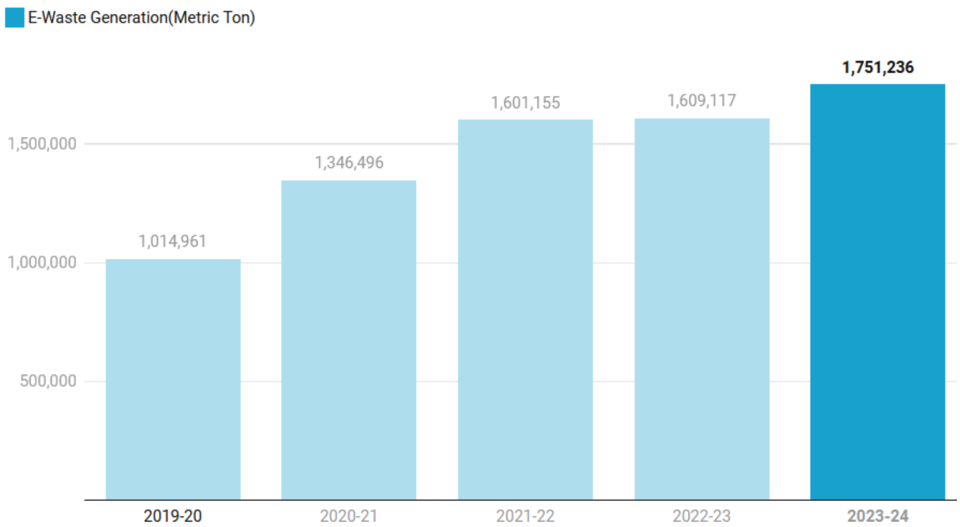
E-waste generation in India

E-waste generation in India has grown significantly, showing a 72.54% rise over five years, increasing from 1.01 million metric tonnes in 2019-20 to 1.751 million metric tonnes in 2023-24. The national-level figures reveal a concerning 72.54 per cent increase in e-waste generation since 2019-20, reflecting the growing use of electronic and electrical devices across the country.



Remarkably, the sharpest rise in e-waste generation was observed between 2019-20 and 2020-21, a period when electronic consumption increased due to the demand for work-from-home and remote learning arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

E-waste contains hazardous materials which, if not properly handled and treated, can have damaging effects on the environment and human health. These toxic materials include heavy metals and substances such as arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury, as well as persistent organic pollutants.

Under EPR(Extended Producer Responsibility), producers of EEE (electrical and electronic equipment), as specified in Schedule I, are assigned annual recycling targets based on the quantity of e-waste generated or products sold. To meet these targets, producers are required to purchase EPR certificates from registered recyclers. These certificates are issued by recyclers based on the quantity of recycled products sold in the market.

Additionally, public institutions, including schools and government offices in urban areas, are categorised as bulk consumers under the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022

The proportion of e-waste processed rose from 22 per cent in 2019-20 to 43 per cent in 2023-24. Despite this progress, approximately 57 per cent of e-waste— equivalent to 990,000 metric tonnes — remains unprocessed in the country.

The increase in e-waste generation, coupled with the gap between waste produced and processed, raises serious environmental concerns. Experts stress the urgent need to integrate the informal sector with formal recycling systems to improve collection efficiency and ensure proper treatment of hazardous materials.

The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA)

The Ind-Aus ECTA has significantly advanced trade ties, creating new opportunities for MSMEs, businesses and employment in both nations while reinforcing the foundation of their economic partnership. Entering its third year, the Government of India is dedicated to sustaining this momentum through strengthened collaboration and innovative initiatives to drive mutual prosperity to realize the vision 2047.

Since its signing, bilateral merchandise trade has more than doubled, surging from USD 12.2 billion in 2020-21 to USD 26 billion in 2022-23. Total trade moderated in the year 2023-24 to USD 24 billion in 2023-24, with India’s exports to Australia growing by 14%. The current fiscal year continues to reflect strong momentum. Total merchandise bilateral trade from April-November 2024 reached USD 16.3 billion.

Exchange of preferential import data has commenced between both countries, highlighting the effective implementation of the agreement in 2023. The data reveals export utilization at 79% and import utilization at 84%.

Key sectors like textiles, chemicals, and agriculture have shown substantial growth, while exports on new lines, including gold studded with diamonds and turbojets highlight the diversification enabled by the agreement. Imports of essential raw materials, such as metalliferous ores, cotton, wood and wood products have fuelled India’s industries, contributing to the win-win nature of this partnership. Sectors such as electronics and engineering have room for growth.

Building upon this success, the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) is now in progress with 10 formal rounds and inter-sessional discussions held so far. CECA build on the foundation laid by the ECTA, advancing the bilateral trade agenda with even greater ambition.

Both the parties are committed to building on the momentum created by the ECTA, driving deeper economic integration and to achieve the target of trade to reach AUD 100 billion by 2030 between India and Australia. Together, India and Australia are poised to take their economic partnership to new heights, fostering mutual prosperity and contributing to a more resilient and dynamic global economy.

India's renewable journey

India has reached a significant milestone in its renewable energy journey, with the country's total renewable energy capacity crossing the 200 GW (gigawatt). This remarkable growth aligns with the country's ambitious renewable energy target of achieving 500 GW from non-fossil sources by 2030.

According to the Central Electricity Authority, the total renewable energy-based electricity generation capacity now stands at 203.18 GW. This achievement underscores India's growing commitment to clean energy and its progress in building a greener future. India's total renewable energy installed capacity surged by an impressive 24.2 GW (13.5%) in just one year, reaching 203.18 GW in October 2024, up from 178.98 GW in October 2023. Additionally, when including nuclear energy, India's total non-fossil fuel capacity rose to 211.36 GW in 2024, compared to 186.46 GW in 2023.

This milestone reflects the result of years of dedicated efforts to harness India’s natural resources. From sprawling solar parks to wind farms and hydroelectric projects, the country has steadily built a diverse renewable energy base. These initiatives have not only reduced reliance on fossil fuels but also strengthened the nation’s energy security. When factoring in the 8,180 MW (megawatt) of nuclear capacity, the total non-fossil fuel-based power now accounts for almost half of the country's installed electricity generation capacity, signalling a strong move toward clean energy leadership on the global stage.

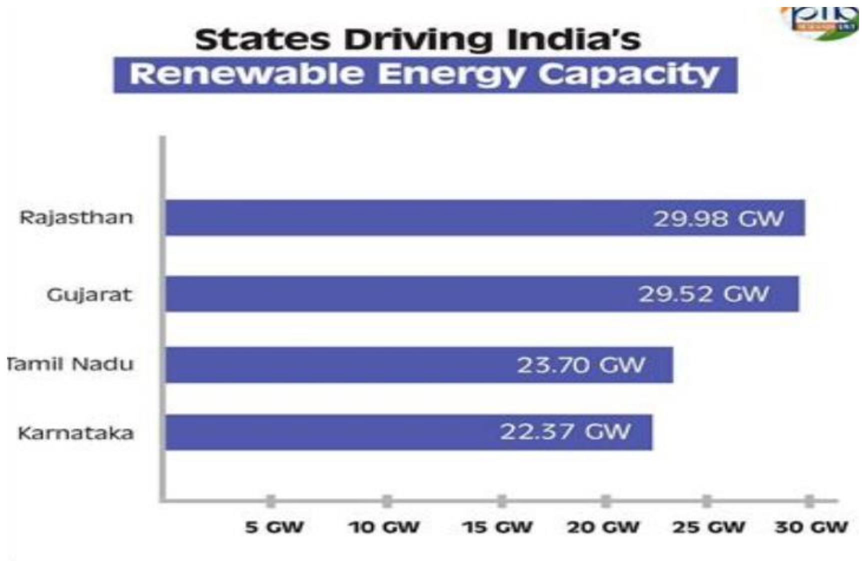
A variety of renewable energy resources contribute to this impressive figure. Solar power leads the way with 92.12 GW, playing a crucial role in India’s efforts to harness its abundant sunlight. Wind power follows closely with 47.72 GW, driven by the vast potential of the coastal and inland wind corridors across the country. Hydroelectric power is another key contributor, with large hydro projects generating 46.93 GW and small hydro power adding 5.07 GW, offering a reliable and sustainable source of energy from India’s rivers and water systems.

Biopower, including biomass and biogas energy, adds another 11.32 GW to the renewable energy mix. These bioenergy projects are vital for utilizing agricultural waste and other organic materials to generate power, further diversifying India’s clean energy sources. Together, these renewable resources are helping the country reduce its dependence on traditional fossil fuels, while driving progress toward a more sustainable and resilient energy future

In 2023, India's renewable energy sector reached a significant milestone, with an estimated 1.02 million jobs created, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA) 2024 Annual Review. The global renewable energy workforce expanded to 16.2 million in 2023, up from 13.7 million in 2022, with India playing a significant role in this growth. The report, created in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), underscores India's increasing leadership in clean energy and its commitment to generating green jobs that fuel economic growth.

Hydropower emerged as the largest employer within the sector, providing around 453,000 jobs, which accounted for 20% of the global total, second only to China

India’s commitment to addressing climate change is reflected in its enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, incorporating the five elements outlined at COP26 in Glasgow. These efforts align with the principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), considering national circumstances. As part of the updated NDC submitted to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) in August 2022, India has committed to reducing its emissions intensity by 45% by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels), achieving 50% of cumulative electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030, and promoting a sustainable way of living through the **'LIFE' (Lifestyle for Environment)** movement. These targets also contribute to India’s long-term goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070, supported by the **'Long-term Low Carbon Development Strategy'** submitted to the UNFCCC in November 2022.



Several states in India have emerged as leaders in renewable energy capacity, contributing significantly to the nation's progress. Rajasthan tops the list with an impressive 29.98 GW of installed renewable energy capacity, benefiting from its vast land and abundant sunlight. Following closely is Gujarat, which boasts a capacity of 29.52 GW, driven by its strong focus on solar and wind energy projects. Tamil Nadu ranks third with 23.70 GW, leveraging its favourable wind patterns to generate substantial energy. Karnataka rounds out the top four with a capacity of 22.37 GW, supported by a mix of solar and wind initiatives.

India- Groundwater Scenario

In 2024, the total annual groundwater recharge increased by 15 BCM, reaching a total of 446 BCM. This improvement reflects sustainable groundwater management efforts, as groundwater extraction also decreased by 3 BCM.

In addition to this,the total annual groundwater recharge is assessed at 446.90 BCM, with an extractable resource of 406.19 BCM and an annual extraction of 245.64 BCM. Recharge from tanks, ponds and WCS (Water Control System) has shown a consistent increase in the last five assessments.

According to the annual report on groundwater resources released by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), in collaboration with State Groundwater Departments, the increased recharge, mainly due to water bodies, tanks, and conservation structures, shows improvements in groundwater conditions in 128 units compared to 2023. The 'National Compilation on Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India, 2024' offers a comprehensive state-wise overview, serving as a foundation for effective policies and management strategies.

Maintaining groundwater quality is just as crucial as its recharge for sustainable water management. Key pollutants such as Arsenic, Fluoride, Chloride, Uranium, and Nitrate pose serious health risks, either through direct toxicity or long-term exposure. Additionally, Elevated Electrical Conductivity (EC) can indicate contamination from agricultural runoff, industrial discharge, or saline intrusion, while Iron contamination may lead to gastrointestinal issues, highlighting the importance of careful water quality monitoring.

To assess the critical areas impacted by contamination, the Annual Groundwater Quality Report for 2024 offers a comprehensive analysis of groundwater quality across India, drawing insights from data collected at over 15,200 monitoring locations and 4,982 trend stations. The report emphasizes the importance of not only preserving groundwater but also ensuring its quality for effective, long-term water management.

The report further reveals that 81% of groundwater samples are suitable for irrigation, with 100% of groundwater samples from the North-Eastern states being rated "excellent" for irrigation, underscoring the favourable conditions for agriculture in the region.

Chhattisgarh - Green GDP model

In a first, the Chhattisgarh state has introduced an innovative plan that connects the ecosystem services of its forests with the Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP).

The moves aimed to highlight the direct link between significant environmental contributions of forests like clean air, water conservation, biodiversity and the state's economic progress.

The action plan is designed to ensure that economic development is achieved while preserving the pristine environment for future generations.

The new approach assesses the often-overlooked benefits that forests provide, such as regulating the climate, enriching soil quality, purifying water, absorbing carbon dioxide among others. These services will now be formally included in the state's economic planning

Chhattisgarh with 44 per cent of its land covered by forests, the state's natural resources are central to the livelihoods of millions of people. Forest products like tendu leaves, lac, honey, and medicinal plants contribute significantly to the rural economy, while forests also play a crucial role in mitigating climate change by absorbing carbon.

Such an initiative will allow for a comprehensive valuation of forests with an emphasis on their economic and environmental benefits.

In the recent report of the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) in its findings cited that there is a remarkable increase in forest and tree cover in Chhattisgarh apparently owing to biodiversity protection and environmental-forest conservation efforts.

To accurately estimate the economic value of forests, the scientists will assess the essential ecosystem services they provide. This includes:

Clean Air: Amount of CO_2 absorbed by trees and converted into Oxygen will be quantified and its market value will be added to Green GDP.

Water Conservation: The water provided by forest through rivers, springs will be calculated for its economic impact.

Biodiversity: The contribution of forest fauna (animals, birds, insects) to maintain ecological balance and aiding farming.

Amended DTAA with Oman

India and Oman have signed a protocol to amend the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), ensuring alignment with international cross-border taxation standards and simplifying tax procedures. This agreement aims to enhance economic cooperation and prevent tax evasion between the two nations.

The pact is aimed at boosting two-way trade and investments. The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, formally began in November 2023.

In such agreements, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

Oman is the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for India. India already has a similar agreement with another GCC member UAE which came into effect in May 2022.

The bilateral trade has declined to $8.94 billion (exports $4.42 billion and imports $4.5 billion) in 2023-24 from USD 12.39 billion (exports $4.47 billion and imports $ 7.91 billion) in 2022-23.

ADB loans to India

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed two key loans with the Government of India, totalling USD 850 million. The first loan of USD 500 million will support green and sustainable infrastructure through the India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL), addressing areas like urban projects, education, and healthcare.

The second loan of USD 350 million under the SMILE program focuses on enhancing India's manufacturing sector and logistics efficiency, promoting economic growth, and fostering gender inclusion. These initiatives align with India's climate commitments and economic development goals.

To meet its net-zero commitments, the country needs immense private capital investment that will require innovative financing platforms and risk-mitigation instruments to address inherent sector risks and market asymmetries. As a strategic development finance institution, IIFCL is well-suited to meet these needs.

ADB has worked closely with IIFCL over the years to develop its operational and risk management capacities. As IIFCL has developed and evolved, its operations are increasingly geared toward leveraging private sector resources that necessitate the expansion of its product offerings for potential institutional investors.

The project will build the institutional capacity of IIFCL to integrate green and best practices into the infrastructure projects. A sustainability unit and an environmental sustainability framework and scoring method to assess the sustainability rating of the projects will also be established.

The loan will finance the second subprogram of the Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem Program, which supports the government's efforts to create a comprehensive policy, planning, and institutional framework at the federal, state, and city levels. This builds on reforms introduced during the first subprogram by institutionalizing policies to strengthen interagency coordination as well as standardizing processes to encourage private sector investment and improve operational efficiency.

The development of India's logistics sector is pivotal in enhancing the competitiveness of its manufacturing sector. Through strategic policy reforms, infrastructural improvements, and digital integration, the government's ongoing reforms are set to transform the logistics landscape. This transformation will not only reduce costs and improve efficiency but also create employment opportunities and promote gender inclusion—driving sustainable economic growth.

The Government of India has launched several strategic policies to address logistics sector constraints, including the Prime Minister Gati Shakti-National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) and the National Logistics Policy (NLP). These initiatives aim to improve infrastructure, streamline processes, and promote digitization. ADB's program supported India's reform efforts, which have improved India's ranking in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index and reduced logistics costs significantly. Key actions include the establishment of institutional arrangements for logistics planning at the state and city levels, implementation of a grain storage plan, and adoption of green transition guidelines for inland waterways

India has joins the Eurodrone (MALE RPAS) programme

India has officially joined the Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (MALE RPAS) or Eurodrone programme, managed by the Bonn-based Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) and led by Taufkirchen-based aerospace company Airbus Defence and Space.

Eurodrone is a four-nation initiative involving Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. The programme, led by Airbus Defence and Space (Germany), includes Leonardo (Italy), Dassault Aviation (France), and Airbus (Spain) as major subcontractors.

India follows Japan, which became the first official OCCAR observer state in the MALE RPAS (Eurodrone) programme in November 2023.

The Eurodrone is a remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) designed for long-endurance missions such as intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR), maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and airborne early warning.

Conceived as a “European Programme for European Sovereignty,” the initiative was founded in 2022 and passed its preliminary design review (PDR) in 2024. The drones are expected to enter service by 2030.

With a maximum mission payload of 2.3 tonnes and an endurance period—maximum time an aircraft can stay in the air using a single load of fuel—of up to 40 hours, the drone offers superior capabilities compared to other existing remotely piloted aircraft systems.

Equipped with a twin-engine configuration, the drone is designed for operations in diverse environments, including severe weather conditions. Airbus says it prioritises the platform's sovereignty over operations and data management, ensuring exclusive and confidential data handling through secure connectivity between the aircraft and the user's network.

The Eurodrone programme is part of Europe's collective defence strategy, reducing reliance on US and Israeli platforms such as the Reaper and Heron drones, respectively. Valued at €7.1 billion, the programme aims to develop, produce, and support 20 systems, each comprising three UAVs and two ground stations.

The first Eurodrone flight is scheduled for 2026, with initial deliveries expected by 2028. As European nations continue to pool resources for defence innovation, India's involvement signals a strategic step in strengthening ties and advancing its own defence capabilities.

Dengue and climate

The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, conducted a study on how climate change affects dengue outbreaks. The study identified key climate factors like rainfall, temperature, and humidity as contributors to mosquito prevalence. IITM also developed an early warning system using AI and machine learning, enabling dengue outbreak predictions two months in advance. This predictive system helps authorities implement timely preventive measures, highlighting IITM's role in combining climate research with public health solutions.

The global burden of dengue, one of the fastest-spreading mosquito-borne diseases, is escalating under the influence of climate change, with India contributing a third of the total. Temperature and humidity in India are projected to increase further into the future, while monsoon rainfall patterns will become more erratic, marked by heavy-to-extreme rains. The climate model shows that the overall increase in warmer days is dominating the future changes in dengue.

The study reveals that a combination of warm temperatures above 27°C, moderate and evenly distributed rainfall, and humidity levels between 60 per cent and 78 per cent during the monsoon season (June–September) increases dengue incidences and deaths. Heavy rain above 150 mm in a week reduces dengue prevalence by flushing out mosquito eggs and larvae.

The team developed a model based on artificial intelligence or machine learning for dengue predictions, offering more than two months of lead time for dengue outbreak preparedness.

Currently, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) provides extended-range forecasts with information on the active-break cycles of the monsoon, 10 to 30 days in advance for the entire country. Utilising these forecasts can offer additional lead time for dengue predictions. Thus, monsoon intra-seasonal oscillations could serve as a valuable predictor for dengue, enhancing forecasting accuracy.

DRDO conducts Scramjet Engine Ground Test

The DRDO successfully conducted a 120-second ground test of an active-cooled scramjet combustor, marking a significant advancement in hypersonic missile technology. Hypersonic missiles, capable of travelling at speeds greater than Mach 5, can evade modern air defences.

DRDL recently developed these technologies and demonstrated a cutting-edge Active Cooled Scramjet Combustor ground test for 120 seconds for the first time in India. The successful ground test marks a crucial milestone in developing next-generation hypersonic missiles.

Hypersonic missiles are a class of advanced weaponry that travel at speeds greater than Mach 5 *i.e.*, five times the speed of sound or more than 5,400 km/hr. These advanced weapons have the potential to bypass existing Air Defence Systems and deliver rapid and high-impact strikes. Several nations including USA, Russia, India and China are actively pursuing Hypersonic technology. The key to hypersonic vehicles is Scramjets, which are air breathing engines capable of sustaining combustion at supersonic speeds without using any moving parts.

The ground test of scramjet combustor showcased several notable achievements, demonstrating its potential for operational use in Hypersonic vehicles, like successful ignition and stable combustion. Ignition in a scramjet engine is like ‘keeping a candle lit in a hurricane’. Scramjet combustor incorporates an innovative flame stabilisation technique that holds continuous flame inside the combustor with air speed in excess of 1.5 km/s.

The indigenous development of endothermic scramjet fuel, the first time in India, jointly by DRDL and Industry is central to this breakthrough. The fuel offers dual benefits of significant cooling improvement and ease of ignition. The team developed a special manufacturing process to achieve stringent fuel requirements of DRDL at Industrial scale.

Another key achievement is the development of state-of-art Thermal Barrier Coating (TBC) which is designed to withstand extreme temperatures encountered during hypersonic flight. A new advanced ceramic TBC having high thermal resistance & capable of operating beyond melting point of steel has been jointly developed by DRDL and Department of Science & Technology (DST) Laboratory. The coating is applied inside the Scramjet engine using special deposition methods that enhance their performance and longevity. With demonstrated capabilities in stable combustion, enhanced performance and advanced thermal management, this breakthrough sets the stage for next generation Hypersonic missiles

India’s share of global consumption

India’s share of global consumption is expected to increase from 9% in 2023 to 16% by 2050, making it the second-largest contributor after North America, which stands at 17%. This growth is attributed to India’s youthful and expanding population, coupled with rising incomes. Meanwhile, advanced economies are seeing declining fertility rates, shifting global demographic attention to regions like India.

India is set to see a substantial rise in global consumption, projected to account for 16% of worldwide consumption at purchasing power parity (PPP) by 2050, up from 4% in 1997 and 9% in 2023, as per an analysis by McKinsey Global Institute in their recent report, "Dependency and Depopulation: Confronting the Consequences of New Demographic Reality." By 2050, only North America will surpass India, with a projected 17% share of global consumption. The increase is largely attributed to India’s young, growing population and rising incomes, with emerging regions such as Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and India contributing to more than half of global consumption in the next 25 years.

The research highlights a major demographic shift, as fertility rates fall in first-wave regions, resulting in an ageing population. By 2050, only 26% of the global population will reside in these regions, down from 42% in 1997, with the remainder in later-wave regions. This shift is expected to drive labour towards emerging markets, where India will play a significant role. In 2050 India’s labour force will contribute two-thirds of global working hours. India’s working-age population and support ratio are also projected to evolve significantly, with the support ratio expected to decrease by half by 2050, reflecting an ageing population like that of Japan today. Despite this, India's demographic dividend has contributed an average of 0.7% to its GDP per capita growth since 1997, and increasing female workforce participation could potentially boost GDP per capita by 4-5%, highlighting the vast potential for further economic growth.

Global temperatures exceeded the 1.5°C threshold

In 2024, global temperatures exceeded the 1.5°C threshold above pre-industrial levels for the first time, averaging 1.6°C, as reported by the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service. This marked a significant milestone in the ongoing climate crisis, with devastating impacts like wildfires, floods, and heatwaves affecting regions worldwide, including the U.S., Bolivia, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the urgent need for global climate action.

It is argued that the way climatological boundaries are determined, a single year in the red doesn’t by itself spell catastrophe. Only when temperatures consistently breach the 1.5

degrees Celsius mark for a decade or two would a boundary considered to have been breached. However, experts say that given the high rate of carbon emissions at present, the 2024 temperatures represent a point of no return**.**

At an average temperature of 15.1 degrees Celsius, 2024 was the warmest year in global temperature records, which go back till 1850, and was 0.72 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average. It was 0.12 degrees Celsius above the average of 2023, the previous warmest year on record. It was also 1.60 degrees Celsius above an estimate of the 1850-1900 temperature designated to be the 'pre-industrial' level.

Each of the past 10 years (2015–2024) was one of the 10 warmest years on record. For 11 months in 2024, the monthly global average temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Going back further, all months since July 2023, except for July 2024, have exceeded the 1.5 degrees Celsius level. At 17.16°C, July 22, 2024 was already recorded as the hottest day ever. Each month from January to June 2024 was warmer than the corresponding month in any previous year on record.

In 2024, the annual average sea surface temperature (SST) over the extra-polar ocean reached a record high of 20.87 degrees Celsius, 0.51 degrees Celsius above the 1991–2020 average. The average extra-polar SST was at record high levels for the time of year from January to June 2024, continuing the streak of record months seen in the second half of 2023. From July to December 2024, the SST was the second warmest on record for the time of year, after 2023.

Among the reasons for the record-breaking temperatures in 2024 was the El Nino, which is warming of the Central Equatorial Pacific, that began in June 2023 with effects lasting well into 2024. Expectations of its converse, a cooling La Nina, setting in the latter half of 2024 did not materialise.

Green Energy Open Access (GEOA) Rules, 2022

Green Energy Open Access Rules, 2022 are a major step towards India cutting emissions by 45% in line with NDC target for 2030

The salient features and benefits to common consumers from 'Green Energy Open Access' are as follows:

(a). These rules are notified for promoting generation, purchase and consumption of green energy including the energy from Waste-to-Energy plants.

(b). The Green Open Access is allowed to any consumer, and the limit of Open Access Transaction has been reduced from 1 MW to 100 kW for green energy, to enable small consumers also to purchase renewable power through open access.

(c). Consumers are entitled to demand supply of Green Power from Discoms. Discoms would be obligated to procure and supply green power to eligible consumers.

(d). These Rules have streamlined the overall approval process for granting open access. Time bound processing by bringing uniformity and transparency in the application as well as approval of open access through a national portal has been mandated. Approval for Green Open Access is to be granted in 15 days or else it will be deemed to have been granted.

(e). Commercial and Industrial consumers are allowed to purchase green power on voluntarily basis.

(f). Provide certainty on open access charges to be levied on Green Energy Open Access Consumers which includes transmission charges, wheeling charges, cross subsidy surcharge, standby charges wherever applicable, banking charge and other fees and charges such as Load Despatch Centre fees and scheduling charges, deviation settlement charges as per the relevant regulations of the Commission.

(g). Cap on increasing of cross-subsidy surcharge as well as the removal of additional surcharge, incentivize the consumers to go green.

(h). There shall be a uniform Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO), on all obligated entities in area of a distribution licensees. Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia has also been included for fulfilment of its RPO.

(i). Consumers will be given Green Certificates if they consume green power and will also be facilitated.

The National Turmeric Board

This board has been established to enhance the welfare of turmeric farmers by promoting better cultivation practices, developing high-yield varieties, and boosting exports. With India accounting for 70% of the world's turmeric production and cultivating it across 20 states with 30 varieties, the board also aims to spotlight turmeric's medicinal properties and support its global recognition. Its launch in New Delhi signifies the government's commitment to strengthening turmeric's role in the agricultural and export sector.

The National Turmeric Board will provide leadership, augment efforts and facilitate coordination with other Government Departments/Agencies in matters pertaining to the turmeric sector and facilitate growth and development of the Turmeric sector in the country. It will help bring focus to efforts of tapping the vast potential that exists for increasing trade of turmeric and its products, especially in view of the health and wellness benefits of turmeric.

India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric in the world. India has more than 62% share of world trade. During 2023-24, 1.62 lakh tonnes of turmeric and turmeric products valued at 226.5 million USD was exported.

The newly formed Board will pay special attention to the welfare of the turmeric farmers spread across 20 states, including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and others.

NATO launches new Baltic Sea mission to protect undersea cables

NATO has announced a new mission aimed at safeguarding undersea cables in the Baltic Sea region. This initiative underscores the importance of these cables, which facilitate over 95% of internet traffic and secure $10 trillion worth of financial transactions daily across 1.3 million kilometres of cable infrastructure.

It is clarified that under the so-called Baltic Sentry mission, a small fleet of naval drones will be deployed “to provide enhanced surveillance and deterrence”.

The Baltic Sea has been the scene of several high-profile infrastructure incidents since the onset of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In September 2022, a series of underwater blasts ruptured the Nord Stream pipelines that carried Russian gas to Europe, the cause of which has yet to be determined.

In October 2023, an undersea gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia was shut down after it was damaged by the anchor of a Chinese cargo ship

6-point plan to strengthen economic ties with EU

India is working with the European Union to strengthen economic ties through a 6-point plan that emphasizes integrating their $24 trillion market. Key areas of focus include promoting fair trade, fostering SME growth, advancing cutting-edge technologies, and ensuring resilient supply chains. The partnership aims to align trade practices with sustainability and address global challenges, with the goal of finalizing a robust Free Trade Agreement. This collaboration highlights India and the EU's commitment to mutually beneficial economic growth.

India would first work together with the European Union, a relationship based on common values of democracy, rule of law and independent judiciary, as a trusted partner for developing an economic relationship which integrates the combined market currently estimated at over $24 trillion, bringing unprecedented opportunities for the 2 billion people of India and the European Union.

Second, India would build a commercially meaningful trade agenda with the EU, which is fair and equitable, addressing the tariff and non-tariff barriers through simplification and cost competitiveness for benefits of businesses on both sides, especially small and medium enterprises, farmers and fishermen.

Third, in the endeavour to build India as a high-quality product market in terms of Prime Minister's clarion call for a "zero defect" and "zero effect" production capability, it would engage with the European Union for exchange of best practices, harmonize standards and build mutual processes to achieve these objectives.

Fourth, India would work together with the European Union to develop cutting edge technologies, secure critical raw material supply chains and build resilient supply chains-reducing dependencies on non-market economies and developing closer economic ties between India and the EU.

Fifth, cooperation in the area of trade and sustainable development in a fair manner, keeping in mind the respective level of developments and the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

Sixth, as a leader in harnessing technologies at scale and a nation home to young, aspirational and highly talented people, India would explore becoming a living bridge with the European Union to partner in mutual growth and development.

Short Picks

The national gender ratio on electoral rolls improved from 940 in 2023 to 948 in 2024. This highlights progress in gender representation among voters. Additionally, four Northeastern states—Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh—have surpassed this national average, showcasing significant strides in achieving gender parity in electoral participation.

- ***The e-Shram portal, aimed at helping unorganised workers access welfare schemes, has expanded to support all 22 scheduled languages in India. This upgrade, facilitated by the Bhashini project, makes the portal more accessible, allowing workers to register and obtain information in their native languages.***
- ***Mount Ibu, located in North Maluku, Indonesia, erupted, sending a column of ash up to three kilometres into the atmosphere. Positioned in the West Halmahera regency, it is one of the country's most active volcanoes, recording 21,100 eruptions in 2023.***
- ***Pune, Maharashtra, has recently reported a sudden increase in cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), a rare but serious neurological disorder. This condition***

occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the peripheral nervous system, leading to muscle weakness, numbness, and, in severe cases, paralysis.

- ***The Indian Sustainable Natural Rubber (iSNR) initiative was launched in Kottayam, Kerala, to align with global sustainability principles and the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). This initiative focuses on promoting sustainable rubber farming practices by offering free certification and training to farmers, thereby empowering smallholders. It also aims to prevent deforestation and improve supply chain traceability. Kerala, known for its significant rubber cultivation, was an ideal location for launching this initiative to enhance sustainability in the rubber sector***.