

**DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY**

# **Daily News Feed**

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**D.N.F**

**24.08.2025**

**Sabaijor Complex, Near Jamunajor Pul, Castair  
Town**

**Deoghar, Mob:-9162500508**



# Flash floods in Uttarakhand leave one dead

Houses and roads washed away, with heavy damage reported to property in Tharali in Chamoli district

30 people injured in flood-related accidents; SDRF, NDRF teams sent to the affected area, say officials

IMD issues orange, red alerts across several districts with heavy rain being forecast

Ishita Mishra  
NEW DELHI

**H**heavy rain followed by flash floods killed a 21-year-old woman in Tharali, a town on the banks of the Pindar river in Uttarakhand, in the early hours of Saturday. The debris-filled rush of water engulfed homes, vehicles, and roads, leaving at least one missing, and caused heavy damage to private and public property.

An official said that more than 30 people were injured, out of which six were sent to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh.

The incident occurred less than 20 days after the August 5 flash floods that washed away the entire village of Dharali on the banks of the Ganga in Ut-



**Flood fury:** A police official and residents during a rescue operation in an affected area in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand after heavy rain on Saturday. PTI

tarkashi district, leaving two dead and 68 missing.

Tharali town in Chamoli district was hit by flash

floods around 12.40 a.m., according to the district administration.

The debris which

flowed down with the water damaged the market and residential areas. Many houses were damaged,

including the residence of the sub-divisional magistrate, along with shops in the Chepado and Kotdwarp markets. Many vehicles were buried under the debris.

## Red alerts issued

"As soon as the information was received, the district administration and a local police team reached the spot for relief and rescue work. At the same time, the SDRF and NDRF teams have left for the disaster area. The Karna-prayag-Gwaldam road has been damaged in many places due to heavy rain. The work of making it motorable is being done on a priority basis," said Vinod Kumar Suman, Uttarakhand Secretary for Disaster Management and Rehabilitation.

The India Meteorologi-

cal Department has issued orange and red alerts for various areas of Uttarakhand, with Chamoli among the districts at risk for the next 48 hours.

A temporary relief and rehabilitation centre was prepared at a polytechnic in Kulsari and a college in a neighbouring village, where around 150 people displaced by the floods were given shelter. Schools and anganwadi centres have been closed.

A team of 50 Army personnel from the Joshimath base immediately rushed to Tharali to help in relief operations. A medical team has been mobilised along with search and rescue dogs and surveillance drones to assist in locating survivors and providing relief, an Army statement said.

"Efforts are being made

to ensure power and communication supply is restored in the area on priority basis. Roads are also being cleared. Indian Army and [Indo-Tibetan Border Police] ITBP are also assisting the district administration in relief and rescue operations," Mr. Suman added.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the incident.

"A tragic report of a flash flood was received in the Tharali area of Chamoli district last night. The district administration, SDRF, and police have reached the spot and are engaged in relief and rescue operations. I am personally closely monitoring the situation. I pray to God for everyone's safety," the CM said.

(With PTI inputs)

## Flash Floods in Uttarakhand

### English:

Heavy rains triggered flash floods in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, killing one person and injuring over 30. Roads, homes, and markets were damaged. SDRF, NDRF, ITBP, and the Army are conducting rescue operations. IMD has issued red alerts for several districts.

### Relevance: GS-I (Geography – Natural Disasters), GS-III (Disaster Management).

### Hindi:

उत्तराखंड के चमोली ज़िले में भारी बारिश से आई अचानक बाढ़ में एक व्यक्ति की मृत्यु और 30 से अधिक लोग घायल हुए। मकान, सड़कें व बाज़ार क्षतिग्रस्त। SDRF, NDRF, ITBP और सेना राहत कार्य में जुटी। मौसम विभाग ने रेड अलर्ट जारी किया।

### महत्त्व: जीएस-I (भूगोल – प्राकृतिक आपदा), जीएस-III (आपदा प्रबंधन)।

# India Post suspends high-value bookings to U.S.

The Hindu Bureau  
COIMBATORE

The Department of Posts will suspend booking and transmission of all categories of mail items, except letters, documents, and gifts worth up to \$100, to the U.S. from August 25.

The decision comes in the wake of an executive order issued by the U.S. administration, ending duty-free imports and mandating collection of pre-paid duty and customs data from August 29.

U.S.-bound carriers have expressed their inability to carry postal shipments in the absence of fully defined mechanisms for duty collection and data exchange. In a communication, the postal department said it is taking steps to restore the services.

The Global Trade Research Initiativesaid the move follows the U.S. Executive Order 14324, which ends duty-free imports under the \$800 *de minimis* threshold, and mandates pre-paid duty collection



People can continue to book letters, documents and gifts worth up to \$100 to the U.S., says the Department of Posts. FILE PHOTO

and advanced customs data. Under the new duty regime, all in-bound parcels

will attract tariffs. But international postal shipments remain duty-free

until the U.S. Customs and Border Protection establishes a new entry process.

After that, such shipments will face one of two duty structures – ad valorem duty or a flat rate. The ad valorem duty will be based on the effective tariff rate under the IEEPA (U.S. legislation), while the flat rate duty – \$80, \$160, or \$200 per item – will depend on the country's tariff bracket (under 16%, between 16-25%, or above 25% respectively).

## India Post Suspends High-Value Bookings to U.S.

### English:

India Post will suspend parcels above \$100 to the U.S. from August 25 due to new U.S. rules



ending duty-free imports (Executive Order 14324). A flat duty (\$80–200) will now apply depending on tariff brackets.

- **Relevance:** GS-III (Indian Economy, Trade, WTO/Customs), GS-II (India-U.S. relations).

- **Hindi:**

इंडिया पोस्ट 25 अगस्त से अमेरिका के लिए \$100 से अधिक मूल्य की पार्सल बुकिंग बंद करेगा। यह कदम अमेरिका के नए आदेश (Executive Order 14324) के कारण है, जिसमें ड्यूटी-फ्री आयात समाप्त कर दिया गया। अब \$80–200 की निश्चित सीमा शुल्क लागू होगा।

- **महत्त्व:** जीएस-III (भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था, व्यापार, शुल्क), जीएस-II (भारत-अमेरिका संबंध)।

# Trump names Sergio Gor as India envoy

President's close aide also named as Special Envoy on South and Central Asian Affairs; experts worry this may indicate continued U.S. interest in mediating between India and Pakistan; some liken the move to Barack Obama's plan to send Richard Holbrooke as his Special Envoy in 2009

## NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

**T**he surprise announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump that he would send his close aide, 38-year-old Sergio Gor, as Ambassador to India has led to some relief for those hoping the nomination will pause the deterioration in India-U.S. ties over trade and other issues.

However, Mr. Trump's additional charge to Mr. Gor, as Special Envoy on South and Central Asian Affairs, has raised a red flag in New Delhi, as experts said this may indicate a continued U.S. desire to mediate between India and Pakistan.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not comment on Mr. Gor's nomination, as the official paperwork for an "agreement" will follow only once he is confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Unlike his predecessor Eric Garcetti, who took charge in New Delhi only two years into the Biden administration due to Congressional delays, Mr. Gor's confirmation process is expected to be smoother, and completed within a

couple of months, if not the stipulated 90 days.

### 'Positive news'

"The fact that there is a nominee, and that it is someone like Sergio Gor is positive news," said Mukesh Aghi, President and CEO of the U.S. India Strategic Partnership Forum that represents industry interests in both countries. It is important for a U.S. Ambassador to be able to speak directly to the U.S. President, rather than through the U.S. State Department, which can delay communication, he said.

"I would also think that the timing of the announcement gives some hope that there is some negotiation possible to defer the secondary sanctions until Mr. Gor is in place," Mr. Aghi told *The Hindu*, referring to the August 27 deadline for an additional 25% penalty tariff to be imposed on India for buying Russian oil, in addition to the 25% reciprocal tariffs already in place.

However, former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Menon Rao, who was also India's Ambassador to the U.S. between 2011 and 2013, pointed out that Mr. Gor has no diplomatic or regional experience.

"On the basis of availa-



Donald Trump described Sergio Gor as a great friend whom he could trust to deliver on his MAGA agenda. AFP

ble information, he is a long-time Trump aide, with no apparent background in India or South Asia. His main qualification appears to be loyalty to Trump," she said.

The U.S.-based author Meenakshi Ahamed said that the lack of experience was in stark contrast to previous Ambassadors sent by Democrat and Republican Presidents alike, including renowned academics like John Kenneth Galbraith and Daniel Patrick Moynihan or the previous Ambassador Eric Garcetti, who was a Rhodes scholar and former Mayor of Los Angeles.

"Mr. Gor has a direct

line to a President who relies on his inner circle and has changed his mind frequently on issues. That may make him India's best hope as Ambassador at this time," she said.

### 'Problematic move'

According to Ms. Rao, appointing a special envoy to the region would "risk re-linking India to U.S. policy on Pakistan and Afghanistan – something India has resisted for decades". Some likened the move to former U.S. President Barack Obama's plan to send Richard Holbrooke as his Special Envoy for the entire region in January 2009.

The plan was derailed after then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee told then U.S. Ambassador David Mulford that the move "smacked of interference and would be unacceptable [to India]", according to a cable published by Wikileaks. As a result, Mr. Holbrooke was only named the Af-Pak envoy.

Former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said that giving Mr. Gor a similar post would be "problematic" as it would blur the lines on ties between India and its neighbours, as well as shift the focus from the U.S.-India Indo-Pacific policy.

"The responsibility of a

U.S. ambassador to a huge country like India, with many U.S. Consulates and a massive amount of bilateral work, is such that this kind of 'concurrent accreditation' is not normal," he said on social media.

Mr. Trump said that he would nominate Mr. Gor, who was a "great friend" to him. "For the most populous Region in the World, it is important that I have someone I can fully trust to deliver on my Agenda and help us, Make America Great Again (MAGA)," he said in his announcement on social media.

Mr. Gor is a naturalised American citizen, who was born in Tashkent under the Soviet Union in 1986 as Sergey Gorokhovskiy, and whose parents moved to Malta and then to the U.S. in the 1990s. He has always been politically conservative.

After working on Republican Senator Rand Paul's team, Mr. Gor moved in 2020 to become chief of staff on the Trump Victory Finance Committee. After Mr. Trump lost the 2020 election, Mr. Gor co-founded a publishing company with Donald Trump Jr. called Winning Team Publishing and continued to raise funds for the next Trump campaign in 2024.

## • Trump Names Sergio Gor as U.S. Ambassador to India

- **English:**

Donald Trump nominated his aide Sergio Gor as Ambassador to India, also giving him charge as Special Envoy for South & Central Asia. Experts warn this may revive U.S. mediation attempts on India-Pakistan issues. Concerns similar to Obama's 2009 Holbrooke envoy plan.

- **Relevance:** GS-II (International Relations, India-U.S. relations).

- **Hindi:**

डोनाल्ड ट्रम्प ने अपने करीबी सहयोगी सर्जियो गोर को भारत में अमेरिकी राजदूत और दक्षिण-मध्य एशिया का विशेष दूत नियुक्त किया। विशेषज्ञों ने चेताया कि यह अमेरिका की भारत-पाकिस्तान मध्यस्थता की



कोशिशों को पुनर्जीवित कर सकता है।

- **महत्त्व:** जीएस-II (अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध, भारत-अमेरिका संबंध)।

# Census 2027 to retain urban area definition of previous count in 2011

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

The upcoming Census 2027 proposes to retain the same definition of an urban area as that used during Census 2011 to ensure uniformity while comparing the urbanisation trends in the country, according to an official communication.

During Census 2011, other than statutory areas such as municipal corporation, cantonment Board, notified town area committee, town panchayat, and nagar palika, an urban unit or a “census town” was defined as “all other villages” with a minimum population of 5,000 persons with a density of population of 400 persons per sq. km and where 75% of the male working population is engaged in non-agricultural pursuits.

According to that Census, out of the total population of 121 crore, around 83.3 crore Indians, or near-



People pass a population clock board outside the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai. EMMANUEL YOGINI

ly 68.8%, live in rural areas, while 37.7 crore, or 31.2%, reside in urban areas. During the 1951 Census, the first after Independence, the percentage of urban areas in the country stood at 17.3%. In 2011, there were 6,40,867 villages in India, while there were 15,870 urban units, towns, and cities.

The Registrar-General of India and Census Commissioner, Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan, in a letter dated August 14 to the States' Directorates of Census Oper-

ations (DCO), said: “It is proposed to retain the same definition for urban areas for Census 2027 as this will ensure comparability with the previous Census and provide the basis for analysis of urbanisation trends in the country.”

The letter said that as the preparatory work for Census begins, the first task to be handled by DCOs is the demarcation of rural and urban areas by preparing an updated list of villages and towns/wards after incorporating the jurisdic-

tional changes that have taken place since Census 2011 up to December 31, 2025.

The letter added that for finalising the rural-urban frame for Census 2027, the statutory towns will be counted as they exist on January 1, 2026, the day when the administrative boundaries across the country will be frozen, ahead of the first phase of the Census which starts on April 1 the same year.

“For the purpose of identification of urban units based on the demographic criteria, i.e., population size and proportion of workers, like in the previous Censuses, all villages having a population of 4,000 or more at the preceding Census 2011 are required to be taken up for examination because a village having a population of 4,000 or more in Census 2011 expected to cross the population mark of 5,000 persons by Census 2027,” the letter said.

## Census 2027 – Urban Area Definition Retained

- **English:**

Census 2027 will keep the same urban area definition as 2011 for comparability: population  $\geq 5,000$ , density  $\geq 400/\text{sq km}$ , and 75% of male workforce in non-agriculture. Urban share of population was 31.2% in 2011 (up from 17.3% in 1951).

- **Relevance:** GS-I (Demography, Urbanisation), GS-II (Governance, Census role).

- **Hindi:**

जनगणना 2027 में शहरी क्षेत्र की वही परिभाषा लागू होगी जो 2011 में थी: जनसंख्या  $\geq 5,000$ , घनत्व  $\geq 400$  प्रति वर्ग किमी, और 75% पुरुष कार्यबल कृषितर कार्यों में। 2011 में शहरी जनसंख्या 31.2% थी (1951 में 17.3%)।

- **महत्त्व:** जीएस-I (जनसांख्यिकी, शहरीकरण), जीएस-II (शासन, जनगणना)।

# 'SC never said state should not fight Naxals'

Opposition V-P nominee Justice B. Sudershan Reddy, in an interview, says that through *Salwa Judum* verdict, which he co-authored in 2011, the state cannot outsource responsibility to protect its people; he argues that Home Minister Amit Shah, who had criticised the judgment, may not have read the order and was wrongly briefed

**Sobhana K. Nair**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court never told the Centre not to fight the Naxals, but the state cannot outsource its responsibility to protect its people, the Opposition's Vice-Presidential candidate, Justice B. Sudershan Reddy (retd.), said on Saturday.

The retired Supreme Court judge was responding to a question on Home Minister Amit Shah's accusation that Justice Reddy had supported Maoism and that had he not delivered the *Salwa Judum* judgment, left-wing extremism in the country would have been eradicated before 2020.

In an interview to *The Hindu* in Delhi, Justice Reddy said he did not want to join issue with Mr. Shah, since a Supreme Court judgment was not meant

for public debate.

"Whatever its merits may be, there are acceptable standards to review a judgment and make a comment upon that," the jurist said.

He said Mr. Shah perhaps had not read the judgment and was wrongly briefed by someone.

The July 2011 judgment, which Justice Reddy co-authored with Justice S.S. Nijjar, said the formation of *Salwa Judum* was an "abdication of constitutional responsibilities of the State to provide appropriate security to citizens by having an appropriately trained professional police force of sufficient numbers and properly equipped on a permanent basis".

"The State alone has the exclusive right to use violence... it is the State alone that can use that power. It cannot be used against the targeted group through another instrumentality...



the State can not outsource its power."

Justice Reddy, 79, was unanimously chosen by Opposition parties on Tuesday after considering a variety of names. During his four-and-a-half-year tenure in the Supreme Court that ended in 2011, Justice Reddy delivered a judgment - just a few days prior to his retirement - criticising the Union government for slackness in investigating black money cases and ordered constitution of a

**He suggests that the Centre use the list of 43 questions in Telangana caste count for the Census**

special investigation team (SIT) for bringing back unaccounted-for money unlawfully kept in bank accounts abroad. This order, among others, is being flagged by the BJP to claim that the Opposition's V-P candidate himself had

found fault with the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government.

Justice Reddy conceded that many of his orders may have been against the UPA government, but said "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh never directly or indirectly interfered with my work".

The BJP said that Justice Reddy's tenure as Goa's Lokayukta was truncated due to the Congress's campaign that he was then Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's "Yes Man". Justice Reddy recounted how Parrikar approached him for the post, and he joined only when the enabling law was amended to bring the Chief Minister under its jurisdiction and the Lokayukta's office was given its own investigating team.

Parrikar, he said, agreed to both. "The first notice the Lokayukta's office issued was against Parrikar,"

Justice Reddy said. He rejected the claim that it was the Congress that ran the campaign.

The numbers are stacked against Justice Reddy in the election, and National Democratic Alliance candidate C.P. Radhakrishnan is expected to sail through. "I have never entertained the idea that this is a losing battle... I would appeal to the Members of Parliament to consider my candidature on its own merits and take an appropriate decision."

The agenda for this contest, Justice Reddy said, was set by the "other side". "They started proudly proclaiming that here is a candidate [Mr. Radhakrishnan] who joined the RSS at 15 years of age and therefore, this would be an ideological fight. It is only then I responded that it is true... it is going to be an ideological fight between a liberal constitutional democrat and a

quintessential RSS person." The numbers, he said, become irrelevant in such a fight.

Justice Reddy, who chaired the Expert Group on Telangana Caste Census, said that a caste count was essential for the country. "How would you formulate your social, economic and political policies unless you have the details of the weaker sections of the society?" he asked.

The former judge suggested that the list of 43 questions framed by the Expert Group he chaired can be used by the Centre for the caste count that will be undertaken with the long-pending Census exercise.

The caste census data, he said, should be made public. The concept of fraternity as imagined in the Constitution will be achieved only if the caste count is done, he said.

## SC vs. Centre – Salwa Judum & Naxal Issue

- **English:**

Justice B. Sudershan Reddy (Opposition VP candidate) clarified that the 2011 SC judgment on *Salwa Judum* did not stop the fight against Naxals but said the State cannot outsource security duties to vigilante groups. He also supported a caste census for policy-making.

- **Relevance:** GS-II (Judiciary, Governance), GS-III (Internal Security).

- **Hindi:**

न्यायमूर्ति बी. सुदर्शन रेड्डी (उप-राष्ट्रपति विपक्षी उम्मीदवार) ने स्पष्ट किया कि 2011 का *सलवा जुदुम* निर्णय नक्सल विरोधी अभियान पर रोक नहीं था, बल्कि राज्य अपनी सुरक्षा ज़िम्मेदारी को निजी समूहों को नहीं सौंप सकता। उन्होंने जाति जनगणना की भी वकालत की।

- **महत्त्व:** जीएस-II (न्यायपालिका, शासन), जीएस-III (आंतरिक सुरक्षा)।



# ‘Mega infra project in Nicobar island being bulldozed through’

**Abhinay Lakshman**

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday alleged that the Centre’s ₹72,000-crore mega infrastructure project on the Great Nicobar island was “simply being bulldozed through”, adding that it was “without a doubt a maha ecological disaster”.

The Congress general secretary in charge of communications made these remarks while sharing a report by *The Hindu* on Saturday about the Tribal Council in Nicobar Islands complaining to the Tribal Affairs Minister. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration had “falsely” reported to the Centre that tribespeople’s rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) had been “identified and settled”, the council had said.

Mr. Ramesh said there

was now “fresh evidence” of the administration making false claims about forest rights on the islands, and obtaining forest land lawfully for the project, which includes a transshipment port, an airport, a township, and a power plant.

*The Hindu* reported on Saturday that the Tribal Council has written a fresh letter to Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram about the Union Territory administration’s claims of settling the forest rights of the tribespeople.

In a 2022 certificate for forest land diversion under the FRA, the administration had claimed that all FRA rights had been settled and consent obtained for the diversion. The Tribal Council in its letter told Mr. Oram that neither had forest rights under the FRA been initiated nor had consent been obtained legally.

## English Summary

- Congress leader **Jairam Ramesh** criticized the Central Government’s **₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project**, calling it a “maha ecological disaster.”

- The project includes a **trans-shipment port, airport, township, and power plant**.
- The **Tribal Council of Nicobar Islands** complained to the Tribal Affairs Minister that the administration **falsely reported** settlement of tribal forest rights under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**.
- Fresh evidence shows that **forest rights were neither identified nor consent obtained**, yet forest land diversion was certified in 2022.
- The opposition alleges that the project is being pushed **without genuine consent** of the tribes and **ignoring environmental safeguards**.

#### Relevance for Exams:

- **UPSC GS-III:** Environment, Conservation, FRA, Infrastructure vs. Ecology.
- **UPSC GS-II:** Rights of Tribals, Governance, Forest Rights Act, Federalism.
- **BPSC/JPSC:** Similar issues in tribal states like Jharkhand/Chhattisgarh (land rights, development vs. tribal consent).

#### हिंदी सारांश

- कांग्रेस नेता **जयराम रमेश** ने केंद्र सरकार की **72,000 करोड़ रुपये की ग्रेट निकोबार मेगा इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर परियोजना** की आलोचना करते हुए इसे “महाआर्थिक और पारिस्थितिकीय आपदा” बताया।
- इस परियोजना में **ट्रांस-शिपमेंट पोर्ट, हवाई अड्डा, टाउनशिप और बिजली संयंत्र** शामिल हैं।
- **निकोबार जनजातीय परिषद** ने जनजातीय कार्य मंत्री को शिकायत दी कि प्रशासन ने **वनाधिकार अधिनियम (FRA)** के अंतर्गत आदिवासियों के अधिकारों के निपटारे का झूठा दावा किया।
- नए सबूत बताते हैं कि न तो **वनाधिकारों की पहचान हुई और न ही सहमति ली गई**, फिर भी 2022 में भूमि हस्तांतरण को प्रमाणित किया गया।
- विपक्ष का आरोप है कि परियोजना को **बिना वास्तविक जनजातीय सहमति और पर्यावरणीय सुरक्षा उपायों की अनदेखी** करते हुए आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है।

#### परीक्षा हेतु महत्व:

- **यूपीएससी जीएस-III:** पर्यावरण, संरक्षण, FRA, विकास बनाम पारिस्थितिकी।
- **यूपीएससी जीएस-II:** जनजातीय अधिकार, शासन, वनाधिकार अधिनियम।
- **बीपीएससी/जेपीएससी:** आदिवासी राज्यों (झारखंड/छत्तीसगढ़) में भूमि अधिकार और विकास परियोजनाओं से संबंधित मुद्दों के समानांतर।

# Clocks calling time on Navic; ISRO now building indigenous devices

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

Officials at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said here on Saturday that they were looking to launch at least three satellites before 2026-end to replenish the defunct satellites that are part of the “Indian GPS”, or the Navic (Navigation with Indian Constellation) system. However, a key element impeding the launch seems to be the development of indigenous clocks.

These high-precision clocks – five for every satellite – are what provides accurate timing (and hence location) services to users on the ground. The Navic satellites provide more accurate location services to the military and slightly less accurate for civilian purposes.

Nine satellites of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), informally called Navic, have been launched since 2013. Only eight reached their intended orbit. The last satellite (IRNSS-1I) of this constellation was launched in 2018. The constellation is akin to the Rus-



The NVS-02, launched in January, did not reach the desired orbit and the mission remained incomplete. ISRO

sian GLONASS, the Chinese Beidou, the American GPS, and European Galileo providing location services. However, Navic is expected to do so only within a radius of 1,500 km in India. It is viewed more as a fallback system if India is denied access to these foreign constellations during future global conflicts.

Last month, the ISRO revealed via a Right to Information request that five of the Navic satellites were completely defunct with

all three of their clocks in each satellite not working. In one of the three with functioning atomic clocks, two of the three devices have failed.

Only two satellites of the constellation, therefore, have functional atomic clocks. The atomic clocks in this constellation were imported by the ISRO from the firm SpectraTime.

For the next series of satellites to replace the impaired and ageing fleet of IRNSS satellites, the ISRO

has decided to install indigenously developed rubidium clocks. Two of the three satellites now being used have passed, or are close to, their rated shelf life of 10 years though it's possible for these systems to function beyond.

“Each satellite will have five clocks though we are still in the processing of developing them,” Nilesh Desai, Director, Space Applications Centre, told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a conclave in Delhi to commemorate National Space Day on Saturday.

Another official familiar with the ISRO said that while based on an indigenous design, there were key components that needed to be imported and this was contributing to procurement challenges and delays in commissioning.

So far, to replace its decrepit fleet of IRNSS satellites, the ISRO has launched NVS-01 in May 2023 and NVS-02 in January 2025. Only NVS-01 has successfully reached its designated orbit and working as intended, with NVS-02 failing to reach the specific orbit required to function as a navigational satellite.

## Mega Infra Project in Nicobar Island being Bulldozed Through English Summary

- Congress leader **Jairam Ramesh** criticized the Central Government's **₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project**, calling it a “maha ecological disaster.”
- The project includes a **trans-shipment port, airport, township, and power plant**.
- The **Tribal Council of Nicobar Islands** complained to the Tribal Affairs Minister that the administration **falsely reported** settlement of tribal forest rights under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**.
- Fresh evidence shows that **forest rights were neither identified nor consent obtained**, yet forest land diversion was certified in 2022.



- The opposition alleges that the project is being pushed **without genuine consent** of the tribes and **ignoring environmental safeguards**.

#### Relevance for Exams:

- **UPSC GS-III:** Environment, Conservation, FRA, Infrastructure vs. Ecology.
- **UPSC GS-II:** Rights of Tribals, Governance, Forest Rights Act, Federalism.
- **BPSC/JPSC:** Similar issues in tribal states like Jharkhand/Chhattisgarh (land rights, development vs. tribal consent).

#### हिंदी सारांश

- कांग्रेस नेता **जयराम रमेश** ने केंद्र सरकार की **72,000 करोड़ रुपये की ग्रेट निकोबार मेगा इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर परियोजना** की आलोचना करते हुए इसे “महाआर्थिक और पारिस्थितिकीय आपदा” बताया।
- इस परियोजना में **ट्रांस-शिपमेंट पोर्ट, हवाई अड्डा, टाउनशिप और बिजली संयंत्र** शामिल हैं।
- **निकोबार जनजातीय परिषद** ने जनजातीय कार्य मंत्री को शिकायत दी कि प्रशासन ने **वनाधिकार अधिनियम (FRA)** के अंतर्गत आदिवासियों के अधिकारों के निपटारे का झूठा दावा किया।
- नए सबूत बताते हैं कि न तो **वनाधिकारों की पहचान हुई और न ही सहमति ली गई**, फिर भी 2022 में भूमि हस्तांतरण को प्रमाणित किया गया।
- विपक्ष का आरोप है कि परियोजना को **बिना वास्तविक जनजातीय सहमति और पर्यावरणीय सुरक्षा उपायों की अनदेखी** करते हुए आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है।

#### परीक्षा हेतु महत्त्व:

- **यूपीएससी जीएस-III:** पर्यावरण, संरक्षण, FRA, विकास बनाम पारिस्थितिकी।
- **यूपीएससी जीएस-II:** जनजातीय अधिकार, शासन, वनाधिकार अधिनियम।
- **बीपीएससी/जेपीएससी:** आदिवासी राज्यों (झारखंड/छत्तीसगढ़) में भूमि अधिकार और विकास परियोजनाओं से संबंधित मुद्दों के समानांतर।

# What's the issue with the map of Africa?

Why does the African Union want the Mercator map replaced? Is the continent depicted as smaller than it is? How did this come about? Has this affected the perception about Africa? What are the alternatives to correct the distortions? What lies ahead?

Vasudevan Mukunth

## The story so far:

**T**he African Union (AU) has endorsed the 'Correct the Map' campaign to replace the Mercator map projection with alternatives such as the Equal Earth map. At the heart of this demand is the charge that the Mercator projection, still widely used in schools, media, and online platforms, systematically distorts the sizes of landmasses, shrinking Africa while inflating Europe, North America, and Greenland. By backing the call, the AU has expressed hope that a fairer projection will restore geographical accuracy and correct what it characterises as centuries of symbolic marginalisation.

## Why is the Mercator map under fire?

The Mercator projection was designed in 1569 by Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator, who was trying to solve a navigation problem. On a globe, a ship sailing in a constant compass direction, called the rhumb line, curves when drawn on most map types. This made it awkward for sailors to translate a bearing into a usable course they could plot on a chart.

Mercator's projection stretched the north-south scale so that all rhumb lines appeared as straight lines. Sailors could now draw a straight line across the map at a chosen compass angle and follow that heading consistently at sea. Thus, together with Edward Wright's 1599 mathematical tables, the Mercator projection is believed to have catalysed European exploration and colonial expansion. To achieve this convenience, Mercator distorted scale: landmasses close to the poles appeared larger while those near the equator appeared smaller than in reality.

As a result, Africa, which covers 30 million sq. km, often appears on Mercator maps roughly as large as Greenland, which is 14x smaller. Europe also looks comparable in size to Africa although the continent is a third as large. Similarly, Canada, Russia, and northern Europe appear bloated while tropical regions like Africa, South America, and India are diminished.

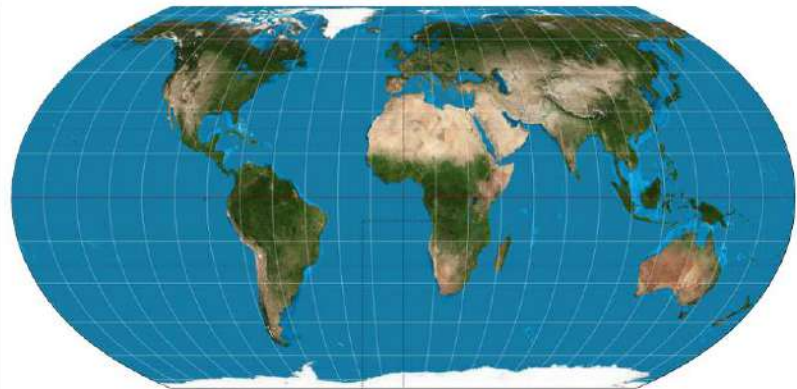
Over time, wall maps in offices, atlases, and on digital platforms defaulted to Mercator's rectangular format because it was familiar and convenient. It was further reinforced by textbooks of the 20th century.

However, critics have argued that such distortions subtly condition how people perceive relative importance. A continent depicted as smaller seems less powerful and even less worthy of attention.

## Why are maps distorted?

There is no perfect way to flatten the surface of a sphere onto a rectangle, rendering every map a compromise. Mathematicians and cartographers tasked with projecting a globe onto a plane need to distort one or more of area, shape, distance or direction. Experts have said the choice of which property to preserve and which to

'The Mercator map falsely portrays Africa as marginal'



**Different perspective:** The Equal Earth projection preserves the relative sizes of continents and countries, ensuring Africa appears far larger than Europe or Greenland, as it is in reality. However, landmasses also appear curved or stretched. STREBE (CC BY-SA)



**Call for change:** The Mercator map projection. STREBE (CC BY-SA)

surrender is a technical as well as political act.

The Mercator projection is a conformal map, which means it preserves local shapes and angles. But to achieve this, Mercator stretched landmasses near the poles, inflating their apparent size and diminishing those of equatorial regions like Africa and South America. In contrast, the Equal Earth projection preserves the relative sizes of continents and countries, ensuring that Africa appears far larger than Europe or Greenland, as it is in reality. However, landmasses also appear curved or stretched. The orthographic projection makes a different trade-off. It portrays the earth as it would look from space, as if viewed from a great distance. While this choice makes it visually intuitive, this projection is limited by the fact that it shows only one hemisphere at a time and areas near the edges appear compressed.

## How does the distortion affect Africa?

Experts have said for many years now that the Mercator projection has reinforced Africa's marginalisation in the global imagination. By making the continent look small, the map suggested, consciously or not, that Africa was less consequential. This perception seeped into textbooks, policymaking, and popular culture.

As Rabah Arezki, a former World Bank economist, has said, the "standard projection was a political tool" that aided colonial

domination, making Africa look "small and conquerable then" and "irrelevant now". Likewise, the AU's deputy chairperson Selma Malika Haddadi has described the Mercator map as falsely portraying Africa as "marginal".

Thus, the AU as well as advocacy groups like Africa No Filter and Speak Up Africa have articulated a move away from the Mercator projection as a way to reclaim dignity.

## What happens next?

The leading alternative to the Mercator projection is the Equal Earth projection, created in 2018 by Tom Patterson (U.S. National Park Service), Bojan Šavrič (then with American GIS company Esri), and Bernhard Jenny (Monash University, Australia). It preserves relative areas sacrificing shape, that is, continents appear stretched or curved.

Another option is the Gall-Peters projection repopularised in the 1970s. It also preserves area but stretches continents vertically, making them appear elongated. Just as Mercator wanted to help sailors, as political scientist Arthur Klinghoffer wrote in his 2006 book, *The Power of Projections*, "Peters was trying to challenge basic assumptions inherent in the Mercator projection with the aim of influencing social and political attitudes. His elongated images were shocking, and made people examine their cartographical frame of reference."

In 1979, a 21-year-old Australian named Stuart McArthur published the "Universal Corrective Map of the World" that turned the world map 180° and showed Australia at the top. He was reportedly sick of being teased as being from "Down Under".

The AU's endorsement is the most significant institutional backing yet for the 'Correct the Map' campaign. Campaigners have also petitioned the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management to adopt Equal Earth. The World Bank has already said it is phasing out the Mercator map in favour of Equal Earth. National Geographic and NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies have also been using it. Google Maps introduced a 3D globe option in 2018, although its mobile app still defaults to Mercator.

This isn't expected to be easy, however, as the Mercator projection is entrenched in classrooms, news graphics, and even some AU-affiliated websites. Displacing it altogether will entail revising textbooks, redesigning curricula, updating digital interfaces, and overcoming institutional inertia.

## Clocks calling time on NavIC; ISRO now building indigenous devices English Summary

- ISRO plans to launch at least three satellites before 2026-end to replenish the defunct



ones in the **NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)** system (India's version of GPS).

- Key challenge: Development of **indigenous atomic clocks** (rubidium clocks). Each satellite requires 5 high-precision clocks for accurate location & timing.
- Currently, **only 2 satellites have functional clocks**; others have failed. Earlier, ISRO imported clocks from Switzerland's **SpectraTime**.
- NavIC is designed to serve within a radius of **1,500 km in India**; provides **precise military navigation** and slightly less accurate civilian navigation.
- To ensure self-reliance, ISRO is now **developing indigenous clocks**, reducing dependence on foreign technology.
- NVS-01 (May 2023) has been successful; NVS-02 (Jan 2025) failed to reach desired orbit. Next launches will carry **indigenous clocks**.

#### Relevance:

- **UPSC GS-III (Science & Tech, Space, Self-reliance in Technology).**
- Strategic importance for **military navigation, national security, and Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

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#### हिंदी सारांश

- **इसरो (ISRO)** ने घोषणा की है कि 2026 के अंत तक कम से कम **तीन नए उपग्रह** प्रक्षेपित किए जाएंगे ताकि **नाविक (NavIC)** प्रणाली में खराब उपग्रहों की जगह ली जा सके।
- मुख्य चुनौती: **स्वदेशी एटॉमिक क्लॉक्स (रूबिडियम क्लॉक्स)** का विकास। प्रत्येक उपग्रह को सटीक समय और लोकेशन हेतु 5 क्लॉक्स चाहिए।
- वर्तमान में केवल **2 उपग्रहों के क्लॉक्स काम कर रहे हैं**, बाकी फेल हो चुके हैं। पहले ये क्लॉक्स स्विट्ज़रलैंड की **SpectraTime** कंपनी से आयात किए जाते थे।
- नाविक की सीमा भारत के **1,500 किमी** क्षेत्र में है; यह **सैन्य उपयोग के लिए सटीक** और नागरिकों के लिए थोड़ी कम सटीक सेवाएं देता है।
- आत्मनिर्भरता की दिशा में अब इसरो **स्वदेशी क्लॉक्स** बना रहा है ताकि विदेशी निर्भरता घटे।
- NVS-01 (मई 2023) सफल रहा, जबकि NVS-02 (जनवरी 2025) वांछित कक्षा तक नहीं पहुंच पाया। आने वाले प्रक्षेपणों में **स्वदेशी क्लॉक्स लगाए जाएंगे**।

#### महत्त्व:

- **यूपीएससी जीएस-III (विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी, अंतरिक्ष, आत्मनिर्भर भारत)।**
- सैन्य नेविगेशन और राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के लिए रणनीतिक दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण।

# What's the issue with the map of Africa?

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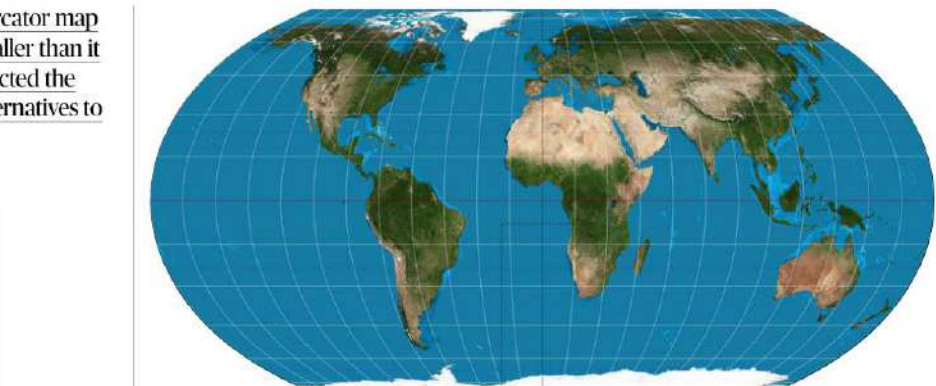
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'The Mercator map falsely portrays Africa as marginal'

## What's the issue with the map of Africa?

### English Summary

- **Background:** The African Union (AU) has launched the 'Correct the Map' campaign to



replace the **Mercator projection** with alternatives like the **Equal Earth map**.

- **Problem with Mercator map (1569):**
  - Designed for navigation, it distorts land sizes.
  - Africa (30 million sq. km) appears as small as Greenland (2 million sq. km).
  - Northern countries (Europe, N. America) look much bigger than they are, while Africa and the Global South appear smaller.
  - This distortion symbolically marginalises Africa, portraying it as “small and conquerable.”
- **Impact:**
  - Perpetuates Eurocentric dominance.
  - Shapes public perception, textbooks, news graphics, and global politics.
- **Alternatives:**
  - **Equal Earth Projection (2018):** Shows continents in relative size, Africa larger than Europe or Greenland.
  - **Gall-Peters Projection:** Keeps proportional sizes though distorts shapes.
- **Significance:** Correcting maps is not only technical but also political—seen as reclaiming dignity and challenging historical biases.

#### Relevance for Exams:

- **UPSC GS-I:** Geography (map projections, world geography).
- **UPSC GS-II:** International relations (AU's stand against symbolic marginalisation).
- **BPSC/JPSC:** Map-based questions, Africa's importance in geopolitics.

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#### हिंदी सारांश

- **पृष्ठभूमि:** अफ्रीकी संघ (AU) ने ‘**करैक्ट द मैप**’ अभियान शुरू किया है, जिसमें **मरकेटर प्रोजेक्शन** को बदलकर **इकल अर्थ मैप** जैसे विकल्प अपनाने की बात की गई है।
- **मरकेटर मानचित्र की समस्या (1569):**
  - मूल रूप से नौवहन के लिए बनाया गया।
  - यह भूमि क्षेत्रों को विकृत दिखाता है।
  - अफ्रीका (30 लाख वर्ग किमी) ग्रीनलैंड (2 लाख वर्ग किमी) के बराबर दिखता है।
  - यूरोप व उत्तरी अमेरिका वास्तविक से बहुत बड़े दिखते हैं, जबकि अफ्रीका और ग्लोबल साउथ छोटे दिखते हैं।
  - इससे अफ्रीका को “छोटा और विजित करने योग्य” दिखाया जाता है।
- **प्रभाव:**
  - यूरोप-केंद्रित वर्चस्व को मजबूत करता है।
  - पाठ्यपुस्तकों, समाचार ग्राफिक्स और राजनीति में गलत धारणाएँ फैलाता है।
- **विकल्प:**
  - **इकल अर्थ प्रोजेक्शन (2018):** महाद्वीपों के सही आकार दिखाता है, अफ्रीका यूरोप या ग्रीनलैंड से बड़ा दिखता है।
  - **गैल-पीटर्स प्रोजेक्शन:** आकार अनुपात सही रखता है, परंतु आकृतियों को विकृत करता है।
- **महत्त्व:** मानचित्र सुधार केवल तकनीकी नहीं बल्कि राजनीतिक भी है—यह ऐतिहासिक पक्षपात को चुनौती देकर अफ्रीका की गरिमा बहाल करने का प्रयास है।

#### परीक्षा हेतु महत्त्व:

- **यूपीएससी जीएस-I:** भूगोल (मानचित्र प्रक्षेपण, विश्व भूगोल)।
- **यूपीएससी जीएस-II:** अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंध (अफ्रीकी संघ का दृष्टिकोण)।
- **बीपीएससी/जेपीएससी:** मानचित्र आधारित प्रश्न, भू-राजनीति में अफ्रीका की भूमिका।