

Current Affairs of the Day

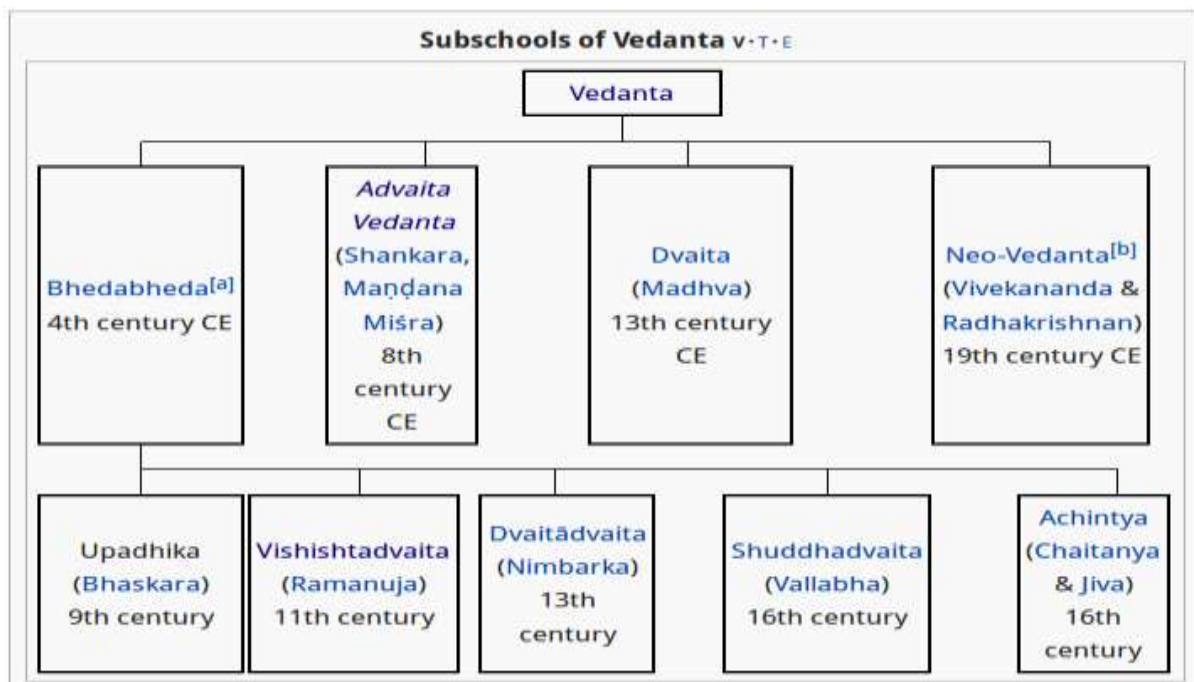
Explained: Life, work and legend of Adi Shankara, Advaita master, philosopher nonpareil

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya at Kedarnath, where the acharya is believed to have attained samadhi at the age of 32 in the ninth century.



Shankara of legend

1. The Adi Shankara story is a remarkable saga of travel and adventure, philosophical inquiry, conflicts in faith, exegesis, the establishment of lineage, organisation and mobilisation, etc.
2. The story recounted today has been reconstructed from multiple Shankaravijayas (Conquests of Shankara) written over the centuries. Texts situate his lifetime between 788 and 820 AD.
3. Adi Shankara is said to have been born in Kaladi village on the bank of the Periyar, the largest river in Kerala.





THE CONCEPT OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

Advaita Vedanta refers to the non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy, which is derived mostly from the Upanishads and elaborated in detail by eminent scholars like Gaudapada and Sri Adishankaracharya. Dvaita means duality, and Advaita means nonduality. In simple terms, Advaita means absence of the duality between subject and object. In our wakeful consciousness we experience duality, but in deep sleep only nonduality.



Advaita Vedanta.

“Non-Dual” Vedanta. Also called “Monist”.

Principal idea is that only Brahman is real, everything else is maya.

Everything that makes you think that you are an individual, with distinct existence, in a world of things, is illusory.



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Remarkable scholarship

1. The picture we gain from these stories is of a remarkable scholar-monk who, after being initiated into studies by Govindacharya, a disciple of the scholar Gaudapada Acharya, was constantly on the move — bearing the flag of Advaita Vedanta, challenging prevailing philosophical traditions including Buddhism and Jainism, establishing mathas, preparing commentaries on important texts, and organising monastic orders.
2. Adi Shankara is generally identified as the author of 116 works — among them the celebrated commentaries (bhashyas) on 10 Upanishads.

Master of Advaita Vedanta

1. Shankara's great standing is derived from his commentaries of the prasthanatrayi (Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Gita), where he explains his understanding of Advaita Vedanta.
2. Advaita Vedanta articulates a philosophical position of radical nondualism, a revisionary worldview which it derives from the ancient Upanishadic texts. According to Advaita Vedantins, the Upanishads reveal a fundamental principle of nonduality termed 'brahman', which is the reality of all things.
3. Advaitins understand brahman as transcending individuality and empirical plurality. They seek to establish that the essential core of one's self (atman) is brahman.
4. The fundamental thrust of Advaita Vedanta is that the atman is pure non-intentional consciousness. It is one without a second, nondual, infinite existence, and numerically identical with brahman. This effort entails tying a metaphysics of brahman to a philosophy of consciousness."



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India's new rare diseases policy offers a lifeline to many

National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021 approved



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India

- Provides for financial support upto Rs 20L to individuals with certain rare diseases that require one-time treatment.
- Assistance to be extended to not just BPL families, but to about 40% of the population who are covered under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
- The financial support will be provided under the umbrella scheme of Rastriya Arogya Nidhi & not PM-JAY

National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021

Implementing Ministry: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

According to WHO: Rare disease or disorder have a prevalence of 1 or less, per 1000 population.

Challenges of Rare Diseases in India

Early diagnosis of rare diseases
research and development
patients pool is very small
expensive cost of treatment of rare diseases
field of rare diseases is very big, complex and heterogeneous



National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021 Key Points

Policy divides Rare diseases into 3 Groups
Policy aims to lower the high cost of treatment
National Consortium will be set under Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
early screening and prevention
Nidan Kendras set up by Department of Biotechnology will also support
Designating 8 health facilities as Centre of Excellence



1. India has introduced the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 (NPRD), which aims to lower the cost of treatment of rare diseases. A disease is considered rare by the WHO when it affects one in 1,000 people, or fewer.
2. The financial capacity to support the exorbitant cost of treatment of rare diseases is an important consideration in public health policy development, and the NPRD is an important step in that direction.
3. By committing to provide Rs 20 lakh to cover the one-time treatment cost of diseases falling under Group 1 through the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi, the NPRD attempts to cover almost 40 per cent of the population that is eligible under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. It will also make use of a crowdfunding mechanism to cover the cost of treatment.

Agritech startups have great potential in India

They can steer the shift from government-controlled agricultural markets towards more demand-driven digital markets.

Agritech potential in India:

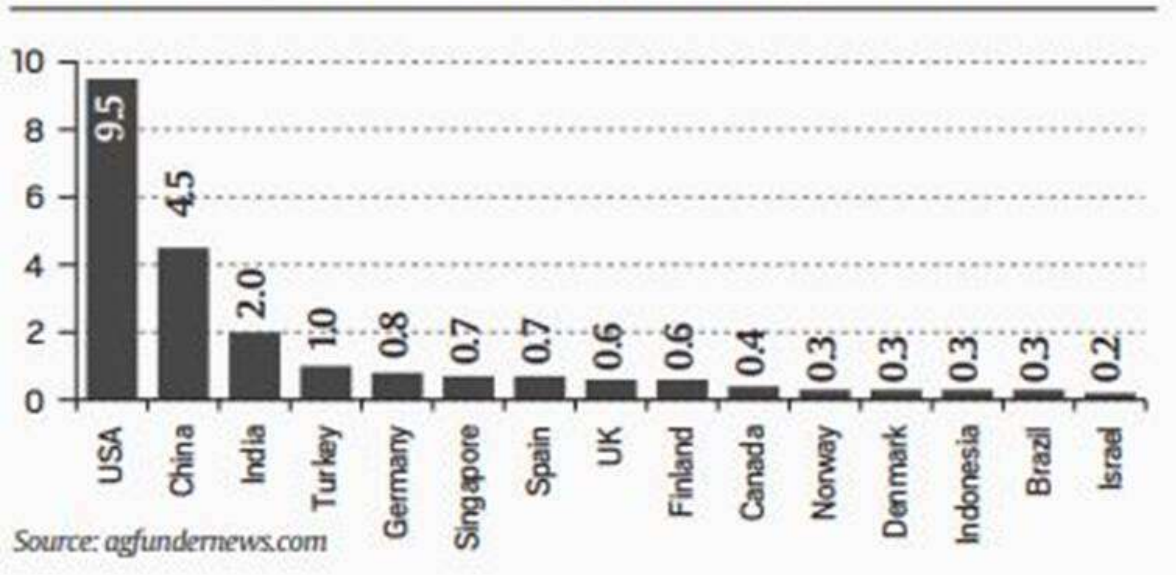
Globally, India is competing with the US and China in the agri-startup space. An Ernst & Young 2020 study pegs the Indian agritech market potential at \$24 billion by 2025, of which only 1 per cent has been captured so far. Among various agritech segments, the supply chain technology and output markets have the highest potential, worth \$12.1 billion.

Current status:

1. Currently, it is estimated that there are about 600 to 700 agritech startups in India operating at different levels of agri-value chains. Many of them use artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), the internet of things (IoT), etc, to unlock the potential of big data for greater resource use efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness.
2. The pandemic helped them catapult and the 2020 farm laws can give them a further boost by providing a legal framework to work with the farmers through FPOs, co-operatives and other collectives.
3. Here, we focus on how some startups in the marketing space are empowering farmers, small agrifood operators, and giving consumers a better deal.
4. Ninjacart, Dehaat, and Crofarm (Otipy) are a few of the many startups that are redefining the agrifood marketplace.



TOP 15 COUNTRIES BY FUNDING (\$ BILLION) IN H1 2021



Transforming potential of Agritech

1. The novelty of startup-led value chain transformation is not limited to empowering farmers but also co-opting local grocery, and kirana stores as well as small agrifood businesses that are an integral part of the agrifood ecosystem.
2. At the same time, the startup network is able to leverage the bigger front-end players who demand bulk quality produce and have challenges in directly linking with farmers.
3. The agritech startups have a growing footprint. Dehaat is present in Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, working with 6,50,000 farmers through 1,890 Dehaat Centres. Ninjacart sources fresh produce from farms and supplies to retailers, restaurants, grocery and kirana stores, and small businesses and is operational in nearly 11 cities.
4. The startups have had a demonstrated impact. Ninjacart reduced wastage to 4 per cent compared to up to 25 per cent in traditional chains through a demand-driven harvest schedule.
5. Logistics optimisation enabled delivery in less than 12 hours at one-third the cost in traditional chains.



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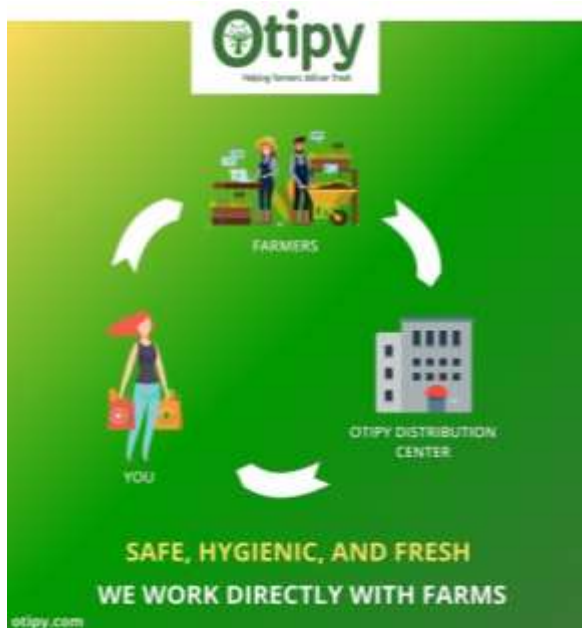
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6. Farmers' net incomes are reported to have increased by 20 per cent. Dehaat has enabled up to 50 per cent increase in farmers' income as a result of savings in input costs, increased farm productivity, and better price discovery.



YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD GROCERY STORE



DeHaat[®]

Seeds to Market

ninjacart





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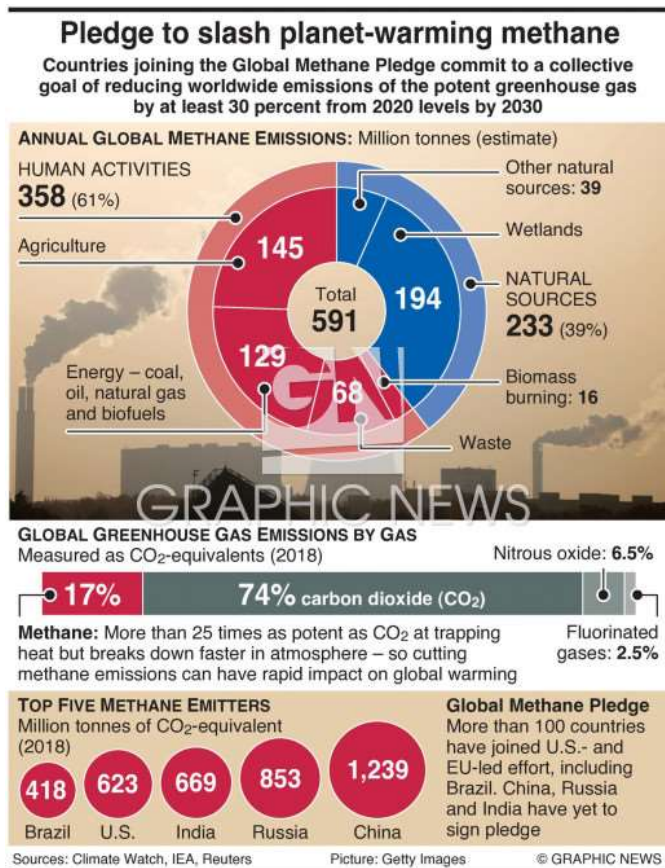


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Agritech startups-led e-commerce platforms have the potential to steer the shift from government-controlled agricultural markets towards more demand-driven digital markets. However, the sustainability and scalability of these ventures will be critical over time. In India, the biggest challenge will be to sustain and scale up the farmer outreach. The startup-FPO partnership can be further strengthened by incentivising the FPOs under the central government's programme to add 10,000 new FPOs by 2024.

CoP26: 104 countries promise to cut methane emissions; What is the global pledge about?

1. A 0.3 per cent reduction per year in methane is equivalent to net-zero for carbon dioxide — there would be no additional warming if this level of reduction is achieved, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest report.
2. As many as 104 countries have promised to cut their methane emissions by at least 30 per cent by 2030 at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (CoP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in Glasgow, United Kingdom.
3. The initiative was announced by the United States and European Union in September 2021, when only nine countries had signed the agreement. These included Argentina, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Mexico and the UK.
4. The pledge is called Global Methane Pledge. India, the third-largest source of methane emissions, is not a signatory. At least 22 countries from Africa have signed the pledge.





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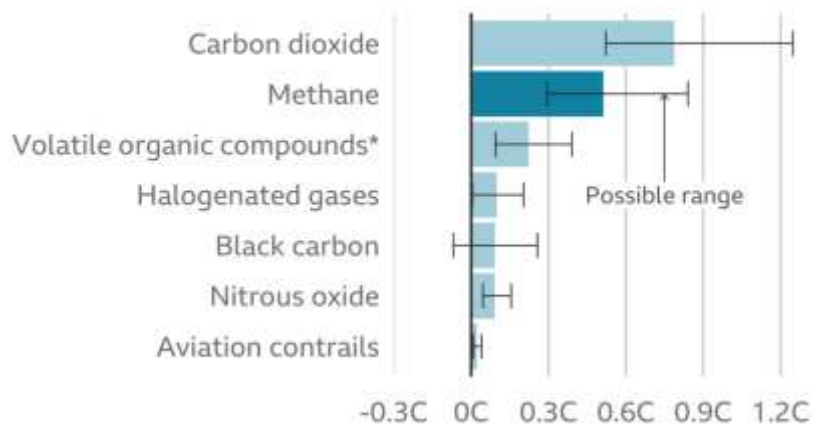
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What is the agreement?

- Both developed and developing countries are a part of this global pledge, which is not a structured agreement. Methane is a leading cause of climate change, and stopping methane leaks and reducing emissions faster is imperative.
- At least 30 per cent of global warming since the industrial revolution is due to methane emissions, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. It is proliferating faster than at any other time since record keeping began in the 1980s.

Methane is a major contributor to global warming

Contribution to warming in degrees Celsius



Figures are for contributions to 2010-2019 warming relative to 1850-1900
*Volatile organic compounds and carbon monoxide

Green grid initiative must overcome technical and political challenges to become a reality



MONGABAY

NEWS & INSPIRATION FROM NATURE'S FRONTLINE

- India and Britain's plan to connect solar power grids across borders has the potential to spur innovation and mobilize funds required by developing countries to transition to round-the-clock clean energy.
- The joint initiative by India and the United Kingdom to connect the world's electricity power grids to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy has been hailed by activists and negotiators at the ongoing United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, but experts warned there are formidable technical and political challenges to overcome before it can become a reality.



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3. The green grid project needs to detail out how power grids can be interconnected across nations when there are no common technical protocols, which currently differ from one country to the other.



4. Interconnectivity on a sensitive sector like energy, which is often linked to national security, could run into political headwinds despite the best of intentions.

5. The joint initiative, led by the India-headquartered International Solar Alliance and the British Green Grids program, will try linking solar grids so that parts of the world with excess renewable power can send it to areas that have deficits. Since the sun shines somewhere in the world 24/7, it could allow for renewable energy to be made available round-the-clock across nations.



6. The initiative intends to help investing in solar, wind and storage to support a global grid; building long-distance cross-border transmission lines and demand centers; developing the latest technologies to support green grids; supporting the global transition to zero-emission vehicles; attracting investment into solar mini-grids and off-grid systems; and developing market structures to attract low-cost capital, including climate finance, for global solar grid infrastructure.



MAINS DAWP	<p>Q1. Green grid initiative must overcome technical and political challenges to become a reality. Critically discuss.</p>
MCQ	<p>Q1. Which of the following gases contribute to global warming?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Methane2. Volatile Organic Compounds3. Halogenated gases4. Black carbon <p>Select the correct answer from the codes given below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. 1 and 4 onlyb. 1, 2 and 3 onlyc. 2, 3 and 4 onlyd. 1, 2, 3 and 4