-8 nuclear warheads.
- **Israel's Stance** – Israel, believed to be a nuclear state, has stated it won't hesitate to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities if necessary.

India-EU Foreign Trade Agreement

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar recently announced that India and the European Union are making progress towards a "comprehensive, balanced, and meaningful" Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

- **Elevated Strategic Partnership** – Both sides agree that the FTA will significantly elevate their strategic partnership, which is rapidly expanding.

Broader EU-India Engagement

- During his visit, Mr. Jaishankar also met with Jozef Sikela, EU's Commissioner for International Partnerships, discussing several key areas:
 - **New Strategic Agenda** – Discussions covered the new EU-India Strategic Agenda.
 - **Connectivity and IMEC** – Focus was placed on advancing connectivity initiatives, including the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor Project (IMEC).
 - **Global Gateway Priorities** – Joint priorities under the Global Gateway initiative, such as clean energy, sustainable urbanization, and enhanced connectivity, were discussed.
 - **Trilateral Cooperation** – A trilateral cooperation arrangement was signed, expected to benefit the Global South.

Economy

India's FY26 growth forecast

The World Bank has reduced India's growth forecast for FY 2025-26 to 6.3%. This is down from its January projection of 6.7%.

- The cut of 0.4 percentage points is due to dampened export growth (from weaker global activity and trade barriers) and a slowdown in investment growth (due to global policy uncertainty).
- This new forecast, released on June 10, 2025, is lower than the RBI's 6.5% prediction for the same period.
- Despite the downgrade, the World Bank expects India to remain the fastest-growing major economy.
- Growth is projected to rise again in FY27 and FY28 to an average of 6.6% annually, driven partly by strong services activity.
- Globally, the World Bank forecasts growth to slow to 2.3% in 2025, the weakest since 2008 (excluding recessions), due to increased trade tensions and policy uncertainty.

Environment

Species in Chilika Lake

- **Irrawaddy Dolphins** - Highly endangered, shy, and elusive dolphins characterized by a rounded nose.
- They are related to killer whales and typically only show their fins or upper body when surfacing.

Chilika Lake situated in Odisha is India's largest brackish water lake, and Asia's second largest.

- Birds
 - Black-tailed Godwits
 - Pied Kingfisher
 - Brahminy Kite
 - Indian Spot-billed Duck
 - Grey-headed Swamphen
 - Whiskered Tern
 - Chilika is a haven for both resident and migratory birds.

Eurasian Otter

The Eurasian otter was recently spotted in the Lidder River in Srigufwara, south Kashmir.

- Totapuri, also known as Bangalore or Sandersha, is a popular mango cultivar.
- **Global Status** - The Eurasian otter is classified as 'Near Threatened' globally by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- **Once Thought Extinct in Kashmir** - For around three decades, the Eurasian otter (locally known as 'Vuder') was believed to be extinct in Kashmir.
- It was once abundant in the Valley's water bodies and a traditional part of the local ecosystem.
- **Rare Sighting** - A recent, rare sighting has occurred in the **Lidder River in Srigufwara, south Kashmir**.
- Villagers initially mistook it for a crocodile.
- Wildlife officials confirmed it as a Eurasian otter after reviewing videos and photographic evidence, and subsequently through CCTV surveillance.
- **Historical Presence in Kashmir** - Historically, significant otter populations were found in Dachigam, streams feeding Dal Lake, Rambhara stream, and the Lidder River.
- **Reasons for Decline** - The sudden disappearance of otters was attributed to:
 - Increased water pollution.
 - Hunting for their fur.
- **Revived Hopes** - This sighting is highly encouraging for wildlife officials.
- It's the **third reported sighting in Kashmir this year**, with others in Gurez Valley (May) and Heerpora (Shopian district).
- The return of the Eurasian otter could play a vital role in **restoring Kashmir's aquatic ecology**.

Security

PASSEX Exercise (Indian and U.K. Navies)

- **Location** - North Arabian Sea.
- **Participants** - The Indian Navy and the United Kingdom's Royal Navy.
- Indian Navy vessels:
 - Stealth frigate INS Tabar
 - An Indian Navy submarine
 - P-8I maritime patrol aircraft
- U.K. Navy Assets:
 - Aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales (part of their Carrier Strike Group)
 - Frigate HMS Richmond
- **Exercise Components** - The multi-faceted exercise included:
 - Unified control of integral helicopters.
 - Tactical maneuvers.
 - Coordinated anti-submarine operations.
 - Professional exchange of officers.
- **Significance** - Demonstrates deepening cooperation between the two navies.
- Showcases a shared commitment to maritime security.
- Highlights robust bilateral ties and dedication to a secure and stable maritime environment.

Miscellaneous

Totapuri Mango

Recently, Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh banned the entry of Totapuri mangoes from other states, specifically impacting Karnataka.

- Totapuri, also known as Bangalore or Sandersha, is a popular mango cultivar.
- **Appearance** - Distinctive for its elongated shape and a unique "parrot beak-like" tip.
- **Key Use** - Highly valued for its juice and pulp. It's widely used in mango drinks by major food and beverage processors, including multinational companies.
- **Growing Regions** - *Primarily cultivated in the border districts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.*
- **Processing Hub** - Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district is a significant hub for mango processing and pulp extraction units, which procure Totapuri mangoes.
- **Reason for Ban** - Andhra Pradesh claims the ban is to protect its local farmers.
- Karnataka's Totapuri mangoes are cheaper (₹5-₹6/kg) than AP's (₹8/kg, plus a ₹4/kg government incentive). If cheaper mangoes enter, AP farmers fear distress.

US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

A team of NTSB investigators is traveling to India to assist the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) with the probe (Air India Express plane crash near Ahmedabad).

- **Mission** - To make transportation safer by conducting objective investigations, studying safety issues, and advocating for safety recommendations.
- **Independence** - A congressionally mandated *independent agency*, crucial for unbiased investigations.
- **Structure** - Governed by *five Board Members*, nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate for 5-year terms.
- A Chairman and Vice Chairman are also designated.
- **History** - Traces its origins to the *Air Commerce Act of 1926*, which tasked the U.S. Department of Commerce with investigating aircraft accidents. It gained full independence in 1974.
- **Scope** - Investigates civil aviation accidents, along with significant incidents in railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline transportation.



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