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 **Offline Centre Location:**
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Index

- 1. SC upholds SIR as EC's constitutional duty**
- 2. Rare dragonfly resurfaces in Arunachal, underscores need for habitat protection**
- 3. Kerala scientists discover new evergreen tree species at Shendurney Sanctuary**
- 4. AMCA fighter project moves ahead as Centre issues RFP to shortlisted firms**
- 5. Global crises demand more than 'citizen sacrifice'**
- 6. Tariffs to carbon, the new rules shaping India's trade**

1. SC upholds SIR as EC's constitutional duty

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India upheld the constitutional validity of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission (EC). This is significant because the SIR led to the deletion of roughly **65 lakh names from the Bihar electoral roll**, sparking a major legal and political controversy. The judgment, authored by Chief Justice Surya Kant, comes even as the second phase of the SIR has begun in 12 other states and union territories, including **West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala**.



Background

- **What is SIR?** It's an intensive, door-to-door verification process to "purify" the electoral roll, going beyond the usual summary revision.
- **The Trigger:** The EC justified the exercise by pointing to the passage of over two decades since the last intensive revision, coupled with large-scale migration, rapid urbanisation, non-reporting of deaths, and resulting duplicate/defective entries.
- **The Pilot: Bihar was chosen as the pilot state.** The final published roll had 7.42 crore electors, down from 7.89 crore when the SIR was notified.
- **The Challenge:** Petitioners argued the SIR was a backdoor attempt at citizenship screening that supplanted the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and caused suffering without an empirical basis.

Features

- **Constitutional Validity:** The court ruled the SIR is "legally tenable," flowing directly from Article 324 of the Constitution, which grants the EC the power to supervise elections. It "breathes life" into this mandate and does not supplant existing laws.

- **Limited Citizenship Enquiry Upheld:** The EC is empowered to examine questions of citizenship for the sole purpose of inclusion in or exclusion from the electoral roll. This was deemed a "limited enquiry" and not a final determination of citizenship itself.
- **Aadhaar as an Indicative Document:** The use of Aadhaar as the 12th indicative document for verification was recognised as a safeguard, not a mandatory requirement for voting.
- **Judicial Remedy:** Persons domiciled in Bihar whose names were wrongly deleted on grounds like absence or duplication can challenge the EC's decision before the courts.

Challenges Addressed by the Court

- **"Backdoor Citizenship Screening":** Rejected. The court held that citizenship is a condition precedent for enrolment, and the EC must be able to verify it to maintain the "integrity, accuracy, and purity of the electoral roll".
- **Lack of Empirical Foundation:** Rejected. The court stated that issues like migration and duplicate entries are matters of "common administrative experience" and do not require a pre-existing mathematical dataset to justify action.
- **Causing "Suffering":** Rejected. The court noted that safeguards like the publication of the complete list of excluded electors and the assistance of booth-level agents were sufficient to mitigate hardship.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court issued specific directions to balance electoral integrity with individual rights:

- **Adjudication by the Centre:** The EC must refer the names of purged electors (who were on the 2003 roll and were removed on grounds of non-citizenship) to the central government's competent authority under the Citizenship Act within four weeks.
- **Timely Decision:** This authority must decide on their citizenship before the next Vidhan Sabha or local body elections.
- **Restoration of Names:** If an individual is found to be a citizen, their name must be restored to the electoral roll.
- **Pan-India Impact:** The judgment's affirmation of the SIR's constitutionality provides a legal foundation for the ongoing second phase and any future intensive revisions across the country.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's judgment firmly establishes the Election Commission's proactive power to ensure electoral roll integrity as a core constitutional duty. While upholding the SIR as valid, the court introduced a crucial safety net by mandating a time-bound, formal citizenship adjudication process for those purged, ensuring that administrative revision does not translate into arbitrary disenfranchisement. The ruling balances the purity of the democratic process with the protection of individual rights.

2. Rare dragonfly resurfaces in Arunachal, underscores need for habitat protection

Why in the News?

A rare dragonfly species, *Gynacantha khasiaca*, commonly known as the Long-tailed Duskhawker, has been rediscovered in Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve after more than 110 years. The species was last scientifically described in 1914 from the erstwhile **Abor Hills region of Arunachal Pradesh**. The rediscovery by citizen scientists has highlighted the importance of biodiversity conservation and habitat protection in Northeast India.

Background

About the Species

- Scientific Name: *Gynacantha khasiaca*
- Common Name: Long-tailed Duskhawker
- Belongs to the order Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies).
- **Dragonflies possess:**
 - Large compound eyes with thousands of lenses,
 - Nearly 360-degree vision,
 - Strong hovering and flight capabilities.

Rediscovery Details

- Rediscovered in October 2024 at the Deban region of **Namdapha National Park**.
- Confirmed through photographs in the presence of forest officials.
- Findings were published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa.

About Odonata

Dragonflies and damselflies are important freshwater insects.

Global diversity:

- Around 6,442 species across 693 genera.

India:

- Around 504 species and 27 subspecies.

Arunachal Pradesh:

- Around 110 species recorded.



- **Features**

Indicator of Healthy Ecosystems

Dragonflies are considered bioindicators because they are highly sensitive to:

- Water quality,
- Habitat degradation,
- Pollution,
- Climate change.

Their presence reflects healthy freshwater ecosystems.

Ecological Importance

Dragonflies:

- Help control mosquito and insect populations,
- Act as predators and prey in aquatic food chains,
- Maintain ecological balance.

Importance of Namdapha Landscape

Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve is among India's richest biodiversity zones due to:

- Tropical evergreen forests,
- High rainfall,
- Unique Himalayan and Indo-Malayan ecological overlap.

The rediscovery reinforces the ecological significance of Northeast India.

Role of Citizen Science

The rediscovery was made by citizen scientists from different Indian States, showing:

- Growing public participation in conservation,
- Importance of local biodiversity documentation,
- Collaborative environmental monitoring.

Conservation Significance

Rediscovery of rare species:

- Expands biodiversity knowledge,
- Helps species conservation planning,
- Encourages habitat preservation measures.

Challenges

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

Major threats include:

- Deforestation,
- Road construction,
- Mining,
- Infrastructure expansion,
- Encroachment into forest areas.

These activities damage freshwater habitats crucial for dragonflies.

Climate Change

Changing rainfall and temperature patterns affect:

- Breeding cycles,
- Wetland ecology,
- Species distribution.

Freshwater Pollution

Pollution from:

- Agricultural chemicals,
 - Waste disposal,
 - Urbanisation,
- damages streams and wetlands where dragonflies breed.

Lack of Research and Documentation

Many insect species remain:

- Understudied,
- Poorly documented,
- Data deficient.

This limits effective conservation planning.

Low Conservation Priority for Insects

Conservation efforts generally focus on large mammals, while insects receive limited policy and funding attention.

Way Forward

Strengthen Habitat Protection

- Protect wetlands, rivers, and forest ecosystems.
- Improve management of biodiversity hotspots.

Promote Scientific Monitoring

- Conduct regular biodiversity surveys.
- Use GIS mapping and ecological databases for species tracking.

Encourage Citizen Science

- Involve local communities, students, and researchers in biodiversity documentation.
- Expand community-based conservation initiatives.

Freshwater Ecosystem Conservation

- Restore degraded wetlands and streams.
- Reduce pollution and habitat fragmentation.

Climate-Resilient Conservation

- Develop adaptive ecosystem management strategies.
- Preserve ecological corridors and buffer zones.

Increase Awareness

- Promote environmental education regarding insects and freshwater biodiversity.
- Integrate insect conservation into broader biodiversity policies.

Conclusion

The rediscovery of the Long-tailed Duskhawker dragonfly after more than a century highlights the extraordinary biodiversity richness of India's Northeast region. At the same time, it underlines the fragility of freshwater ecosystems threatened by habitat destruction and climate change.

Conserving such rare species requires stronger habitat protection, scientific monitoring, and community participation to ensure ecological sustainability and biodiversity conservation in India.

3. Kerala scientists discover new evergreen tree species at Shendurney Sanctuary

Why in the News?

Scientists from the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute have discovered a new evergreen tree species named *Humboldtia nairiana* in the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary. The discovery was officially reported in May 2026 and has highlighted the rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats and the urgent need for conservation of endemic species.

Background

Discovery Process

- The species was first noticed in 2010 during a floristic survey along the Cheenikkala–Pandimotta forest trail in Kerala.
- Researchers collected unusual plant specimens and preserved healthy seedlings at the JNTBGRI Arboretum for ex-situ conservation.
- After a long juvenile phase, the trees flowered and fruited in 2022.
- Detailed morphological studies later confirmed it as a new species.

About the Species

- Scientific Name: *Humboldtia nairiana*
- It belongs to the genus *Humboldtia*, which is largely endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Named in honour of Prof. G.M. Nair, former Director of JNTBGRI and noted plant biotechnologist.

Features

Humboldtia nairiana is a medium-sized evergreen tree growing 5–8 metres tall. Its distinguishing features include:

- Unique warty, pale brown bark with a creamy-white blaze
- Angled, glabrous (smooth) branchlets
- Shorter, sparsely hairy stipules
- Larger flowers with comparatively long pedicels
- Elliptic-oblong fruits with a shorter beak

The species is named in honour of Prof. G.M. Nair, a distinguished plant biotechnologist and former JNTBGRI Director, on his 75th birth anniversary.

• Challenge

The species faces immediate survival threats. It is strictly endemic to Kerala, known only from the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve at an elevation of ~300 metres.

- The entire known habitat spans less than 2 sq. km and contains fewer than 10 mature trees. Based on IUCN Red List criteria, it has been categorised as 'Data Deficient', signalling the urgent need for extensive field tracking to prevent extinction.



Way Forward

Researchers recommend extensive field surveys to locate additional populations and strict habitat protection within the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve. Continued ex-situ conservation at JNTBGRI will serve as an insurance population while wild status is assessed.

Conclusion

The discovery of *Humboldtia nairiana* underscores the Western Ghats' rich biodiversity and the importance of long-term botanical monitoring. The 12-year journey from initial collection to species confirmation highlights the patience required in taxonomic research, while its critically low population makes conservation efforts time-sensitive.

4. AMCA fighter project moves ahead as Centre issues RFP to shortlisted firms

Why in the News

The Ministry of Defence has issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the indigenous fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme to three shortlisted private sector bidders. This marks a major step forward in India's push for self-reliance in advanced combat aviation.

Background

The AMCA is India's ambitious project to develop a fifth-generation stealth fighter jet with advanced avionics, supercruise capability, and reduced radar signature to meet the Indian Air Force's long-term operational needs. Last year, the Defence Minister approved the AMCA Programme Execution Model, under which the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) will execute the project through an industry partner. On May 15, 2026, the foundation stone for the ₹15,803-crore AMCA infrastructure project was laid in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Sathya Sai district.

Feature

- Fifth-generation stealth design with reduced radar cross-section
- Supercruise capability - sustained supersonic flight without afterburners
- Advanced avionics and sensor fusion
- Under the current phase, the government plans to build five prototypes
- The selected private entity will partner with ADA, not go solo
- Notably, state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) has been kept out of this process

Challenge

The AMCA programme faces several inherent challenges:

- Technological complexity of developing a stealth airframe, advanced radar-absorbent materials, and a new generation engine
- Long development timelines typical of fifth-generation fighter programmes
- Private sector capacity - this is the first time Indian private firms are being entrusted with the lead role in a fighter aircraft development programme of this scale
- Engine development remains a critical area, with initial prototypes likely to use a lower-thrust interim engine until an indigenous higher-thrust engine is ready.



Way Forward

The three shortlisted bidders - L&T-BEL combine, Tata Advanced Systems, and Bharat Forge-BEML consortium - will now submit responses. The selection process is expected to be completed within four to five months based on technical and commercial evaluations. The chosen firm will then partner with ADA to begin prototype development.

Conclusion

The issuance of the RFP signals the government's intent to fast-track the AMCA programme while marking a paradigm shift by positioning private industry as the lead production partner. If successful, AMCA will place India among a select group of nations capable of designing and building fifth-generation stealth fighter aircraft, significantly boosting the Make in India initiative in defence aerospace.

5. Global crises demand more than 'citizen sacrifice'

Why in the News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently issued seven appeals urging citizens to embrace restraint, self-reliance, and responsible consumption amid global uncertainty caused by the America-Iran conflict and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. The appeals have drawn mixed reactions across political parties, economists, businesses, and the public.

Background

The seven appeals included buying local products, conserving energy, avoiding unnecessary foreign travel, prioritising domestic tourism, supporting indigenous innovation, and promoting work from home wherever feasible. Some view them as practical nationalism suited to an unstable world, while others see them as realism. Supporters argue that promoting domestic consumption and reducing external dependence could strengthen India's resilience in a fractured global economy.

Feature

The article argues that these appeals represent a subtle but significant shift of responsibility - the burden of managing structural crises is being moved from the state to individuals.

The key features of this critique include:

- **Weakening of the social contract:** Citizens pay taxes and obey laws; in return, governments are expected to provide public goods, social protection, and strategic preparedness. When governments respond to structural shocks primarily with behavioural messaging, the contract weakens.
- **Symbolism over institutional reform:** Behavioural appeals generate symbolic solidarity but cannot substitute for institutional preparedness, long-term economic planning, or policy coherence.
- **Asymmetry of responsibility:** Citizens are repeatedly advised to adjust and sacrifice, yet governments are not issuing equivalent commitments to transparency, regulatory stability, or institutional reform.

Challenge

- Structural crises (inflation, climate stress, energy insecurity) are being oversimplified into moral obligations for citizens.
- The "danger of behavioural politics" is that it normalises institutional underperformance.
- Patriotism and consumption nationalism cannot replace capable institutions and sustained public investment.
- Democracies cannot function sustainably if governments offer behavioural advice while citizens bear the consequences of structural vulnerabilities.

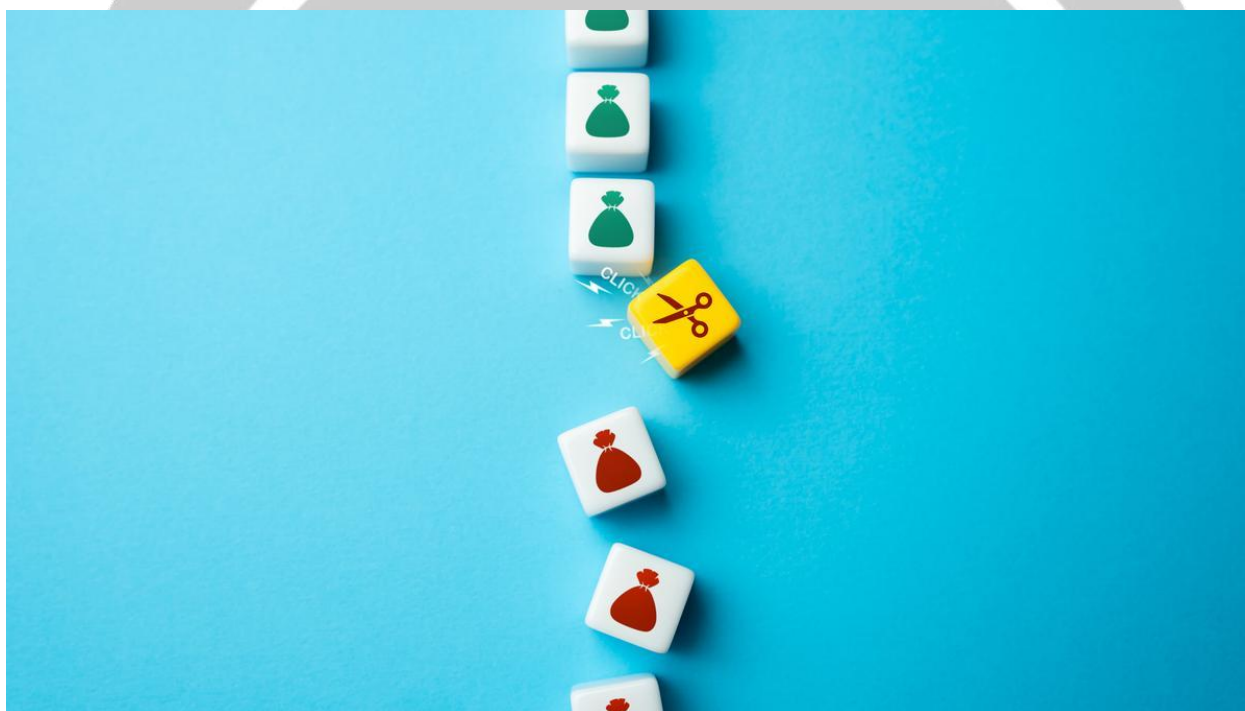
Way Forward

- **Social protection:** Invest seriously in primary health care, disease surveillance, nutrition, mental health, and emergency preparedness.
- **Inequality:** Confront rising economic inequality rather than relying on consumption patriotism when millions remain financially insecure.
- **Education and research:** Make long-term investments in public universities, laboratories, and scientific temper so Indian institutions emerge as global leaders.

- **Transparency and trust:** Communicate honestly during crises and allow independent institutions, experts, and media to function freely.
- **Climate and urbanisation:** Address root causes - poor urban planning, inadequate public transport, shrinking green spaces - rather than merely asking citizens to conserve.
- **Regulatory stability:** Create predictable, stable policy environments for businesses, workers, researchers, and entrepreneurs.
- **Democratic dialogue:** Protect open debate instead of framing criticism as anti-national; democracies grow stronger through institutional criticism and course correction.

Conclusion

Individual responsibility and civic virtues matter, but they cannot substitute for governance itself. India's ambition to become a major economic and geopolitical power requires strong institutions, evidence-based policymaking, investment in human capital, and a renewed social contract where governments accept greater responsibility for national resilience. The true test of leadership during crises is whether governments demonstrate the accountability, foresight, and policy seriousness needed to protect citizens in an increasingly uncertain world.



6. Tariffs to carbon, the new rules shaping India's trade

Why in the News

The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) entered its definitive phase on January 1, 2026. This climate policy tool imposes a carbon-linked charge on imports based on their embedded emissions, directly affecting carbon-intensive products such as steel, cement, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen. The development holds significant implications for India's trade with the EU and broader export competitiveness.

Background

Proposed in July 2021, CBAM seeks to prevent "carbon leakage" - where production shifts to

countries with weaker emission norms. Even as India pursues bilateral trade negotiations with the EU, CBAM will still apply independently. Market access is increasingly being shaped not only by tariffs but also by compliance with carbon-emission standards. The mechanism is structurally distinct from traditional non-tariff measures (NTMs) in that it is price-based and quantifiable, directly linking market access to carbon emissions rather than qualitative compliance requirements.

Feature

- **Immediate sectoral impact:** India's steel and aluminium sectors face the most direct exposure due to their dependence on European markets and carbon-intensive production processes. Although EU importers formally pay the levy, part of the burden will shift to exporters through tighter contracts and stricter supplier selection.
- **Indirect fertiliser impact:** India, a major net importer of fertilisers, may face higher import bills as key suppliers (Egypt, Russia, Morocco, China) also face CBAM costs, which are likely to be passed on through higher global prices.
- **New definition of comparative advantage:** Export competitiveness no longer depends only on production efficiency and pricing, but also on the carbon efficiency of production processes.
- **Emerging global norm:** Other developed countries are considering similar policies, signalling a structural shift that could constrain market access for developing countries broadly.



Challenge

- **Cost burden on exporters:** Compliance costs could shrink profit margins and hurt export competitiveness despite ongoing FTA negotiations. Indian exporters may have to absorb additional costs or invest heavily in cleaner technologies.
- **Higher cost of green transition:** Investing in cleaner energy and carbon-neutral production is significantly more expensive than complying with conventional product quality standards, especially in the short run.

- **Agricultural and food price risks:** Increased fertiliser import costs could jeopardise farm profitability and contribute to high food prices.
- **Equity concerns:** Developing countries face disproportionate short-run costs without the historical emissions responsibility borne by developed nations.

Way Forward (Two-pronged strategy proposed)

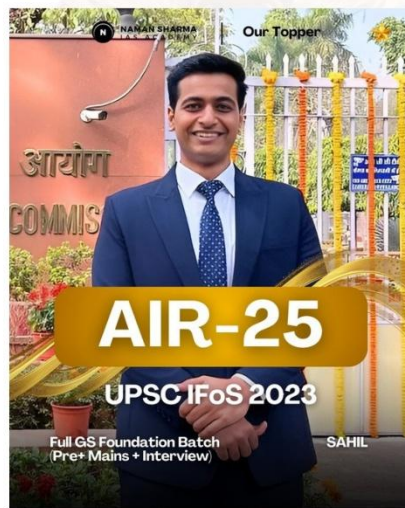
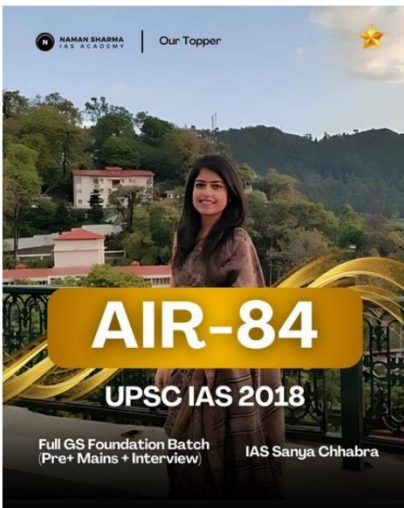
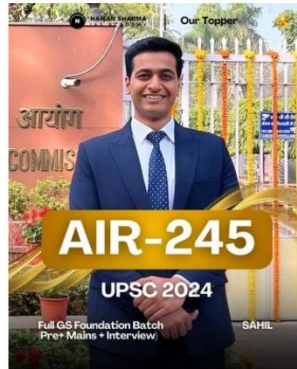
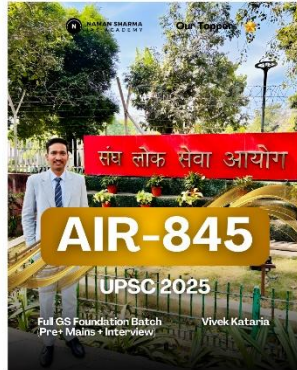
- **Domestic reform:**
 - Greater investment in clean energy and stricter implementation of carbon policies to improve firms' carbon efficiency.
 - Reduce fertiliser import dependence through higher domestic production.
 - Better implementation of the Soil Health Cards Scheme and promotion of balanced, need-based fertiliser application.
- **International negotiation:**
 - Negotiate for equitable treatment of developing countries so that short-run compliance costs can be eased through a phased transition.
 - Seek transitional support and technology transfer to ensure a level playing field in trade agreements with developed countries.

Conclusion

The challenge extends beyond merely adapting to carbon-constrained trade regimes. India must ensure that the transition to cleaner production does not undermine economic growth and sustainability. Carbon compliance is becoming a defining feature of global trade, and India's response requires both domestic policy seriousness and effective global engagement.

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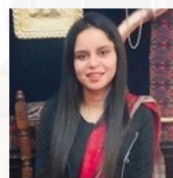
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