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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

AUGUST WEEK 1

01-08-2025 TO 09-08-2025

50%

**ISRAEL TO
PARTIALLY
REOPEN GAZA**

**AYUSH
MEDICINES
UNDER FSDA**

**KARNATAKA
DEVADASI BILL**

**INTERNAL
QUOTA**

❖ Quantum tech to redefine State's capabilities

- Chief Minister called quantum technology the force that will redefine Karnataka's capabilities, during his address at Quantum India Bengaluru 2025. **The State also set a mandate to create a quantum economy worth \$20 billion by 2035.**
- "Quantum technology represents a strategic frontier with the potential to fundamentally transform how global industries solve their most complex challenges. It is not just the future, it is the force that will redefine Karnataka's capabilities in healthcare, education, energy, infrastructure, and cybersecurity,".
- **Quantum India Bengaluru is being jointly organised by the Department of Science and Technology and IISc Quantum Technology Initiative**
- "Our focus is on the indigenization of quantum technologies and on establishing Karnataka as a global exporter of quantum solutions, unlocking innovations that were once thought to be out of reach,".

Quantum road map

- Karnataka Quantum Roadmap, which outlined the State's strategic vision for quantum leadership was announced at the event. **Built on five pillars: talent, R&D, infrastructure, industry enablement and global partnership, the roadmap would adopt a phased, outcome-driven approach and focus on aligning academia with industry.**
- The plan includes large-scale skill development, advanced research targets, infrastructure expansion, startup funding and global collaboration. It aims to support 150 PhD fellowships each year and roll out quantum skilling programmes across 20 colleges to build a technical workforce ready for jobs in hardware, software, and applied research.
- The State government also announced an ambitious vision for 2035 to create \$20 billion quantum advantage-driven economy.
- **The State has also established the country's first dedicated Quantum Research Park at IISc with ₹48 crore sanctioned for its phase 2 expansion.**
- The government was also planning a Quantum City, a world class innovation cluster for research, advanced manufacturing, education, start-ups and government initiative.

❖ India is a 'bright spot', says Centre amid Trump tirade

- India and Russia could "take their dead economies down together", U.S. President Donald Trump said among a barrage of statements targeting India, a day before the 25% tariffs announced on Indian imports by the U.S. are set to take effect.
- Mr. Trump lashed out at India for its ties with Russia, membership of the "anti-American" BRICS, high tariffs, "massive" trade deficit with the U.S., and for imposing the "most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary trade barriers of any country".
- The U.S. State Department also sanctioned six Indian companies and five Indian nationals for involvement in energy trade with Iran.

Deal with Pakistan

- Mr. Trump also announced that the U.S. and Pakistan had concluded a deal whereby the two countries will work together on "developing their massive oil reserves", in continuation with the

U.S.'s growing closeness with Pakistan over trade issues in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor.

- Mr. Goyal defended India's record on trade agreements, highlighting that **in an increasingly protectionist world, India had entered into a number of "mutually beneficial" trade agreements with the UAE, the U.K., Australia and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries.**
- When all kinds of sanctions are coming up in the world, it is important for India to develop and implement very specific technologies, and quantum is one of them, said Ajai Chowdhry, Chairman, Mission Governing Board of National Quantum Mission and EPIC Foundation.

Quantum Mission

- The government has already recognised these areas under the National Quantum Mission, earmarked ₹4,000 crore for quantum technology to be developed in India.
- Of this, over ₹2000 crore is for Space, Defence, Atomic Energy and MeitY.
- "Quantum communication is a current strength in computing, however, India is a little behind but progress is ongoing," he added.
- National startup schemes were designed to promote quantum innovation, offering sizeable funding without initial equity demands, and startups could now apply at any time, and targets were tied to further funding increases.

❖ SC pulls up TG Speaker over defection plea

- The Supreme Court said on Thursday that it was about time Parliament reviewed its expectation that Assembly Speakers and Chairpersons would live up to the dignity of their high office and crush the "evil of political defection" by deciding disqualification proceedings against legislators in time and without favour.
- The top court sounded the warning bells while directing the Telangana Assembly Speaker to decide the disqualification petitions pending for several months against 10 Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLAs who shifted allegiance to the ruling Congress in the State in 2024.
- The verdict by a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai said the Speaker must decide the anti-defection proceedings as early as possible, and not exceed three months at any cost. The court noted that disqualification proceedings often died a "natural death" after being kept in limbo by Speakers for months together until the tenure of the Assembly drew to an end.
- The court further ordered that the Telangana Speaker should draw adverse inference against any MLA.
- Chief Justice Gavai, quoting from a speech made by the late parliamentarian Rajesh Pilot, observed the only intent to have made the Speaker/Chairman act as a Tribunal to adjudicate disqualification petitions was to "avoid dilly-dallying in the courts of law or the Election Commission".
- "With the experience of over 30 years of working of the **Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) to the Constitution**, the question that we will have to ask ourselves is whether the trust which the Parliament entrusted in the high office of the Speaker or the Chairman of avoiding delays in deciding the issue with regard to disqualification has been adhered to by the incumbents in the high office of Speaker and the Chairman or not?" Chief Justice Gavai said.

❖ There is no category called 'suspicious voters' under RP Act, EC informs Rajya Sabha

- Amid the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the Election Commission (EC), through the Union Ministry of Law and Justice, informed the Rajya Sabha that there was no category called "suspicious voters" under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

- The EC, in a statement on June 24, cited various reasons, including rapid urbanisation, frequent migration, young citizens becoming eligible to vote, non-reporting of deaths, and inclusion of the names of “foreign illegal immigrants” as reasons that necessitated the conduct of a special revision of the electoral roll, to ensure its integrity and to keep it error-free.
- “The Election Commission has informed that there is no category of suspicious voters as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951,” Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said in his written reply in the Rajya Sabha.
- Mr. Suman also asked if electronic voting machines (EVMs) could be manipulated. The EC informed that election results could not be manipulated with EVMs, Mr. Meghwal said.
- The Representation of the People Act, as amended by the Election Laws(Amendment) Act, 2021, allowed electoral registration officers to require existing or prospective electors to provide their Aadhaar numbers for establishing their identity on a voluntary basis.
- “The EC vide its instruction dated 4th July, 2022, has launched the programme to collect the Aadhaar number of existing and prospective electors on a voluntary basis from 1st August, 2022 in all States and Union Territories. The linking of Aadhaar with Electoral Photo Identity Card has not yet started,” the commission said.

❖ **Cabinet Committee approves four multi-tracking projects**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved four multi-tracking projects covering 13 districts across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, and Jharkhand, increasing the existing network of the Indian Railways by about 574 km. “The total estimated cost of the projects is approximately ₹11,169 crore and the multi-tracking will be completed by 2028-29,” a spokesperson of the Indian Railways said.

❖ **Cabinet enhances budgetary allocation for PMKSY**

- The Union Cabinet increased the budgetary outlay for the flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) by ₹1,920 crore to ₹6,520 crore to boost the food processing sector.
- The enhanced funds, to be provided this fiscal, will be utilised for 50 multi-product food irradiation units and 100 food testing labs. The decision in this regard was taken in the meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

❖ **‘Station’ in Ladakh begins research to simulate life on Mars**

- To prepare for possible manned missions to the moon and potentially Mars, Protoplanet, a Bengaluru-based company involved in space science popularisation, launched human outer planet exploration (HOPE) in Tso Kar, Ladakh, the company said.
- HOPE is intended to be a research station where selected “crew” —will take turns inhabiting the station as part of a 10-day “isolation mission”. “They will undergo extensive physiological and psychological studies to assess human adaptability and resilience in conditions simulating deep space environments,” Protoplanet said.
- The high-altitude and cold desert-like conditions here serve as an “exceptional analogue site, closely mimicking the geological and environmental conditions found on the moon and Mars”, it noted.
- “ISRO funded a portion of the station’s development as well as advised on the criteria for selecting candidates,”.

❖ Advanced guided-missile frigate delivered to Navy

- The Indian Navy received the advanced guided-missile frigate Himgiri built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata.
- The Navy called it a major milestone in achieving self-reliance in warship design and construction. Himgiri (Yard 3022) is the third ship of Nilgiri Class (Project 17A) and the first of the class built at GRSE. The Project 17A frigates are versatile multi-mission platforms, designed to address future challenges in the maritime domain.
- According to the Navy, Himgiri is modelled on the erstwhile INS Himgiri, a Leander-class frigate, which was decommissioned on May 6, 2025, after 30 years of service to the nation. Designed by the Warship Design Bureau and overseen by the Warship Overseeing Team (Kolkata), the ship is modular, ergonomic and built within the envisaged timelines.

❖ Malaria's new frontlines: vaccines, innovation, and the Indian endgame

- In 2023, malaria infected nearly 294 million people and killed close to 6,00,000. Despite early victories in the fight against malaria, global progress has stalled in recent years. The parasites are adapting, becoming resistant to treatments, while mosquitoes are surviving insecticides.
- India has reduced its malaria burden by over 80% between 2015 and 2023 — but last year, tribal districts such as Lawngtlai (Mizoram) and Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh) still recorded malaria rates of over 56 and 22 cases per 1,000 people, respectively as per the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control — reminders that the parasite continues to thrive in several pockets long after national averages have improved.
- While Africa faces mostly Plasmodium falciparum, India also battles the relapse-prone Plasmodium vivax which can lie dormant in the liver and reawaken weeks or, even months later. In Jharkhand, mixed infections account for nearly 20% of cases (NCVBDC), complicating elimination. Even where incidence has dropped, the parasite can persist — lurking in asymptomatic carriers (people with no symptoms) or returning months after infection.

The search for smarter, longer-lasting vaccines has never been more urgent.

- After decades of setbacks, the **first approved malaria vaccine — RTS,S — arrived in 2021**. It offered about 55% protection in the first year, but efficacy waned by 18 months, requiring a fourth booster dose.
- **The R21/Matrix-M vaccine, developed by Oxford and the Serum Institute, showed up to 77% efficacy in Phase 3 trials winning World Health Organization (WHO) approval in 2023**. Fewer doses, low cost, and Indian production make it especially promising.
- Still, both vaccines target only one stage of the parasite, leaving reinfection and transmission a lingering threat.
- Instead of targeting a single protein, like in RTS,S and R21, whole-parasite vaccines expose the immune system to the entire malaria parasite — alive, but weakened. The experimental PfSPZ vaccine mimics natural infection using radiation-weakened P. falciparum sporozoite (the parasite's early-stage form) delivered directly into the bloodstream. Early studies showed that 96% of participants developed strong antibodies, with up to 79% protection after the third dose.
- Building on that foundation, **a modified version called PfSPZ-LARC2, developed by Sanaria, may push efficacy even further**. The simplicity of a one-dose regimen, despite the intravenous requirement, could make it a strong candidate for targeted use in outbreak zones or among hard-to-reach migrant populations in India.
- Unlike vaccines that target the parasite's earlier stage, PfRH5 acts during the blood stage, when symptoms appear and the risk of severe illness increases. Since RH5 is a vital protein for red blood cell invasion that the parasite can't easily alter, it offers cross-strain protection — a rare asset in malaria

vaccine design. Phase 1a/b and Phase 2b trials in the U.K., The Gambia, and Burkina Faso have shown promising outcomes. These vaccines could complement earlier-stage ones and may help boost natural immunity in people who've previously had malaria.

Transmission-blocking vaccines

- While the above vaccines aim at protecting individuals, transmission-blocking vaccines (TBVs) target the parasite in the mosquito — halting its spread at the population level. Pfs230D1 induces antibodies that prevent parasite fertilisation within the mosquito gut. In Mali, it reduced transmission by 78% in a Phase 2 trial.
- This strategy is especially relevant to India with a far higher proportion of asymptomatic carriers. “Our group and others in India are actively working on TBVs to address this reservoir,” said Agam P. Singh, scientist at the National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi.
- India, too, is entering the TBV space with its own candidates. In July 2025, AdFalciVax was announced by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the country's first indigenous dual-stage malaria vaccine. Unlike single-phase vaccines, it combines pre-erythrocytic (PfCSP) and transmission-blocking (Pfs230 and Pfs48/45) antigens to both prevent infection and block mosquito transmission. “AdFalciVax has completed preclinical testing,” said Subhash Singh, who leads the programme at ICMR-RMRC, Bhubaneswar.
- In mice, it triggered strong immune responses lasting over four months — roughly equivalent to a decade in humans — and remained stable at room temperature for nine months, potentially aiding rural deployment.
- Progress is also visible beyond *P. falciparum*. A first-in-human trial in Thailand showed that the *P. vivax* TBV Pvs230D1M reduced mosquito transmission by up to 96%, another ray of light for India's mixed-species numbers. India, too, is not far behind. “A similar research programme for *P. vivax* is underway, in collaboration with AdFalciVax co-inventors Sanghamitra Pati and Sushil Singh,” said Dr. Singh.

Boosting immune power

- Strengthening the immune response itself is another active front. A recent protein-based vaccine combined a ferritin nanoparticle with CpG — a type of adjuvant, or immune booster already used in hepatitis B vaccines — and cut liver-stage parasite burden by 95% in mice.
- AdFalciVax showed over 90% protection in mice even with alum, a mild and widely used adjuvant. “We saw protection on a par with more inflammatory adjuvants such as MPLA (a stronger adjuvant),” said Dr. Singh. “Whether this holds in humans remains to be seen.”
- **Scientists are also testing newer vaccine platforms such as mRNA, which allow vaccines to be made faster and tweaked more easily than protein-based ones.** In 2025, researchers at CureVac and the U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH) encoded the Pfs25 antigen — targeting the parasite's sexual stage — into an mRNA-lipid nanoparticle. They observed complete transmission blockage in mice, with antibodies lasting over six months from just two doses.
- However, not all mRNA-based vaccine efforts are moving ahead smoothly. In early 2025, BioNTech's Phase I/IIa trial for its blood-stage mRNA vaccine candidate BNT165e was placed on clinical hold by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). While the company did not disclose the reason, it noted that discussions with regulators are ongoing. The pause highlights the hurdles of translating mRNA platforms into malaria vaccines.
- “mRNA and nanoparticle platforms can certainly be explored — alone or in combination,” said Pawan Malhotra, emeritus scientist at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi. “But it's hard to predict what will work. Plasmodium is complex, unlike bacteria or viruses.”

- Beyond boosting the strength of the immune response, scientists are also exploring how to improve its aim — modifying malaria antigens to help the body recognise the parasite more efficiently. A new experimental vaccine links PfCSP — a surface protein from the malaria parasite — to MIP3, a molecule that acts like a flare to draw in immune cells. In mice, it triggered stronger antibody and T cell responses than standard mRNA vaccines, reducing liver-stage infection by up to 88%. It hasn't yet been tested in humans, but it shows how tweaking the immune response could push malaria vaccines past current limits.
- Beyond vaccines, researchers are exploring how malaria hides from our immune system. *P. falciparum* uses RIFIN proteins to bind to immune 'off switches' like the LILRB1 receptor, shutting down immune cells.

It is a tactic that helps the parasite hide in plain sight.

- A new study describes an experimental, engineered antibody, D1D2.v-IgG, designed to block this interaction. Built from a segment of the LILRB1 receptor, the antibody binds to RIFIN 110 times more strongly than the natural version — outcompeting the parasite at its own game. By blocking this interference, it freed the body's LILRB1 to function normally, restoring immune attack in lab tests. Though still untested in animals, the approach could one day support new malaria therapies or enhance vaccine responses.
- While engineered antibodies attack the parasite, CRISPR-based gene drives go after its vector. These tools insert fertility-disrupting genes into mosquitoes. In a landmark study, this approach wiped out entire *Anopheles gambiae* colonies within a year — with no resistance detected.
- But evolution rarely plays along. In the wild, mosquitoes might adapt, ecosystems could shift, and once released, gene drives can't be recalled. The idea of eradicating a species raises thorny ethical and ecological questions.
- So, researchers are exploring subtler strategies. One 2025 study edited a single letter in the FREP1 gene, blocking the malaria parasite from developing inside the mosquito. With a gene drive, this parasite-blocking trait spread to over 90% of lab mosquitoes in ten generations — without harming their fertility or survival. But the parasite remains under pressure to evolve around the block, and infected mosquitoes still live long enough to potentially transmit malaria if the trait doesn't saturate the population.
- Another team took a different route — engineering mosquitoes to die sooner only when infected. By disabling an immune gene, they created a self-limiting feedback loop: the more malaria spreads, the more it kills its own carriers.

Challenges and the path ahead

- India aims at eliminating malaria by 2030. It's an ambitious plan — but one that hinges on precision and persistence.
- “*P. cynomolgi* — a monkey malaria species — is the best model for *P. vivax* research,” said Dr. Malhotra. “We were developing it 20 years ago with the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), but strict monkey access laws and lack of scientific foresight stalled it.”
- Despite these challenges in *vivax* research, efforts to develop a vaccine are gaining ground. Both Dr. Subhash Singh at ICMR and Dr. Agam P. Singh at NII confirm that *P. vivax* vaccine candidates are under active development.

But even the most innovative science needs systems to carry it forward.

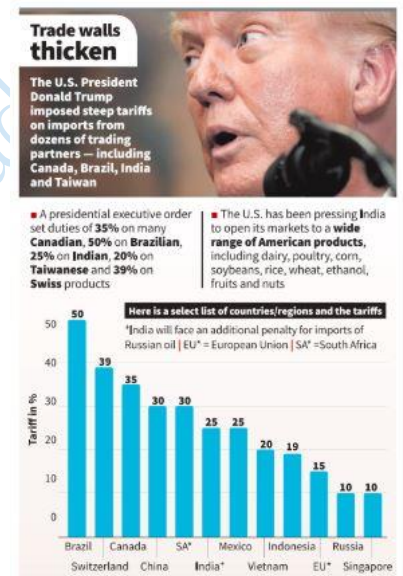
- “We need a COVID-style push,” said Dr. Malhotra. The science is advancing — but it needs infrastructure and political will to match. Dr. Singh echoes the sentiment. “We are now concentrating on translating AdFalcivax's promising preclinical results into trials. Successful deployment however, will require good results over multiple stages of trials as well as regulatory approvals, likely taking at least 7–

8 years.” In addition, strong coordination between regulators, industry, and researchers is needed. The ICMR has already floated an Expression of Interest seeking industrial partners to co-develop the vaccine. “Challenges that need to be addressed include producing GMP-grade components, developing immune biomarkers, and benchmarking efficacy against RTS,S and R21,” added Dr. Singh.

- “We definitely need vaccines, antibodies, new drugs — for both *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*,” said Dr. Malhotra. “But that’s not enough. Doctors need training, resistance must be tracked, and vector control has to keep pace.” It must be a full-spectrum battle — from the molecular level to the community clinic.
- India’s malaria story is no longer one of uniform burden — it’s a fight against hidden reservoirs, remote geographies, and a parasite that won’t quit. With next-gen vaccines, homegrown innovation, and growing scientific momentum, the country stands at a critical juncture. Elimination by 2030 is not just a goal — it’s a test of whether science, policy, and public health can unite to defeat an ancient foe.

❖ India-U.S. ties ‘weathered several challenges’, will ‘move forward’, says MEA

- The India-U.S. relationship has “weathered several transitions and challenges”, and the bilateral ties will “move forward” said a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs against the backdrop of comments from U.S. President Donald Trump, who, cited India’s purchase of military hardware and energy from Russia and announced 25% tariffs on Indian imports “plus a penalty”.
- “India and the United States share a comprehensive global strategic partnership anchored in shared interests, democratic values, and robust people-to-people ties.
- Officials clarified that the India-U.S. relationship has come a long way and expressed confidence that it will overcome the latest challenges in the way that India dealt with the sanctions that the U.S. had imposed after India tested nuclear weapons in May 1998.
- “Remember, while India is our friend, we have, over the years, done relatively little business with them because their Tariffs are.. among the highest in the World, and they have the most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary Trade Barriers of any Country. Also, they have always bought a vast majority of their military equipment from Russia, and are Russia’s largest buyer of ENERGY, along with China...”
- Apart from targeting India for sourcing energy, and military hardware from Russia, President Trump had slammed the BRICS grouping where India and Russia have been the founding members. “You know, they have BRICS, which is basically a group of countries that are anti the United States, and India is a member of that..,” Mr. Trump told the media.
- Responding to this, Mr. Jaiswal said, “Our bilateral relationships with various countries stand on their own merit and should not be seen from the prism of a third country. India and Russia have a steady and time-tested partnership.” He further highlighted the “strong defence partnership with the U.S.” that India has developed over the past years and mentioned the decisions taken during Mr. Trump’s February 13 meeting with Prime Minister Modi in Washington D.C. which had led to the new initiative named “**U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century**”.



❖ India's fuel exports going on without import duty in U.S.

- India's exports of petroleum products such as diesel and jet fuel to the U.S. continue to be exempted from the levy of any import duty or tariff, and President Donald Trump has, for now, not indicated the penalty he plans to impose to deter New Delhi's energy trade with Russia.
- Mr. Trump had announced plans to impose a 25% tariff on India, along with an additional penalty, citing concerns over the country's energy and defence ties with Russia, as well as existing trade barriers.
- However, the executive order he signed thereafter only gives effect to the 25% tariff on Indian goods coming to the U.S. Even this has an exclusion list that includes finished pharmaceutical products (tablets, injectables and syrups), active pharmaceutical ingredients, electronics and ICT goods (semiconductors, smartphones, SSDs and computers), and petroleum products (crude oil, LNG, refined fuels, electricity and coal).
- The executive order also does not indicate any penalty that is to be levied for Russian trade.
- According to official data, India exported 4.86 million tonnes of petroleum products to the U.S. in fiscal year 2024-25 for over \$4 billion. Reliance Industries Ltd. is the biggest exporter of fuel to the U.S.
- With fuel exports continuing to be on the exemption list, it means business as usual for India and companies such as Reliance, analysts said.

Big relief

- Also, a relief would be if no penalty is imposed to punish India for its oil imports from Russia, they said, adding that for now, the U.S. administration has not indicated any penalty. "For now, there is nothing but you never know," an analyst said.
- From just 0.2% before the Russia-Ukraine war to now accounting for 35-40% of total crude imports, India's reliance on Russian oil has surged — drawing fresh scrutiny with Mr. Trump announcing a penalty on top of a 25% tariff, or tax, on all goods going to the U.S.
- India historically bought most of its oil from the Middle East, including Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, things changed when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.
- India, the world's third-largest crude importer after China and the U.S., began snapping up Russian oil that was available at a discount after some in the West shunned it as a means to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.
- From a market share of just 0.2% in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia overtook Iraq and Saudi Arabia to become India's No.1 supplier, with a share as high as 40% at one point of time.
- This month, Russia supplied 36% of all crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, that India imported.

❖ 12th Fail named best film; Shah Rukh, Vikrant Massey, and Rani best actors

- The best male actor award was shared by Shah Rukh Khan for Jawan and Vikrant Massey for 12th Fail, which won the best feature film award at the 71st National Film Awards announced.
- Rani Mukerji was adjudged the best female actor for her role in Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway. This year, a total of 332 feature films, 115 non-feature films, 27 books, and 16 critics came for selection for the awards for 2023.
- Mr. Khan and Ms. Mukerji, senior artists, won the best actor awards for the first time.
- The best male actor award for a supporting role was shared by Vijayaraghavan for Pookkaalam (Malayalam) and Muthupettai Somu Bhaskar for Parking (Tamil); Urvashi won the best female actor award for a supporting role for Ullozhukku (Malayalam) along with Janki Bodiwala for Vash (Gujarati). The best child artist award went to Sukriti Veni Bandreddi; Kabir Khandare; and Treasha Thosar, Shrinivas Pokale and Bhargav Jagtap, for Gandhi Tatha Chettu (Telugu), Gypsy (Marathi), and Naal 2, respectively.
- The best direction award went to Sudipto Sen for The Kerala Story (Hindi), which was also recognised for best cinematography (Prasantanu Mohapatra). PVNS Rohit was adjudged the best male singer for the song Premisthunna in the film Baby (Telugu), which also won for the best screenplay (Sai Rajesh Neelam). Shilpa Rao won the title of best female singer for Chaleya in Jawan (Hindi).
- The award for best debut film was bagged by Ashish Bende for Aatmapamphlet (Marathi), and the best popular film by Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani directed by Karan Johar. Sam Bahadur, directed by Meghna Gulzar, was recognised as the best film promoting national, social, and environmental values.
- Naal 2 (Marathi), directed by Sudhakar Reddy Yakkanti, topped the best children's film category, while Hanu-Man (Telugu) won for be best film in animation, visual effects, gaming and comic category.
- The awards for sound design were bagged by Animal (Hindi) (Sachin Sudhakaran and Hariharan Muralidharan); for editing by Midhun Murali in Pookkaalam; production design by Mohandas in 2018: Everyone Is A Hero (Malayalam), music direction by G.V. Prakash Kumar in Vaathi (Tamil) and Harshavardhan Rameshwar in Animal; and lyrics by Karsarla Shyam in Balagam (Ooru Palleturu - Telugu).
- The best choreography award went to Vaibhavi Merchant for Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani (Dhindhora Baje Re); and the best action direction award (stunt choreography) to Nandu Prudhvi for Hanu-Man. Sam Bahadur, a biopic on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, was named in categories for make-up and costume, while Sanya Malhotra-starrer Kathal: A Jackfruit Mystery was adjudged the best Hindi film.
- Deepak Kingrani was recognised as the best dialogue writer for the Hindi film Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai. Rongatapu 1982 (Assamese), Deep Fridge (Bengali), Parking, Kandeelu (Kannada), Shyamchi Aai (Marathi), Pushkara (Odia), Godday Godday Chaa (Punjabi), and Bhagavanth Kesari (Telugu) won in the language film categories.

The credits roll...

The jury for the 71st National Film Awards picked the winners from 332 feature film entries for 2023

■ **Best film on national values**
Sam Bahadur (Hindi)

■ **Best direction**
The Kerala Story (Hindi) | Sudipto Sen

■ **Best documentary**
God Vulture and Human

■ **Best Editing**
Pookkaalam (Malayalam)

■ **Best short film**
Giddh The Scavenger (Hindi)

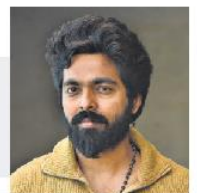
■ **Best screenplay**
Baby (Telugu), *Parking* (Tamil), *Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai* (Hindi)



■ **Best film: 12th Fail** (Hindi)

■ **Best children's film**
Naal 2 (Marathi)

■ **Best production design: 2018 - Everyone Is A Hero** (Malayalam)



■ **Best music direction**
G.V. Prakash Kumar (*Vaathi*) and Harshavardhan Rameshwar (*Animal*)

■ **Best choreography**
Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani (Hindi)



■ **Best male actor**
Shah Rukh Khan (*Jawan*) and Vikrant Massey (*12th Fail*)



■ **Best female actor**
Rani Mukerji (*Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway*)

- The Hindi film Flowering Man won for the best non-feature film. The best documentary award went to God Vulture and Human; the best director award to Piyush Thakur for The First Film; and the best script award was bagged by Kannada short film Sunflowers were the First Ones to Know by Chidananda Nayak.

❖ **'Report on failure analysis of PSLV-C61/EOS-09 mission to be submitted to PM soon'**

- The failure analysis committee has pinpointed the problem that caused the failure of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle-C61/Earth Observation Satellite-09 (PSLV-C61/EOS-09) mission in May, V. Narayanan, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The PSLV-C61/EOS-09 had a perfect lift-off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, on May 18. The mission's objective was to place the EOS-09 satellite in a sun-synchronous polar orbit. The mission failed to achieve its objective, causing an unusual setback for the space agency with the PSLV, often described as its trusted workhorse for its reliability. Immediately afterwards, the ISRO had stated that the "PSLV-C61 performance was normal till second stage. Due to an observation in the third stage, the mission could not be accomplished."

❖ **ISRO gearing up for next U.S. collaboration with BlueBird communications satellite**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is hoping to launch the Block 2 BlueBird communications satellite developed by the U.S.-based AST SpaceMobile in three or four months, Chairman of the space agency V. Narayanan.
- This Indo-U.S. collaboration follows the NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission (NISAR) which the ISRO successfully launched on July 30 using the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV). The BlueBird satellite will be launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, aboard LVM3, ISRO's heaviest launch vehicle which was formerly known as the GSLV-Mk III, he said.
- The BlueBird satellite, weighing around 6,500 kg, is expected to arrive in India in September. Work is also progressing on the mission launch vehicle.
- On whether U.S. President Donald Trump's trade policies would affect collaboration in science and technology, Mr. Narayanan said he "fully believes that whatever technology contracts that India has signed will be executed".
- Mr. Narayanan reiterated ISRO's plans to have the first of three uncrewed missions planned ahead of the Gaganyaan human space flight in December 2025. The remaining two uncrewed missions are expected in 2026.
- The ISRO had earlier announced plans to have the crewed mission in the first quarter of 2027. This schedule will be kept after studying the performance of the uncrewed missions.
- On the development of the Gaganyaan programme, he said the human-rating of the launch vehicle has been completed. The development of the orbital module is in an "advanced stage", he said, adding the development of the crew escape system is nearing completion.

❖ 'Bio-fortified potatoes to hit Indian market soon'

- Bio-fortified potatoes, with **added iron content**, will soon be available in Indian markets, said Simon Heck, Director-General of the **Peru-based International Potato Center (CIP)**.
- Bio-fortified sweet potatoes, with **vitamin A added using technology** developed by the CIP, are **already available in Karnataka, Assam, West Bengal, and Odisha**.

• **The CIP, an apex research body of international research institutions working on tubular crops,** will take efforts to make the seeds of bio-fortified sweet potato available to more farmers, said Dr. Heck, currently in India for the establishment of the CIP South Asia regional centre in Agra.

- The focus is on iron fortification in potatoes. “We have already shared the germ plasm with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research’s Central Potato Institute in Shimla. The first variety has been released in Peru”, he said.
- India has the strongest momentum for potato production and farmers wanted better varieties of potato that grew well with fewer agro-chemical input and they also wanted to be part of the market chain, including food processing.
- The centre will help farmers access better quality seeds and provide them better exposure to markets.

• **The CIP believes that the location chosen for the new centre near Agra, in the heart of the potato belt of India, is ideal as the Indo-Gangetic plains is the largest potato-producing area in the world.**

- Uttar Pradesh government had made available the land and handed it over to the National Horticulture Board, which invited the CIP to establish the centre. The agreement between the CIP and the Union Agriculture Ministry, signed in the last week of July, was set up following the demand from the Government of India in recognition of the potential for economic growth from the thriving potato sector.
- The international companies, especially potato firms from Europe and North America, are increasingly investing in potato production in India,” he said.

Part of market chain

- “What they [farmers] needed is access to potato seed of the right quality, of the right variety, and at the right time of the year. There are constraints. They do not have enough potato seeds or they come too late for planting or they are not of good quality.
- We need to build the capacity for companies to multiply potato seeds. That will be a major contribution of the CIP,” he said.
- The CIP was working with private companies and public research institutes to make sure that farmers throughout India would have access to good quality planting material, right from the initial breeding of new varieties, through multiplication every year, in the right locations.
- The CIP would also ensure that the vulnerable parts of society had access to nutritious potato. There were number of opportunities along the road; one was to work with the government, with public sector food procurement, for school feeding programmes, such as mid-day meals. This would give children access to nutritious potato through the programmes, more specifically and consistently, he said. Another one was to breed potato that was more nutritious, he added.

❖ Buffer zones around waterbodies to be fixed based on size?

- The State government has proposed to fix buffer zones for waterbodies, including tanks, lakes, and nalas, based on their size.
- The Karnataka Land Conservation and Development Authority has clarified that the proposed buffer zone fixation is not to help real estate development but to have uniform zones based on the size of the waterbodies across the State.

- As per the proposal, the buffer zone is sought to be removed for tanks with area less than five guntas, while setting a three-metre buffer for tanks with an area between five guntas and one acre; six metres for tanks between one acre and 10 acres; 13 metres for tanks between 10 and 25 acres; 24 metres for tanks between 25 acres and 100 acres, and 30 metres for tanks that are bigger than 100 acres.
- **For primary canals, the government has proposed to bring down the buffer zone from the current 30 to 15 metres. For secondary canals, it will be reduced from 15 to 10 metres and for tertiary canals from 10 to five metres.**
- **Currently, the buffer zone in the State is based on the National Green Tribunal (NGT) order of 2016 pertaining to lakes in Bengaluru that was subsequently modified by the Supreme Court.**

Orders in 2019

- The State government issued orders for the current buffer zone in 2019. Accordingly, the buffer zone for lakes was fixed at 30 metres, for primary canals at 30 metres, secondary canals at 25 metres, and tertiary canals at 10 metres.
- In Karnataka, 41,849 lakes have been identified for having an area between one gunta and 1,000 acres. Some of the public services such as drinking water pipelines, underground electricity cables, roads, bridges connecting to major roads, lift irrigation projects, jack wells, pump houses, and sewage water treatment facilities, among many others, are in the buffer zones.
- A note from the authority said that the proposed buffer zone, a first-of-its-kind in the country, is based on the studies conducted in different States and petitions received from the Kundapur legislator and the Deputy Commissioner of Udupi, who said that uniform buffer zone for waterbodies has been fixed without considering the size and the same had been made applicable to waterbodies irrespective of whether they are one gunta or 1,000 acres.

Other States

- In Tamil Nadu, a uniform buffer zone of three metres has been fixed, while in Gujarat, the buffer zone is nine metres.
- In Telangana, a buffer zone of 30 metres has been fixed for tanks bigger than 10 hectares and a buffer of nine metres is fixed for tanks below nine hectares.
- Outlining benefits of the new proposal, the authority argued that only those projects that are in the interest of public services would be taken up without obstructing the inflow of water to the waterbodies.
- In several places, the declared buffer zones have private properties where no construction zone is in effect, it said, adding that the proposed buffer zone would help mitigate floods in urban centres and helps in development of infrastructure.
- It also said that the new buffer zones would help in setting up sewage treatment plants near waterbodies to prevent its pollution and the reduction of buffer zones would not affect aquatic life.
- **The new proposal is a balance between development and conservation issues,** it claimed.

❖ How does the World Bank classify countries by income?

- When people talk about countries as 'rich' or 'poor', they can mean many different things. But for researchers and policymakers, it helps to have a way to compare countries by income using clear criteria. One widely used approach is the **World Bank's income classification system, which places countries into four groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries.**
- Every year, the World Bank assigns each country to an income group based on its gross national income (GNI) per capita.

- **GNI per capita is a measure of the average income of a country’s residents, including income that is earned abroad. Since countries report GNI in their local currencies, the World Bank converts these figures into U.S. dollars using exchange rates. It then places countries in one of four income groups based on specific thresholds.**

Maps 1 and 2 show how countries were classified by income in 2014 and 2024.

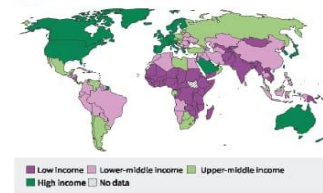
- The income thresholds that separate groups were first set **in the late 1980s when this classification system was introduced**. At that time, these were aligned with the World Bank’s policies for lending money to countries. The Bank used average incomes to determine which countries were eligible for concessional loans.
- This threshold for receiving such loans became the boundary between low-income and middle-income countries. The Bank then added two more thresholds to allow for further distinctions. These were chosen based on the distribution of country incomes at the time, rather than on lending rules.
- Today, the thresholds are no longer linked to the Bank’s operations, but they have been updated yearly to account for inflation. This adjustment is based on a measure of global inflation.
- This means that the classification is absolute. Countries are put into groups according to predetermined thresholds, and a country’s placement depends only on its GNI per capita, not on how it stacks up relative to other countries.

Income thresholds

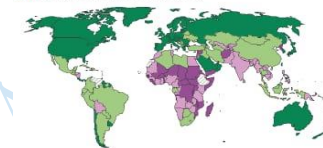
The data for the charts were sourced from Our World in Data's story titled "How does the World Bank classify countries by income?"



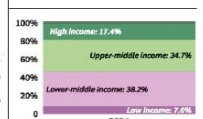
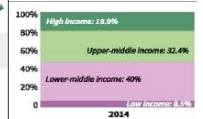
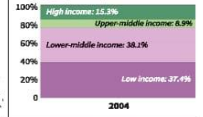
Map 1: Countries classified by Income in 2014



Map 2: Countries classified by Income in 2024



Charts 3, 4 and 5: Share of population by income group in 2004, 2014 and 2024



- **The thresholds for the latest income groups are (in U.S. dollars): low income: \$1,135 or less; lower-middle income: \$1,136 to \$4,495; upper-middle income: \$4,496 to \$13,935; high income: More than \$13,935.**

- If a country’s GNI per capita crosses a threshold, it moves into a new income group in the following update. Because GNI per capita changes over time, and thresholds are revised annually, countries can move between income groups over time. These movements may reflect real changes in income, shifts in exchange rates, or updates to population data.
- In the long run, most countries have moved up the income ladder as their economies have grown. However, countries can also move down — and some have, particularly in periods of war and economic crisis. Two examples are Syria and Yemen, which went from low-middle income to low income in 2017.
- When we hear that there are four income groups, we might imagine that the world’s population is evenly divided across them, with around 25% of people living in each. But this isn’t the case. Again, these groups are defined based on absolute thresholds, not relative cut-offs that change based on other countries’ progress.
- In 2004, 37% of the population lived in low-income countries. Today, that share has fallen to less than 10%. In the same period, the share of upper-middle income countries increased from less than 10% to 35%. You can see this change in Charts 3, 4 and 5.

❖ 140 people of PVTGs, Nicobari tribe to join Andaman Police

- A total of 140 people from Nicobari tribe and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) will join the Andaman and Nicobar Police as part of their gradual integration in Port Blair.
- **“The PVTGs, which include Onge, Great Andamanese, Nicobari, will join as Home Guard Volunteers,”.**

- “A total of 132 Nicobari candidates, including 41 females, three Great Andamanese, including one female and five Onge, are now part of our police family.” Integration is also noticed among other PVTGs such as Shompens and Jarawas (Ang).

❖ Scientists use AI-designed proteins to generate immune cells

- A team of Harvard scientists has used artificial intelligence (AI), in the form of AI-designed proteins, to generate large numbers of immune cells and enhance immunity against diseases ranging from cancer to viral infections, a new research paper published in Cell said.
- The scientists engineered a synthetic activator of a key cellular pathway called **Notch signalling**, which plays a crucial role in cellular differentiation and is essential for transforming human immune progenitors into T cells.
- **Notch signalling is a cell-to-cell communication system vital for various developmental processes and tissue homeostasis in multicellular organisms.**
- Homeostasis is the body’s way of keeping everything balanced and stable, despite what is happening around it.
- “In response to viral infections or cancer, the body requires a higher production of T cells to mount an effective immune defence. However, this process depends on the activation of the Notch signalling pathway, for which no effective molecular activators have been available,” Rubul Mout from Assam, the principal scientist of the study, said.

Improved method

- According to the study, an earlier method of activating Notch signalling in laboratory settings by immobilising Notch ligands on tissue culture dishes is not applicable for therapeutic use in humans.
- The quest for a viable, soluble activator of Notch signalling that could work in vivo (inside a living body) made the team develop a library of custom-designed soluble Notch agonists and systematically test their ability to activate the Notch pathway and support T cell development and function.
- AI-driven protein design technologies, an innovation that contributed to Dr. Baker receiving the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry along with Demis Hassabis and John Jumper, were used to address the challenge.
- Using the agonists, the researchers demonstrated the large-scale generation of T cells in a laboratory bioreactor, an important advancement given the growing demand for T cell production in hospitals worldwide for Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T cell-based cancer immunotherapies.
- Furthermore, when the agonists were injected into mice during vaccination, the animals displayed significantly improved T cell responses, indicating an enhanced immune response. The treatment resulted in increased production of memory T cells, which are crucial for the long-term impact of vaccines. “Being able to activate Notch signalling opens up tremendous opportunities in immunotherapy, vaccine development, and immune cell regeneration,” Dr. Mout said.

❖ Why is Hong Kong regulating and licensing stablecoins?

- Within and outside the crypto ecosystem, even if they might not balloon in price like Bitcoin. Crypto investors often use stablecoins to facilitate easy trading on crypto exchanges. Others around the world have used stablecoins to maintain the value of their savings when their native currencies are depreciating, or to save money on cross-border transactions.
- **Argentina, Turkey, and even Taliban-occupied Afghanistan are some places where stablecoins are not just for trading, but a way to make daily life possible.**

- The numbers tell a compelling story as well. **Tether (USDT), the fourth largest cryptocurrency by market capitalisation and the largest stablecoin, per CoinMarketCap, has a circulating supply of 163.75 billion USDT. Meanwhile, more than \$250 billion worth of stablecoins are estimated to be in circulation worldwide.**



- Naturally, more governments are concerned about whether the highly engineered use of stablecoins could one day affect the value of the original fiat currencies or commodities backing them up. Furthermore, what is the guarantee that every stablecoin pegged to the dollar, euro, pound, or peso is actually backed up by its issuer?
- Currently, it is largely up to stablecoin users to audit their issuers' reserves and make sure that their stablecoins are adequately backed. When a stablecoin issuer suddenly adds millions of dollars in assets, it naturally raises questions about where the money to back this is coming from, or whether it really exists. This is where regulation comes in.

Do stablecoins exhibit volatility despite being pegged to currencies?

- Despite their name and their backing, stablecoins can also exhibit volatility. In response to both technical factors and world events, stablecoins sometimes come unpegged and their prices may rise or fall beyond the usual range, with sudden drops triggering panic amongst investors. For example, USDT, which is pegged to the U.S. Dollar, has in the past fallen to prices as low as around \$0.92.
- Stablecoins have also collapsed entirely. In May 2022, Terra's cryptocurrency LUNA and its linked algorithmic stablecoin UST both lost most of their value in a matter of hours. Panicking investors who no longer trusted these assets quickly sold them off to minimise losses, and the prices fell close to zero. Billions of dollars were wiped from the crypto sector and the ensuing liquidity crunch triggered asset freezes across global crypto exchanges and fintech platforms.

Have other countries started to regulate stablecoins?

- U.S. President Donald Trump in July signed the GENIUS Act that is designed to regulate stablecoins and protect the U.S. dollar, much to the joy of his pro-crypto supporters.
- As per the White House, the GENIUS Act requires 100% reserve backing with liquid assets like U.S. dollars or short-term Treasuries for stablecoins. Those issuing this asset will also have to make monthly, public disclosures of the composition of their reserves, apart from complying with marketing rules.
- Other countries that have started to regulate stablecoins include Japan and Singapore, per AFP, while multiple other jurisdictions have more generic regulations that cover stablecoins along with other cryptocurrencies.
- Though the Chinese government heavily restricts crypto-related activities in its jurisdiction, some of the country's tech giants hope that Hong Kong's upcoming regulatory regime will provide an outlet for their own stablecoin ventures.

❖ Centre hits back after Trump threatens more tariffs on India

- Less than a week after he announced a 25% tariff on imports from India “plus a penalty”, U.S. President Donald Trump once again raised the issue of India buying oil from Russia and profiting from it.
- He stated that he would be “substantially” raising the tariff “paid by India to the USA”. It should be noted that such tariffs are paid by importers in the U.S., rather than the country on which the tariffs are levied.
- The Indian government hit back at Mr. Trump’s statements and also criticism from European countries on India’s trade with Russia, saying that such “targeting of India” was “unjustified and unreasonable”. In a statement, the government pointed out that not only did the U.S. encourage such trade previously, both the European Union and the U.S. continue to actively trade with Russia at levels significantly higher than India’s.”
- “India is not only buying massive amounts of Russian Oil, they are then, for much of the Oil purchased, selling it on the Open Market for big profits,” Mr. Trump posted on the social network Truth Social. “They don’t care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian War Machine. Because of this, I will be substantially raising the Tariff paid by India to the USA. [sic]”
- The Ministry of External Affairs responded to the statement, saying that the U.S. had previously “actively encouraged” the import of Russian oil.
- “India has been targeted by the United States and the European Union for importing oil from Russia after the commencement of the Ukraine conflict,” the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said. “In fact, India began importing from Russia because traditional supplies were diverted to Europe after the outbreak of the conflict.
- The United States at that time actively encouraged such imports by India for strengthening global energy markets stability.” The MEA’s statement added that India’s oil imports from Russia are meant to ensure “predictable and affordable energy costs” for the Indian consumer. “They are a necessity compelled by the global market situation,” it added. “However, it is revealing that the very nations criticising India are themselves indulging in trade with Russia. Unlike our case, such trade is not even a vital national compulsion.”
- The MEA said that the European Union in 2024 had a bilateral trade of €67.5 billion in goods with Russia, in addition to a trade in services estimated at €17.2 billion in 2023.

Western trade with Russia

- “This is significantly more than India’s total trade with Russia that year or subsequently,” the MEA said. “European imports of LNG [liquefied natural gas] in 2024, in fact, reached a record 16.5 mn tonnes, surpassing the last record of 15.21 mn tonnes in 2022.”
- Europe’s trade with Russia includes not just energy, but also fertilizers, mining products, chemicals, iron and steel and machinery and transport equipment, the statement said.
- “Where the United States is concerned, it continues to import from Russia uranium hexafluoride for its nuclear industry, palladium for its EV [electric vehicle] industry, fertilizers as well as chemicals,” the MEA noted.
- “In this background, the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable,” it added. “Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security.”
- The 25% tariff places India at a relative disadvantage compared to some of its competitors such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Philippines. Mr. Trump’s new tariffs are expected to take effect from August 7

❖ Panel submits report on SC internal quota

- The over-three-decade struggle for internal reservation among the 101 Scheduled Castes in Karnataka reached a crucial point with the one-man commission headed by retired judge H.N. Nagamohan Das submitting its report with six recommendations.
- The commission considered social and educational backwardness along with adequate representation in public employment before arriving at a matrix for quota within the 17% reservation for SCs in public education and employment.
- The government had tasked the commission **to recommend internal reservation slicing up the 17% quota among Dalit right (Holeyas), Dalit left (Madigas), Korma, Korcha, Lambani, Bhovi and over 40 nomadic castes based on the August 1, 2024 ruling of the Supreme Court that cleared the decks for internal reservation by upholding its constitutional validity under Article 14.**

Challenges for survey

1. Though the government asked Mr. Nagamohan Das, in January 2025, to recommend internal reservation, the retired judge, in his interim report in March 2025, recommended a State-wide survey to collect data scientifically, as mandated by the court, following which the survey had been conducted.
2. The commission, after conducting a house-to-house survey across Karnataka between May 5 and July 6, identified 1.07 crore persons from 27.24 lakh families hailing from the SC community. About 93% of the projected SC population of about 1.16 crore in Karnataka has been covered. The survey lagged in BBMP jurisdiction, touching about 54% after several extensions.
3. Several castes within the broader SC community have also not been beneficiaries of reservation with no representation in public employment nor political representation, and poor or no benefits in educational avenues besides facing social discrimination.

❖ **Shibu Soren (1944-2025): Former Jharkhand CM Shibu Soren dies**

- Former Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) co-founder Shibu Soren passed away in Delhi. He was 81.
- “He was like a protective shade for Jharkhand and the tribals. That shade has left us today.
- Mr. Soren was born on January 11, 1944 in Nemra village of undivided Bihar, which now comes under Ramgarh district of Jharkhand.
- **He co-founded the JMM along with A.K. Roy and Binod Bihari Mahto in 1973. The JMM soon became the primary political voice for the demand for a separate tribal State and got support across the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions.**
- He served as Chief Minister of Jharkhand three times, but never completed a full term. He was elected several times to the Lok Sabha from Dumka. As a key figure in the United Progressive Alliance government, he also served as Union Coal Minister.
- Before Shibu Soren started his political journey, he was a social reformer. Later, as a political leader, he fought for a separate Jharkhand State, earning the respect of all parties.
- As a tribal leader, he challenged the social structure at that time. From 1962, he had fought against the money-lending system which, at its peak, deprived borrowers of all but one-third of their produce in the tribal areas.
- Describing his fight against the money lenders, Tanuj Khatri, spokesperson and central committee member of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), that Soren had started a campaign to cut paddy on lands occupied by the moneylenders in lieu of loans.
- Tribal women would harvest paddy, and men with bows and arrows would keep a watch.

- Hailing from the Santhal tribal group, Soren got the sobriquet Guruji because he used to organise night schools for children who could not afford to go to school.

❖ Health Dept. brings AYUSH medicines under FSDA purview

- After merging the Drugs Control Department with the Food Safety Authority, the Health Department has now brought all AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) medicines and AYUSH testing laboratories under the purview of the Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA).
- Announcing this at a press conference, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the move is to control the quality of medicines being prescribed under the alternative systems of medicine. Moreover, the department has also reduced the time it takes to recall substandard medicines from the market.
- Earlier, once a drug was flagged as ‘Not of Standard Quality’ (NSQ), it could take up to 30 days for it to be removed from pharmacies and distributors. Now that time has been cut to just two days, the Minister said.

❖ Women’s inclusion in armed forces a priority, says Rajnath

- The parliamentary consultative committee on Defence, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, was briefed on the representation of women in the armed forces.
- As per the data from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), women form 13.4% of the Indian Air force workforce — the highest among all three services — while they make up 6.85% of the Army’s workforce and 6% of the Navy’s.
- In 2024, there were a total of 1,735 women in the Army, 1,614 in the Air Force, and 674 in the Navy. In 2005, the figures were 767, 574, and 154, respectively.
- Twelve branches in the Army are open to women officers, including combat. In the Navy, all branches are open for women officers except submarines. All branches of the Air Force are open for women officers.

❖ Pollution Control Boards have power to impose restitutionary damages: SC

- The Supreme Court gave Pollution Control Boards more teeth by declaring their power to impose and collect restitutionary damages to completely restore polluted air and waterbodies back to their original, pristine selves in an ecosystem.
- “We direct that Pollution Control Boards can impose and collect as restitutionary and compensatory damages fixed sums of monies or require furnishing bank guarantees as an ex-ante measure towards potential environmental damage in exercise of powers under Sections 33A and 31A of the Water and Air Acts,” Justice P.S. Narasimha, who authored the judgment, held.
- The judgment came on an appeal filed by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee against a Delhi High Court decision that it was not empowered to levy compensatory damages in exercise of **powers under Section 33A of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Section 31A of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- The Bench, including Justice Manoj Misra, further directed that the power should be enforced only after issuing the necessary subordinate legislation in the form of rules and regulations under both statutes. The rules must incorporate the basic principles of natural justice.
- “**According to the polluter pays principle,** the responsibility for repairing the damage is that of the offending industry... The focus has to be on restoration of the ecosystem as close and similar as possible to the specific one that was damaged,” Justice Narasimha observed.

- Justice Narasimha held that the Pollution Control Boards had expansive powers and “enormous responsibilities” under the Water Act and the Air Act. They had a broad statutory mandate to prevent, control and abate water and air pollution.
- The provisions under these statutes bestowed the Boards with the power to direct closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process. Further, this power extended to directing the stoppage or regulation of supply of electricity, water or any other service. The laws allow the Boards significant flexibility in deciding the nature of directions.

❖ Largest Asian tortoise back in Nagaland community reserve

- The **critically endangered Asian giant tortoise, the largest in mainland Asia, has been reintroduced into the Zeliang Community Reserve in Nagaland’s Peren.**
- Officials said 10 individuals of the species from **Nagaland Zoological Park in Chümoukedima** were released through a community event
- . The event was organised by the Nagaland Forest Department and the **India Turtle Conservation Programme.**
- The tortoises were released in a pre-constructed soft-release enclosure to help them develop site fidelity before dispersal. **Once found in large numbers, the species was almost wiped out from Nagaland over a decade ago.**

❖ PM’s Pariksha Pe Charcha sets Guinness World Record

- Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Ashwini Vaishnaw, and Jitin Prasada received the Guinness World Record for the latest edition of “Pariksha Pe Charcha”, an annual event led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The initiative, being organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with MyGov since 2018, has been conferred the record for the “Most people registered on a citizen engagement platform in one month”.
- “A matter of great delight and personal satisfaction to accept the Guinness World Record... #PPC2025 has set a world record with 3.53 crore+ registrations and over 21 crore viewership on television,” said Mr. Pradhan.



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❖ Independence Day invites this year to feature Chenab bridge, Operation Sindoor

- Independence Day invites from the Defence Ministry for this year's Independence Day celebrations will have Operation Sindoor as the central theme.
- In another change, the Central Vista image embossed on the cards will be replaced by a sketch of the world's highest railway bridge that spans the Chenab river which was recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Posters and banners around the venue will also mention Operation Sindoor. Operation Sindoor was launched by India on May 7 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen were murdered.

❖ Mutual fund industry AUM grew sevenfold in 10 years: Study

- The asset under management (AUM) of India's mutual fund (MF) industry as of June 2025 was estimated at ₹74.40 lakh crore, marking a more than seven-fold growth in 10 years, Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund said in a report.
- The report said equity commanded the largest share at 59.94%, followed by debt at 26.53%, hybrid at 8.28%, and other categories accounting for 5.26%.
- A steady rise was witnessed in passive investing, which now accounts for about 17% of the total AUM, it added.
- "While active funds continue to dominate in absolute terms, the increasing share of passive strategies reflects broader adoption of low-cost, transparent, and benchmark-aligned approaches. In the quarter ended June 2025, total estimated net inflows stood at ₹3,98,000 crore," Motilal Oswal Mutual Fund said.
- "This was largely led by the debt segment, which drew ₹2,39,000 crore, reversing the previous quarter's outflows. Equities contributed ₹1,33,000 crore, while commodities added ₹9,000 crore.
- Active strategies accounted for ₹3,62,000 crore of total inflows, with passive funds contributing ₹36,000 crore," it added.

❖ Bharti Airtel unveils subsidiary Xtelify, to sell software tools to foreign telcos

- Bharti Airtel Ltd. announced a new subsidiary called Xtelify, which the company said, would sell the telco's internal business intelligence and customer relations tools with operators around the world.
- In addition to this, Airtel will sell 'sovereign' cloud storage with local data centres to firms who need it due to data localisation regulations.
- The integration of Airtel's own systems into the cloud was something that led to Xtelify's formation, Airtel India CEO Gopal Vittal told reporters. The suite would offer telcos the ability to make personalised offers to customers, something Airtel has already been doing, Mr. Vittal said. Xtelify has already tied up with the Singaporean telco Singtel, and Globe, a Filipino operator.
- The product would help telcos materially boost their earnings from users, Mr. Vittal said. The "software platform ... will help telcos all around the world rid themselves of underlying complexity, improve customer experience, lower churn and raise Average Revenue Per User," Airtel said in an announcement.
- The Airtel Cloud product had a "control plane" that was also in India, Mr. Vittal said.

❖ Flash floods leave four dead in Uttarakhand

- At least four persons were killed and dozens feared washed away in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand after flash floods triggered by torrential rain hit the **Kheer Ganga river**.
- **Army:** Rescued around 20 people in the first three hours of the rescue operation
- **Uttarkashi District Magistrate:**
 - ✓ The floods, which hit the town around 1.45 p.m., had caused heavy losses of life and property.
 - ✓ The administration has also set up relief camps for those affected. Hospitals in the area have been asked to reserve a separate wing for the treatment of injured people, and medical teams have been asked to be ready with beds, oxygen, and medicines.
 - ✓ Given the poor weather conditions and further predictions of heavy rains over the next couple of days, the administration has announced that all schools will be shut on July 6.
- **Teams of State Disaster Response Force, Army and ITBP:** Were immediately rushed to the spot to carry out rescue operations on a war footing.
 - ✓ Disaster management officials have been asked to use loudspeakers and sirens to alert people living in villages near the river, in the Chilyanisaur, Bhatwari, and Dunda blocks, asking them to evacuate their homes for safer locations. Trekking permits in Uttarkashi have also been denied until further notice.
- **Uttarakhand Chief Minister:** Ordered the administration to ensure speedy rescue and rehabilitation.
- **The Union government** has assured the State of its help in the rescue efforts.

❖ Revenue Minister inaugurates Bhu Suraksha Yojane, aimed at digitising all base land records

- Minister for Revenue Krishna Byre Gowda inaugurated the **Bhu Suraksha Yojane, a land records digitisation project**, at the Bengaluru (Urban) Deputy Commissioner's office in central Bengaluru.
- The initiative **aims at digitising all base land records, including those classified under categories A and B, by scanning them and making them available online through the Bhu Suraksha website.**
- **The project began a year ago across all tahsildar offices in the State.**
- **Now, the government has expanded the digitisation effort to include records in all Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner offices.**
- **“There are an estimated 100 crore pages of land records in the State that need to be scanned.**
- We have completed scanning 36.35 lakh pages so far, and the remaining will be done at the earliest,” the Minister said. According to Mr. Gowda, the deadline for completing digitisation of records in Assistant Commissioner (AC) and Deputy Commissioner (DC) offices across the State is March 2026.
- The Minister emphasised that the initiative will not only make land records easily accessible to the public but also help eliminate irregularities such as possible dependence on middlemen or the need for bribes to obtain records.
- He clarified that those who prefer to collect the records in person can do so at Nadakacheris, where officials will provide the digitised documents.
- Karnataka was the first State to embark on a full-scale digitisation of such a massive volume of documents.

❖ **Internal quota: panel moots 6% for Dalit left, 5% for Dalit right**

- The one-man commission headed by H.N. Nagamohan Das, which submitted its report on internal reservation for 101 Scheduled Castes in Karnataka to the government, is learnt to have **created a separate group for Adi Karnataka (AK), Adi Dravida (AD) and Adi Andhra (AA), providing 1% reservation within the 17% reservation for SCs for the three.**
- The colonial era nomenclature coined to bring depressed sections within the SC community had been a major cause of confusion in slicing up the reservation matrix since members from both Dalit left (Madigas) and Dalit right (Holeyas) grouping have certificates under these names.

How it is sliced up

- While the commission is learnt to have provided 6% reservation for the Dalit left, it is learnt to have given the Dalit right 5%.
 - The **Lambani, Korama, Koracha and Bhovi have been given 4%** and the **more than 40 nomadic tribes classified as micro communities due to their population size have been given 1%**, it is learnt.
 - There are over 50 very backward micro communities whose population is less than 10,000.
 - The micro communities are learnt to have been given a higher weightage that will help them in public employment over others.
- “Castes that are equal in social and educational backwardness, and scored poor in adequate representation have been brought together. This, along with population size, has been the basis for allocating reservation matrix,” sources said.

❖ **Trump’s tariffs likely to severely affect aquaculture and seafood sector in A.P.**

- With the U.S. President Donald Trump announcing a 25% tariff on Indian products, the aquaculture sector in Andhra Pradesh is likely to be severely affected, particularly for the shrimp farmers.
- Aquaculture farmers in A.P. exporting their produce to the U.S have to bear about 25% tariffs, 5.77% countervailing duty and 3.96% anti-dumping duty from August 7, says the Seafood Exporters Association of India members.
- The contribution of A.P. to seafood exports was 9.52% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in 2023-24, said Joint Director (Aquaculture), Shaik Lal Mohammad.
- The sector has been facing a severe crisis after the U.S. imposed 26% tariff in April. As the prices fell of shrimp in the international market, many farmers announced crop holiday, the producers said.

❖ **Trump says he will hike tariff on India ‘over next 24 hours’**

- U.S. President Donald Trump said India had not been a good trading partner, and announced that he would raise the tariffs on the country “very substantially” over the next 24 hours because it is buying Russian oil.
- “With India, what people don’t like to say about India, they’re the highest tariff nation. They have the highest tariff of anybody. We do very, very little business with India because their tariffs are so high,” he said in an interview with CNBC Squawk Box.
- “India has not been a good trading partner, because they do a lot of business with us, but we don’t do business with them. So we settled on 25% [tariff], but I think I’m going to raise that very substantially over the next 24 hours, because they’re buying Russian oil. They’re fuelling the war machine. And if they’re going to do that, then I’m not going to be happy,” he added.
- The Europe-Russia trade includes not just energy but also fertilizers, mining products, chemicals, iron and steel, and machinery and transport equipment, it said. “Where the U.S. is concerned, it continues to

import from Russia uranium hexafluoride for its nuclear industry, palladium for its EV industry, fertilizers as well as chemicals,” it added.

- “In this background, the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable. Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security,” the Ministry said.

❖ U.S. exerting ‘illegal’ trade pressure on India: Russia

- Russia accused the United States of exerting “illegal” trade pressure on India after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened again to raise tariffs on India over its purchases of Russian oil.
- “We believe that sovereign countries should have and do have the right to choose their own trading partners, partners for trade and economic cooperation...”.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin has signalled no change in Russia’s stance on the war, despite the looming deadline on August 8. India has called Mr. Trump's threats “unjustified”.

❖ In top court, Centre rejects any move to lower age of consent

- The Union government has objected before the Supreme Court to any move to reduce the age of consent under child protection laws from 18 to 16, warning that such a change would open the floodgates to trafficking and other forms of child abuse under the garb of assent.
- “Introducing a legislative close-in-age exception or reducing the age of consent would irrevocably dilute the statutory presumption of vulnerability that lies at the heart of child protection law,” the Centre, represented by Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, clarified in written submissions placed on record.
- To buttress its argument, the Centre cited a 2007 Ministry of Women and Child Development study which found that 53.22% of children reported facing one or more forms of sexual abuse. It noted that in 50% of these cases, the abusers were persons in positions of trust or authority, including parents, relatives, neighbours, and school staff.
- “The report concluded that children are particularly vulnerable when the offender is a known figure, as the abuse is concealed, normalised, or silenced through emotional manipulation or fear,” the Centre explained.
- The Centre’s position is in contrast to that of senior advocate and amicus curiae Indira Jaising, who has argued before the court that consensual sexual activity between adolescents aged 16 to 18 should not be classified as “abuse” or criminalised under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**.
- Ms. Jaising urged the court to read a “close-in-age exception” into the law, which would apply to consensual sexual activity where both individuals are adolescents aged between 16 and 18.

❖ India may change stance amid U.S. tariffs, EU sanctions over Russian oil

- The statement by the Ministry of External Affairs, defending India’s purchases of Russian oil, is its most explicit since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022, making it clear that India will take “all necessary measures” to safeguard its interests.
- The MEA’s response followed the new threats by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose penalty tariffs over and above the massive 25% reciprocal tariffs the U.S. will impose on Indian goods as tariffs kick in worldwide.

- Mr. Trump said India was selling “massive amounts” of Russian oil for “big profits” without “caring how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian war machine”, which was why he would raise tariffs “substantially”.
- The MEA statement called out both the U.S. and the European Union for their double standard, given they themselves continued to purchase Russian energy, critical minerals, fertilizers, iron and steel.
- The statement left other double standard unsaid, such as the U.S. and Europe’s funding and arming Israel’s war in Gaza, that has led to the killing of at least 60,000 Palestinians. Nor did it point out that the U.S. has not announced penalties on China, a bigger buyer of Russian oil.
- This marks a shift from the past when New Delhi’s response to low-impact U.S. and E.U. sanctions of Indian companies for Russian transactions was submissive. In 2017, the Modi government agreed to “zero out” all its oil imports from Iran and Venezuela after threats from the previous Trump administration.

Changing tack

- The first option would be to continue to buy Russian energy and even double down on them, while weathering sanctions imposed by the U.S. and E.U., and continuing to pursue free trade agreements with both in the hope these would lessen such penalties.
- The next option, to search for alternative options for trading to circumvent U.S.-E.U. sanctions, could include moving to quickly conclude other FTA negotiations, ongoing with the GCC, EAEU, Australia, New Zealand and so on. It could also conclude talks on revising the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement or even a re-look at joining the 15-nation ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that India withdrew from in 2019, largely due to concerns about China.
- The third option, of counter-measures, could involve suspending talks with the E.U. on the BTIA, and with the U.S. on trade, nuclear energy, defence purchases and others until they prove more reasonable on the issue.
- All eyes are now on whether the turbulence will impact the strongest pillar of India-U.S. ties — their shared Indo-Pacific strategy and the Quad summit that India is due to host this year.

❖ **India-Philippines ties elevated to strategic partnership, says PM**

- India and the Philippines have decided to boost their defence and maritime links, begin direct flights, and start negotiating a new trade deal as they upgraded their ties to the level of a “strategic partnership”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Welcoming visiting Filipino President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., Mr. Modi said that as both countries support “freedom of navigation”, cooperation in the maritime domain is “natural and essential”. The two sides also announced the commencement of talks for a preferential trade agreement.
- “We have been consistently working together in areas such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. Today, as the President is visiting India, three Indian naval ships are, for the very first time, participating in a naval exercise in the Philippines. India’s hydrography ship is also a part of this important engagement,” the Prime Minister said. He also expressed his “sincere gratitude” to the government of the Philippines for condemning the terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22.
- The Prime Minister discussed regional and global issues with the Filipino President, and also hinted at India’s position on the disputes in the South China Sea.
- Mr. Modi described the Philippines as an “important partner” in India’s Act East Policy.

- The Prime Minister also announced that direct flights between India and the Philippines will begin this year, while India will extend a free e-tourist visa facility to Filipino nationals for a period of one year, starting August 2025.

❖ **Officers who are honest must be protected: SC**

- The Supreme Court said a provision in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 that mandates prior sanction before prosecuting public servants serves to protect honest bureaucrats from becoming victims of political vendetta after a regime change.
- Section 17A of the Act bars any “enquiry or inquiry or investigation” against a public servant for recommendations made during official duties without approval from the competent authority. “Honest officers who do not toe the line after a change in government will be protected,” the Bench observed.

❖ **Govt. can issue national IDs to citizens: Centre**

- The Lok Sabha was recently informed that the Citizenship Act, 1955 provides that the Union government should compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue national Identity Cards to them.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs was responding to a question by Trinamool Congress member Mala Roy about details of cards, which, as per the court of law, is an admissible identity proof as an Indian citizen.
- Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in a written reply, said the particulars of citizens are entered in the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

❖ **Amid protests over SIR, Lok Sabha passes Bill for ST quota in Goa Assembly**

- Amid disruptions by Opposition members over the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the **Lok Sabha passed a Bill that seeks to provide reservations to Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Goa Assembly.**
- This is the first Bill to be passed by the Lok Sabha in the Monsoon Session of Parliament amid the logjam over SIR in Bihar.
- Law Minister moved the Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2025 for consideration and passage, and the House passed it by a voice vote when it reassembled at 2 p.m.

❖ **Satya Pal Malik (1946-2025): Satya Pal Malik: last Governor of J&K who became a staunch critic of Modi**

- Satya Pal Malik, the last Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, who became a trenchant critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2021 farmer agitation, passed away in Delhi after a prolonged illness, the sixth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370.
- The seasoned grassroots politician from western Uttar Pradesh, who weathered many a political storm spanning over five decades.
- Following the abrogation of Article 370, which reduced the status of J&K to a Union Territory, Mr. Malik was transferred to Goa and subsequently to Meghalaya.

❖ Ayush Ministry and FSSAI release a list of 'Ayurveda Aahara' food preparations

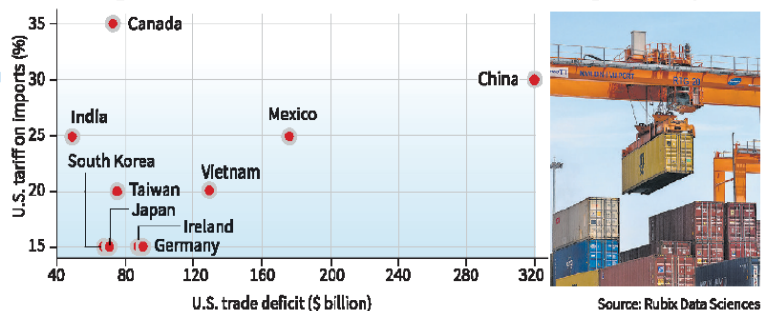
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), in consultation with the Ayush Ministry, has released a list of Ayurvedic food preparations under the category of Ayurveda Aahara.
- **Ayurveda Aahara refers to foods developed according to Ayurvedic dietary guidelines, focusing on balance, seasonal suitability, and natural ingredients and herbs with therapeutic benefits.**
- With rising public interest in preventive health and sustainable living, Ayurveda Aahara is viewed as a trusted nutritional choice that combines tradition with modern dietary habits, noted a release issued by the Ministry.
- “This move will bring India’s traditional food wisdom into the mainstream, **following the introduction of the Food Safety and Standards (Ayurveda Aahara) Regulations in 2022.**
- These regulations recognise foods based on recipes, ingredients, and processes from authoritative Ayurvedic texts, and the new list brings clarity and confidence to consumers and businesses alike,” explained an Ayush Ministry official, adding that the list, issued under Note (1) of Schedule B of the regulations, draws directly from classical Ayurvedic texts listed in Schedule A.
- To facilitate future additions, FSSAI has established a process for FBOs to request inclusion of additional Category A products not yet listed and such requests need supporting references from authoritative texts in Schedule A.

❖ 'U.S. trade deficit with nine countries higher than that of India'

- The U.S. has levied the third-highest tariff on India among the top 10 countries with which it has the highest trade deficits, an analysis has revealed. In other words, while the U.S. has a higher trade deficit with nine other countries than with India, it has levied higher tariffs on just two — China and Canada.
- An analysis by Rubix Data Sciences, a risk management and monitoring company, shows that the U.S. had a \$49.5 billion trade deficit with India in 2024, the 10th highest among all its trading partners. However, the U.S. has levied a tariff of 25% “plus penalties” on imports from India, the third-highest among these countries.
- For example, the U.S. had a trade deficit of \$175.9 billion with Mexico in 2024 — 3.5 times that with India — but has levied the same 25% tariff on that country.
- Similarly, the U.S. had higher trade deficits with Vietnam (\$129.4 billion), Germany (\$87.9 billion), Ireland (\$87.2 billion), Taiwan (\$76.4 billion), Japan (\$72.3 billion), and South Korea (\$69.9 billion) than with India, but levies lower tariffs on those countries than it does on India.
- The only two countries with which the U.S. has higher deficits than with India and also levies a higher import tariff are China (30%) and Canada (35%).
- On India’s purchase of oil from Russia, Mr. Trump on Monday said that “they (India) don’t care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian war machine”.
- However, data from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, which regularly tracks Russia’s energy exports, show that the EU was the largest buyer of Russian liquified natural gas (LNG), accounting for 51% of Russia’s exports of these products between December 2022 and June 2025, followed by China (21%) and Japan (18%). Even when it comes to pipeline gas, the EU was the largest buyer of Russian gas, purchasing 37% of Russia’s exports, followed by China (30%) and Turkiye (27%).

Tariff dynamics

The U.S. has higher trade deficits with nine countries than with India, but levies higher tariffs on just two



- China bought 47% of Russia's crude exports during this period, followed by India (38%), the EU (6%), and Turkiye (6%).

❖ **DBT helped deactivate 4.08 cr. fake, inactive LPG connections: Puri**

- The Direct Benefit Transfer of LPG (DBTL) of the Centre, under which domestic cooking gas subsidy is paid into the bank account of consumers has helped block, suspend or deactivate 4.08 crore duplicate, fake/non-existent or inactive liquefied petroleum gas connections.
- The DBTL or PAHAL scheme has played a crucial role in identifying and blocking 'ghost' accounts, multiple accounts, and inactive LPG connections, thus curbing diversion of subsidised LPG for commercial use.
- The scheme, whose implementation began in January 2015, has contributed to transparent and effective disbursal of subsidies across the country.
- Besides the scheme, other initiatives like Aadhaar-based verification, biometric authentication and the weeding out of ineligible or duplicate connections resulted in significantly strengthening the system of transfer of targeted subsidies.
- All domestic LPG cylinders are sold at non-subsidised prices and the subsidy transferred directly to the respective bank accounts under the DBTL scheme.
- The government has also introduced a Common LPG Database Platform (CLDP) through which duplicate connections are identified and removed from the database.
- Deduplication is carried out using Aadhaar number, bank account details, AHL TIN number, ration card details, name, and address as key parameters. Aadhaar-based authentication for DBT schemes enables accurate, real-time and cost-effective identification, authentication and de-duplication of beneficiaries, ensuring targeted delivery of benefits.
- Public sector oil marketing companies have been advised to undertake and complete biometric Aadhaar authentication of PMUY and PAHAL beneficiaries.
- As of July 1, **biometric Aadhaar authentication has been completed for 67% of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries.**
- All new PMUY consumers have to undergo biometric authentication before release of connections, a release from the Ministry on Mr. Puri's reply said.

❖ **Services PMI stood at 11-month high in July on strong demand**

- Activity in India's services sector stood at a 11-month high in July 2025 driven by strong demand, according to a private sector survey.
- The HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index increased marginally to 60.5 in July from 60.4 in June. Where a score of below 50 denotes a contraction in activity, one above 50 shows an expansion.
- The relatively high score in July, thus, "signalled another sharp increase in output," the report said. This is the highest score the index achieved since August 2024. "Sustained increase in new business intakes were identified by survey members as the main aspect behind output growth," it added.

❖ **Israel to partially reopen Gaza private goods trade**

- Israel will partially reopen private sector trade with Gaza to reduce its reliance on humanitarian aid, the Defence Ministry civil affairs agency for the Palestinian territories.
- "As part of formulating the mechanism, a limited number of local merchants were approved by the defence establishment, subject to several criteria and strict security screening," COGAT said.

- The COGAT statement said private sector deliveries would be paid for by monitored bank transfers and be subject to inspections by the Israeli military before entering Gaza, “to prevent the involvement of the Hamas terrorist organisation”. Permitted goods under the new mechanism will include food staples, fruit, vegetables, baby formula and hygiene products, COGAT said.

❖ Trump raises U.S. tariffs on Indian imports to 50%

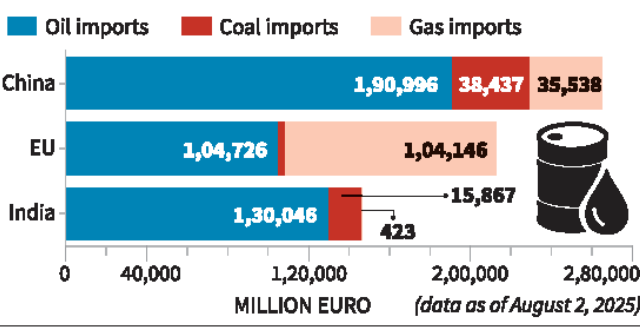
Context:

- U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing an additional 25% tariff on imports from India, in response to India “directly or indirectly” importing oil from Russia. This is over and above the 25% tariff on Indian imports that Mr. Trump approved on July 31.
- While the initial 25% tariff will come into effect 8th August 2025, the additional 25% tariff will come into effect after 21 days.

- **Mr. Trump’s executive order** :“To deal with the national emergency described in Executive Order 14066 [relating to Russia’s actions in Ukraine], I determine that it is necessary and appropriate to impose an additional ad valorem duty on imports of articles of India, which is directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil,”. “Accordingly, and as consistent with applicable law, articles of India imported into the customs territory of the United States shall be subject to an additional ad valorem rate of duty of 25%,” it added.
- **In response MEA:** Not only did the U.S. encourage such trade previously, both the European Union and the U.S. actively trade other items with Russia in excess of the amount that India pays for Russian oil.
- Negotiators from the U.S. and India are currently engaged in finalising the **first tranche of a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** by fall of this year.

Singling out India

Trump’s rationale for tariffs on India for its oil trade with Moscow overlooks a key fact: all goods combined, China and EU have imported more from Russia since its invasion of Ukraine



SOURCE: CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON ENERGY AND CLEAN AIR (CREA)

❖ Petrol lobbies behind E20 fuel fear campaign: Gadkari

Context:

- While new E20-tuned vehicles have started rolling out from April 2025, existing owners are concerned about the impact on their older vehicles and a surge in maintenance costs.
- Tests show that older vehicles are not damaged in any way by using a new petrol blend with a higher 20% of ethanol.

- **Biofuels** helped put the country on the path
 - ✓ to self-reliance by cutting oil imports, and also reduces pollution and saves farmers’ lives by ensuring they received a higher value for their crops.

• **Due to the transition to E20, a fuel blend that comprises 20% ethanol produced from plant products such as sugarcane, rice, and maize, and 80% gasoline,** the transition to blended fuel started in 2001, when Atal Behari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister.

- “From an economic point of view, the country spends ₹22 lakh crore on **fossil fuel** imports and the automotive industry is growing and imports are too. There are also concerns over rising levels of pollution.

- Thirdly, our push for alternative fuels and bio fuels places the country on the path to **Atmanirbharta [self-reliance].**”
- **India** was still at a nascent stage of its transition to biofuels unlike **Brazil**, which has over 80 years of experience. It will take another seven to eight years for stability.

❖ State police hat to get replaced with navy blue peaked caps

Context:

- The slouch hat for the lower rank police personnel of the Karnataka police from the British era is going to be replaced soon. as the State government approved the proposal to replace the **hats of head constables and police constables with navy blue peaked caps.**
- Karnataka State government approved the proposal to replace the hats of **head constables and police constables with navy blue peaked** caps.
- While **officers above the sub-inspector rank wear khaki peaked hats**, for head constables and constables, the department chose a different colour with minor changes in the design.

❖ JNCASR research holds promise for curing Alzheimer’s Disease

Context:

- A new research conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) holds promise for treating and also potentially curing Alzheimer’s disease (AD).
- This research involves novel therapeutic target and treatment options based **on RNA and small molecules**, which could potentially accelerate the drug discovery process.
- Department of Science and Technology, AD accounts for 70-80% of dementia cases and is the fifth leading cause of death. **The disease is characterised by the accumulation of protein clumps in the brain, memory loss, and cognitive deficits.**
- “While, the role of various proteins in the development and progression of AD has been well studied, the role of microRNAs (miRNAs) in AD is poorly understood,” it added.
- To address this, JNCASR researchers explored altered miRNAs in the AD brain and also probed the potential of miRNAs to be biomarkers for early, specific, and accurate clinical diagnosis of AD.
- **“Since miRNAs are small non-coding RNA, they are known to target multiple mRNAs to regulate pathways linked to health and diseases as well as multiple disease pathologies linked to AD,”.**

Methodology

- Used a double transgenic AD mouse model to discover novel miRNAs involved in AD development and progression and identified various miRNAs that are altered in the AD brain compared to the normal brain, which could potentially trigger the disease.
- “The current study offers valuable insight into AD by uncovering the regulatory role of miR-7a in controlling neuroinflammation and ferroptosis via Klf4 targeting,”.
- The researchers have developed a miRNA-based therapeutic that targets Klf4 to prevent neuroinflammation and ferroptosis.
- Honokiol is a natural product found in bark and seed cones of the Magnolia tree that targets Klf4 to stall neuroinflammation and ferroptotic cell death involved in AD.
- The department said that this demonstrates that the miR-7a-Klf4 axis is a novel target for AD and warrants further exploration to develop better therapeutics for the disease.

- “The research shows that miR-7a suppresses Klf4, alleviating neuronal damage by modulating inflammation, and ferroptosis-related (iron-dependent accumulation of lipid hydroperoxides) pathways. Targeting this axis with a blood–brain barrier-permeable compound like honokiol demonstrates therapeutic potential.’

❖ Cabinet likely to approve Nagamohan Das Commission report today

Context:

- Karnataka State Cabinet, which is expected to meet, is likely to approve the recommendations of the commission headed by **H.N. Nagamohan Das**, which submitted its report on **internal reservation for 101 Scheduled Castes in Karnataka** to the government.
- The report recommended:
 - ✓ **4% quota for Lambanis, Koramas, Korachas, and Bhovis (touchable communities)** against the 4.5% recommended during the previous BJP government.
 - ✓ **6% reservation for the Dalit left, 5% for the Dalit right, 1% to more than 40 nomadic tribes classified as micro communities and 1% for Adi Karnataka (AK), Adi Dravida (AD) and Adi Andhra (AA) communities.**

❖ Doval to visit Moscow, as Trump imposes additional tariffs on India

Context:

- **National Security Adviser Ajit Doval** will hold meetings with senior Russian officials in Moscow, just a day after the U.S. decided to impose an **additional 25% penalty tariffs on India for its import of Russian oil.**
- **India is the second largest buyer of Russian crude oil after China.**
- To focus on “further strengthening the specialised cooperation in the form of a particularly privileged strategic partnership”
- To speak about the **delivery of the remaining S-400 missile systems**, that played an important role during the India-Pakistan conflict and Operation Sindoor.
- Russia’s recent decision to grant recognition to the **Taliban regime in Afghanistan** is also expected to come up.
- Possibly discuss the latest moves for talks between **Russia and Ukraine.**
- Since 2022, India increased its oil imports from Russia multi-fold, defying pleas from European countries to stop increasing Russian revenues, from procuring less than a per cent of its imports from Russia, to nearly 40% of its oil at its peak.
- After the U.S. announced plans for penalty tariffs on India last week, many Indian oil importers have reduced their demand, although the government said it would not submit to the tariffs by the U.S. and sanctions by the European Union.

❖ Modi to meet Japanese PM as part of East Asia outreach

Context:

- Against the backdrop of growing uncertainty in India-U.S. ties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reach out to **East Asia** in the coming weeks.

- The visit to Japan is significant, as both countries are part of the **Quad initiative that was launched by Australia, India, Japan, and the United States in 2017.**
- As the United States reorients its trade priorities, the resultant dynamics are expected to spill over to platforms where India and the U.S. cooperate on a number of issues.
- Around this time, global attention will also be focused on the upcoming summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in China, where leaders of the SCO member states are expected to be present.

❖ Parliament passes legislation to modernise India's maritime laws

Context:

- The Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025 was passed by the Rajya Sabha even as the Opposition continued loud protests against the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.
- The Lok Sabha passed another maritime legislation, the Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tabled the **Demands for Grants for Manipur for 2025-26. Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13 2025.**
- The Bill was approved by a **voice vote** amid the din. It had been passed by the Lok Sabha earlier.
- The **Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024** is meant to be progressive, future-ready legislation that replaces the outdated **Merchant Shipping Act of 1958**. The Bill marks a significant step towards aligning India's maritime legal framework with global standards and strengthening the country's position as a trusted maritime trade hub.
- The **Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025**, repealed the **Indian Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 1925**. The legislation is expected to simplify maritime trade laws, reduce litigation risks, and enhance transparency and commercial efficiency in cargo movement by sea.

❖ LS cannot discuss revision of electoral rolls in Bihar: Rijiju

Context:

- Amid repeated disruptions by Opposition members, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju informed the Lok Sabha that a discussion on the special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar could not take place in the House as the matter was pending before the Supreme Court and the rules did not allow a discussion on issues under adjudication.
- The rules of the Lok Sabha did not permit such a discussion. Citing a ruling by former Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar, he said the functioning and responsibilities of an autonomous body such as the Election Commission (EC) could not be deliberated in the House.

❖ Aadhaar face ID can ensure exam 'transparency': Centre

Context:

- Aadhaar face authentication will help enhance transparency of competitive examinations, build trust among aspirants, and strengthen administrative accountability, the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry told Parliament.
- Staff Selection Commission and the Railway Recruitment Board were already authorised to use Aadhaar facial recognition to authenticate examinees.

- Using the “liveness” factor with phone cameras, Aadhaar face authentication matches people with the photo they took when enrolling for Aadhaar, and the feature has seen increased interest among government bodies. For instance, the Employment Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) said in a circular last month that universal account numbers, the main identifying number for salaried employees and retirees with PF accounts, would be generated henceforth only with this feature.
 - The feature has seen increased interest in view of Aadhaar authentication failures due to worn-out biometrics among labourers and elderly people.
 - **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** was undertaking “promotion of face and iris authentication for residents with worn fingerprints” to cater to people who could not use their fingerprints.
 - The **India Post Payments Bank**, under the Department of Posts, introduced Aadhaar face authentication this month. The feature “is aligned with Digital India and Financial Inclusion missions of the Government of India”, the bank said, adding that its use empowers “values of equity, access, and empowerment”.
- Aadhaar authentication in general — not just facial recognition authentication — requires approval from the IT Ministry.
 - In the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Amendment Rules, 2025 notified in January, the Ministry laid out a framework where private entities as well as government organisations could submit authentication proposals to the IT Ministry, which would have them vetted by the UIDAI.
 - The IT Ministry has set up a Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge (SWIK) portal where such proposals can be submitted. A review of the portal shows that up to half a dozen (or as little as one or two) proposals a month are being approved every month.
- Recently the Sports Authority of India was authorised to use Aadhaar authentication to “verify the identity of athletes, coaches, and staff during registration, attendance marking, and DBT processing under schemes such as Khelo India, Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), and National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs)”.
 - As many as 312 Union and State government organisations have received approvals under SWIK rules since 2020.


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❖ Liquidate regulatory assets owed to discoms within four years: SC

Context:

- The Supreme Court gave power distribution companies a four-year deadline, starting from April 1 last year, to liquidate their long-pending regulatory assets while noting that “electricity is a public good”.
- A Bench headed by Justice P.S. Narasimha delivered the judgment on petitions filed by BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd., BSES Yamuna Power Ltd., and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd., power supply companies in the national capital.
- They had challenged the manner in which the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission had determined the tariff for retail supply of power over the years, leading to the creation and continuation of a “regulatory asset”, which has led to liabilities burgeoning over decades.
- “Regulatory assets are treated as assets in the balance sheet and are liquidated over a defined period of time through tariff adjustments or government subsidies. The regulatory asset is a cost incurred by the utility that the Regulatory Commission allows to be deferred on the balance sheet instead of being immediately expensed,” Justice Narasimha said. He directed the liquidation of the existing dues by April 2028.
- **The court said that in future, regulatory assets must be liquidated within a period of three years. The judgment directed the State Regulatory Commissions to provide the roadmap for liquidation of the existing regulatory assets.**

❖ Fishing gear a major source of ‘microplastic’ contamination along Indian coasts: Minister

Context:

- The major sources of ‘microplastic’ pollution along India’s coasts are “riverine inputs” and abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), through the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), conducted field surveys along India’s coastline between 2022 and 2025 to assess microplastic and marine debris levels.
- Assessment of microplastics in both water and sediment has been carried out along the east and west coasts of India.
- On the west coast, 19 transects were surveyed from Porbandar (Gujarat) to Kanniyakumari (Tamil Nadu), while on the east coast, around 25 transects were sampled from Puri (Odisha) to Thoothukudi (Tamil Nadu).
- The findings indicated that the predominant sources of microplastic pollution are riverine inputs and abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), he said.
- **Microplastics** are tiny plastic particles, ranging in size from 1 micrometre to 5 millimetres. They can be either primary microplastics, manufactured at that size, or secondary microplastics, formed from the breakdown of larger plastic items.
- The major concern for microplastics is that they are being increasingly linked to tumours, and are said to be poisonous to marine and aquatic life.
- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** commissioned a project to assess microplastic contamination in food products and develop methods for its detection.
- The environmental research organisation **Toxics Link** tested 10 types of salt that claimed to reveal the **presence of microplastics in all salt and sugar samples, in various forms, including fibre, pellets and films.**

❖ MPC holds repo rate at 5.5%, maintains GDP growth at 6.5%

Context:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) voted to maintain the policy repo rate at 5.50% and continue with its neutral stance after assessing the current and evolving macroeconomic situation.
- To maintain the policy repo rate at 5.50% and continue with its neutral stance.
- Consequently, the standing deposit facility (SDF) rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) remains unchanged at 5.25% and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate at 5.75%.
- This decision is towards achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4% within a band of +/- 2%, while supporting growth.
- The MPC took note that the global environment continues to be challenging. Global growth, though revised upwards by the IMF, remains muted.
- **The pace of disinflation is slowing down, with some advanced economies even witnessing an uptick in inflation, it noted.**
- **Taking various factors into account, the projection for real GDP growth for 2025-26 has been retained at 6.5%**, with Q1 at 6.5%, Q2 at 6.7%, Q3 at 6.6% , and Q4 at 6.3%.
- **Real GDP growth for Q1:2026-27 is projected at 6.6%**. The risks are evenly balanced.
- Stating that **CPI headline inflation declined** for the eighth consecutive month to a 77-month low of 2.1% (y-o-y) in June 2025, the MPC observed that this was driven primarily by a sharp decline in food inflation led by improved agricultural activity and various supply side measures.
- However, **core inflation, which remained within a narrow range of 4.1-4.2% during February-May, increased** to 4.4% in June, driven partly by a continued increase in gold prices, it stated adding that the inflation outlook for 2025-26 had become more benign than expected in June.
- Considering various factors, CPI inflation for 2025-26 has been projected at 3.1% [as compared with 3.7% previously] with Q2 at 2.1%; Q3 at 3.1% ; and Q4 at 4.4%. CPI inflation for Q1:2026-27 is projected at 4.9%. The risks are evenly balanced.
- “Despite a challenging external environment, the Indian economy is navigating a steady growth path with price stability; MPC.

❖ ‘End of transmission fee waiver for solar, wind to hit 26 GW RE’

Context:

- About 26 gigawatt of renewable energy (RE) projects are expected to be impacted with the end of waiver on inter-State transmission system (ISTS) charges provided for solar and wind projects, according to Crisil Ratings.
- The deadline for announcing an extension on ISTS charges for setting up and commissioning solar and wind projects ended on June 30, 2025.
- In a recent report, Crisil Ratings said, “Around 26 gigawatt (GW) of under-construction utility scale renewable energy projects, for which power purchase agreements (PPAs) have already been signed, may face moderation in cash flow following expiry of the 100% ISTS charge exemption on June 30, 2025.”
- These projects, which have experienced commissioning delays due to procedural, regulatory and infrastructure challenges, may now be subject to a phased reduction in benefits, Crisil Ratings said.
- The ISTS charge waiver, was instrumental in encouraging renewable energy development.

❖ 'It's like writing a poem': maths prize winner Rajula Srivastava

- Rajula Srivastava has won the **Maryam Mirzakhani New Frontiers Prize** for her work in harmonic analysis and analytic number theory.
- She discovered her love of maths in school, and then went on to major at the National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar.

❖ What is the potential of biochar?

Context:

- With the Indian carbon market set to be launched in 2026, CO₂ removal technologies such as biochar are expected to play a crucial role.
- **Biochar is a type of charcoal rich in carbon and is produced from agricultural residue and organic municipal solid waste.** It offers a sustainable alternative to manage waste and capture carbon.

What is biochar's potential?

- India generates over 600 million metric tonnes of agricultural residue and over 60 million tonnes of municipal solid waste every year. A significant portion of both is burnt openly or dumped in landfills, leading to **air pollution from particulate matter and greenhouse gases such as methane, nitrous oxide, and CO₂.**
- By using 30% to 50% of surplus waste, India can produce 15-26 million tonnes of biochar and remove 0.1 gigatonnes of CO₂-equivalent annually. Byproducts of biochar production, such as syngas (20-30 million tonnes) and bio-oil (24-40 million tonnes), can generate additional electricity and fuels. Theoretically, utilising syngas could generate around 8-13 TWh of power, equivalent to 0.5-0.7% of India's annual electricity generation, replacing 0.4-0.7 million tonnes of coal per year. Bio-oil can likewise potentially offset 12-19 million tonnes (or 8%) of diesel or kerosene production annually, leading to lower crude oil imports and reducing more than 2% of India's total fossil-fuel-based emissions.

How can biochar be a carbon sink?

- Biochar can hold carbon in the soil for 100-1,000 years due to its strong and stable characteristics, making it an effective long-term carbon sink. Its application across different sectors provides scalable opportunities for reducing emissions.
- In agriculture, applying biochar can improve water retention, particularly in semi-dry and nutrient-depleted soils. This, in turn, can abate nitrous oxide emissions by 30-50%. Notably, nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas with 273-times the warming potential of CO₂, making its mitigation a crucial benefit of biochar.

Biochar can also enhance soil organic carbon, helping restore degraded soils.

- In carbon capture applications, modified biochar can adsorb CO₂ from industrial exhaust gases. However, its carbon removal efficiency is currently lower than that of conventional methods.
- In the construction sector, biochar can be explored as a low-carbon alternative to building materials. Adding 2-5% of biochar to concrete can improve mechanical strength, increase heat resistance by 20%, and capture 115 kg of CO₂ per cubic metre, making building materials a stable carbon sink.
- In wastewater treatment, biochar offers a low-cost and effective option to reduce pollution. India generates more than 70 billion litres of wastewater every day, of which 72% is left untreated. A kilogram

of biochar, along with other substances, can treat 200-500 litres of wastewater, implying a biochar demand potential of 2.5-6.3 million tonnes.

What hinders biochar's application?

- Despite its theoretically substantial potential to capture carbon, biochar remains underrepresented in carbon credit systems due to the absence of standardised feedstock markets and consistent carbon accounting methods, which undermine investor confidence.
- While research confirms biochar's technical feasibility for applications across sectors, deployments are hindered by barriers such as limited resources, evolving technologies, market uncertainties, and insufficient policy support.
- Viable business models are yet to emerge for large-scale adoption. Market development is further constrained by limited awareness among stakeholders, weak 'monitoring, reporting, verification' frameworks, and a lack of coordination across areas such as agriculture, energy, and climate policy.
- To enable large-scale adoption, sustained support for R&D is essential to create region-specific feedstock standards and to optimise biomass utilisation rates based on agro-climatic zones and crop types.
- Further, biochar should be systematically integrated into existing and upcoming frameworks, including crop residue management schemes, bioenergy initiatives in both urban and rural contexts, and state-level climate strategies under the State Action Plans on Climate Change.
- Recognising biochar as a verifiable carbon removal pathway within the Indian carbon market will generate additional income for investors and farmers through carbon credits.
- Deploying biochar production equipment at the village level has the potential to create approximately 5.2 lakh rural jobs, linking climate action with inclusive economic development.
- The additional benefits of biochar, such as better soil health, lower fertilizer requirement (by 10-20%), and higher crop yield (by 10-25%), should be systematically integrated into policy and market frameworks to fully realise its potential.
- In sum, although biochar is not a silver bullet, it offers a science-backed multisectoral pathway for India to achieve its climate and development goals.

❖ Cabinet nod for Karnataka Devadasi Bill

Context:

- The State Cabinet approved 18 Bills, including the Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2025.

• Devadasi Bill:

- ✓ Envisages strengthening the fight against the century-old Devadasi system and seeks to replace the older Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition and Dedication) Act, 1982.
- ✓ The proposed legislation also provides the option for children of a Devadasi not to be compelled to declare the name of their father while applying for government identity cards such as passport, PAN, Aadhaar, and driving licence.
- ✓ The proposed Bill runs into 20 pages and includes provisions for recognising the right of Devadasi children to identify their father, potentially through DNA testing, and removing the requirement of a father's name on official documents.

Some of the Bills that were approved by the Cabinet

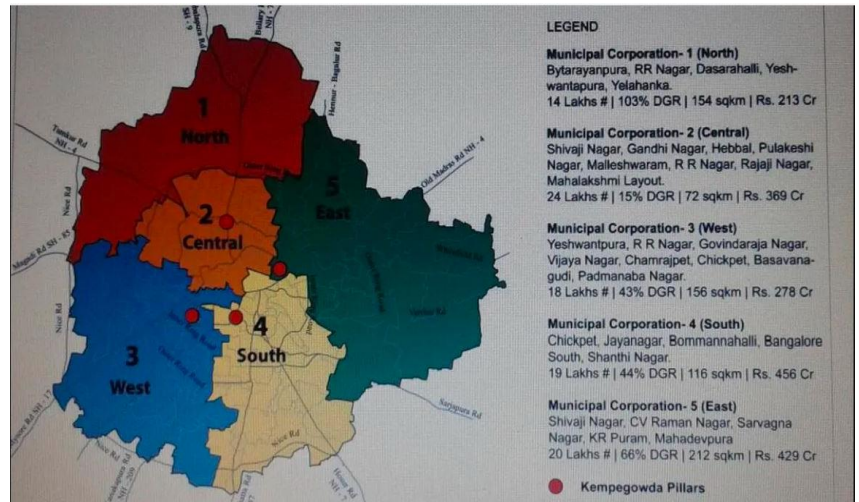
■ Karnataka Town and Country Planning and Certain Other Law (Amendment) Bill - For appointment of a Commissioner	■ Bill - For amending certain sections of Land Revenue and Land Reforms Acts
■ The Karnataka Ground Water (Regulation for Protection of Sources of Drinking Water) Amendment) Bill - For adopting the Central Government guidelines	■ Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance (Amendment) Bill - To substitute the words the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhitha, 2023 (Central Act 2023)
■ Karnataka Ports (Landing and Shipping Fees) (Amendment) Bill - For revising the fees once in three years	■ Karnataka Cooperative Bill - For incorporating suggestions given by the Governor
■ Karnataka Land Reforms And Certain Other Law (Amendment)	■ The Greater Bengaluru (Amendment) Bill - For preparing the electoral roll in each city corporations.

- ✓ The Bill is intended to be a more comprehensive approach for addressing the Devadasi system, moving beyond the previous focus on prohibition to include relief and rehabilitation measures.

❖ Cabinet clears Greater Bengaluru Bill for preparation of voters' list in 5 corporations

Context:

- The State Cabinet approved the Greater Bengaluru Governance (Amendment) Bill, 2025, for preparation of voters' list for each of the five corporations in the city and ensure early conduct of polls.
- The government notified five corporations carved out of the existing city civic limits. The Bill proposed to prepare the voters' list for each corporation under the guidance and supervision of the State Election Commission (SEC).
- **The five corporations are Central, North, East, West, and South, of varying sizes in terms of area, population and population density.**
- **The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) was officially established on May 15, 2025, replacing the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) as the city's primary governing body.**
- The Bill will introduce some amendments to substitute a few words in the original Act (2024).
- The Supreme Court directed the Karnataka government to strictly adhere to the timeline as mentioned in its affidavit and complete the process of ward delimitation and issuance of notification by November 1, 2025.
- The SEC also filed an additional affidavit, stating that it would require 60 to 90 days after the final notification was issued by the State government for preparing and finalising electoral rolls for the city corporations.



❖ Modi vows to protect farmers amid FTA negotiations with U.S.

Context:

- In an apparent reference to concerns of farmers over the proposed trade agreement with the United States, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that welfare of farmers is his government's "highest priority".
- The U.S., under the free trade agreement (FTA) under negotiation, has sought access to Indian agriculture markets, especially to the dairy sector, and for exporting produce such as soybean, corn, almonds and apples.

❖ EC notifies V-P polls; August 21 is last date for filing nominations

Context:

- The Election Commission issued the notification for the Vice-Presidential election to be held on September 9, kick-starting the nomination process.
- The election was necessitated by the sudden resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar on July 21, which had led to a rare mid-term vacancy in the second highest constitutional position of the country. An official Gazette notification of the vacancy was issued on July 22.
- **The Vice-President is elected by members of the Electoral College consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament.**

Electoral College

- For the election this year, which will be the 17th Vice-Presidential election, the Electoral College consists of 233 elected members of the Rajya Sabha (five seats are vacant), 12 nominated members of the Rajya Sabha, and 543 elected members of the Lok Sabha, where one seat is vacant.
- Since all the electors are MPs, the value of each vote is the same (one).
- The election will be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. In this system, the elector has to mark preferences against the names of the candidates.
- Preference can be marked in the international form of Indian numerals, in Roman form, or in the form of any recognised Indian languages. Preference has to be marked in figures only and shall not be indicated in words. The elector can mark as many preferences as the number of candidates.
- A nomination paper of a candidate has to be subscribed by at least 20 electors as proposers and by at least 20 other electors as seconders.
- Political parties cannot issue any whip to their MPs in the matter of voting in the Vice-Presidential election.

❖ LS passes Manipur Appropriation Bill amid din

Context:

- The Lok Sabha passed the Manipur Appropriation Bill, 2025, The Bill, presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, authorises the State to spend ₹30,969 crore on its expenditure requirements during the current financial year.
- Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13. Earlier during this session, Parliament approved a statutory resolution to extend President's Rule in Manipur for another six months, beyond August 13.
- The House passed both the Manipur Appropriation (No.2) Bill, 2025 and the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025, through a voice vote, amid persistent disruptions from Opposition benches.
- The Manipur Budget included an additional Central allocation of ₹2,898 crore, with ₹1,667 crore earmarked for capital expenditure, and ₹1,231 crore for revenue expenditure.

❖ Exporters to U.S. fear loss of business with 25% additional tariff

Context:

- The additional 25% tariff announced by the U.S. on exports from India will result in loss of substantial business if the tariff stays, said exporters of engineering and textile products.
- The U.S. is the top market for several Indian products. Exporters hope the U.S. will withdraw the additional tariff and have called for efforts to continue negotiations between the two countries.
- While support from the government cannot be a substitute for export orders, the exporters do need financial support from the Union government to overcome the current situation as Indian exporters are in trouble, said an engineering exporter.
- **In 2024-2025, the U.S. accounted for 27% of the \$22.9 billion auto components exported from India and 7% of \$22.4 billion imports of auto components into India.**
- **Engineering exports from India to the U.S. in 2024-2025 were to the tune of nearly \$20 billion. Iron and steel products and aluminium, and electrical and industrial machinery are among the major exports.**
- U.S. is a key market for Indian ready-made garment exports, with the country holding a share of 33% in India's total garment exports in 2024.
- "While export of fashion garments will continue as it is not easy for the U.S. buyers to identify alternative suppliers immediately, export of volume products may move out of India if the additional tariff stays.
- With the initial 25% tariff, some of the U.S. buyers have accepted the shipments and some negotiated for discounts," of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council, urged the government to announce a three-year moratorium on bank loans.

Pharma exempted

- the U.S. decision to temporarily exempt Indian pharma exports from increased tariffs reiterates India's critical role in ensuring affordable, high-quality medicines for the American population.
- **India supplies over 40% of generics used in the U.S. Tariffs on Indian pharma will be counterproductive as any tariff will be passed on to U.S. consumers.**

❖ AU Small Finance Bank gets universal banking licence from RBI

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted 'in-principle' approval to AU Small Finance Bank Ltd. (AUSFB) for transitioning from a small finance bank (SFB) to a universal bank.
- **This is the first time after 11 years that an entity has been granted a universal bank licence by the banking regulator.**
- **Universal banking licences were last granted in 2014 — to Bandhan Bank, and IDFC Bank, which later became IDFC First Bank.**

❖ Lula, Modi agree to defend multilateralism in face of Trump tariffs

Context:

- The leaders of Brazil and India vowed in a telephone call to “defend multilateralism” after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed punishing tariffs on imports from both their countries.
- The talks between Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi came a day after Mr. Trump announced 50% tariffs on Indian goods, matching the punishing taxes he has imposed on a raft of Brazilian goods.
- Brazil’s presidency said that the two leaders had stressed the need “to defend multilateralism and confront the economic challenges” posed by Trump’s tariff war.
- Mr. Modi, on X, said he was committed to deepening ties with fellow BRICS member Brazil, adding: “A strong people-centric partnership between Global South nations benefits everyone.”

❖ Trump hints at pause in trade talks with India

Context:

- After doubling tariffs on India to 50% over Russian oil imports, U.S. President Donald Trump has indicated that he may even pause trade talks between the two countries until the oil issue was “resolved”.
- Mr. Trump responded to a specific question about whether there would now be an increased pace in negotiations for the bilateral trade agreement (BTA).
- “No, not until we get it resolved,” Mr. Trump replied in what appeared to be a reference to his demand that India cancel its oil imports from Russia until the war in Ukraine ends.
- A team of U.S. negotiators are due to travel to India on August 25 for the next round of BTA talks, that were launched when Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to Washington in February this year.

Current Status of Bilateral Trade Agreement

- No comprehensive FTA: India and the US have not signed a formal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or Bilateral Trade Agreement in the conventional sense.

Trade governed by:

- ✓ WTO rules
- ✓ Bilateral investment treaties (earlier agreements replaced by India’s 2016 model BIT)
- ✓ Sectoral MoUs in areas like defence, clean energy, technology, intellectual property rights, and supply chains.

Historical Background

- Pre-1991: Limited trade due to India’s protectionist policies and Cold War geopolitical alignment.
- Post-1991 reforms: India’s economic liberalization significantly boosted US–India trade, especially in IT services, pharmaceuticals, and textiles.
- 2000s onward: Trade volumes rose sharply, with cooperation extending to defence, aerospace, and high technology.

Attempts at a Deal

- Mini Trade Deal (2018–2021): Negotiated to resolve tariff disputes and restore GSP benefits, but stalled over dairy and ICT product tariffs.
- Current Approach: Both sides are focusing on sector-specific cooperation rather than an all-encompassing FT

❖ Israel set for full Gaza City control after security vote

Context:

- Israel's military will "take control" of Gaza City under a new plan approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, touching off a wave of criticism.
- Under the newly approved plan to "defeat" Hamas, the Israeli army "will prepare to take control of Gaza City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside combat zones", the Premier's office.
- Before the decision, Mr. Netanyahu had said **Israel planned to seize complete control of the Gaza Strip, but did not intend to govern it.**
- Mr. Netanyahu's office said the cabinet had adopted "five principles", including Gaza's demilitarisation and "the establishment of an alternative civil administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority".
- The plan triggered swift criticism, with **China, Turkey, Britain and the UN's rights chief** as well as **numerous Arab governments issuing statements of concern.**

❖ SEP panel favours Kannada/mother tongue as medium of instruction in State

Context:

- The Commission for State Education Policy (SEP), headed by educationist Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, has recommended Kannada/mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary education and a two-language policy in place of the current three-language policy in Karnataka, among its key recommendations.
- The SEP, submitted to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah after a delay of over a year, has proposed to **mandate Kannada/mother tongue as the medium of instruction at least until Class 5, and preferably up to Class 12 (II PUC).**
- Alongside this, **a two-language policy should be implemented, comprising Kannada or the mother tongue, and English.**
- "To support this policy, teachers must be trained in bilingual teaching methods, and a dedicated Language Teaching Centre should be established," it recommended.

Structural changes

- **The SEP has recommended schooling in the 2+8+4 model, which includes 2 years of pre-primary, 8 years of elementary, and 4 years of secondary education.**
- According to the **National Education Policy (NEP-2020) the structure of school education model was 5+3+3+4.**
- "In addition to restructuring, it is important to retain small schools to ensure access and equity in education, and to avoid arbitrary closures," it stated.
- To strengthen Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), it is recommended to attach two-year pre-primary programmes to existing primary schools.
- "An ECCE Council should be formed to enable integrated governance and coordination across departments.
- Additionally, private pre-schools must be brought under a dedicated regulatory framework,".
- The commission has also cleared up confusion about the **minimum age limit for children to enrol in school and recommended standardising the admission age for Class 1 to 6 years (±3 months).**

❖ SEP emphasises importance of ‘Constitutional Value Education’

Context:

- The much-awaited State Education Policy (SEP) for Karnataka, the final report of which was submitted to the State government, has proposed that “Constitutional Value Education” should be institutionalised as a compulsory subject.
- **Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairman of the SEP Commission**, and other members, submitted the report to Chief Minister.
- The report stated that “**values enshrined in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policy** must be embedded across the curriculum to nurture informed, responsible, and constitutionally aware citizens.”

Extend RTE

- Further, the commission recommended that the coverage of the Right to Education (RTE) Act should be extended in a phased manner **to include all children from ages 4 to 18.**
- A Comprehensive Curriculum for School Education (CCSE) should be developed to guide learning across all stages, with a strong emphasis on foundational learning up to class 5.
- SEP Commission, battling for the regulation of private schools and fee regulations, said, “Privatisation of school education should be actively discouraged.”
- “Strict enforcement of fee regulations and obligations related to admissions under the Economically Backward Sections (EBS) quota is essential. A dedicated regulatory body for private schools must be established,” it stated.
- To improve the quality of education, SEP recommends that the **State must raise and allocate 3% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) specifically for school education, while also increasing the education sector’s share to 30% of the total annual State Budget expenditure.** “To ensure sustained improvement in educational outcomes, there should be **steady real growth in per-student spending, ideally between 5-10% annually,**” the commission said.

❖ Sports centre with cricket stadium of 80,000 seating capacity gets CM’s nod

Context:

- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah cleared a proposal by the Karnataka Housing Board (KHB) to build a state-of-the-art sports complex, including a **cricket stadium with 80,000 seating capacity at Surya City in Bommasandra** on the southeastern outskirts of the city.
- This will likely be the **second largest cricket stadium in the country after the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, which has a seating capacity of 1,32,000.**
- **Justice John Michael Cunha Commission** that probed into the stampede at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, with a seating capacity of 32,000 and spread over 17 acres, was not suitable for large events and recommended shifting them out to a suitable venue.

Context:

- The Justice H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission, which submitted its report on internal reservation for 101 Scheduled Castes in the State, has recommended to the State government to write to the Centre to allow people of certain castes to change the name of their communities that are being used as cuss words.
- The members belonging to the castes have shown reluctance to identify themselves with the caste due to its name being wrongfully used. They include **Ghantichor, Holey a Dasari, Halalkhor, Kalla Korama and Chandala** among others. The **Holey a and Madiga** caste names are also used as cuss words.
- The report said that it was the **British who had criminalised certain castes in 1793 by branding them “criminal nomadic tribes”. Incidentally, the British enacted the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871.**
- The commission noted that many of these castes members, for the same reason, have taken caste certificates in the name of Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravid and Adi Andhra.
- It received request to drop the caste names of ‘**Sugali**’ and ‘**Sukali**’ that are also used as cuss words to insult **Banjaras**. Though **Supreme Court has clarified that the change of caste is not possible, the State Government can recommend to the Centre to change of caste names.**
- On the misuse of caste certificates issued to **Beda Jangama and Buduga Jangama**, the commission has recommended to the government to initiate anthropological studies of the castes to identify the real members of the community. Based on the fertility rate of 2% between 2011 and 2025, the population of the community is estimated to have grown to 1.44 lakh. However, 3.22 lakh have identified themselves as Beda Jangama or Buduga Jangama, showing an artificial growth by 123 %, in the survey. The commission has identified artificial growth in numbers in 16 districts in the State.

Castes with single digit population

- **Kepmaris** has been identified as a Scheduled Caste that has the least numbers with **six members** belonging to it, followed by **Mala Hannai with eight**, the only two castes to have a population in the single digit.
- There are 17 castes that have a double-digit population. In all, 73 castes have been identified to have a population of less than 10,000, while 12 have been identified with population between 10,000 and 50,000.
- As many as five castes have population between 50,000 and one lakh.

The issue of AK, AD, and AA

- Though one of the focus of the survey was to remove the confusion of Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravida and Adi Andhra for internal reservation, people have continued to identify themselves under the same category instead of their original castes.
- However, the numbers have dropped significantly to about 4.75 lakh. The number of those identifying themselves as AA has come down to 7,114 from 26,486 during the 2011 Census and 1.68 lakh during survey conducted by **A.J. Sadashiva Commission in 2011**. The population of Adi Karnataka came down to 1.47 lakh from 29.20 lakh in 2011 Census and 10.78 lakh during Sadashiva commission’s survey. The Adi Dravida numbers fell to 3.20 lakh from 7.95 lakh in 2011 Census and 5.73 lakh in Sadashiva commission’s survey.

❖ China welcomes PM's planned visit for SCO summit

Context:

- China welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin to be held from August 31 to September 1, describing the event as "a gathering of solidarity, friendship and fruitful results".
- Mr. Modi is expected to travel to China after a gap of over seven years to attend the annual summit of the SCO, people familiar with the matter in Delhi.
- Tianjin summit will be a gathering of solidarity, friendship and fruitful results, and the SCO will enter a new stage of high-quality development featuring greater solidarity, coordination, dynamism and productiveness."
- The PM last visited China in June 2018 to attend the SCO summit.

❖ Oil firms to get ₹30,000 cr. for subsidised LPG

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved compensation worth ₹30,000 crore to be paid to three public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) for subsidising the sale of cooking gas at a time of soaring global prices.
- The Cabinet also approved a targeted subsidy of ₹300 per 14.2 kg gas cylinder for up to nine refills per year to the poor households who are beneficiaries of the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**.
- The scheme will get an additional ₹12,000 crore from the Centre during the current financial year 2025-26.
- "Average Per Capita Consumption (PCC) of PMUY consumers, which was only about 3 refills in 2019-20 and 3.68 refills in 2022-23, has improved to about 4.47 during 2024-25," the government said.
- The Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Indian Oil Corporation Limited are the three public sector firms that will receive compensation for the under-recoveries incurred on their sale of domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas will make the payout in 12 tranches.
- "The international prices of LPG remained at high levels during 2024-25 and continue to remain high. However, to insulate consumers from fluctuations in international LPG prices, the increase in cost was not passed on to consumers of domestic LPG which led to significant losses for the three OMCs..." the Union government said in a statement.

• Govt. extends PM E-DRIVE plan by 2 years till Mar. 2028

Context:

- The government has extended the validity of the **₹10,900-crore PM E-DRIVE Scheme by two years till March 2028 for certain categories of vehicles** including **electric buses, e-ambulances and e-trucks**.
- The PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme, the provisions of the scheme will now be in effect till March 2028 instead of March 2026.
- However, the terminal date for registered e-2 shall be March 31, 2026, as per the notification.

❖ 'Vilifying ethanol blending won't work'

Context:

- Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri refuted assertions about the impact on vehicular efficiency with the use of ethanol-blended fuel.
- Mr. Puri said similar attempts were made when compressed biogas was introduced. "You must have faith in your agriculture, biomass, annadaata and urjadaata.
- Meanwhile, Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association, an industry body backed the government's claim saying, **India's ethanol blending programme is scientifically validated, globally proven, strategically crucial for the nation's energy independence, while also ensuring farmers' welfare.**

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