

NEXT IAS

DAILY NEWS

ANALYSIS



20th December

Explained

1. FOR FIRST TIME, A FORMER REFUGEE WILL LEAD UN'S REFUGEE AGENCY
2. 11111111111 AS ACCOUNT NUMBER, SHUT CENTRES, SAME PHOTOS: CAG ON GAPS IN SKILLS SCHEME
3. BEHIND RUPEE'S WEAKNESS AGAINST THE DOLLAR: TRADE HEADWINDS, RBI POLICIES
4. WHO MEET BOOSTS COLLABORATION ON GLOBAL HEALTH: PRIME MINISTER

Decoded

5. CORPORATES HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL DUTY TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT: SUPREME COURT

DNA QUIZ

PRACTICE QUESTION

Playlist Link:



What to Read: <https://bit.ly/3FYdutC>

Daily News Analysis: <https://bit.ly/4ge9BgF>

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EXPLAINED

1. INDIAN EXPRESS - THE WORLD PAGE

Backdrop : For first time, a former refugee will lead UN's Refugee Agency

Relevance : Former Iraqi President Barham Salih to Lead UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

1. Appointment & Significance

- **Barham Salih** has been selected as the **head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**.
- **First-ever former refugee** to lead UNHCR.
- **First Middle Easterner** to head the UN Refugee Agency.
- Appointment approved by the **UN General Assembly**.
- Tenure: **5 years**, starting **January**.

2. About Barham Salih

- Former **President of Iraq** (2018–2022).
- Veteran **Kurdish politician**.
- Associated with the **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)**.
- Served twice as **Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**.
- Was a **refugee in the United Kingdom** during Saddam Hussein's regime.

3. About UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

- **Mandate**: Protection and assistance to **refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons**, and **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**.
- **Headquarters**: Geneva, Switzerland
- **Established**: 1950
- **Parent Body**: United Nations General Assembly
- UNHCR was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize twice**:
 - ♦ **1954** – for work in Europe after World War II
 - ♦ **1981** – for global refugee assistance
- UNHCR operates in **130+ countries**.
- UNHCR protects: Refugees, Asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons (**IDPs**) – unlike refugees, they do **not cross international borders**, Stateless persons, Returnees
 - ♦ UNHCR does **not** primarily handle: Economic migrants (handled by IOM)

4. Legal Framework Related to Refugees

• 1951 Refugee Convention

- ♦ Defines who is a refugee
- ♦ Outlines rights of refugees and obligations of states
- ♦ The Convention defines a refugee as a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country."

• 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

- ♦ Removed geographical and time limitations of the 1951 Convention

• Core principle:

- ♦ **Non-Refoulement** – refugees cannot be forcibly returned to countries where they face persecution

• India is NOT a signatory to:

- ♦ 1951 Refugee Convention
- ♦ 1967 Protocol

2. NEWS: 1111111111 AS ACCOUNT NUMBER, SHUT CENTRES, SAME PHOTOS: CAG ON GAPS IN SKILLS SCHEME

Backdrop : 1111111111 as account number, shut centres, same photos: CAG on gaps in skills scheme

Relevance : The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has highlighted serious implementation gaps in PMKVY, including misuse of bank account details, duplication of photographs, non-functional training centres, and weak monitoring mechanisms during 2015–2022.

Key Findings of CAG

1. Financial & Beneficiary Irregularities

- **Dummy bank accounts** used:
 - ♦ "1111111111" used as bank account number for multiple beneficiaries.
 - ♦ Single bank account linked to **multiple candidates**.
- **Aadhaar linkage issues**:
 - ♦ Incomplete or incorrect Aadhaar seeding.
 - ♦ Disbursements made without proper verification in early phases.

• DBT failures:

- Only **18.44%** candidates successfully paid under PMKVY 2.0 and 3.0.
- Payments for **6.14 lakh candidates (63.75%)** pending as of October 2024.

2. Fake & Poor-Quality Training

- Same photographs** used for multiple beneficiaries (UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan).
- Shut or non-functional training centres:**
 - In Bihar, **2 out of 3 centres** closed.
- Certification without training:**
 - Some candidates are certified as “Best-in-Class” without proper assessment.
- Training not aligned to industry needs**, defeating employability objectives.

3. Data & Monitoring Deficiencies

- Skill India Portal (SIP) had:
 - Incomplete candidate details.
 - Invalid bank accounts and contact information.
- Poor response to beneficiary surveys:**
 - Only **3.95% email response rate**.
- Lack of effective **physical inspections** of training centres

2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- Certifies informal skills already possessed by workers
- Important for migrant & unorganised sector workers

3. Special Projects: Target difficult, remote, or specialised sectors

- Eg: tribal areas, disaster-affected regions

Additional Points

- Skill and Certification Framework:** Based on **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)**
- Under the Scheme, every certified candidate is given a reward of Rs. 500 for clearing the exam as encouragement.
- Inclusivity:** Inclusivity was a key pillar of the scheme with **45% of the candidates being women** and a significant share coming from **Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**.
- Progress:**
 - Over the years, **more than 1.63 crore** candidates have been trained under PMKVY in diverse sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, healthcare, IT, electronics, retail and more.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- Launched:** 2015
- Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)
- Nature:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- Implementing Agency:** National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)
- Target Group:** Youth (15–45 years), school/college dropouts, unemployed
- Objective:**
 - Provide **short-term skill training**
 - Enable **certification and employability**
 - Recognition of existing skills (RPL)

Core Components of PMKVY

1. Short-Term Training (STT)

- Fresh skilling for school/college dropouts
- NSQF-aligned courses coupled with **training + assessment + certification**

PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA

An Overview

PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16)

Enrolled	Trained	Assessed	Certified
1,986,016	1,986,016	1,951,487	1,451,636

PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20)

Enrolled	Trained	Assessed	Certified
11,484,724	11,000,708	9,920,742	9,157,547

PMKVY 3.0 (2020-21)

Enrolled	Trained	Assessed	Certified
794,976	737,502	582,629	431,808

PMKVY 4.0 (2022- ONGOING)

Enrolled	Trained	Assessed	Certified
3,342,336	2,577,112	1,749,438	1,539,643

Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

As of 11th July, 2023

Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

As of 11th July, 2025

SKILL INDIA MISSION

- It aims to deliver skill, re-skill and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres / institutes under various schemes.

- In February 2025, the restructured 'Skill India Programme' was approved for 2022-23 to 2025-26, merging **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0)**, the **Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS)**, and the **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme** into a single Central Sector Scheme.

- ♦ **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**

- ♦ **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)-**

- Offers vocational skills to non-literates, neo-literates, and school dropouts (up to 12th standard), aged 15–45.
- Focuses on women, SC, ST, OBC and minorities in rural and low-income urban areas.
- More than 26 lakh people have been trained from FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24 under the scheme.

- ♦ **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)**

- Promotes apprenticeship by offering financial support for apprentice stipends.
- Training includes both basic and on-the-job/practical training in industries. Under PM-NAPS, over 43.47 lakh apprentices have been engaged across 36 States and Union Territories as of 19 May 2025.

3. NEWS: BEHIND RUPEE'S WEAKNESS AGAINST THE DOLLAR: TRADE HEADWINDS, RBI POLICIES

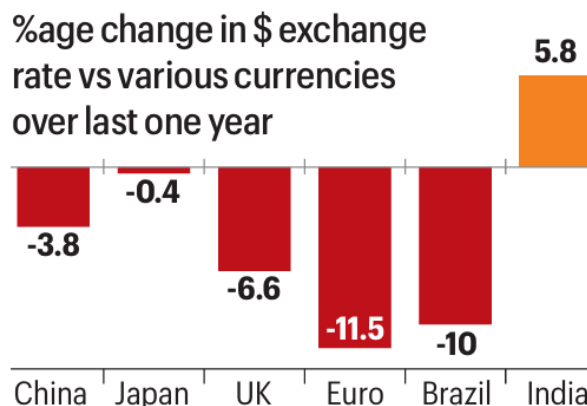
Backdrop : Behind rupee's weakness against the dollar: trade headwinds, RBI policies

Relevance : Even though India's economy is growing fast, the **Indian rupee is becoming weaker against the US dollar**. This is happening because of **trade problems, global factors, and RBI's exchange rate policies**.

What is Happening?

- In the **last one year**, the rupee has **fallen by about 6%** against the dollar.

• ₹ is weakening against \$; \$ is weakening against rest



SOURCE: GOOGLE FINANCE

- The **RBI sold dollars** in the market to stop the rupee from falling too much.
- Still, the rupee remains weak compared to many other currencies.

Main Reasons for Rupee Weakness

1. Trade Deficit (Very Important)

- India **imports more than it exports**.
- Imports like **crude oil, electronics, fertilisers** need dollars.
- Higher imports → greater demand for dollars → pressure on rupee.

More imports = more dollar demand = weaker rupee

2. Global Trade & Geopolitical Factors

- US trade policy:**
 - The US imposed **higher tariffs on Indian goods**.
 - Indian exports become costlier for foreign buyers.
 - Demand for Indian goods falls → fewer dollars come to India.
- India-US trade tensions** and diplomatic uncertainty affected investor sentiment.

3. Less Foreign Investment

- According to **Bank of Baroda study (Dec 2024)**:
 - Foreign investors are investing more in the US, **China, Japan** etc.
 - US stock indices rose **17–23%**
 - China, Japan, Hong Kong performed comparably or better

- ♦ Indian equities (stock market) perceived as **overvalued**, reducing inflows.
- **Less foreign money (FPI) coming to India** → less dollar supply → rupee weakens.

4. RBI's Exchange Rate Policy

- India follows a **managed floating exchange rate system** → RBI does **not fix** the rupee value → RBI intervenes only to **control excess volatility**.
- **RBI uses two methods:**
 - ♦ **Spot market** – buying/selling dollars immediately
 - ♦ **Forward market** – agreement to buy/sell dollars in future

Important Point:

Forward market intervention affects the rupee more than spot market intervention

5. Trade Deficit Is Not the Only Reason

- A Bank of Baroda study found that:
 - ♦ **Trade deficit did NOT strongly correlate with rupee movement** in the short term.
 - ♦ **Reason:**
 - Trade data reflects **booked transactions**, not immediate dollar flows.
 - Exporters may **delay bringing dollars back to India**.
- Many **non-economic factors** also matter:
 - ♦ Global uncertainty
 - ♦ Investor confidence
 - ♦ Expectations about the future

4. WHO MEET BOOSTS COLLABORATION ON GLOBAL HEALTH: PRIME MINISTER

Backdrop : WHO Meet Boosts Collaboration on Global Health: Prime Minister

Relevance : India hosted the **2nd WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine**, where health ministers and experts from many countries discussed how **traditional medicine and modern technology** can work together to improve global health.

Key Highlights of the Summit

- Organised by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**
- Theme of the summit is "Restoring Balance for People and Planet: The Science and Practice of Well-Being."

- Focused on:
 - ♦ Research in traditional medicine
 - ♦ Simplifying regulations
 - ♦ Sharing scientific knowledge
- Emphasised combining:
 - ♦ **Traditional medicine**
 - ♦ **Modern science & technology**

India's Role

1. WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM)

- **Established at Jamnagar, Gujarat**
- First such WHO centre in the world
- Aims to:
 - ♦ Promote evidence-based traditional medicine
 - ♦ Support global standards & research

2. Traditional Medicine Digital Library (TMDL)

- India launched **Traditional Medicine Digital Library** → World's largest digital repository on traditional, complementary and integrative medicine. Bringing together over 1.5 million records,
- It will serve as a global knowledge resource with evidence maps, research, policies and regulatory information from across WHO's Member States related to traditional medicine
- **Purpose:**
 - ♦ Preserve traditional knowledge
 - ♦ Support scientific research
 - ♦ Prevent misuse & biopiracy

Use of Digital Technology in Health

The summit highlighted:

- **Digital health tools**
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
- **Research & innovation**
- **Modern wellness infrastructure**

Shows **integration of tradition + technology**

Key Collaborations Announced

1. **Centre of Excellence on BIMSTEC**
 - ♦ Focus on health cooperation
 - ♦ Strengthens regional collaboration

BIMSTEC

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation



7 MEMBER COUNTRIES

Objectives of BIMSTEC



- To enable environment for rapid economic development.
- To collaborate and mutually assist members on matters of common interest.
- To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations.
- To endeavour to eradicate poverty from the Bay of Bengal region.
- To establish multidimensional connectivity, promote synergy among connectivity frameworks in the region.

Founded in 1997 through Bangkok Declaration

2. India–Japan Collaboration

- Integrating:
 - Modern science
 - Healthcare systems

Traditional Medicine: Legacy & Present Relevance

- One of the world's oldest holistic healing traditions.
 - According to WHO, traditional, complementary and integrative medicine is used in 170 of its 194 Member States.
 - While countries like India, China and Japan have long established systems of traditional medicines, they are also widespread in Africa and the Americas.
- In India, under the Ministry of AYUSH, systems such as **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy are formally recognised** within India's public-health framework.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda is India's ancient system of holistic healing that focuses on balancing the body, mind and spirit through natural principles.

Unani

Unani is a holistic healing system based on maintaining balance in the body through diet, lifestyle and natural remedies.

Sowa-Rig-pa (Amchi Medicine)

Sowa-Rigpa, or Amchi medicine, is a Himalayan healing tradition rooted in Buddhist principles and Ayurvedic fundamentals.

Yoga and Naturopathy

Yoga is a mind-body discipline that combines postures, breathwork, and meditation to achieve physical strength, mental calm, and inner balance. Naturopathy is a natural healing system that uses diet, and lifestyle practices to help the body heal itself.

Siddha

Siddha is one of India's oldest healing systems, offering highly personalised treatments using herbs, minerals, specialized formulations, and diagnostic methods like pulse and tongue examination.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a scientific system of medicine that relies on gentle, individualized remedies to stimulate the body's natural healing response.

India hosted the 1stWHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine on 17-18 August 2023 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, alongside the G20 Health Ministers' Meeting. As the first, high-level global platform dedicated to traditional, complementary and integrative medicine, the Summit brought international attention to the role of traditional systems in modern healthcare.

Key highlights included:

- Participation from ministers, scientists, regulators and policy leaders across WHO Member States, enabling structured dialogue on integrating traditional medicine with contemporary health systems.
- A strong focus on evidence generation, research validation, safety and equity to build global confidence in traditional-medicine practices.
- Emphasis on sustainability through biodiversity protection, ethical sourcing of medicinal plants and fair benefit-sharing with knowledge holders.
- Adoption of the Gujarat Declaration, which reaffirmed global commitment to evidence-based TCIM, called for improved data and regulatory frameworks, and acknowledged India's leadership in shaping a holistic, culturally rooted and scientifically aligned global health agenda.

5. CORPORATES HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL DUTY TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT: SUPREME COURT

Backdrop : Corporates Have a Fundamental Duty to Protect the Environment: Supreme Court Summary: The **Supreme Court (SC)** has said that **companies also have a fundamental duty to protect the environment**, just like citizens.

It ruled that **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** must include **environmental protection**, not just charity or social work.

Key Supreme Court Observations

1. Corporates Have Environmental Responsibility

- A company is a **legal person**.
- Therefore, it has a **fundamental duty** to protect the environment.
- CSR must include environmental responsibility.** CSR is **not optional charity**, but a **constitutional duty**.

2. Link with the Constitution

- The Court linked CSR with **Article 51A(g)**:
 - Duty to **protect and improve the natural environment** including forests, rivers, lakes, wildlife
 - Also includes **compassion for living creatures**

- **Prelims Fact:** Article 51A(g) applies to **both citizens and corporations (legal persons)**.

3. Shared Ecosystem Concept

- Companies **share the ecosystem** with wildlife and local communities.
- They cannot claim to be socially responsible while **damaging the environment**.
- Corporates must act as **"guests" in nature**, not owners.

4. Polluter Pays Principle

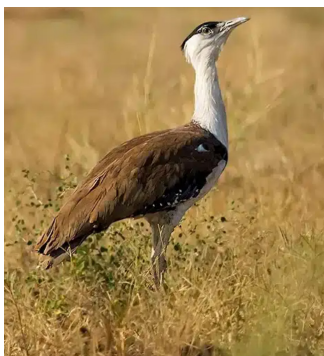
- If corporate activities (mining, power, infrastructure):
 - ♦ Damage ecosystems
 - ♦ Threaten endangered species
- Then the **company must bear the cost of restoration**.

Includes:

- **In-situ conservation** (protecting species in natural habitat)
- **Ex-situ conservation** (zoos, breeding centres, etc.)

Case Background

- Case related to risks faced by the **Great Indian Bustard**



- One of the **heaviest flying birds in the world**
- **Distribution:** The species has a current viable population of 100- 150 individuals in India and mainly survives in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan that holds about 100 individuals.
- Found mainly in:
 - ♦ **Rajasthan**
 - ♦ **Gujarat**
- **Habitat:** It inhabits dry grasslands and scrublands.

Some additional characteristics:

- The sexes are roughly the same size, with the largest individuals weighing 15 kg (33 pounds).

- They breed mostly during the monsoon season, when females lay a single egg on open ground.

- **Lifespan:** 12-15 years

- Their diet ranges widely depending on the seasonal availability of food.

- ♦ They feed on grass seeds, insects like grasshoppers and beetles, and sometimes even small rodents and reptiles.

- Threatened by:

- ♦ Power lines
- ♦ Renewable energy projects
- ♦ Infrastructure development

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** means companies must contribute to **social and environmental welfare**.
- In India, CSR is **mandatory** for certain companies.

Legal Basis of CSR in India

CSR in India is governed by:

- **Section 135** of the **Companies Act, 2013**
- **Schedule VII** of the Companies Act
- **Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014**
- India has one of the **most detailed CSR frameworks in the world**.

Which Companies Must Do CSR? (Eligibility Criteria)

- CSR is **mandatory** if a company meets **any one** of the following:

- ♦ **Net worth** ≥ ₹500 crore
- ♦ **Turnover** ≥ ₹1,000 crore
- ♦ **Net profit** ≥ ₹5 crore

Such companies must spend **2% of the average net profit of the last 3 years** on CSR.

CSR Committee

- Committee decides:
 - ♦ CSR policy
 - ♦ CSR activities
 - ♦ CSR expenditure
- Every eligible company must form a **CSR Committee**. Committee must have:
 - ♦ **At least 3 directors**
 - ♦ **At least 1 independent director**

CSR Activities (Schedule VII)

CSR funds can be used for:

- Education
- Health & sanitation
- Environment protection
- Poverty eradication
- Rural development
- Disaster relief
- Protection of national heritage

CSR activities are **specified in Schedule VII**.

Penal Provisions (Non-Compliance)

- If a company fails to comply with CSR rules:
 - ♦ **Company:** Fine from ₹50,000 to ₹25 lakh
 - ♦ Officers responsible:
 - **Imprisonment up to 3 years** OR
 - Fine from ₹50,000 to ₹5 lakh OR
 - Both

CSR Amendment, 2019

- **Before 2019:** Unspent CSR money could be **carried forward** to next year.
- **After 2019 Amendment:**
 - ♦ **Unspent CSR amount must be transferred:**
 - To a **Schedule VII fund** at the end of the financial year
 - ♦ The amount must be **used within 3 years**
 - ♦ If not used → transferred to **specified government funds**

CSR spending is now **strictly monitored**.

(c) 1 and 2

(d) 2 and 3

Q.2 With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements:

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.
3. It aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the National Framework. Skill Qualification

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.3 Consider the following statements:

The effect of devaluation of a currency is that it necessarily

1. improves the competitiveness of the domestic exports in the foreign markets
2. increases the foreign value of domestic currency
3. improves the trade balance

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2

(c) 3 only

(d) 2 and 3

Q.4 With reference to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) rules in India, consider the following statements:

1. CSR rules specify that expenditures that benefit the company directly or its employees will not be considered as CSR activities.
2. CSR rules do not specify minimum spending on CSR activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

== PRACTICE QUESTION ==

Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding World Toilet Organization:

1. It is one of the agencies of the United Nations.
2. World Toilet Summit, World Toilet Day and World Toilet College are the initiatives of this organization, to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.
3. The main focus of its function is to grant funds to the least developed countries and developing countries to achieve the end of open defecation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 2 only

(b) 3 only

Answer

1. (a)

2. (c)

3. (a)

4. (a)

■■■■■