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History, Art and Culture

Divya Bharat

NITI Aayog recently released **"Divya Bharat: A Window to the Soul of India."**

• **Collaborative Effort -** By Ministry of Tourism, Culture, industry partners like Airbnb, Atithi Foundation; Indian School of Public Policy (ISPP); Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM); and Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

• **Aims to** - Help both domestic and international travellers explore India's vast culture and landscapes.

• **Strategy -** The guide organizes destinations by the months of the year. This approach encourages tourists to travel year-round, aligning trips with local weather and traditional festivals.

• **Beyond Sightseeing -** The initiative focuses on **experiential travel**. It encourages visitors to engage with local communities and traditions rather than just visiting famous landmarks.

• **Boosting Local Economies –** The project promotes balanced tourism & helps support small businesses.

• Jhumka

• **Jhumka is** - A bell-shaped earring featuring a decorative dome that hangs below a stud. It is a staple of Indian jewelry, worn during weddings and festivals.

• **Ancient Origins -** These designs date back to **300 BCE**.

• Originally found - In ancient temple sculptures and became highly popular during the **Chola dynasty** in South India.

• **Features -** The earrings are three-dimensional and designed to sway gracefully. They are often made of gold or silver and decorated with pearls, gemstones, or beads.

• **Protecting Heritage -** It is difficult to patent jhumkas because they are centuries-old community designs.

• Current laws protect new inventions, but often fail to safeguard ancient, shared cultural traditions.

• **Cultural Meaning -** Jhumkas represent India's rich artistic history. They show a direct link between ancient temple art and the modern global fashion world.

Polity & Governance

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) -VAANI Scheme Launch

AICTE has introduced the 3rd edition of the VAANI scheme to promote technical education in 22 Indian languages, fostering a more inclusive academic environment for students.

• **Key Languages** - Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, and 17 others.
• **Aims to** - Encouraging research, learning, and the dissemination of technical knowledge in native tongues.
• **Financial Assistance -** AICTE allocates **Rs. 4 crores annually**, granting up to **Rs. 2 lakh** per institution to support approximately 200 seminars and workshops.
• **Emerging Domains -** Focus areas include 16 critical fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Technology, Cybersecurity, Hydrogen Energy, Space, Defence & Agrotech.

Quick Facts

• AICTE is a statutory body under the **Ministry of Education**.
• **Functions** -It plans, formulates, and maintains norms and standards for technical education, ensuring quality through accreditation and funding across India.

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA)

IICA commenced a week-long induction programme for International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) Assistant Managers on April 2026.

• **Venue** - Manesar Campus, Haryana
• **Goal -** To strengthen India’s international financial ecosystem through policy research and capacity building.
• **Curriculum -** Officers are being trained in corporate laws, fintech innovation, governance frameworks, and multidimensional regulations involving authorities like SEBI and PFRDA.

Quick Facts

IFSCA
• Headquartered in GIFT City, Gujarat.
• **About the Institution** - Is a unified statutory body that regulates financial products, services, and institutions within India's International Financial Services Centres**.**

• **IICA**
• **IICA Established by** - Ministry of Corporate Affairs
• **Location** - Manesar, Haryana.
• **Functions as** - a premier think tank providing capacity building, policy research, and training in corporate law and governance.

International Relations and Issues

Gulf Cooperation Council

The Gulf nations consist of six Arab states: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain. Formed in 1981, this union focuses on regional security and economic integration.

• **Landscapes -** The geography includes the **Arabian Shield** in the west and lowlands in the east. It is also home to the **Rub' al Khali**, the world's largest continuous sand desert.

• **Extreme Climate -** The region faces an arid climate with temperatures often exceeding **50°C**. The landscape is defined by dry river valleys, known as wadis, and vast rocky plateaus.

• **Global Energy Hub -** These nations hold massive reserves of oil and natural gas. Their exports are vital, acting as the "central bank" for the world's energy markets.

• **Strategic Waterways - Strait of Hormuz** is a critical chokepoint. Nearly **20%** of global oil and liquefied natural gas passes through this narrow waterway every single day.

• **Economic Transformation -** Beyond energy, these countries are becoming leaders in finance, tourism, and logistics. Huge "Giga-projects" and wealth funds are helping them diversify their modern economies.

Economy

Urea Production Rises

India's urea production is expected to reach **2 million tonnes** by end of April 2026. This is an **11.1% increase** from March, helping the country return to its normal production levels after recent shutdowns.

• **Gas Supply -** To make urea, factories need LNG gas & due to the West Asia crisis, India bought gas quickly from global markets. Now, factories are getting **90%** of the gas they need to run.

• **Stocks -** By April 15, India's fertilizer stock reached 18.4 million tonnes. This is higher than last year and will help farmers during the Kharif season starting in June.

• **Rising Global Prices -** War and supply issues have made urea much more expensive. Prices in new tenders reached **$1,000 per tonne**, which is almost double the price from two months ago.

• **Buying from Abroad -** India is the world's biggest urea buyer. The government recently asked to buy **2.5 million tonnes** from other countries.

Boost Logistics Efficiency

Ministry of MSME has signed an agreement with NICDC Logistics Data Services Limited a digital and data arm of the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC).

• **Aims to** - Improve how goods are moved and tracked across India & this move would supports the government's goal of making business easier.

• **Digital Data Sharing -** 2 groups will link their systems using **API integration**.

• This allows for a seamless, real-time exchange of logistics information between the government and the data provider.

• **Decision Making -** By using live data, the Ministry can make better policy choices.

• This digital framework helps identify bottlenecks and improves the overall supply chain for small businesses.

• **Empowering Small Businesses -** This would **reduce costs**, fix inefficiencies, and become more competitive in both local and global markets.

Facts about

NICDC Logistics Data Services Limited & National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC)

NLDS aims to provide **end-to-end visibility** across the entire supply chain.
• By using technology to track cargo, it eliminates data gaps between different transport modes like ships, trucks, and trains.
• **Logistics Data Bank (LDB) -** Uses RFID technology to track containers. This creates a "single window" for exporters and importers to see exactly where their goods are at any moment.
• **Big Data Analytics -** The organization analyzes massive amounts of tracking data to identify delays at ports or toll plazas.
• This helps the government fix infrastructure issues and reduces the overall **cost of logistics** in India.
• **Improving transparency -** NLDS helps Indian businesses compete globally. Real-time tracking reduces "lead time," allowing companies to manage their inventory more efficiently and reliably.
• **National Corridor Support -** As an arm of the **NICDC**, it plays a vital role in developing Industrial Corridors.
• It ensures that the digital infrastructure matches the physical growth of India's manufacturing hubs.

17th Joint Economic Commission (17th JEC)

India and Austria recently held their **17th JEC** meeting in New Delhi.
• **Cooperation -** Both nations reviewed their current trade relations and created a roadmap for the future. They aim to deepen ties through mutual trust and shared values.
• **Focus on Sectors -** Including infrastructure (automotive, railways and road transport), scientific research and innovation, dual vocational training, skills development and recognition of vocational qualifications, startups (Global Innovation Network), AYUSH and wellness, tourism, semiconductors, critical minerals, digitalisation and artificial intelligence, film funding and other trade and business-related areas.
• They also explored working together on **semiconductors**, artificial intelligence, and critical minerals.
• **Innovation and Training -** Focus on startups, scientific research, and vocational training. This ensures that workers in both countries have the skills needed for modern industries.
• **European Connection -** Both sides celebrated progress on the **India-EU Free Trade Agreement**. This collaboration creates new opportunities for India to engage more deeply with the European market.

Security

Global Security Meeting

India recently participated in the **World Border Security Congress 2026** in Vienna, Austria. The event took place from April 14 to 16, bringing together international security experts.

• **Showcased** - How the nation leads in maritime safety and international teamwork.
• **Protecting Oceans -** The delegation shared India's best methods for guarding its sea boundaries. The goal was to demonstrate a strong and reliable system for maritime governance.
• **Modern Innovations -** Participants discussed new technology and better ways to manage borders.
• **Future Cooperation -** The meeting reinforced India's commitment to working with other nations. By sharing ideas, countries can build safer and more secure borders together.

Quick Facts
• **World Border Security Congress -** Started in 2012, • **Top platform for** - Government and security leaders. • **Focuses on** - Solving modern border challenges through cooperation

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