

# WEEKLY DIGEST

SEPTEMBER 2025

WEEK - 2

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## THE APATANIS TRIBE

### CONTEXT

The Apatani women of Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh are the last generation to bear the tribe's traditional facial tattoos and wooden nose plugs—a cultural practice that, though banned in the 1970s, is still proudly displayed by the community's elder women.



### **ABOUT APATANI TRIBE**

- The Apatani—also known as Tanw, Apa Tani, or simply Apa—are an indigenous tribal community from Arunachal Pradesh.
- They are renowned for their unique cultural identity, traditional lifestyles, and deep ecological knowledge.
- The Apatanis primarily reside in the scenic Ziro Valley, situated in the Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- This picturesque, bowl-shaped valley lies amidst the eastern Himalayan ranges and is known for its natural beauty and rich biodiversity.

### **APATANI FACIAL TATTOOS AND NOSE PLUGS**

#### Historical Background

- Facial tattoos and wooden nose plugs were traditionally worn by Apatani women as a form of protection and cultural expression.
- The practice originated during a time when raids and abductions by neighboring tribes were common. Over time, it became a powerful symbol of identity and pride within the community.

### **Reasons Behind the Practice**

- **Protection from Abduction:** The tattoos and large wooden nose plugs were intended to reduce the attractiveness of Apatani women to outsiders, thus safeguarding them from being kidnapped by rival tribes.
- **Cultural Identity & Dignity:** These markings evolved into emblems of honour, signifying a woman's rightful place and dignity within the tribe.
- **Tribal Beauty Standards:** Though seen as unconventional by outsiders, the tattoos and nose plugs came to represent traditional beauty among the Apatani.

### **Custom and Application**

- **Tattooing Age:** Girls were typically tattooed around the age of 10.
- **Carried Out By:** The process was traditionally performed by elder women of the tribe.
- **Tattoo Design (Tippei):**
  - A single vertical line ran from the forehead to the tip of the nose.
  - Five horizontal lines were inked onto the chin.
- **Nose Plugs (Yaping Hullo):**
  - Large wooden plugs were inserted into both sides of the nose.
  - The wood was cleaned thoroughly beforehand to prevent infection.

### **Cultural Significance**

Women who bore the tattoos and nose plugs were held in high regard, seen as proud upholders of tradition and symbols of familial honour.

### **Decline of the Practice**

In the early 1970s, the Indian government banned facial tattooing and nose plugging, citing social stigma and concerns about their impact on women's employment prospects in the modern world.

Today, only the elderly women of the community still carry these physical markers, making them the last living bearers of a once-vibrant tradition.

## STATE EMBLEM OF INDIA

### CONTEXT

OAround 50 individuals were detained in Srinagar following the vandalism and removal of a plaque featuring the national emblem at the Hazratbal shrine.

### ABOUT STATE EMBLEM OF INDIA

- The State Emblem of India is a stylized adaptation of the Lion Capital of Ashoka from Sarnath.
- It was officially adopted on January 26, 1950, the day India became a Republic.
- The emblem stands as a powerful symbol of the nation's sovereignty, authority, and its core values of truth and justice.
- The original Lion Capital was erected by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE at Sarnath, the site where Buddha gave his first sermon.
- It was part of Ashoka's series of pillars that promoted Dhamma (righteousness and moral law).
- Rediscovered in 1905, the capital is now housed in the Sarnath Museum, Uttar Pradesh.

### Key Features:

- Four Asiatic Lions: Standing back-to-back, these represent power, courage, confidence, and pride.
- Abacus Frieze: Decorated with high-relief carvings of a lion, bull, elephant, and horse, separated by Dharma Chakras (wheels of law).
- Lotus Base: The original sculpture features a bell-shaped lotus base, which is excluded from the official version.

### Design of the Adopted Emblem

- Displays three lions (the fourth is hidden from view).
- At the center is a Dharma Chakra (Wheel of Law).
- A bull appears on the right and a galloping horse on the left.
- Outlines of Dharma Chakras are depicted at each end of the base.
- 

### Motto

Below the emblem is inscribed the national motto:

“सत्यमेव जयते” (Satyameva Jayate) — meaning “Truth Alone Triumphs” — written in Devanagari script.

सत्यमेव जयते



# RED SEA

## CONTEXT

Damage to undersea internet cables in the Red Sea disrupted connectivity across Asia and the Middle East, impacting major submarine systems such as SMW4 and IMEWE, and causing slow internet speeds in India and surrounding areas.



## ABOUT RED SEA

- The Red Sea is a narrow, elongated inland sea that forms part of the rift valley system between northeastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.
- It holds immense strategic significance as a key international trade and maritime route, connecting the Mediterranean Sea (via the Suez Canal) to the Arabian Sea (through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait).
- Neighbouring Countries :
  - The Red Sea borders Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.
  - Additionally, Jordan and Israel have coastlines along the Gulf of Aqaba, an extension of the Red Sea.
- Geography
  - Length: Stretches approximately 1,930 km from Suez (Egypt) to Bab el-Mandeb (Yemen).
  - Geological Setting: Located in a tectonic rift zone that remains geologically active, with ongoing volcanic and seismic activity.
- Notable Features
  - Marine Environment: One of the hottest and saltiest seas, the Red Sea supports diverse coral reef ecosystems.
  - Economic Role: Serves as one of the world's busiest maritime corridors, facilitating vital shipping routes between Europe, Asia, and Africa.

**About Undersea (Submarine) Cables:**

They are undersea or submarine cables are fiber-optic cables laid on the seabed that carry around 95% of the world's international data traffic.

They form the backbone of global connectivity, enabling the internet, cloud computing, and international communications.

**Key Features**

- **Structure:** Made up of bundled glass fibers encased in multiple layers of protective materials. Each fiber transmits data as pulses of light.
- **Performance:** Offers high-speed, low-latency data transmission across continents.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Prone to damage from natural disasters, earthquakes, ship anchor drags, or intentional sabotage, leading to potential large-scale disruptions.



# VICE PRESIDENT ELECTION – SYSTEM OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

## CONTEXT

Voting for the Vice-Presidential election commenced on September 9, 2025, after the resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The Prime Minister of India cast the first vote, with CP Radhakrishnan and Justice B. Sudershan Reddy standing as the candidates for the position.



## **ABOUT VICE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION :**

- The Vice President of India is elected through a system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote (STV).
- This election is conducted by secret ballot and involves an Electoral College made up of members from both Houses of Parliament—Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, including both elected and nominated members.

## How the Vice Presidential Election Works

### Electoral College

- Comprises all MPs from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, regardless of whether they are elected or nominated.
- State Legislative Assemblies do not participate, unlike in the Presidential election.



**Equal Value of Votes**

- Every MP's vote carries equal weight (value = 1).
- This ensures a simpler process, unlike the Presidential election where vote values vary based on population and assembly strength.

**Ballot Paper & Voting Preferences**

- Ballot papers are pink and printed in both Hindi and English.
- The first column lists the names of the candidates; the second column is for MPs to indicate their order of preference.
- MPs mark their preferences by writing 1, 2, 3, etc., next to the candidates' names (using international numerals, Indian scripts, or Roman numerals).
- Writing preferences in words (e.g., "one", "two") or leaving them blank renders the vote invalid.

**Quota for Winning**

- A candidate must secure a majority of valid votes to win.

The formula for the quota is:

$(\text{Total Valid Votes} \div 2) + 1$

Example: If 780 MPs vote, the quota is  $(780 \div 2) + 1 = 391$  votes.

**Counting & Vote Transfers**

1. First Preference Count: Only the "1" marked votes are counted initially.
  - If any candidate reaches the quota, they are declared elected.
2. If No One Reaches the Quota:
  - The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated.
  - Their ballots are transferred to the next preference (marked "2").

This process continues in rounds until a candidate meets the required quota.

**Secret Ballot & No Party Whip**

- Voting is entirely confidential, and MPs are not bound by any party whip.
- Since the anti-defection law doesn't apply, MPs can vote freely, allowing for cross-voting—making the results less predictable.

## PALLA'S CAT

### CONTEXT

A WWF-India survey in Arunachal Pradesh has recorded the first-ever photographic evidence of the Pallas's cat in the state, reinforcing the status of the eastern Himalayas as a global biodiversity hotspot.



### ABOUT PALLAS'S CAT:

- Pallas's cat (*Otocolobus manul*), also known as the manul, is a small wild feline species believed to be one of the oldest surviving cats, having diverged approximately 5.2 million years ago.
- Though similar in size to a domestic cat, it appears more robust due to its thick, dense fur.
- Distribution
  - Native to Central Asia, particularly found in Mongolia, China, and parts of Russia.
  - Recently captured on camera in Arunachal Pradesh, marking an extension of its known range in the eastern Himalayas, previously recorded only in Bhutan and Sikkim.
- Habitat
  - Inhabits high-altitude grasslands, rocky steppes, and cold desert regions.
  - Documented at elevations nearing 5,000 meters in the eastern Himalayan region.
- Physical and Behavioral Features
  - Characterized by short legs, low-set rounded ears, and a thick fur coat that changes seasonally for effective camouflage.
  - An ambush predator, feeding on rodents, pikas, lizards, and small birds.
  - Known for its distinctive yelping call, unlike most other cats, and unique rounded pupils rather than vertical slits.
  - Typically solitary and secretive, with a lifespan of around 8–9 years in the wild. Active mostly during night and twilight hours (nocturnal/crepuscular).
- Significance
  - This rare and elusive species represents a significant breakthrough in Indian wildlife research.
  - Its presence further highlights the eastern Himalayas as a vital biodiversity hotspot, underscoring the region's ecological richness.

## EXERCISE ZAPAD 2025

### CONTEXT

An Indian Armed Forces contingent has set out for Russia to take part in the multilateral military exercise Zapad 2025, held at the Mulino Training Ground in Nizhniy.



### ABOUT EXERCISE ZAPAD 2025:

- Zapad 2025 is a multinational military exercise hosted by Russia, aimed at simulating high-intensity conventional warfare and counter-terrorism operations within a multinational framework.
- While Russia is the primary host, the exercise includes India and several other partner countries.
- The Zapad series (meaning “West” in Russian) has its origins in the Soviet era. The modern version has been conducted every four years since 2009. India also took part in the 2021 edition.
- Objectives
  - Strengthen defence cooperation and build strategic trust among participating countries.
  - Improve interoperability through joint tactical exercises and coordinated planning.
  - Enhance capabilities for counter-terrorism and conventional warfare scenarios.
  - Provide experience in multinational combat environments and familiarize forces with emerging military technologies
- Key Features
  - Location: Mulino Training Ground, Nizhniy, Russia.
  - Participants: Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy.
  - Focus Areas: Company-level joint operations in open terrain, tactical maneuvers, weapons proficiency, and special operations training.
- Expected Outcomes
  - Enhanced operational coordination among forces.
  - Shared military knowledge and best practices.
  - Strengthened defence relations between India and Russia.



## GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM (GERD)

### CONTEXT

Ethiopia has officially inaugurated the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the largest hydroelectric project in Africa, celebrating it as a "major national achievement." Meanwhile, Egypt filed a protest with the United Nations, describing the dam as an existential threat to its water security.



### ABOUT GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM (GERD)

- The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is Africa's largest hydroelectric project, designed primarily for power generation and promoting regional energy cooperation.
- It serves as a symbol of national pride and development for Ethiopia but remains at the center of regional geopolitical tensions.
- Location & River
  - Situated on the Blue Nile River in Guba, Ethiopia, approximately 30 km upstream from Sudan.
  - The Blue Nile contributes around 85% of the Nile's total flow, making the dam a highly sensitive geopolitical issue, especially for downstream countries like Sudan and Egypt.
- Project Background
  - Launched by Ethiopia in 2011, the dam is seen as a project of self-reliance, economic progress, and regional influence.
- Key Features
  - Height: Approximately 170 meters
  - Length: Around 2 kilometers
  - Reservoir Capacity: Holds about 74 billion cubic metres of water, flooding an area of roughly 1,874 km<sup>2</sup>
  - Power Generation: Estimated capacity ranges between 5,150 MW and 6,450 MW, making it the largest hydroelectric power source in Africa
  - Sediment Management: Designed to trap up to 100 years' worth of sediment, though actual collection may exceed expectations

### ABOUT BLUE NILE RIVER:

- The Blue Nile, known in Ethiopia as the Abay River, is one of the two primary tributaries of the Nile. It supplies nearly 70% of the Nile's floodwaters at its confluence with the White Nile in Khartoum, Sudan.
- Length & Origin
  - Total Length: Approximately 1,460 km (907 miles)
  - Source: Emerges from a spring near Lake Tana in northwestern Ethiopia, at an elevation of about 1,800 meters (6,000 feet).
  - The river flows into and out of Lake Tana, then carves through dramatic gorges and rapids in the Ethiopian highlands.
- Path Through Nations
  - Ethiopia: Flows through deep canyons and circles the Choke Mountains.
  - Sudan: Continues northwest until merging with the White Nile at Khartoum, forming the main Nile River.
- Major Tributaries
  - Dinder River
  - Rahad River
  - Both originate in the Ethiopian highlands and significantly boost the Blue Nile's volume.



## LANKHONG PUJA

### CONTEXT

The Tiwa tribe of Assam recently observed their traditional Lankhong Puja, a socio-religious festival dedicated to offering prayers for a bountiful harvest in the upcoming Rabi season.



### ABOUT LANKHONG PUJA:

- Lankhong Puja is a traditional socio-religious festival celebrated by the Tiwa (Lalung) tribe of Assam.
- The festival is observed to seek divine blessings for a successful Rabi crop season and to ensure a good agricultural harvest.
- Key Features
  - Community members come together to offer ritual prayers and offerings to their deities.
  - The celebration is accompanied by folk music, dance, and various cultural performances.
  - The festival reinforces the agrarian roots, community unity, and the continuity of cultural heritage among the Tiwa people.

### ABOUT TIWA TRIBE:

- The Tiwa tribe, formerly referred to as Lalung, is a significant indigenous community of Assam, belonging to the Mongoloid ethnic group.
  - They speak a language from the Tibeto-Burman family and share close ethnolinguistic ties with Bodo-Naga tribes





### Habitat

- Tiwa populations are concentrated in districts like Nagaon, Morigaon, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, and Titabor in Assam. They also reside in parts of Meghalaya and Tripura.
- The community is divided into two groups:
- Hill Tiwas – residing in hilly regions, often with distinct customs and practices.
- Plains Tiwas – settled in river valleys, influenced by neighboring Assamese communities.

### Notable Features

- Physical Traits: Display Mongoloid characteristics; the name Tiwa translates to Ti = water, Wa = superior.
- Cultural Life:
  - Rich in oral traditions, folk dances, and music.
  - Mentioned in historical texts like Assam Buranji, Jayanta Buranji, and Kachari Buranji.
- Religious Practices: Centered around sacred spaces such as Borghar, Thaan Ghar, and Naamghar.
- Social Structure:
  - Youth bodies like Chamadi are active in community service and maintaining social responsibilities.
  - Their festivals and rituals reflect the agricultural cycle and emphasize collective life and cooperation.

## FIRST OVERSEAS ATAL INNOVATION CENTRE

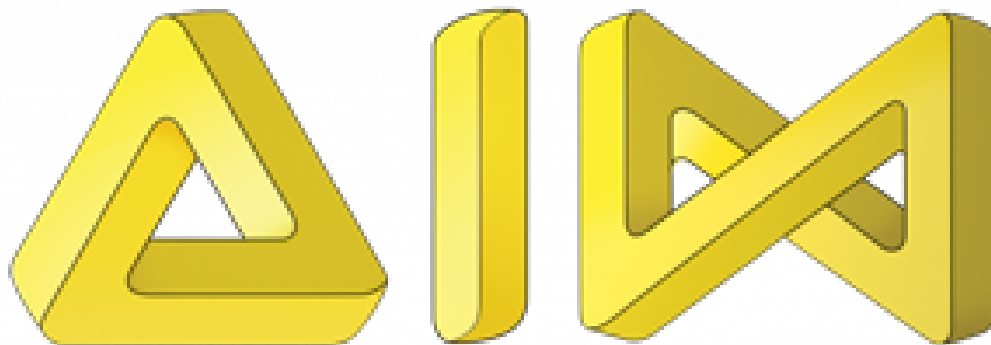
### CONTEXT

During his visit to the UAE, the Union Education Minister of India inaugurated the country's first overseas Atal Innovation Centre at the IIT Delhi–Abu Dhabi campus.



### ABOUT FIRST OVERSEAS ATAL INNOVATION CENTRE

- India's first international Atal Innovation Centre has been established at the IIT Delhi–Abu Dhabi campus, marking a major milestone under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM).
- It was launched September 2025, during the Union Education Minister's visit to the UAE.
- Objectives:
  - Foster innovation, research, and entrepreneurship among students and young professionals.
  - Strengthen India–UAE cooperation in areas such as education, sustainability, and technology-driven development.
- Core Functions:
  - Incubate start-ups and offer mentorship to emerging innovators.
  - Provide state-of-the-art infrastructure and laboratories for advanced research.
  - Promote student and faculty exchange, teacher training, and skill development programs.
  - Serve as a global hub for knowledge sharing, collaborative innovation, and cross-border partnerships.



## ATAL INNOVATION MISSION

### ABOUT ATAL INNOVATION MISSION (AIM):

- AIM is a flagship initiative by the Government of India, implemented by NITI Aayog, to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country.
- It was launched as a part of the national strategy to build an innovation-driven ecosystem spanning schools, universities, and industries.
- Key Initiatives Under AIM:
  - Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs):
    - Set up in schools (Classes 6–12) to promote hands-on learning in robotics, IoT, 3D printing, and electronics.
    - Over 10,000 labs operational across India.
  - Atal Incubation Centres (AICs):
    - Located in universities and corporate institutions.
    - Support start-ups through mentorship, funding, networking, and workspace.
    - 72 AICs currently active, supporting over 3,500 start-ups and generating 32,000+ jobs.
  - Entrepreneurial Focus Areas:
    - Covers key sectors such as HealthTech, FinTech, AgriTech, EdTech, Food Processing, Drone & Space Technology, and AR/VR.
    - Actively supports over 1,000 women-led start-ups, promoting inclusivity in innovation.



## ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE

### CONTEXT

Prime Minister of India paid homage to Acharya Vinoba Bhave on his birth anniversary (11 September 2025).



### ABOUT ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE

- Acharya Vinoba Bhave was a revered spiritual leader, philosopher, and social reformer, widely regarded as the National Teacher of India and the spiritual heir to Mahatma Gandhi.
- He was a prominent proponent of Sarvodaya (the welfare of all) and is best known for initiating the Bhoodan Movement (Land Gift Movement).
- Born on 11 September 1895 in Gagode village, Maharashtra.
- Spiritually inclined from a young age, with a deep attachment to the Bhagavad Gita and a desire for an ascetic life.
- After reading a speech by Mahatma Gandhi at Banaras Hindu University, he abandoned formal studies and joined Gandhi at Kochrab Ashram in 1916, committing himself to the Gandhian way of life.

- **Role in India's Freedom Struggle**

- In 1940, at Gandhi's request, Vinoba became the first Individual Satyagrahi, representing the power of personal, nonviolent resistance.
- He was actively engaged in the Quit India Movement (1942) and various constructive programmes, including Khadi promotion, Nai Talim (basic education), and rural self-sufficiency.
- Lived at Sabarmati Ashram in a hut known as "Vinoba Kutir", where he delivered his famous talks on the Gita, later published and translated into multiple languages.

- **Social and Spiritual Contributions**

- **Bhoodan Movement (1951):**
  - Launched a nationwide campaign to encourage landlords to voluntarily donate land to landless peasants. He successfully collected over 4 million acres.
- **Gramdan Movement (1954):**
  - Took the idea further by advocating for the donation of entire villages for community ownership and collective welfare.
- Championed values of non-violence, rural development, sanitation, and self-reliance.
- A polyglot and prolific writer, Vinoba translated the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi (as Geetai), and wrote insightful commentaries on the Bible, Quran, and Dnyaneshwari.

- **Legacy and Significance**

- Vinoba Bhave's work bridged the gap between spirituality and socio-economic reform.
- His movements laid the foundation for land reforms, rural reconstruction, and the trusteeship model of economy.
- He remains a symbol of peaceful activism, moral leadership, and transformative social change rooted in compassion and justice.