

28/04/2026 Daily Current News

1. *New Khambatki Ghat Tunnel:*

Context: The New Khambatki Ghat Twin Tube 6-Lane Tunnel Project, undertaken by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on NH-4 (New NH-48), is transforming one of Maharashtra's most challenging highway sections into a symbol of modern, people-first infrastructure. With physical progress of the project reaching 86 percent, the tunnel is on track for inauguration in the first half of 2026.

About New Khambatki Ghat Tunnel:

- ❖ For decades, the Khambatki Ghat stretch on the Pune-Satara highway was known as a test of patience and courage. Narrow lanes, sharp 'S' curves, long traffic jams and frequent accidents made the journey stressful, especially during weekends and holiday traffic. What should have been a short drive often stretched into an exhausting wait inside congested tunnels.
- ❖ The new Khambatki Ghat Tunnel upgrades a congested and accident-prone stretch on the Mumbai-Pune-Bengaluru corridor, improving connectivity to major cities and tourist destinations like Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani.
- ❖ The six-lane twin-tube tunnel reduces travel time, lowers accident risk, cuts fuel consumption and vehicle maintenance costs, and improves efficiency for commuters, trade, and tourism.
- ❖ The project enhances safety and travel comfort in the ghat section by replacing sharp curves and steep terrain with modern tunnel infrastructure focused on faster and safer mobility.

2. *India – New Zealand Free Trade Agreement Signed:*

Context: India- New Zealand FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports. India and New Zealand announced negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on 16 March 2025 and concluded in a record 9 months, making this the fastest concluded free trade agreement.

More details about the FTA:





- ❖ The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports
- ❖ A USD 20 billion investment commitment over 15 years strengthens long-term economic and strategic cooperation.
- ❖ Through Agricultural Productivity Partnership, the FTA collaborates with farmers to boost productivity and integrate them in the global value chains.
- ❖ The FTA boosts MSMEs and Jobs through Zero-duty access for labour-intensive sectors including textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, gems & jewellery, engineering goods and processed foods.
- ❖ India has offered market access in 70.03% of the tariff lines while keeping 29.97 % tariff lines in exclusion, which covers 95% of New Zealand's Bilateral Trade.
- ❖ Certain products are kept in exclusion such as dairy (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese etc.), animal products (other than sheep meat), vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds etc.), sugar, artificial honey, Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, Arms and Ammunition, Gems and Jewellery, Copper and Articles (Cathodes, Cartridges, Rods, Bars, Coils etc.), Aluminium and articles thereof (Ingots, billets, wire bars) among others.
- ❖ 30.00% of tariff lines will have immediate duty elimination, covering wood, wool, sheep meat, leather-raw hides etc.
- ❖ 35.60% of tariffs are subject to phased elimination over 3, 5, 7, and 10 years, including petroleum oil, malt extract, vegetable oils, and selected electrical and mechanical machinery, peptones etc.
- ❖ 4.37% of products face tariff reductions, such as wine, pharmaceutical drugs, polymers, aluminium, iron and steel articles etc
- ❖ 0.06% fall under tariff rate quotas, including Mānuka honey, apples, kiwi fruit, and albumins including milk albumin.

3. **Anti Defection Law:**

Context: AAP submits disqualification plea under Anti defection law to Rajya Sabha chair against MPs who joined BJP.

About Anti Defection Law:

- ❖ The Tenth Schedule is popularly known as the Anti-Defection Law.
- ❖ It was added to the Constitution through the Fifty-Second Amendment Act, 1985.
- ❖ The Ninety-First Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 strengthened the law by replacing the 1/3 split provision with a mandatory 2/3 majority for merger exemption.
- ❖ The law aims to curb political defections and protect democratic stability.
- ❖ A legislator can be disqualified for voluntarily giving up party membership.
- ❖ Defying the party whip during voting is a ground for disqualification.
- ❖ An independently elected member is disqualified if they join a political party after election.
- ❖ A nominated member is disqualified if they join a political party after six months of becoming a legislator.
- ❖ The Speaker or Chairman is empowered to decide disqualification cases under the Tenth Schedule.
- ❖ The law exempts disqualification in cases of merger supported by at least two-thirds of legislators of the original political party.
- ❖ The Tenth Schedule requires a genuine merger of the original political party, not merely legislators switching sides.

4. *Mali:*

Context: India advises its nationals in Mali to exercise caution due to security concerns. Separatist groups have launched joint attacks in Bamako, Kati, Gao, Sévaré, and Mopti regions in Mali.

About Mali:

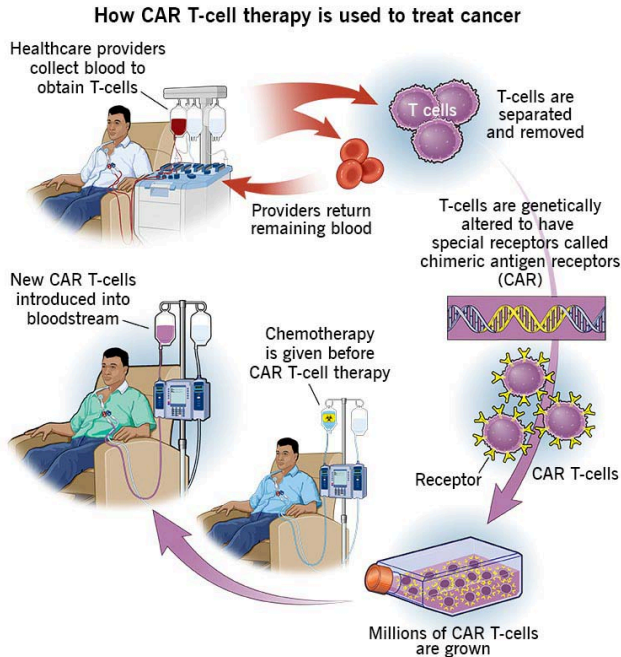
- ❖ Mali is a landlocked country located in the Saharan and Sahelian regions of West Africa.
- ❖ The Sahel is a transitional zone between the arid Sahara Desert in the north and humid savannas in the south.
- ❖ Mali shares borders with Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, and Mauritania.
- ❖ Major rivers of Mali are the Niger River and Senegal River.
- ❖ Hombori Tondo is the highest point in Mali.
- ❖ The climate of Mali is influenced by the Alize and Harmattan winds.
- ❖ Major minerals found in Mali include gold, iron, bauxite, manganese, and lithium.

5. *CAR-T cell therapy:*

Context: Researchers in Cancer Immunotherapy found that many tumour cells previously considered “invisible” actually contain very low levels of the CD70 protein, which traditional CAR-T Cell Therapy fails to detect in solid cancers. Scientists from Columbia University and Sloan Kettering Cancer Center developed a more sensitive HIT receptor that can identify these weak cancer signals, and in mouse studies the new HIT-based T-cells successfully eliminated kidney, ovarian, and pancreatic tumour cells missed by

conventional CAR-T therapy, offering new hope for future solid cancer treatment, though more clinical trials and safety checks are still needed.

About CAR-T cell therapy:

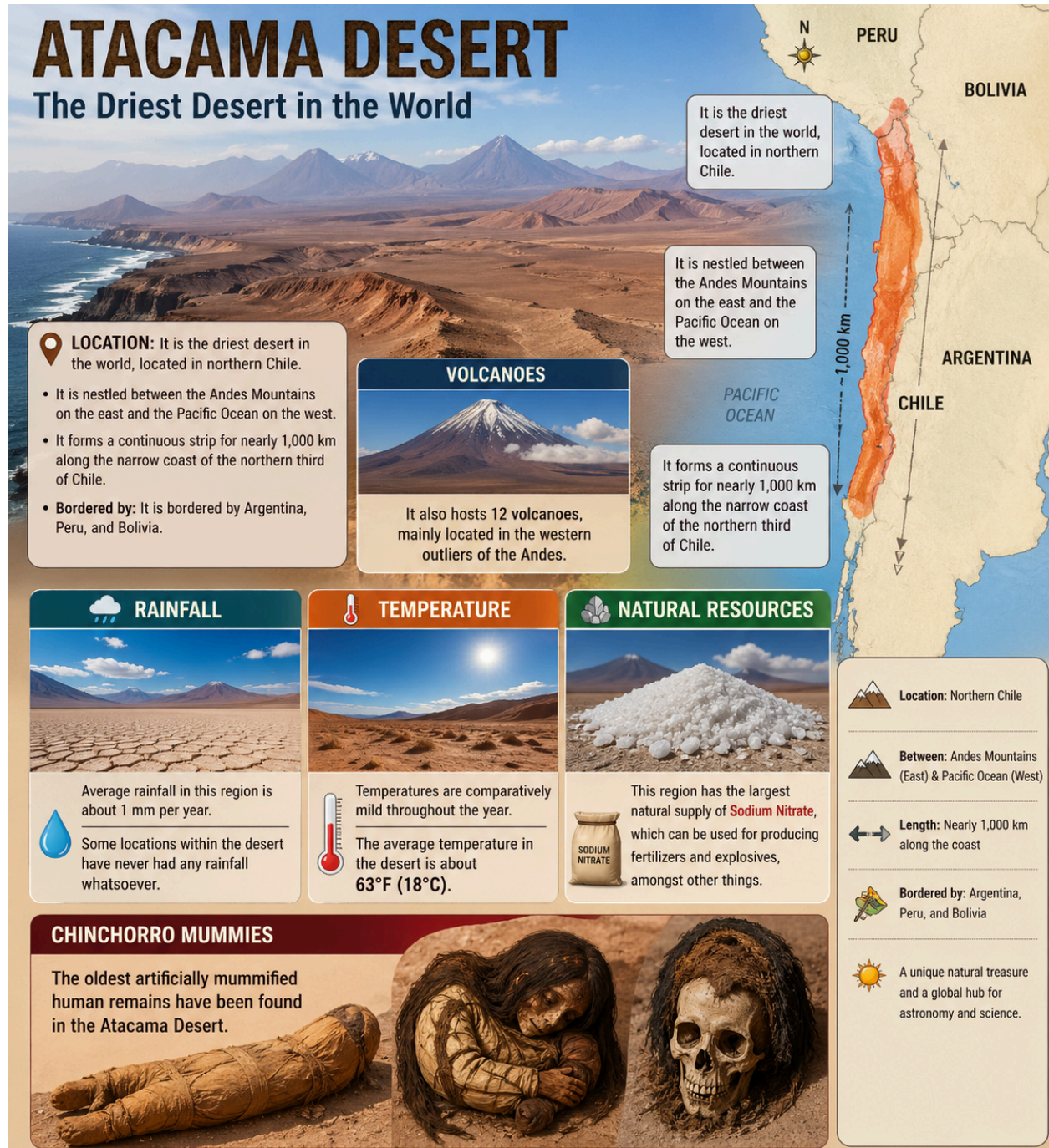


- ❖ Unlike chemotherapy or immunotherapy, which requires mass-produced injectable or oral medication, CAR T-cell therapies use a patient's own cells.
- ❖ They are modified in the laboratory to activate T-cells, a component of immune cells, to attack tumours.
- ❖ These modified cells are then infused back into the patient's bloodstream after conditioning them to multiply more effectively.
- ❖ As of today, CAR T-cell therapy has been approved for leukaemias (cancers arising from the cells that produce white blood cells) and lymphomas (arising from the lymphatic system).
- ❖ Modification in the cellular structure allows CAR T-cells to effectively bind to the tumour and destroy it.
- ❖ The final step in the tumour's destruction involves its clearance by the patient's immune system.

6. *Atacama desert:*

Context: The Atacama Desert is one of the world's best locations for astronomy due to its dry climate, high altitude, and minimal light pollution, providing over 300 clear nights annually. It hosts major observatories, including the European Southern Observatory facilities and the upcoming Extremely Large Telescope, which is expected to become the world's most powerful optical telescope by 2030. However, increasing urbanisation, industrial projects, mining, and renewable energy developments are threatening the desert's dark skies, raising concerns among scientists about the need for stronger environmental and sky-protection regulations.

About Atacama desert:



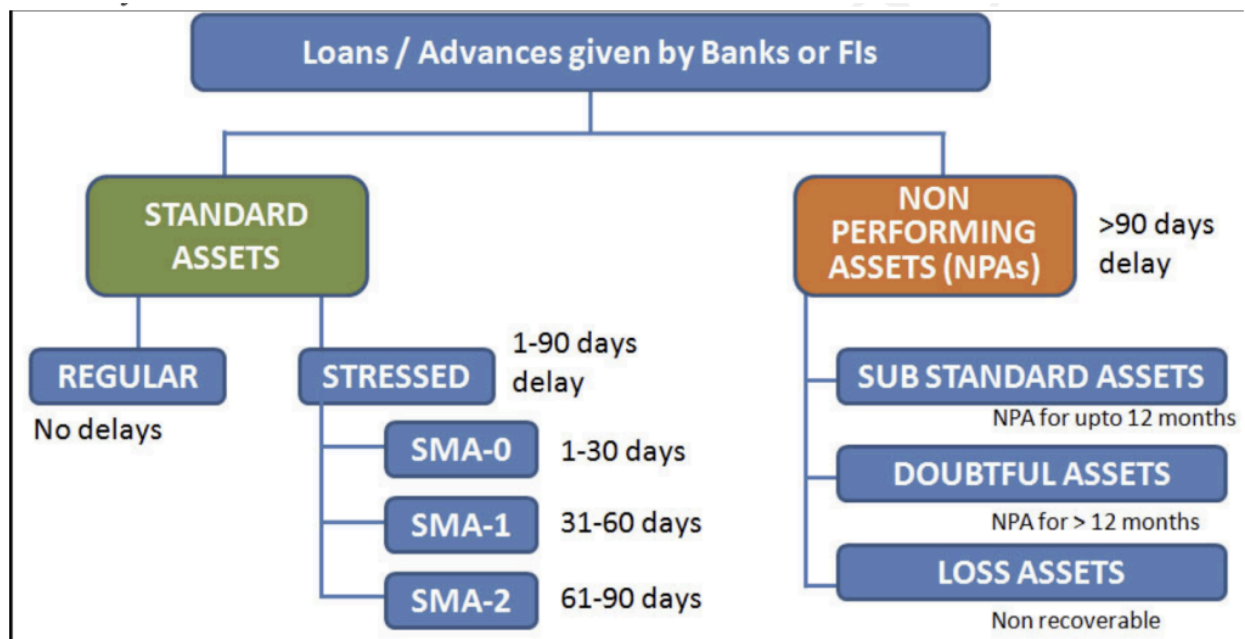
7. Non-performing asset (NPA):

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has rejigged the rules governing classification of bad loans, definition, and recovery, to align with globally-accepted standards, effective April 1, 2027, according to the Master Directions released on Monday. According to one of the revised directions, if one loan of a borrower with many loans is classified as a non-performing asset (NPA), all the other loans would also be

considered so. The basis for classifying a loan as NPA, however, remains at 90 days overdue. An NPA borrower will be considered a “standard asset” only “on repayment of entire arrears of interest and principal pertaining to all the credit facilities,” as per the revised norms.

About Non Performing Assets:

- ❖ Non-Performing Assets (NPA) are loans and arrears lent by banks or financial institutions whose principal and interests are delayed beyond 90 days.
- ❖ In the case of agricultural loans, NPAs are declared if the interest and/or instalment or principal remain unpaid for two harvest seasons. However, this period should not be longer than two years.



8. NITI Aayog:

Context: The revamp of the NITI Aayog last week with a new set of full-time members shows a tilt towards technology and health sectors.

More details:

- ❖ The recent appointments to NITI Aayog show a shift from the usual dominance of economists toward experts from science, health, and biotechnology backgrounds.
- ❖ Abhay Karandikar is currently the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology and former Director of Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur.
- ❖ Mr. Karandikar was also a Professor of Electrical Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.
- ❖ M. Srinivas recently served as Director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences Delhi.
- ❖ Gobardhan Das is currently Director of Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Bhopal.

- ❖ Mr. Das earlier served as Professor at the School of Molecular Medicine, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- ❖ Gobardhan Das had contested the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections as a BJP candidate before leaving the party.
- ❖ K. V. Raju, another full-time member, is part of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and specialises in agriculture, rural development, and water policy.
- ❖ Rajeev Gauba has also been appointed as a full-time member of NITI Aayog.
- ❖ Ashok Lahiri has been appointed Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog.
- ❖ Ashok Lahiri served as India's Chief Economic Adviser from 2002 to 2007 and worked with institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.
- ❖ Ashok Lahiri is also the MLA from Balurghat after winning the 2021 West Bengal Assembly election as a BJP candidate.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ The Indian Navy's Sail Training Ship, INS Sudarshini, concluded a landmark three-day port call at Las Palmas, Canary Islands, on 26 Apr 2026, marking a pivotal milestone in its Lokayan 26 transoceanic expedition.
- ☐ Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh will lead a high-level Indian delegation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting which will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on April 28, 2026.
- ☐ Over 240 members of the B'nei Menashe community from Manipur and Mizoram were relocated to Tel Aviv by the Israel government. The B'nei Menashe are a Jewish-identifying community belonging mainly to the Mizo-Kuki tribes, who claim descent from the ancient "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel," particularly the Tribe of Menashe.
- ☐ Researchers have discovered two new species of jumping spiders in India, highlighting the country's rich but still underexplored biodiversity. The newly identified species, named "Mogrus shushka" and "Mogrus pune", were found in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

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