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DAILY NEWS

ANALYSIS



17th July

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Govt. merges 36 schemes to float farm programme

PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, announced in the Budget earlier this year, aims at increasing agricultural productivity and sustainable practices; annual outlay of ₹24,000 crore for six years

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, or PMDDKY, to enhance agricultural productivity and increase adoption of sustainable agricultural practices across the country.

The scheme was announced in the Union Budget for 2025-26.

After the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told presspersons that the Centre had merged 36 schemes of 11 Ministries into the PMDDKY, which will have an outlay of ₹24,000 crore per year for six years beginning 2025-26. "This scheme will help 1.7 crore farmers," he said.

Greener fields

The PMDDKY aims at enhancing **agricultural productivity**, increasing adoption of **crop diversification** and **sustainable agricultural practices**, and augmenting **post-harvest storage**

₹ 24,000 cr.

to be allocated yearly for six years for the scheme

■ States and private sector to partner with the Centre to implement the scheme

100 districts to come under the scheme which will begin this financial year

■ Districts to be identified based on 3 key indicators: low productivity, low cropping intensity, less credit disbursement

Helping hand: Nearly 1.7 crore farmers will benefit from the scheme. P11



A release said the scheme aims at augmenting post-harvest storage at the panchayat and block levels, improving irrigation facilities, and facilitating availability of long-term and short-term credit.

"The scheme will be implemented through convergence of 36 existing schemes across 11 departments, other State schemes, and local partnerships with the private sector... 100 districts will

be identified based on three key indicators of low productivity, low cropping intensity, and less credit disbursement," the release said.

The scheme would benefit at least one district in each State. "The number of districts in each State/ Union Territory will be based on the share of Net Cropped Area and operational holdings. However, a minimum of one district will be selected from each State," the release added.

The scheme is modelled on the "Aspirational District Programme" of the Centre. Mr. Vaishnaw said the "first-of-its-kind" scheme would focus exclusively on agriculture and allied sectors.

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Backdrop: Government combines 36 schemes to launch a new farming programme.

Relevance: GS2- Welfare Schemes GS3- Agriculture

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Helping hand: Nearly 1.7 crore farmers will benefit from the scheme. PTI



PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY)

Announcement and Budget

- Announced in the **Union Budget 2025-26**.
- Aims to **boost agricultural productivity** and **promote sustainable farming practices**.
- Will run for **six years** with an **annual outlay of ₹24,000 crore**.

Structure and Coverage

- **36 schemes from 11 ministries** will be merged into PMDDKY.
- **Target beneficiaries:** 1.7 crore farmers across India.
- Will benefit **at least one district in every State/UT**.
- Total **100 districts** to be selected based on:
 - Low productivity
 - Low cropping intensity
 - Low credit disbursement

Implementation Mechanism

- Modelled on the **Aspirational District Programme**.
- Led by Ministry of Agriculture with **NABARD** and Department of Financial Services.
- Based on **data-driven selection** of districts.
- No separate budget; funded by **converging 36 existing schemes** across multiple ministries.
- To be executed through:
 - **Convergence** with other central, state schemes and private partnerships.
 - **District, State, and National Committees** for planning, implementation, and monitoring.
 - **Central nodal officers** to monitor field implementation.
- Each district will prepare a **District Agriculture and Allied Activities Plan**, aligned with national goals.
- Plans to be created and approved by **District Dhan-Dhaanya Samiti** (Headed by **District Collector**), which will include **progressive farmers**.

Focus Areas

- **Post-harvest infrastructure** (storage at panchayat and block levels).
- **Improved irrigation facilities.**
- **Access to long-term and short-term credit.**
- **Emphasis on:**
 - **Crop diversification**
 - **Water and soil conservation**
 - **Self-sufficiency in agriculture**
 - **Natural and organic farming**

Expected Outcomes

- **Increased local livelihoods and domestic production.**
- A move towards **self-reliance in agriculture.**
- **Agricultural Growth:** Higher yields, better crop planning and **value addition** in agriculture and allied sectors.
- **Income Stability:** Diversified income streams for farmers.
- **Infrastructure Boost:** Better post-harvest and cold storage facilities.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Improved access to affordable credit.
- **Rural Employment:** Jobs in farming, processing, and storage sectors.

Expert Insights

- Experts view the scheme as a **significant move** to improve agriculture in **underperforming districts**.
- **Abhishek Jain (CEEW)** suggested:
 - Use **net agricultural income per hectare** as a better district selection criterion.
 - Avoid using **low credit disbursement** as a negative indicator, as **resilient agriculture should rely less on external credit**.

Monitoring

- The scheme's **progress will be tracked monthly** to ensure transparency and effectiveness.

Challenges

- **Timely Fund Flow:** Converging funds may cause delays.
- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Cold storage, irrigation, and warehousing gaps.
- **Awareness & Participation:** Need for grassroots outreach and farmer education.



PRACTICE QUESTION



Q1. With reference to the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY), consider the following statements:

1. The scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2025–26 and will run for a period of six years.
2. The scheme is funded through a separate dedicated budget allocated under the Ministry of Agriculture.
3. It aims to promote crop diversification, improve irrigation, and strengthen post-harvest infrastructure.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only**
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

TEN YEARS OF PMKVY



Government of India
Press Information Bureau



International Year
of Cooperatives
2025
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Social Welfare

A Decade of Building Skills & Empowering Dreams

10 years of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

Posted On: 14 JUL 2025 11:16AM

Key Takeaways

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has empowered over **6 crore Indians** through its various schemes since 2014.

Over 1.6 crore youth trained nationwide since 2015 under PMKVY.

Courses expanded to emerging fields like **AI, Robotics, and IoT**.

As of July 11, 2025, **over 25 lakh candidates** have been trained under PMKVY 4.0.

Introduction

India's growing youth population holds immense potential, but harnessing this demographic dividend requires the right skills. Through focused efforts in skilling, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, global workforce readiness, and promotion of traditional trades, the government is empowering its citizens to become drivers of economic and social progress. Since 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has empowered more than **6 crore Indians** through its various schemes to build a brighter future for themselves and for the country.

At the heart of this transformation is India's Skill India Mission (SIM), which is equipping youth with essential industry-relevant skills through various programs. These initiatives focus on skill development, re-skilling and up-skilling, empowering millions with the tools needed for sustainable careers. By bridging the skill gap, fostering innovation, and creating new job opportunities, SIM is paving the way for a self-reliant and developed India (Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat).

Background: 10 years of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Relevance: GS 3/Economy

About the news



Since 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has empowered more than **6 crore** Indians through its various schemes to build a brighter future for themselves and for the country

The **Skill India Mission (SIM)** aims to provide **skill training, re-skilling, and upskilling** through a vast network of development centres. In **February 2025**, the government approved a **restructured programme (2022–26)** by merging three schemes into a **single Central Sector Scheme**:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 4.0)**: Offers **short-term training, upskilling, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** across India, including rural areas.
- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)**: Provides **vocational training** to **non-literates, neo-literates, and school dropouts (age 15–45)** with a focus on **women, SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities** in rural/low-income urban areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS)**: Encourages apprenticeship in industries through financial support for stipends, covering both basic and on-the-job training.

Transforming Futures: A Decade of PMKVY



Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) was launched on **July 15, 2015**.

- **Objective:**
 - Promote **skill development** across the country.
 - Provide **free short-duration training** to youth.
 - Offer **monetary incentives** for skill certification.
- **Target:** Improve **employability of youth** and meet **industry skill demands**.
- **Over 1.6 crore** youth trained nationwide since 2015 under PMKVY.

PMKVY 1.0 (2015–16):

- Pilot phase; **19.85 lakh** candidates trained

PMKVY 2.0:

- Expanded **sector-wise and geographically**.
1.10 crore candidates trained/oriented

PMKVY 3.0:

- Focused on special initiatives:
 - **Customised Crash Course for COVID Warriors (CCCP-CW)**
 - **Skill Hub Initiative (SHI) under NEP 2020**
- **7.37 lakh candidates trained**

PMKVY 4.0 (2022–2025):

- **Over 25 lakh candidates trained** (as of July 11, 2025)
- **Types of Training under PMKVY 4.0**
 - **Short-Term Training (STT):** Structured skill courses (300–600+ hours) aligned with NSQF, including on-job training as per NCVET norms.
 - **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Certification and upskilling for individuals with existing skills through assessment and industry recognition.
 - **Special Projects:** Customized skilling programs for marginalized groups and emerging job roles, with flexible formats and special approvals.

Target Group, Eligibility and Geographical Coverage



	Short Term Training	Special Projects	Recognition of Prior Learning
Target Group	Candidates looking for fresh skilling, re-skill/upskill, out of education candidates, school/college dropouts or unemployed youth of India nationality	Marginalized, vulnerable groups, etc. requiring special attention or jobs -roles with focus on future skills.	Candidates with prior learning experience or skills and willing to get assessed and certified.
Eligibility	Indian nationals possessing valid Aadhaar and fulfilling eligibility criteria of respective job role. In case of RPL, prior experience will be required in the job role for which RPL certification is being sought and as specified in the job role.		
Age Group	15-45 years	15-45 years	18-59 years
Geographical coverage	Special attention to aspirational, backward, border, tribal and Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts, including skilling requirement for other countries.		

Key Steps Driving the Success of PMKVY 4.0 Nationwide

- **Focus on New Age Skills** like Industry 4.0, Web 3.0, AR/VR, Climate Change, Circular Economy, Green Economy, etc.
- **Greater reliance on On-Job-Training (OJT)** for better practical exposure to candidates.
- **Emphasis on Re-skilling and Up-skilling** under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- **Flexibility in course curriculums** by introducing courses in partnership with industry.
- **Cross-utilization of available infrastructure** with educational institutions viz. Institutes of National Importance (INIs) / Schools / Colleges / Universities / Central and State Government Institutions, etc.
- **Training aligned to National Priorities and Policy Announcements** focusing on clusters in sectors like Semiconductor, 5G, AI, Green Hydrogen, EV (Electric Vehicles), Solar Mission and Tourism

Innovative Initiatives under PMKVY



- **Targeted Skilling & Inclusivity**
 - **Special Projects:**
 - **2,500 Bru-tribe youth** in Tripura trained
 - **Jail inmates** trained in Assam and Manipur
 - **13,834 (70% women)** trained under the **PANKH project** across 18 states
- **Traditional Crafts & Regional Upskilling**
 - **Namda craft (J&K):** 2,243 women trained
 - **Artisans and weavers** in **Nagaland and J&K:** 9,605 upskilled under **RPL**
 - Supported by the **Handicraft and Carpet Sector Skill Council**
- **Mainstreaming Skilling Across Government Schemes**
 - Aligned with national flagship programmes like:
 - PM Surya Ghar Yojana
 - Vibrant Villages Programme
 - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jal Jeevan Mission, Green Hydrogen Mission

- **Skill Hub Initiative**
 - Over **1.23 lakh youth trained** using **schools/colleges as vocational hubs**, supporting **NEP 2020** goals
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**
 - **Informal skills certified**, boosting **employability** without formal training durations.
- **Digital & Outcome-Driven Reforms:**
 - The **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** tracks training digitally, ensures **Aadhaar-based validation**, and links payments to performance.
- **Academic Mobility**
 - **PMKVY 4.0** integrated with the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**
 - Enables **credit transfer** between skill training and formal education.

Other Schemes Empowering Skill Development in India

- **PM Vishwakarma Yojana**
 - **Target Group:** Artisans and craftspeople from **18 traditional trades**
 - **Key Features:**
 - PM Vishwakarma Certificate & ID Card
 - Skill upgradation & toolkit incentive
 - Credit support, digital transaction incentives, and marketing support.
 - **Funding:** Central Sector Scheme with **₹13,000 crore** outlay (2023–2028)
 - **Progress:**
 - Over **2.7 crore applications** submitted
 - **29 lakh+ applications** registered (as of July 13, 2025)

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**
 - **Objective:** Diversify rural incomes and support rural youth career goals
 - **Achievements:**
 - 16.9 lakh+ candidates trained
 - 10.97 lakh+ candidates placed in jobs (till November 2024)
 - 65% placement rate.

- **Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs)**
 - Free residential training with post-training credit linkage to promote **rural entrepreneurship**
 - **Lead Institutions:** Sponsored and led by **banks**
 - **Impact:**
 - **56.7 lakh+ candidates trained** in 2025–26 (up from 22.9 lakh in 2016–17)



PRACTICE QUESTION



Q2. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0, consider the following statements:

1. It focuses on new age Skills like Industry 4.0, Web 3.0, Green Economy, etc.
2. A person in the age group of 15-45 years are eligible for Recognition of Prior Learning

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only
- (c). Both 1 and 2
- (d) None of the above

Govt. clamping down on dumping, 'import surges'

The DGTR under the commerce ministry, last month, initiated anti-dumping investigations on 8 different product lines originating from a total of 12 countries or groupings, *The Hindu* has learnt

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Commerce has begun using its various departments such as the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) to clamp down on import surges and dumping in India owing to malpractice by India's trading partners. It has also begun coordinating with other Ministries on this.

The DGTR last month initiated anti-dumping investigations on eight different product lines originating from a total of 12 countries or groupings, *The Hindu* has learnt.

"In the Department of Commerce, we have started monitoring the import surges for all commodities now and have started shar-

Under watch

Dept. of Commerce has started monitoring import surges for all commodities and is sharing reports with different ministries



- DGFT last month curbed import of palladium, rhodium, and iridium containing more than 1% of gold
- The importers had imported gold disguised as alloys of these metals to evade import duty
- DGTR has begun anti-dumping probe on import of several industrial chemicals from countries including China

ing the surge reports with different Ministries so that they can also monitor at their level," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said during a press briefing.

"Whenever we find an unusual surge, we examine it, and if need be, if we find that a surge is due to a malpractice, in that case we are also using the DGFT to restrict it," he added.

For example, the DGFT last month restricted the

import of the alloys of palladium, rhodium, and iridium containing more than 1% of gold.

According to sources, this was because the government found that importers were importing gold – which normally attracts a higher import duty – disguised as alloys of these metals, the import of which was free.

"We have also told DGTR, in view of the fact

that a lot of trade diversions are happening around the world, to look at if there is any import which may be harming the domestic sector in the country," Mr. Barthwal further said during the press briefing.

The Hindu has learnt that the DGTR in June 2025 initiated eight investigations on possible dumping activities. Dumping refers to the practice of exporting goods to other countries – including to India – at prices well below their normal rate. The DGTR has launched such anti-dumping investigations on the import of several industrial chemicals from China, Taiwan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Switzerland and the EU, as well as types of glass wool from Egypt and types of paperboards from Indonesia.

Backdrop: Government takes strict action against unfair imports and sudden rise in foreign goods.

Relevance: GS3- Trade

The Ministry of Commerce has begun using its various departments to clamp down on import surges and dumping in India owing to malpractice by India's trading partners.

Key Departments Involved

- **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)** – Leading anti-dumping investigations.
- **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** – Imposing import restrictions when malpractice is detected.
- **Ministry of Commerce** – Coordinating efforts and monitoring import trends across departments.

Recent Actions

- **Anti-dumping probes** initiated on **8 product lines** from **12 countries/groupings** in **June 2025**.
- **Import monitoring is now** active across all commodities, with regular reports shared with other Ministries.
- **DGFT restricted** imports of alloys containing **palladium, rhodium, and iridium** with **over 1% gold** due to misuse.

Reason for Action

- **Import surges** and **malpractice** observed, including:
 - **Gold smuggling disguised as alloy imports** to evade high duties.
 - **Trade diversion tactics** harming domestic industries.
- **Dumping concerns** — goods being exported to India at **unfairly low prices**, harming domestic producers.

Countries Involved in Anti-Dumping Probes

- China, Taiwan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Switzerland, EU, Egypt, Indonesia

Products Under Investigation

- Industrial chemicals
- Types of glass wool
- Types of paperboards

Terminologies

- **Dumping:** Exporting goods at prices below the normal market value, potentially damaging the importing country's domestic industry.
- **Import Surge:** A sudden increase in imports of specific commodities, often linked to trade manipulation or tariff evasion.

Antidumping vs countervailing duty

- Anti-dumping duties are imposed on goods sold at below their normal value (usually their price in the producing country).
- While countervailing duties offset subsidies provided by foreign governments. Both aim to protect domestic industries from injury caused by unfair competition from imports.

Most favoured nation (MFN)

Under the MFN principle, a country must treat imports and exports from one WTO member as favorably as it does for all others—ensuring non-discrimination in trade benefits.

Developed vs Developing Countries

- **No fixed definitions:** The WTO does not formally define "developed" or "developing" countries.
- **Self-designation:** Member countries **choose their own status**—either as developed or developing.
- **Access to S&DT:**
 - Countries that declare themselves as developing can access **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)** provisions.
 - These benefits may include:
 - **Longer timeframes** to implement WTO agreements.
 - **Technical assistance** and capacity-building support.

Dispute Settlement Mechanism

- The **WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM)** is a two-tier system:
 - **Panel stage**
 - **Appellate Body (AB)** stage
- Since **late 2019**, the **Appellate Body has been non-functional** due to the **United States blocking appointments** of new members.

WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) – Process

- **Consultations**

- Initial stage where the complainant seeks dialogue with the respondent.
- Aim: Resolve disputes amicably within set timeframes.

- **Panel Establishment**

- If consultations fail, a **Dispute Settlement Panel** is formed.
- Managed by the **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)**.
- DSB's powers:
 - Establish panels
 - Refer matters to arbitration
 - Adopt reports
 - Monitor implementation
 - Approve retaliation in case of non-compliance

- **Panel Report**

- Report includes findings and recommendations.
- Circulated to all WTO members for review and comments.

- **Adoption or Appeal**
 - Report is adopted unless a consensus exists against it.
 - Disputing parties can appeal to the **Appellate Body**.

WTO's Appellate Body

- Established in **1995**.
- Composed of **7 members** (4-year terms).
- Functions:
 - Review and **uphold, modify, or reverse** panel rulings.
 - Final reports are binding once adopted by the DSB.
- Based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Implementation and Compliance

- Members found violating WTO rules must align with agreements.
- Non-compliance allows the complainant to **seek compensation or retaliate**, including suspension of trade concessions.

India's Stand on DSM(Dispute Settlement Mechanism)

Active Engagement

- Participates as **complainant, respondent, and third party**.
- Involved in several **high-profile disputes**, especially in agriculture and trade barriers.

Key Positions and Concerns

- **Supports a functional Appellate Body** to ensure impartial and effective dispute resolution.
- Strong advocate for **Special and Differential Treatment (SDT)** for developing countries.
- Raises concerns about **power imbalances** favoring developed nations in WTO proceedings.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Q3. With reference to trade remedies, consider the following statements:

1. Anti-dumping duties are imposed on imported goods that are sold below their normal value in the exporting country.
2. Countervailing duties are levied to counter the effect of export subsidies provided by the exporting country's government.

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

SECRET CALL RECORDINGS ALLOWED IN DIVORCE CASES: SC

Secretly recorded conversations admissible in divorce cases: what SC said

APURVA VISHWANATH &
AMAAL SHEIKH

NEW DELHI, JULY 16

THE SUPREME COURT on Monday ruled that secretly recorded conversations between spouses are admissible as evidence in matrimonial disputes. It set aside a 2021 Punjab and Haryana High Court judgment that had barred a husband from using secretly recorded phone conversations with his wife as evidence in divorce proceedings.

The top court's ruling changes the contours of spousal or marital privilege in Indian law, which protects private conversations between a husband and wife during their marriage, and even after the marriage has ended.

What is spousal privilege?

Spousal privilege means that a person cannot be compelled to testify against their

spouse in a criminal case. It is rooted in the idea that a degree of protection must be provided to private conversations between a husband and wife during their marriage.

Spousal privilege is codified in Section 122 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. "No person who is or has been married, shall be compelled to disclose any communication made to him during marriage by any person to whom he is or has been married; nor shall he be permitted to disclose any such communication."

According to the law, spousal communication is allowed as evidence only when the other spouse consents to it or when one spouse has narrated the events to a third party, who then testifies in court.

How does the law apply to divorce cases?

Spousal privilege does not directly apply in divorce cases where one spouse makes allegations against the other spouse,

and testifies in a court of law. These allegations are supplemented by evidence such as letters, photographs, or testimonies of other people. However, with technological advances, text messages, video and voice recordings, and emails are often presented as evidence.

Many High Courts have refrained from accepting secret recordings as evidence due to two main reasons.

■ There is a risk that secret recordings can be procured through suspect or coercive methods. Courts must weigh whether the material is relevant and lawfully admissible as evidence in each case. This process in a trial is called the appreciation of evidence.

■ There is a reasonable expectation of privacy in a marriage, and secret recordings violate an individual's privacy. A relationship bereft of this expectation gives rise to

concerns of surveillance among spouses.

Why did the SC allow secret recordings to be admissible in court?

The SC's ruling relied on its 1973 judgment in a case that pertained to a telephonic conversation recorded secretly by the police to prove a bribery charge against a doctor. At the time, the apex court overlooked

how the evidence was obtained, given that the case involved corruption by a public servant and the phone tap was conducted by the state.

The SC has now effectively extended this reasoning to matrimonial cases.

The court has said that if evidence is relevant, independently verifiable, and falls within statutory exceptions, it can be admitted even if collected in secret. Although secret recordings are a violation of fundamental rights, the right to privacy

must be balanced with the right to a fair trial, according to the SC.

The apex court has also said a telephone that secretly records conversations is "no different from an eavesdropper". Put simply, the SC has equated digital evidence to a third party who is a witness to a privileged conversation and is testifying.

Why is the ruling significant?

The ruling is an example of how the SC operationalises the right to privacy. In its interpretation of Section 122, the apex court said the provision was drafted for the "sanctity of the marriage", and not to protect privacy within marriage.

While this is true for a law which came into force in 1872, the SC's 2017 judgment in the *Puttaswamy* case made the right to privacy a fundamental right, protecting the inner sphere of the individual from interference from both state and non-state ac-

tors. Any infringement of the right to privacy must be backed by a valid law.

Also, there have been concerns that making secret recordings admissible as evidence in court could lead to surveillance within a marriage. The SC, however, has stated that "if the marriage has reached a stage where spouses are actively snooping on each other, that is in itself a symptom of a broken relationship and denotes a lack of trust between them."

Another concern is that the ruling could affect women's right to a fair trial as there is a huge gender gap in smartphone ownership in India. According to the Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025, there is a 39% divide in ownership of smartphones by women compared to men in the country. This means that men have more access to recording technologies which gives them an upper hand in cases related to matrimonial disputes.

Backdrop: Court's ruling on secretly recorded spousal conversations in matrimonial cases.

Relevance: GS 1- Social Issues

- The **Supreme Court (SC)** ruled that **secretly recorded conversations between spouses are admissible** as evidence in **matrimonial disputes**, including **divorce cases**.
- This overturned a 2021 Punjab & Haryana High Court ruling which had disallowed such evidence.

What is Spousal Privilege in Law?

- As per **Section 122 of the Indian Evidence Act**, private conversations between married partners cannot be disclosed in court without consent.
- However, this rule **has exceptions**:
 - **It does not apply to disputes between the spouses themselves.**
 - Communication shared with a third party who then testifies is admissible.

Application in Divorce Cases

- In **divorce proceedings**, spousal privilege **does not directly** apply when one spouse **makes allegations and testifies**.
- Courts already allow other forms of evidence like **letters, emails, photos, and witness statements**.
- With technology, digital evidence like **text messages, recordings**, or emails are increasingly submitted.

Why Were Secret Recordings Controversial?

- **Risk of coercion:** Secret recordings could be obtained under pressure or deceit.
- **Privacy concerns:** Spouses have a **reasonable expectation of privacy**, and spying within a marriage raises ethical concerns.

Why Did the SC Allow Secret Recordings?

- The SC referred to a **1973 case** where a police phone tap was allowed as evidence in a bribery case.
- It ruled that **if evidence is relevant, verifiable, and falls under legal exceptions**, it can be admitted even if secretly recorded.
- It **balanced privacy rights** with the **right to a fair trial**.
- It **compared a secret recording device to a third-party eavesdropper**, essentially a digital witness.

Reinterpretation of Section 122

- The SC clarified: **Spousal privilege** prevents forcing someone to testify, but **does not bar the use of recordings or evidence gathered independently**.
- The court said the law was meant to protect the **sanctity of marriage**, not absolute privacy within it.

Impact of the Ruling

- The ruling **reshapes Indian law on privacy vs. fair trial** in the context of marriage.
- The **Evidence Act (1872)** is based on outdated Victorian-era thinking; today, privacy **is a constitutional right**, and any breach must be legally justified.
- The SC dismissed fears of increased **spousal surveillance**, saying that **mutual spying is a sign of a broken marriage**, not a reason to disallow evidence.

Puttaswamy Judgment (2017)

- **Landmark Verdict:** A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court declared the **Right to Privacy** as a fundamental right.
- **Constitutional Basis:** Privacy was held to be **intrinsic to life and personal liberty** under **Article 21**, and part of the broader rights under **Part III of the Constitution**.
- **Overruled Past Judgments:** The Court **overturned earlier rulings** in the **M.P. Sharma (1954)** and **Kharak Singh (1962)** cases, which did not recognise privacy as a fundamental right.
- **Universal Applicability:** The right to privacy applies not only to Indian citizens but to **any person**, who can now approach courts under **Articles 32 and 226** for protection.



PRACTICE QUESTION



Q4. Right to Privacy' is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

- (a) Article 15
- (b) Article 19
- (c) Article 21**
- (d) Article 29

A tectonic shift in thinking to build seismic resilience

The tremors that were felt in Delhi on July 10, 2025, at 9.04 a.m. with a magnitude of 4.4 on the Richter Scale – as reported by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) – are a wake-up call for India's seismic vulnerability. The epicentre, which was located approximately 20 kilometres southwest of the city at a shallow depth of five kilometres, did not cause significant damage but exposed the fragility of the capital's infrastructure, where over 80% of buildings, especially those pre-dating the year 2000, fail to comply with seismic codes.

The July event follows a series of earthquakes across Asia since March 2025, including the devastating quake in Myanmar and Thailand (magnitude 7.7), tremors in Tibet and Greece, and recurring seismic activity along the India-Myanmar border. As India sits on one of the world's most tectonically active plates, the urgency to build seismic resilience has never been greater.

The danger of unpreparedness

India's seismic risk is rooted in the northward drift of the Indian Plate, colliding with the Eurasian Plate at 4 centimetres to 5 cm a year, shaping the Himalayas, which is a region overdue for a "Great Himalayan Earthquake" of magnitude 8 or higher, potentially impacting over 300 million people across northern India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Delhi, which lies in Seismic Zone IV (high risk), with a peak ground acceleration (PGA) factor of 0.24g, lies perilously close to this tectonic frontier.

The tremors felt in July, though moderate, highlighted the risk to the city's estimated 33.5 million residents and over 5,000 high-rises, many built without adhering to the Bureau of Indian Standards' IS 1893:2016 Code, which mandates ductile detailing and shear walls. Historical events such as the Bhuj earthquake of 2001 (7.7 magnitude, 20,000-plus deaths) and the Nepal quake of 2015 (7.8 magnitude) underscore the catastrophic potential of unpreparedness.



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With earthquake activity intensifying, regionally and globally, the Government of India must lead a national dialogue to enforce seismic codes rigorously

Beyond Delhi, India's seismic zones, which range from Zone II to V, span a vast vulnerable area. The northeast, including Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram in Zone V (very high risk, PGA 0.36g+), has felt the ripple effects of seismic activity in Myanmar, notably the 7.7 magnitude Mandalay quake on March 28, 2025, and a 5.2 magnitude event on May 17, 2025. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, also in Seismic Zone V, remain prone to tsunamis following subduction zone activity, as seen in 2004. The 5.7 magnitude Tibetan quake on May 12, 2025, caused tremors in Sikkim, reinforcing the restlessness in the Himalayan belt. Even distant events, such as the quake of magnitude of 6.2 in Greece on May 22, 2025, reflect a global pattern of tectonic unrest, though their direct impact on India is minimal.

Greater danger with urbanisation

Delhi's rapid urbanisation exacerbates the risk it faces. Older structures in East Delhi, built on liquefaction-prone soils, and poorly designed high-rises pose a threat during strong quake shaking. The NCS's real-time monitoring using the IndiaQuake app offers early warnings, but enforcement and public awareness lag behind. Compare this to Bangkok, where updated seismic codes since 2007 mitigated damage despite a flat-slab collapse in 2025, or Myanmar, where unenforced codes worsened the quake toll in 2025. India must bridge this enforcement gap to protect its cities.

The global seismic context heightens the urgency. The Greece earthquake, though 5,000 km away, is part of a series of tremors since March, including those in Indonesia, the Chile-Argentina border, and Ecuador on May 3, 2025. While these do not directly trigger Indian quakes, they signal a dynamic earth, pointing to the need for preparedness. The Himalayan seismic gap, where strain has built since the quake in Kangra (1905) and the 'Gorkha quake' (Nepal, 2015), are a ticking clock, with a major event potentially devastating Delhi and beyond.

To counter this, India must enforce seismic codes rigorously. In Delhi, retrofitting older buildings with steel jacketing and mandating deep pile foundations in vulnerable areas can enhance stability. Guwahati, in Zone V, needs strict IS 1893:2016 compliance, avoiding Brahmaputra floodplain construction to prevent liquefaction, and adopting base isolation for critical infrastructure. Bhuj requires expanded retrofitting and community disaster response teams. The Delhi Development Authority should accelerate compliance checks, while the NCS expands early warning systems to rural Zone V areas.

Global lessons

The international lessons are instructive. Bangkok's use of high-strength concrete (30MPa-40 MPa) and ductile detailing offers a model, though its lower seismic risk (0.1g-0.2g) differs from India's Zone V challenges. The damage seen in Myanmar due to unreinforced masonry is a warning about neglect – a risk India must avoid. Tailored solutions – accounting for the Northeast's soft soils and Kutch's sandy basins – require annual retrofitting investments of ₹50,000 crore, as estimated by experts.

With seismic activity intensifying regionally and globally, India cannot afford delay. The Government of India must lead with stringent enforcement, public education, and resilient infrastructure investment. Citizens should educate themselves about the need for emergency kits, safe building practices, and evacuation plans. The Bhuj disaster, where unpreparedness amplified casualties, remains a haunting lesson. As tremors punctuate India's seismic landscape, building resilience is a technical and moral duty in order to protect lives and livelihoods.

There needs to be a national dialogue urging action before the next major quake strikes. Delhi's tremor echoes this urgency, demanding a transformation from vulnerability to strength.

Backdrop: Urgency to build seismic resilience

Relevance: GS1/Geophysical phenomena

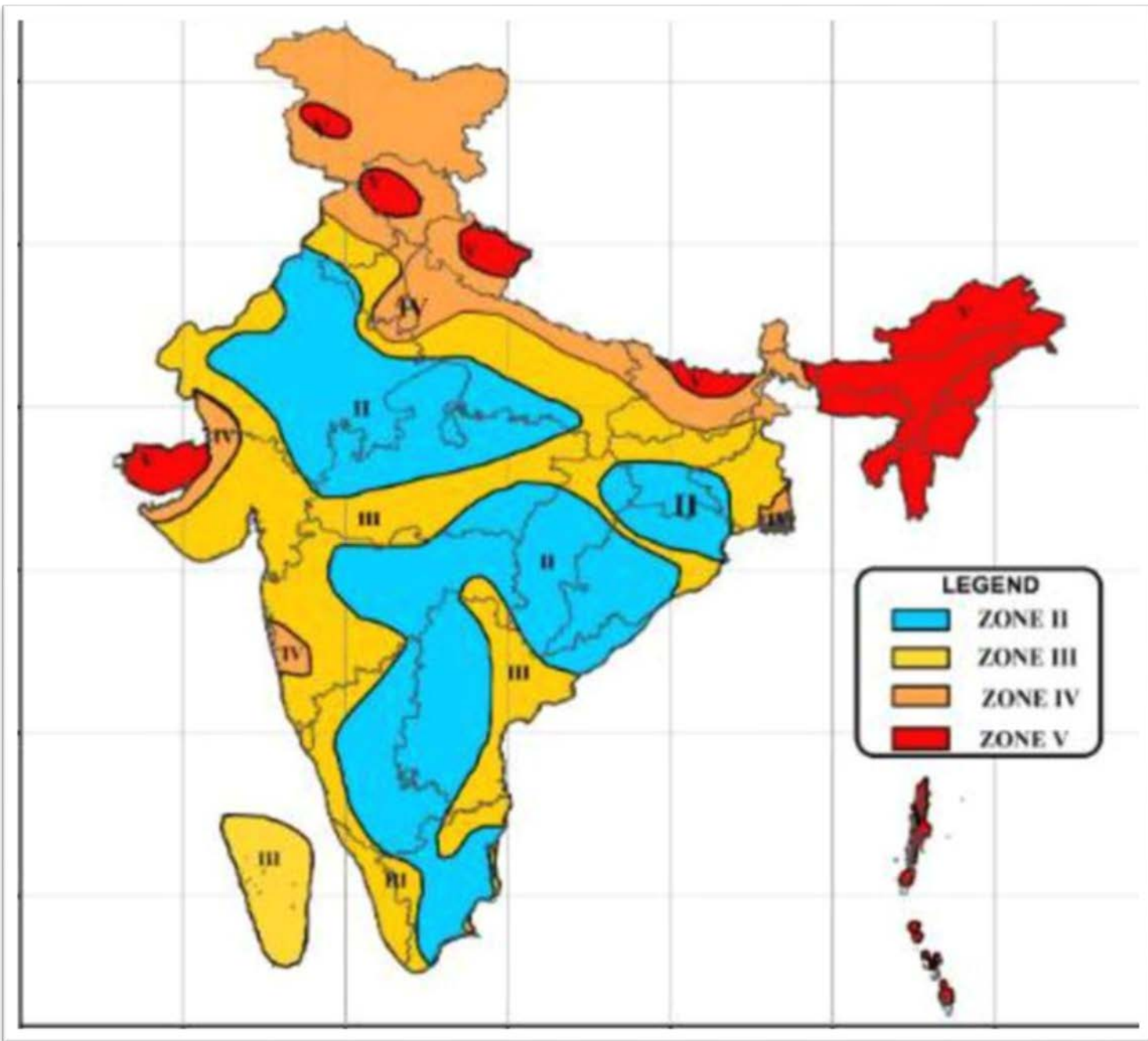
- Recently, a **4.4 magnitude** earthquake struck near Delhi, with its epicentre about 20 km southwest of the city and a shallow depth of **5 km**.
- This tremor is part of a series of recent earthquakes across Asia since March 2025, including major events in Myanmar, Thailand and India-Myanmar border underscoring the fact that India's location on an active tectonic plate makes the need for seismic resilience urgent and unavoidable.

What is Seismic resilience?

- It refers to the ability of a structure, system, or community to withstand, adapt to, and recover from the impacts of earthquakes.
- It's about minimizing damage, maintaining functionality, and quickly restoring normal operations after an earthquake.
- It involves both the physical structures and the social systems that support them.

Why does India need to focus on seismic resilience ?

- **India's High Seismic Vulnerability**
 - India lies on one of the world's most **tectonically active plates**, the Indian Plate, which collides with the Eurasian Plate. The **region** is overdue for a **"Great Himalayan Earthquake"** (magnitude 8+).
 - **Seismic vulnerability spans Zones II to V**
 - **Northeast (Zone V)** has experienced tremors from regional quakes, such as the **7.7 magnitude Mandalay quake (March, 2025)**.
 - **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Zone V)**, remain **tsunami-prone** due to subduction zone activity.



- **Weak and non-compliant Urban Infrastructure**
 - Poorly designed high-rises, especially in **liquefaction-prone areas** like East Delhi, pose major risks during earthquakes.
 - Seismic codes like **IS 1893:2016** exist, but are **poorly enforced**, especially in high-risk zones (Zones IV and V).
 - In Delhi, over **80% of buildings**, especially those built before 2000, **do not comply with seismic safety codes**.
- **Increasing Seismic Activity**
 - Recent earthquakes across Asia (e.g., **Myanmar, Tibet, India-Myanmar border, Greece**) indicate a **global pattern of tectonic unrest**.
- **History of Catastrophic Quakes**
 - **2001 Bhuj earthquake** (7.7 magnitude): **20,000+ deaths** due to lack of preparedness.
 - **2015 Nepal earthquake** (7.8 magnitude): Widespread destruction

- **Rapid and Unplanned Urbanisation**

- Cities are expanding fast, with many constructions on unstable soils, without seismic considerations.
- Risk increases when **infrastructure growth outpaces disaster preparedness**.

- **Potential Economic and Human Loss**

- A major quake can cause massive **casualties**, economic disruption, and long-term displacement.
- Experts estimate **₹50,000 crore/year** is needed for retrofitting to avoid future catastrophic losses.

Measures to Build Seismic Resilience in India

- **Strict Enforcement of Seismic Codes**
 - Ensure rigorous implementation of **IS 1893:2016**, especially in high-risk zones like Delhi, Guwahati, and Bhuj.
 - **Delhi Development Authority (DDA)** must accelerate compliance checks across the city.
- **Retrofitting and Structural Safety**
 - Retrofit older buildings using **steel jacketing** and enforce **deep pile foundations** in vulnerable zones.
 - Establish **community disaster response teams**.
 - Avoid construction in the **floodplain** (E.g Brahmaputra floodplain in Guwahati).
- **Early Warning and Monitoring**
 - The **National Center for Seismology (NCS)** must expand **early warning systems** into **rural Zone V** regions to improve preparedness.

- **Learning from Global Best Practices**
 - **Bangkok:** Use of **high-strength concrete** and **ductile detailing** serves as a model, even if its seismic risk is lower.
- **Region-Specific Solutions**
 - Tailor seismic safety measures based on regional geologies(E.g., Soft soils in the Northeast and Sandy basins in Kutch).
- **National Dialogue and Policy Action**
 - Launch a **national conversation on seismic resilience**, emphasizing proactive policies before the next major earthquake.
 - The Government must lead with **investment, enforcement, and mass awareness** to turn vulnerability into strength.

Conclusion

With rising seismic activity, building earthquake resilience is both a technical necessity and a moral obligation to safeguard lives and livelihoods across India. India needs seismic resilience to safeguard its people, infrastructure, and economy from inevitable earthquakes. Preparedness today can prevent catastrophe tomorrow.



PRACTICE QUESTION



- Q5.** "India's vulnerability to seismic hazards is not merely a matter of geography but also of poor enforcement, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of public awareness." In this context, discuss the key challenges in building seismic resilience in India and suggest a comprehensive strategy to mitigate earthquake risks. **(250 words)**