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Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2026: Greater Central Role in Mineral Regulation

- The Rajya Sabha has taken up the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, which seeks to amend the MMDR Act, 1957. The Bill aims to strengthen regulation of mineral-bearing lands, promote investment and ensure greater certainty in the mining sector.

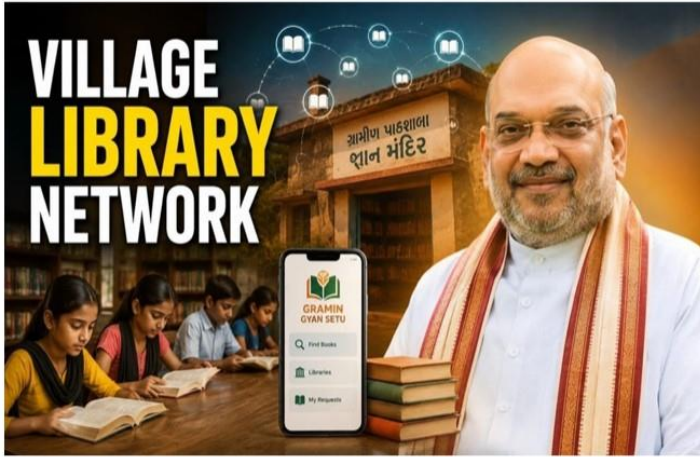
Key Provisions:

- The Bill proposes to empower the Central Government to regulate mineral-bearing lands and restrict specified taxes, cess and other levies imposed by States on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands. The objective is to reduce multiple and unpredictable levies, improve mining viability and strengthen domestic mineral production.

Constitutional Context:

- The issue is important for Centre–State relations.
- Entry 54, Union List: Regulation of mines and mineral development under Parliamentary control.
- Entry 23, State List: Regulation of mines and mineral development, subject to Entry 54.
- Entry 50, State List: Taxes on mineral rights, subject to Parliamentary limitations.
- Entry 49, State List: Taxes on lands and buildings.
- Thus, the Bill raises questions regarding fiscal federalism and Parliament's power to restrict State taxation.

Q. Which Act is proposed to be amended by the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2026? **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.**



Gramin Gyan Setu App Launched to Integrate Libraries in Gandhinagar

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has launched the Gramin Gyan Setu app through video conferencing to integrate libraries in the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency of Gujarat. The initiative seeks to connect libraries through a common digital platform and improve access to books and learning resources, particularly in rural areas.

What is Gramin Gyan Setu?

- The app is designed to integrate local libraries, enabling better access to available reading resources and promoting a culture of reading and knowledge-sharing.
- The initiative is significant in the context of digital inclusion, rural education and lifelong learning, as digital platforms can help overcome geographical limitations in access to educational resources.

Link with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

- The initiative is consistent with the NEP 2020, which emphasises strengthening and modernising public libraries, setting up rural libraries and reading rooms, improving access to books in Indian languages and expanding digital libraries. NEP also envisages using technology to promote lifelong learning.

Additional Facts: Digital Education in India

Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya:

- A digital initiative of the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, providing access to quality digital books across languages, genres and geographical locations.

Q. Which policy emphasises strengthening rural libraries, reading rooms and digital libraries? **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**

NCDC (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026



NCDC Amendment Bill, 2026 Passed to Strengthen Cooperative Sector

- Parliament has passed the National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) Amendment Bill, 2026, with the Rajya Sabha approving it after the Lok Sabha. The Bill amends the National Co-operative Development Corporation Act, 1962 and seeks to expand NCDC's role in financing and promoting the cooperative sector.

What Does the Bill Propose?

The amendment broadens NCDC's operational scope by:

- Allowing NCDC to undertake activities relating to industrial goods.
- Enabling State Governments to extend NCDC funding to any entity engaged in cooperative development.
- Allowing NCDC to provide loans and grants directly to cooperative societies and entities engaged in cooperative development.
- The reforms aim to improve access to finance and support diversification of cooperative activities.

About NCDC:

- The National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) was established in 1963 under an Act of Parliament, based on the NCDC Act, 1962.
- It is a statutory corporation under the Ministry of Cooperation.

Q. Under which constitutional provision is the State directed to promote the voluntary formation, autonomous functioning and democratic control of cooperative societies? **Article 43B**





Kerala to be Renamed “Keralam” After Parliament Passes Bill

- Parliament has passed the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, with the Rajya Sabha approving it, after the Lok Sabha passed it a day earlier.
- The Bill seeks to change the name of the State from “Kerala” to “Keralam” in the First Schedule of the Constitution.
- The move follows a request from the Kerala Legislative Assembly, which passed a resolution in 2024.

Why “Keralam”?

- Keralam is the name of the State in Malayalam, and the proposed change seeks to align the constitutional name with its Malayalam identity and linguistic heritage. The Union Cabinet approved the proposal in February 2026.

Constitutional and Legal Context:

Article 3 of the Constitution empowers Parliament by law to:

- Form a new State.
- Increase or diminish the area of a State.
- Alter the boundaries of a State.
- Alter the name of a State.
- Before introducing such a Bill, the President's recommendation is required. Where the proposal affects the area, boundaries or name of a State, the President refers it to the concerned State Legislature for expressing its views.

Q. Under which Article of the Constitution can Parliament alter the name of an existing State? **Article 3.**



Indian Navy's Next-Generation OPV 'Shruti' Launched at GRSE

- The Indian Navy's Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) 'Shruti' (Yard 3037) was launched at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

About Shruti and NGOPVs:

- The NGOPV programme involves indigenously designed and built vessels intended to strengthen maritime surveillance and security. The ships are approximately 113 m long, 14.6 m wide, with a displacement of around 3,000 tonnes, a speed of up to 23 knots and an endurance of 8,500 nautical miles at 14 knots.

They are designed for multiple roles, including:

- Maritime surveillance and coastal security
- Anti-piracy and anti-smuggling operations
- Anti-poaching and trafficking control
- Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)
- Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations
- Protection of offshore assets
- Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) operations
- Special and out-of-area contingency operations

Significance:

- The vessel strengthens India's maritime domain awareness and presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), particularly for protecting offshore economic assets and maintaining secure sea lanes.

Q. Shruti, recently launched by the Indian Navy, is what type of vessel? **Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV).**



Skyroot Aerospace Signs 3-Launch Deal for Vikram-1 Missions

- Skyroot Aerospace has signed a three-launch agreement with Kerala-based HEX20 Space for dedicated missions using the Vikram-1 orbital launch vehicle, with the missions scheduled to begin in late 2027. The agreement strengthens India's emerging private space-launch ecosystem and demonstrates growing commercial demand for indigenous launch services.

About Vikram-1:

- Vikram-1 is Skyroot's small-satellite launch vehicle designed primarily for deployment into Low Earth Orbit (LEO). It is intended to provide flexible, dedicated and rideshare launch options for small satellites. Skyroot lists a payload capacity of up to 350 kg to LEO and 260 kg to Sun-synchronous Orbit.
- The agreement will support Earth-observation and payload-demonstration missions, strengthening India's capabilities in commercial space transportation.

About Skyroot Aerospace:

- Skyroot Aerospace is a Hyderabad-based private space-tech company developing the Vikram series of launch vehicles.
- In November 2022, Skyroot's Vikram-S became the first privately developed Indian rocket to undertake a suborbital launch from Sriharikota under Mission Prarambh.

Q. Which launch vehicle is associated with Skyroot Aerospace's commercial launch agreement with HEX20 Space? **Vikram-1.**



Former Nuclear Scientist and People's Science Advocate M.P. Parameswaran Dies at 91

- Former BARC scientist, science communicator and people's science advocate M.P. Parameswaran passed away at the age of 91 in Kerala.
- He was known for taking scientific knowledge beyond laboratories and classrooms and making it accessible to ordinary people.

Scientific Career:

- M.P. Parameswaran was trained as a nuclear engineer and worked at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). He later moved from formal scientific research towards science popularisation, education and grassroots development. He played an important role in transforming the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) into a wider people's science movement.

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP):

- KSSP was established in 1962 initially as a forum of science writers. It later developed into a major people's science organisation, promoting scientific temper, literacy, environmental awareness and social development. Parameswaran was among its important leaders and helped popularise science through regional-language communication.

Q. Name the former BARC scientist, science communicator and people's science advocate, who passed away recently? **M.P. Parameswaran**



Gujarat to Establish Four Centres of Excellence for Natural Farming

- The Gujarat Government has approved four Centres of Excellence (CoEs) for natural farming for 2026–27, with an allocation of ₹20 crore.
- The centres will be established in Navsari, Morbi, Bhavnagar and Chhota Udepur districts.
- Each centre will have modern facilities and capacity to train 100 farmers at a time, serving as training, demonstration and knowledge hubs for natural farming.

What is Natural Farming?

- Natural farming is a chemical-free, agroecological approach that relies on locally available resources, livestock-integrated farming, diversified crops and natural bio-inputs. It aims to reduce dependence on externally purchased agricultural inputs while improving soil health, ecosystem restoration and climate resilience.

The Centres of Excellence will:

- Train farmers in natural-farming practices.
- Demonstrate location-specific farming models.
- Reduce dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides.
- Lower input costs and potentially improve farm profitability.
- Promote soil health and biodiversity.
- Strengthen climate-resilient agriculture.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing among farmers and agricultural institutions.

Q. Which Central Government mission promotes natural farming as a standalone Centrally Sponsored Scheme? **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF).**



Deesa to Get Asia's First Desert-Themed Night Safari

Why in News?

- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has approved Gujarat's proposed Desert Zoological Park and Drive-through Night Safari at Juna Deesa in Banaskantha district. The project is being described as Asia's first desert-themed drive-through night safari and zoological park. It is estimated to cost around ₹542.14 crore and will cover nearly 103 hectares. The project will be developed by the Gujarat Forest Department.

Key Features:

- The proposed facility is expected to house around 2,700 animals and birds belonging to nearly 83 species. It will feature five dedicated night-safari enclosures, along with a reptile safari, aviary, butterfly park, aquarium, rainforest biome and interpretation centre. The project will showcase wildlife associated with Indian, African and Australian desert ecosystems. Indian species planned include chinkara, blackbuck, Indian wild ass, desert fox, caracal, Indian wolf and Asiatic lion, along with selected exotic desert species.

Environmental Significance:

- The project aims to combine wildlife conservation with sustainable ecotourism. Proposed environmental measures include solar energy, rainwater harvesting, sewage treatment, solid-waste management, native plantations and green buffer zones.

Q. Which state has received CZA approval for Asia's first desert-themed drive-through night safari and zoological park at Juna Deesa? **Gujarat.**



Hurun India Most Valuable Family Businesses 2026

- The Barclays Private Clients Hurun India Most Valuable Family Businesses 2026 report has ranked India's leading family-owned business groups by the value of their businesses. The Ambani family retained the top position, while the Kumar Mangalam Birla family moved into second place. The report highlights the growing economic significance of India's family-controlled enterprises.

Top Family Businesses:

- The Ambani family, led by Mukesh Ambani and associated with Reliance Industries, topped the list with a business valuation of about ₹28.23 lakh crore. The Birla family, led by Kumar Mangalam Birla and associated with the Aditya Birla Group, ranked second. The Jindal family, associated with JSW, ranked third, with its valuation reaching around ₹8 lakh crore in FY26. The Jindal family recorded the strongest growth among major family businesses during the year.

Overall Value

- According to the 2026 report, India's 300 most valuable family businesses together are worth approximately ₹138 lakh crore (\$1.46 trillion). The top 10 families alone have a combined valuation of around ₹70.5 lakh crore, demonstrating the significant role of family-owned enterprises in India's corporate economy.

Q. Which family topped the Barclays Private Clients Hurun India Most Valuable Family Businesses 2026 list? **Ambani family** (Reliance Industries).

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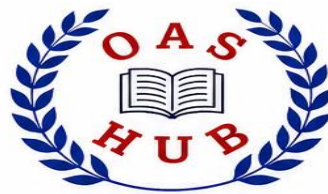
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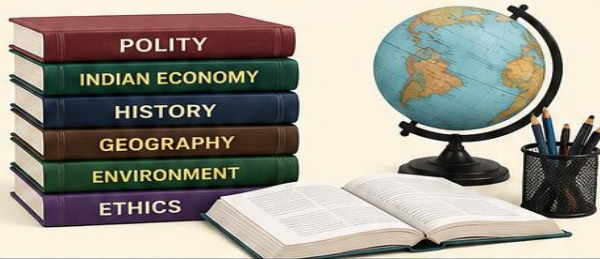
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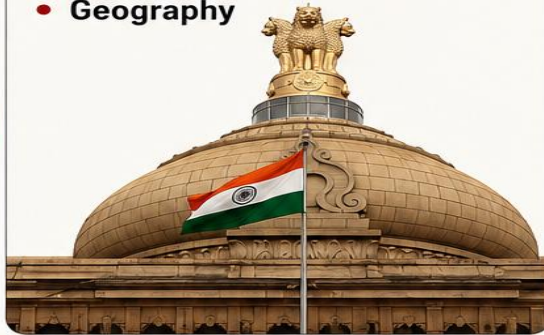
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