



DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY BENGALURU

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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

AUGUST WEEK 2

11-08-2025 TO 16-08-2025

**INDIA
SEMICONDUCTOR
MISSION (ISM)**

**GENEVA
PLASTICS TREATY
NEGOTIATIONS**

**ZYDUS GETS
U.S. FDA NOD**

**NASHIK: GRAPE
CAPITAL OF
INDIA**

❖ Stepwell from Kalyani Chalukya era being restored**Context:**

- An architectural gem belonging to the Kalyani Chalukya era, and dating to the 10th-11th century CE, is emerging from obscurity and is set to bring the spotlight and tourist footfall to the remote village of Sudi in Gadag district.
- The Nagakunda Pushkarani is a stepwell — similar in form and function to the more famous ones like Rani ki Vav or Adalaj in Gujarat — that is poised for revival thanks to the ‘Adopt a Monument’ scheme of the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage (DAMH).
- Sudi, which used to thrive as a pilgrimage destination and as a strategic centre of the Kalyani Chalukyas, preserves remarkable relics from the 10th and 11th centuries, of which the Nagakunda Pushkarani and the neighbouring Jodu Kalasadagudi temple are just two examples.
- Located 35 km from the popular tourist site of Badami, it was under the administration of **Akkadevi, sister of Chalukya monarch Jayasimha II**.
- Like the temples of the region, the stepwell was built with great attention to detail. Over the centuries, the stepwell fell into disuse while its intricate sculptures slowly weathered under the elements, but is now expected to see better days.
- “Restoration of Nagakunda — which is one of the grandest creations of the Kalyani Chalukyas — is not just a facelift but an example of sustainable heritage conservation, and will revive the community’s engagement with traditional water systems,” said, commissioner, DAMH.
- Restoration works of the stepwell have been taken up by the Deccan Heritage Foundation India (DHFI), **in collaboration with Heritage Matters, the Gandipet Welfare Society — a Hyderabad-based NGO working on zero waste — and the Water Literacy Foundation.**
- The current project aims to restore the architectural beauty of the stepwell and its functionality as a water storage body, and help the local community, according to conservation architect.
- “In terms of architecture, this is a unique stepwell in this part of the country and is similar to the ones in Gujarat and Rajasthan,” , pointing out that the interior walls of the stepwell have architectural features similar to the external facade of a temple making it unique.
- In the second phase, a pathway will link the stepwell to the Jodu Kalasadagudi temple, and the surroundings will be landscaped, developed, and preserved to enhance tourism.

**❖ Nominations to J&K Assembly outside the realm of elected govt., says Centre****Context:**

- The Union Home Ministry has informed the Jammu and Kashmir High Court that the Union Territory’s Lieutenant-Governor can nominate five members to the J&K Legislative Assembly without the government’s “aid and advice”. It said the office of the Lieutenant-Governor was not an extension of the government.

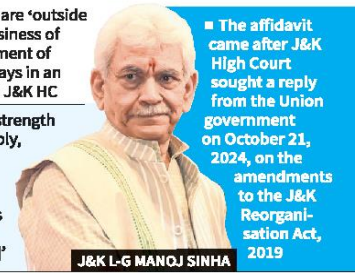
- The Ministry in an affidavit filed on July 24, said the nominations were “outside the realm of the business of the elected government of J&K”.
- The **powers to nominate three members — two Kashmiri migrants, including a woman, and one member from the Pakistan-occupied J&K (PoJK) community — to the Assembly was inserted in the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 by Parliament in 2023.**
- The 2019 Act had also provided for nomination of two women to the Assembly if, in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor, women are not adequately represented in the Assembly. The amendment was challenged through a public interest litigation petition by Congress leader Ravinder Kumar Sharma. Hearing the petition, the High Court on October 21, 2024 had sought a reply from the Union government on the changes to the 2019 Act.
- “Once Parliament bylaw recognises the Lieutenant-Governor as a distinct authority from the government of Union Territory, it necessarily follows that when a power is conferred upon the Lieutenant-Governor, then the same must be exercised as a statutory function and not as an extension of his duties as the head of the U.T. government,” the Ministry said.
- The Ministry also said in court that “...there can be no manner of doubt that it is the Lieutenant-Governor who has to exercise this statutory duty in his discretion, as a statutory functionary and not as an extension of the government, thus, without aid and advice”.
- “Whether Sections, 15, 15-A and 15-b of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, making provision for nominating the members of Legislative Assembly over and above the sanctioned strength of the Legislative Assembly, and which have the potential of converting the minority government into a majority government and vice versa, is ultra vires the Constitution being in violation of basic structure of the Constitution?” it had asked.
- The 2023 amendment had increased the total number of seats to 119 from the existing 114. The government had kept 24 seats vacant for the PoJK areas. The Ministry, in its affidavit, said the “present writ petition has become academic as the scenario contemplated did not arise”.
- It said that “the interpretation of Section 12 of the Union Territories Act, 1963 would pari materia apply to Sections 15, 15A and 15B of the J&K Reorganisation Act and accordingly, the nominations so made, would be made without the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, being outside the realm of the business of the elected government of J&K.”
- The Ministry said the petitioner had failed to substantiate the claim that the nominations made under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 exceed the sanctioned strength of the Legislative Assembly, while those under the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, do not. “The petitioner has not provided any cogent legal basis or statutory interpretation to support such a distinction, and the submissions in this regard remain misconceived and unsustainable in law,” it said.
- It added that Section 14(3) of the 2019 Act “does not provide the total strength of the Legislative Assembly; but merely provides the number of directly elected members to such Legislative Assembly”. “The sanctioned strength of the Assembly, therefore, is not 114, but 114 + all members nominated in terms of Sections 15, 15A and 15B,” the Home Ministry said.

Turf war

The Centre has said the office of the Lieutenant-Governor in Jammu and Kashmir is not an extension of the government

■ The nominations are ‘outside the realm of the business of the elected government of J&K’, the Ministry says in an affidavit filed in the J&K HC

■ ‘The sanctioned strength of the [J&K] Assembly, therefore, is not 114, but 114 + all members nominated in terms of Sections 15, 15A and 15B [of the Act]’



Context:

- Karnataka has 489 public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations installed along its 8,191-km national highway network, making it the State with the second most highway EV chargers in India.
- This puts Karnataka just **behind Uttar Pradesh in the national rankings**, as per a recent response from Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways.
- **Uttar Pradesh tops with 507 EV charging stations along highways. In the third place is Maharashtra with 459 followed by Tamil Nadu, which has 456, and Rajasthan, which has 424 charging points on highways.**
- According to the Union Minister, **a total of 4,557 public EV charging stations** have been installed across 1,46,342 km of national highways across India.
- Union government does not currently have any dedicated incentive scheme for charging point operators (CPOs), in response to Mr. O'Brien's question on incentives.

Urban infrastructure

- While Karnataka holds a strong position nationally in terms of highway EV infrastructure, earlier data released by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) highlights the State's significant lead in urban EV infrastructure.
- **As per BEE's April 2025 data, Karnataka boasts of 5,880 public EV charging points, more than any other State, with 4,626 located in tier-1 cities, predominantly Bengaluru. In comparison, Maharashtra has 2,454 stations, and Delhi has 1,951, all established over the past five years.**
- Beyond the capital city, Karnataka has made strides in expanding EV infrastructure to underserved areas. Tier-2 cities in the State now have 285 public charging stations, while tier-3 towns account for 969 chargers. India now has 26,367 public charging stations, the BEE data reveals.
- Officials from the Karnataka Energy Department attributed this rapid progress to a combination of rising fuel costs, deteriorating urban air quality, and proactive government policy. **"Karnataka was the first State to introduce a dedicated EV policy back in 2017, laying the foundation for the expansion we're seeing today,"** a senior energy official said. At the time of the policy's launch, Karnataka was recording just around 11,000 EV registrations annually, according to official.

Initiatives

- The **2025–26 State Budget included announcements for the establishment of a state-of-the-art EV testing track and an exclusive EV manufacturing and R&D hub in the Bengaluru region.**
- The State has set an ambitious goal of attracting ₹50,000 crore in investments and generating one lakh new jobs in the clean mobility sector.
- On the public transport front, the Karnataka Transport Department plans to deploy 14,750 electric buses as part of its electrification strategy. A Transport Department official said, "These will be introduced under schemes such as PM e-DRIVE, PM-eBus Sewa, and other Externally Aided Projects. Of this total, 9,000 buses are slated for inclusion in the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) fleet."
- The presence of charging stations along highways plays a crucial role in encouraging EV adoption. "Many long-distance travellers hesitate to invest in EVs because of the lack of charging options on highways. However, now I see more fuel stations integrating EV chargers, which is a positive trend,"

• External Affairs Ministry set to brief House panel on India-U.S. relationship

Context:

- U.S. President Donald Trump's imposition of additional tariffs on India is a result of "flawed assumptions" and New Delhi is being dragged into a geopolitical tug of war in which it does not intend to participate, officials of the External Affairs Ministry are poised to tell the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs.
- The officials may also highlight the bipartisan nature of India-U.S. relationship and argue that ties prospered under "both BJP and Congress-led governments".
- The meeting of the Committee on External Affairs is being convened after the U.S. administration cited India's purchase of Russian oil as a trigger for additional tariffs.

• Indian, ASEAN officials to begin fresh round of talks to review trade agreement today

Context:

- As India braces for the impact of U.S. tariffs of 25% that went into effect from August 7, the government is seeking to shore up other trade negotiations, including with ASEAN countries beginning in New Delhi.
- A delegation of the 10-nation ASEAN, or the Association of South East Asian Nations, will meet Commerce Ministry officials from August 11 to 14, sources confirmed, for the next round of talks on a review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).
- The talks come two months after Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal called the 2009 agreement "silly" as it gave India's Asian competitors easy access to its markets, a comment that led to speculation that India was planning to pull out of the agreement.
- The comment also caused some outrage among ASEAN members, as he referred to them as the "B-team of China", referring to India's concerns over Chinese goods flooding the market via these countries.
- However, in July, after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart, Anwar Ibrahim, who is chairing the ASEAN Summit this year, as well as a meeting between Mr. Goyal and Malaysian Minister for Investment, Trade and Industry Tzafrul Aziz, the two sides agreed to "fast-track" the AITIGA review to be completed by the end of this year.
- In addition, officials are preparing for a possible visit by Mr. Modi to Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN-India Summit and East Asia Summit, at the end of October. On Friday, Mr. Ibrahim announced that he "looks forward to welcoming" ASEAN leaders and dialogue partners, including U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, although China normally attends ASEAN Summits at the level of Premier.

U.S. tariffs loom large

- The push for a quick end to AITIGA review talks, among a number of other trade agreement negotiations the government is pursuing with the European Union, Australia, and New Zealand, has been given further impetus by the imposition of 25% additional penalties on India by the U.S. last week.
- Sources said that although nine rounds of talks in the past year with ASEAN officials have not produced a breakthrough yet, they are hopeful of some movement this week. "We are trying to address the fact that, under the existing deal, our imports have grown far in excess of our exports to these countries," a source said.
- Data with the Commerce and Industry Ministry show the trade balance between India and ASEAN has been turning increasingly unfavourable for India. In 2017-18, the earliest year for which the Ministry has

made data available, India's exports to the ASEAN countries stood at \$34.2 billion while imports were \$47.1 billion, leading to a trade deficit of \$12.9 billion. As of 2024-25, India's exports to the ASEAN countries had grown at an average annual rate of 1.7%, to \$39 billion, while imports had grown at 7.5% on average every year, to \$84.2 billion. As a result, the trade deficit had swelled to \$45.2 billion.

- **ASEAN countries comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam also led the effort for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a 15-nation FTA, which India walked out of in 2019.**

❖ India has set an example in lion conservation: Minister

Context:

- Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday said the rise in the Asiatic lion population in Gujarat reflected India's intimate relationship with nature and wildlife.
- "India has given a commitment to the world to work for nature's conservation through the rehabilitation of wildlife," Mr. Yadav said at a World Lion Day function at Timbdi village in the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary in Devbhumi Dwarka district of Gujarat.
- As per the census conducted in May, the estimated population of **Asiatic lion has increased to 891 from 674 five years ago.**
- "The growth of India's lion population since 1889 (when the last Asiatic lions were seen) shows our intimate relationship with nature and wildlife," Mr. Yadav said.
- He said the resolution made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year to boost Gujarat's lion population and develop the Barda Sanctuary as a new habitat had been fulfilled.
- To address these, Mr. Modi had initiated multiple global efforts such as the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the International Solar Alliance.
- "In addition, the **International Big Cat Alliance has been established.** Conservation work has been undertaken for five of the seven big cat species found in India.
- **Asiatic lions are only found in India, and that too in Gir, and Gujarat gets 100% of the pride for their conservation,**" he said.
- The Minister praised the unique bond between the **pastoralist Maldhari community and lions as a model of coexistence.**
- Mr. Yadav said the **number of tiger reserves in India had risen to 58 from 47 during Mr. Modi's tenure, and they host 70% of the global tiger population. Snow leopard conservation efforts continue, with their population in India currently at 714.**
- On cheetah reintroduction, he said, "Bringing African cheetahs to India was a challenge, but we successfully rehabilitated them."
- He also mentioned ongoing projects such as **Project Lion, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Dolphin, and Project Great Indian Bustard,** which are reinforcing India's conservation leadership.
- Mr. Yadav said **two more species of big cats — jaguar and puma — are found in Latin America, and quoted Mr. Modi's call for global cooperation in conserving all seven big cat species found across 97 countries, especially in Africa and Asia, through knowledge sharing, artificial intelligence, and technology.**

❖ What is Telangana's Kaleshwaram project?

- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), billed as the lifeline of Telangana by the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, is mired in controversies over the manner in which it has been executed. A barrage forming a major component of the project suffered damages within three years of its inauguration, while two others constructed upstream developed cracks resulting in the charge that the KLIP was a colossal waste of public money.

What is the KLIP?

- The KLIP is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari river in Kaleshwaram of Bhupalpally in Telangana. Billed as the world's largest multi-stage irrigation project, Kaleshwaram's upstream influence is at the confluence of **Pranahita and Godavari**.
- It utilises a canal network of more than 1,800 km. The project was conceived by the BRS government, headed by K. Chandrasekhar Rao, to provide irrigation facilities to over 16 lakh acres in 13 districts of Telangana, besides stabilising the existing ayacut. It aims at storing and distributing 240 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) of Godavari water of which 169 tmc ft is proposed to be allocated for irrigation, 30 tmc ft for drinking water to Hyderabad, 16 tmc ft for miscellaneous and industrial uses and another 10 tmc ft for drinking water to villages en route.

Where was it built?

- The government has constructed barrages across Godavari at Ramadugu, Medigadda, Sundilla and Annaram. The water is stored there to cater to drinking water and irrigation needs.
- The project was conceived at a cost of ₹71,000 crore initially. The cost escalated to close to over ₹1 lakh crore over a period of time. Finishing works is likely to take few more thousands of crores.

What is the controversy?

- The project has been mired in controversies right from the beginning as the then government shifted the location from Tummidihatti to Medigadda even after reportedly receiving hydrology clearance for the former location.
- The shifting of the site was made on the pretext of non-availability of water at Tummidihatti, but an inquiry revealed that the Central Water Commission had estimated the water availability at Tummidihatti to be over 200 tmc ft.
- A major allegation that has surfaced in the construction of the project was that the barrages were constructed on permeable foundations rather than strong foundations that can withstand the inflow of heavy quantum of water.
- The shifting of location, from Tummidihatti to Medigadda, too came under criticism as almost 30% of the works at Pranahita Chevella Sujala Sravanti (PCSS) project, started in united Andhra Pradesh in 2008, at Tummidihatti costing over ₹11,000 crore were completed by then.
- Another major charge against the BRS Government was that the decision to go ahead with the project was taken solely by Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao. It was alleged that he had not obtained the consent of the State Cabinet before launching work on the project.
- The faults in the Kaleshwaram project were exposed during the BRS regime when the piers of the Sundilla barrage sunk, substantiating the claims that the barrage was constructed on permeable foundation. Two other barrages, Annaram and Sundilla, too developed cracks as the government impounded and stored huge quantities of water against technical advice.

Was an inquiry ordered?

- The constitution of a judicial commission to probe the lapses in the Kaleshwaram project was an election promise of the Congress. Subsequently, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy constituted a one-man judicial

the first language, Kannada will be the second language. In this case, students are allowed to learn their mother tongue as the third language.

- “About 90% of the schools in the State are Kannada and English medium schools, where implementing the two-language policy is not difficult. However, in the remaining 10% linguistic minority schools, it was decided to teach three languages after serious discussions for about 15 days to ensure that children are not deprived of learning their mother tongue.”
- “Since the third language is optional and is not considered for assessment, the government cannot neglect it. Instead, teachers of the respective language should be appointed and priority should be given to effective learning by providing books and other materials. If Tulu, Konkani, Kodava and other regional language students want to learn in their mother tongue, that is also allowed.”

❖ SC orders capture of stray dogs in Delhi, says never let them back on the street

Context:

- The Supreme Court directed the Delhi government and local bodies to immediately capture stray dogs, detain them in pounds created across the National Capital Territory (NCT), and never release them back into public spaces.
- A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said anyone who resist picking up or rounding up of stray canines would face contempt action from the Supreme Court.
- The top court said authorities should “at the earliest, start picking up strays from all localities, more particularly the vulnerable ones in the city and outskirts
- The court was hearing a suo motu case on the increasing instances of stray dog attacks on children, including infants. Addressing the clamour to protect stray dogs, the court asked whether animal rights activists would be able to return children lost to rabid canines to their parents.
- Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the government, supported the court’s decision.

❖ India’s first Uber Black pick-up zone at city airport

Context:

- Uber, in partnership with Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), introduced India’s first dedicated Uber Black pick-up zones at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), enhancing the premium travel experience for passengers at both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2.
- The initiative, launched, also covers Uber Comfort rides. It is aimed at offering a seamless transition between air and ground travel, according to Uber.
- The new zones feature enhanced amenities such as water dispensers, charging stations, a staffed helpdesk kiosk, and trained on-ground personnel to assist passengers. Uber stated that highly-rated drivers and well-appointed vehicles are part of the service, ensuring a more refined commuting option for airport travellers.

❖ RS returns Manipur Budget Bill in absence of Opposition

Context:

- The Rajya Sabha discussed and returned to the Lower House the Budget and Appropriation Bills of Manipur, and the Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, in the absence of members from Opposition parties.

- The Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill provides reservation to Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Goa Assembly. The Bill was passed by a voice vote.
- The Upper House returned the Manipur budget, the Manipur Appropriation Bill, and the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, too, during the day, without a brief discussion, in the absence of the Opposition. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said both Bills were very critical for Manipur, and asked the Opposition to participate in the discussion.

❖ Lok Sabha passes Income Tax Bill; officials' powers broadened

Context:

- The Lok Sabha passed the revised Income Tax Bill, 2025.
- The Bill seeks to simplify, rationalise, and shorten the existing Income Tax Act, 1961.
- It also broadens the powers of income tax officials, allowing them to forcibly break into personal emails and social media accounts of assesseees during search operations.
- Union Finance Minister had introduced the previous version of the Bill in the Lok Sabha in February, following which it was sent to a Select Committee chaired by Baijayant Panda for a review. The Select Committee submitted its recommendations on July 21. Following this, the government withdrew the Bill to incorporate the suggestions made by the committee.
- FM introduced the updated version — the Income Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025 — in the Lower House. The Bill has around 2.59 lakh words compared with the 5.12 lakh words in the Income Tax Act, 1961. The number of chapters has been brought down to 23 from 47 and the number of Sections to 536 from 819.
- In order to provide greater clarity, the new Bill has increased the number of tables to 57 from 18 and the number of formulae to 46 from six.

In search operations

- The new Bill has also tweaked the powers of income tax officials during search and seizure operations.
- The new Bill requires any person “who is found to be in possession or control of” any books of account or other documents in electronic form to provide the authorised officer assistance in accessing these, “including access code, by whatever name called”.
- Further, it allows the authorised officer to “override the access code to any computer system” if the access code is not made available.
- The Select Committee defended these provisions in its report, saying that various “incriminating evidences and material are found/seized from electronic records including WhatsApp communications, emails, etc.” and that passwords for these are often not shared with officials. However, a few members of the committee submitted dissent notes calling for changes to these provisions. Congress MP Amar Singh argued that the wording of the relevant section “gives very wide-ranging power to the government to force tax payees to hand over **all types of personal digital data** including passwords, chats, etc.” and asked for a reduction in these powers.
- “This provision is arbitrary and [gives] excess powers to the authorities and there is every chance of misuse of this provisions and **ultimately infringing the Right to Privacy of an individual guaranteed in the Constitution and reiterated by the Supreme Court** in As Opposition members continued their protest, the Lok Sabha passed two crucial Bills pertaining to taxation without any debate.
- Union Finance Minister introduced the Income Tax (No. 2) Bill and the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha when no Opposition member was present in the House. Most of the Opposition leaders had been detained while marching towards the headquarters of the Election Commission in

protest against the revision of the Bihar electoral rolls and alleged electoral malpractices. After they returned, the Opposition members continued raising slogans in the Well of the House. Amid the din, the two taxation Bills were passed by voice vote.

Sports Bill passed

- The Lok Sabha also passed the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025. These Bills were also introduced when the Opposition members were not present in the House. Two members spoke in support of the Bills. Earlier, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, while taking up the two Bills for passage, said the government had made “several attempts” to bring forward legislation on sports governance.
- “In the coming days, when India is going to bid for the Olympics, it is important that our sports ecosystem is robust, transparent and accountable. This is a crucial step in that direction,” he said.

❖ Rift between two blocs continues in Geneva Plastics Treaty negotiations

Context:

- The deadlock between two blocs of countries on the best way to contain plastic pollution mirrors a shift in the global plastic and polymer-manufacturing industry, which in recent years has moved out of Europe and drifted towards South and Southeast Asia.
- Since 2022, the United Nations Environment Programme has been spearheading efforts to get countries to evolve, by consensus, a legally binding treaty that commits them to address plastic pollution on land as well as in oceans.
- However, two broad coalitions have evolved over four sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution here — the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) chaired by Norway and Rwanda, consisting of nearly 80 countries, including members of the European Union (EU), and the Like Minded Countries (LMC), which includes Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, China and Cuba. While the latter is not a formal coalition like the HAC, it is a much smaller group of countries whose interests are aligned because they are all major petrochemical states.
- **India** had expressed solidarity with the LMC. Under the current rules of negotiation, countries cannot pass a proposal by a majority vote, and near-unanimous agreement is required.
- The fundamental rift between the two is that the HAC says plastic pollution cannot be contained without imposing cuts or capping production of plastic and its constituent, polymer. The LMC says plastic pollution can be addressed through waste management, and imposing production cuts would only cause disruptions in trade, rather than a meaningful reduction in plastic production and use.
- An analysis in July by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) tracking the flows of the main chemical constituents of plastic — ethylene, propylene, styrene and their derivatives polypropene, low-density polyethylene, linear low-density polyethylene, high-density polyethylene and polyethylene terephthalate — showed that Asia dominated the global trade in primary plastic polymers, with 11 exporting and 18 importing countries.

Divergent stance

- In North America, the United States was the largest exporter of these primary plastic polymers, while several European countries served as both importers and exporters. Trade volumes in Africa and South America were negligible. This year, the United States, which is part of neither coalition but had always pitched for a “strong treaty”, said it would not support any proposals for production cuts.
- India’s support for the LMC echoes in a submission made by the All India Plastic Manufacturers Association, an industry lobby, to the Chair of the INC 5.2, Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso, on

August 5. “We believe that any cap on the production of primary polymers will do more harm than good as its growing needs in a multitude of areas cannot be met with other materials in the quantities needed,” says the submission.

- “We ask that the INC focus on helping countries increase their waste management capabilities... and build programmes for behavioural change to eradicate littering.” Independent observers said that the business case for petroleum and polymer refining in major economies was “weak”. “Look at China for instance. Its petrochemical refining is working at 50% capacity. Several major refiners the world over are seeing that margins and demands for polymer products are declining,” said David Azoulay, managing attorney, Center for International Environmental Law, at a seminar.

❖ Zydus gets U.S. FDA nod for Diltiazem Hydrochloride drug

Context:

- Generic drugmaker Zydus Lifesciences has received final approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA) for Diltiazem Hydrochloride tablets USP, 30 mg, 60 mg, 90 mg, and 120 mg.
- A generic of Cardizem Tablets, the drug is indicated for management of chronic stable angina and angina due to coronary artery spasm.
- Diltiazem Hydrochloride tablets had annual sales of \$13.9 million in the U.S., Zydus said citing IQVIA MAT June 2025 numbers.

❖ Look for markets other than the U.S., add value, Centre tells fish exporters

Context:

- Seafood exporters and other stakeholders sought the Union Government’s intervention to address tariff barriers in major markets such as the U.S., at the Seafood Exporters Meet.
- “The EU, Japan, South Korea, U.K., Russia, Australia, West Asia, South East Asia and many countries are available for export of Indian seafoods,”.

Non-tariff barriers

- The exporters also pointed to non-tariff barriers such as private testing, third-party clearances, and farm certifications, along with gaps in cold chain and processing infrastructure for niche products like rainbow trout.
- According to official statistics, from 2023-24, the U.S. has been the major importer of Indian seafood in value terms, with imports worth \$2,549.15 million, accounting for a share of 34.53% in terms of U.S. dollar value.
- **China is the second largest importer of Indian fish followed by Japan and Vietnam.**

❖ Australia ‘will recognise’ Palestinian state at UNGA

Context:

- Australia will recognise a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.
- “A two-state solution is humanity’s best hope to break the cycle of violence in the Middle East [West Asia] and to bring an end to the conflict, suffering and starvation in Gaza,” he told reporters in Canberra.

- “Australia will recognise the right of the Palestinian people to a state of their own. We will work with the international community to make this right a reality.”
- He said that Australia’s decision was predicated on reassurances from the Palestinian Authority that there would be “no role for the terrorists of Hamas in any future Palestinian state”.

❖ H5N1 influenza poses serious risk to humans: Study

Context:

- Indian Institute of Science researchers, in a new study, have discovered that the currently circulating 2.3.4.4b clade of H5N1 subtype of influenza virus (bird flu) has specific mutations in its genome that increase its human adaptive potential. This clade is acquiring the same key mutations that pandemic human influenza strains possess, which could be a growing risk.
- The H5N1 influenza virus, which was first identified in birds three decades ago, has now gradually found its way to humans.
- Indian Institute of Science (IISc) researchers in a new study have discovered that the currently circulating 2.3.4.4b clade of H5N1 has specific mutations in its genome that increase its human adaptive potential.
- H5N1 is a strain of the influenza virus harbouring type 5 haemagglutinin (H5) and type 1 neuraminidase (N1) surface proteins, which help in viral entry and spread, respectively.

Common ancestor

- IISc said that clade represents a group of organisms having a common ancestor.
- “The 2.3.4.4b clade has infected many mammalian species and is adapting to [non-human] mammals, which is a concern for human adaptation. The clade is panzootic, causing unprecedented mortality in birds and mammals, along with several sporadic human infections,” Kesavardhana Sannula, assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry, IISc.

Growing risk

- This clade is acquiring the same key mutations that pandemic human influenza strains possess, which could be a growing risk.
- IISc said that when the influenza virus enters a new organism, it can develop genetic mutations. This helps the virus adapt to the new host.
- The researchers were trying to decode whether the 2.3.4.4b clade was evolving to produce crucial adaptations in its proteins that allow it to infect humans. They also wanted to decipher which host animals can potentially accelerate this adaptation, giving the virus a leg up in scaling the evolutionary ladder.

Increased mutations


- The team found an increased number of mutations specifically in the viral polymerase complex (PA, PB2), nucleoproteins, and haemagglutinin (HA) proteins.
- IISc said that once it identified these mutations, the team classified them depending on whether the mutations can help the virus spread from non-human mammals to humans (adaptive) or simply survive in the non-human host (barrier).
- “Finally, they developed a simple mathematical approach and estimated the human adaptive potential for the 2.3.4.4b clade,” IISc said.
- The team was also able to pinpoint animals that would be likely to harbour virus strains with the highest human adaptive potential. Interestingly, viruses that can adapt to fox hosts seemed to have higher adaptive potential than cattle-adapted strains.

- Based on their findings, the researchers suggest that enhanced and proactive surveillance measures need to be implemented.

❖ LS Speaker sets in motion the process to remove HC judge

Context:

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla set in motion the process of removing Justice Yashwant Varma of Allahabad High Court by admitting a motion, signed by 146 members, and constituting a three-member inquiry committee to probe the charges against Justice Varma.
- The inquiry committee comprises Supreme Court judge Justice Aravind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and senior Karnataka High Court advocate B.V. Acharya.
- Justice Varma was repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt wads of currency notes were found at his official residence on March 14. Later, an in-house inquiry of the Supreme Court had indicted Justice Varma.
- “The committee will submit its report as early as possible. The proposal [for removal of Justice Varma] will remain pending till the receipt of the report of the inquiry committee,” Mr. Birla informed the House.
- He said he accepted the proposal received on July 21 and constituted a three-member panel for the removal of the judge from his post in accordance with Section 3(2) of the Judges (Inquiry) Act 1968.

 The facts connected in the present case point towards corruption and are eligible for action as per Article 124, Article 217 and Article 218 of the Constitution of India. Parliament needs to speak in one voice on this issue

OM BIRLA
Lok Sabha Speaker



‘Foundation of trust’

- Mr. Birla said unimpeachable character and financial and intellectual integrity were the foundation of the trust a common person has in the judiciary. **“The facts connected in the present case point towards corruption and are eligible for action as per Article 124, Article 217 and Article 218 of the Constitution of India.** Parliament needs to speak in one voice on this issue and every citizen of this country should send a clear message about its commitment to zero tolerance to corruption.”
- Earlier, then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna had asked Justice Varma to resign or face impeachment proceedings after receiving the report of the in-house probe committee in March. As Justice Varma refused to quit, CJI Khanna forwarded the report to the President and the Prime Minister for the removal of the judge.
- Though Justice Varma had moved the Supreme Court against CJI Khanna’s recommendation for his removal, the top court rejected his plea.

❖ Retail inflation hits 8-year low of 1.55% as food prices drop

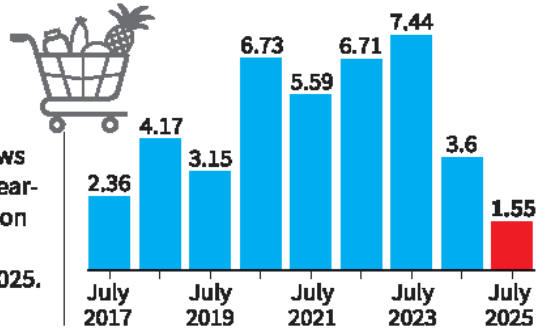
Context:

- Retail inflation in India slipped to 1.55% in July, its lowest rate since June 2017, driven by a drop in food prices. This is below the Reserve Bank of India’s comfort band of 2% to 6%.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI), released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Tuesday, shows inflation easing for nine consecutive months.
- The rate of inflation in the food and beverages category came in at -0.8% in July, lower than the -0.2% seen in June, and the 5.1% rate in July 2024.

- “In the food basket, there was deflation in key items such as vegetables, pulses, spices, and meat,” said Rajani Sinha, chief economist at CareEdge Ratings. “Looking ahead, food inflation is likely to remain contained, supported by healthy agricultural activity and a favourable base.”
- Vegetable and pulses inflation contracted 21% and 14% respectively, driven by a high base and falling prices.
- Ms. Sinha added that the good progress of the monsoon, adequate reservoir levels, and strong kharif sowing bode well for agricultural output and food price stability.
- Core inflation, which excludes the impact of food and fuel prices, also eased to 4.1% in July 2025 from 4.4% in the previous month, nearly at the RBI’s target of 4%.
- The other broad categories in the CPI saw little change from the previous month.
- Dipanwita Mazumdar, an economist at the Bank of Baroda, said that a statistical high base will continue to keep the inflation rate down between September and December 2025.

Rate eases

The chart shows the all-India year-on-year inflation rate from July 2017 to July 2025. Values in %



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF STATISTICS & PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION



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❖ Centre for Smart Governance, e-Gov Foundation tie up to transform public service delivery

Context:

- The State government's nodal software development agency, Centre for Smart Governance (CSG), and eGov Foundation have announced a strategic partnership to strengthen governance delivery and improve citizen experience in Karnataka, across India, and in the global south.
- Through the partnership, the two organisations will collaborate on key e-Governance initiatives in Karnataka and globally, provide each other with access to technical expertise, training and marketing support, and share niche expertise for the development of products that are relevant and easily adoptable for governments across the world, especially in the global south, said a communique from CSG.

Build for Karnataka

- According to officials from CSG, the partnership will initially be looking at developing tech solutions for projects under the Urban Development Department and solid waste management solutions for the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.
- The idea is to create digital public infrastructure-led solutions that can be successfully implemented in Karnataka, replicated across India, and adapted for other countries in the global south.
- CSG has delivered more than 50 technology solutions for Karnataka's departments and agencies covering sectors such as education, land reforms, and property and marriage registrations. So far, most were developed using proprietary tools by foreign technology companies.
- According to the officials, the partnership with eGov is a step in a different direction, where solutions can be developed using open-source software and digital public goods. This not only helps to bring down the costs significantly, but also removes the dependency on foreign companies and their hold over intellectual property, they note.
- It also eliminates the need to build solutions from the ground up as eGov Foundation's open-source platform, DIGIT, has been built to launch and scale citizen services quickly while allowing the government to keep the ownership of the systems they use.
- The collaboration brings together CSG's operational understanding of government systems with eGov's expertise in open digital infrastructure, process innovation, and institutional enablement, noted a statement from CSG.

❖ India's first commercial EO satellite constellation to be established

Context:

- The constellation will deliver analysis-ready data and value-added services for applications in climate change monitoring, disaster management, among others.
- Bengaluru-based PixxelSpace India will lead a consortium comprising Piersight Space, Satsure Analytics India, and Dhruva Space; it will invest more than ₹1,200 crore over the next five years
- The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) on Tuesday announced the selection of the PixxelSpace India-led consortium to design, build, and operate India's first fully indigenous commercial earth observation (EO) satellite constellation under the public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- The Bengaluru-based PixxelSpace India consortium comprises Piersight Space, Satsure Analytics India, and Dhruva Space.
- IN-SPACe said the selection of the PixxelSpace India consortium was done following a competitive bidding process which involved two more consortia.

- It is for the first time in the history of the Indian space sector that a private consortium would invest more than ₹1,200 crore over the next five years to launch a constellation of 12 state-of-the-art EO satellites equipped with panchromatic, multispectral, hyperspectral, and microwave Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) sensors.
- The constellation will deliver Analysis Ready Data (ARD) and Value-Added Services (VAS) for applications in climate change monitoring, disaster management, agriculture, infrastructure, marine surveillance, national security, and urban planning, while also catering to the global demand for high-quality geospatial intelligence.
- IN-SPACE said that by generating high-resolution, indigenous satellite data, the initiative will significantly reduce India's reliance on foreign sources, ensure data sovereignty, and position the country among the global leaders in space-based data solutions.
- "This initiative signals the coming of age of India's private space industry in the space sector. It demonstrates the capability and confidence of Indian companies to lead large-scale, technologically advanced, and commercially viable space missions that serve both national and global markets. The EO - PPP model fosters an ecosystem where public and private capabilities reinforce each other to drive growth, innovation, and self-reliance," Pawan Goenka, chairman, IN-SPACE, said.



The constellation will deliver analysis-ready data and value-added services for applications in climate change monitoring, disaster management, among others. REUTERS

Under the PPP framework, the Union government will provide strategic, technical, and policy support, while the PixxelSpace India-led consortium will own and operate the EO system, including satellite manufacturing, launches from Indian soil, ground infrastructure, and commercialisation of data services. IN-SPACE further added that the EO constellation will be deployed in a phased manner over the next four years to ensure continuous service upgrades and expanded coverage.

❖ India-U.K. FTA offers mutual growth: Kang

Context:

- The U.K.-India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) deal would mutually benefit both nations and promote mobility, innovation, inclusivity, support jobs, boost exports, and strengthen cross-border trade and economic growth, said Harjinder Kang, Trade Commissioner, South Asia, and British Deputy High Commissioner, Western India, at the Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) organised roundtable.
- "The vision also aligns with the U.K.'s modern industrial strategy which will help businesses overcome barriers to investment across sectors," he commented, while addressing BCIC members.
- Chandru Iyer, British Deputy High Commissioner, Karnataka and Kerala and Deputy Trade Commissioner, South Asia (Investment), further explained how this strategic partnership could unlock new opportunities for bilateral growth and collaboration.
- "Indian-owned companies are already thriving in the U.K., driving jobs in high-growth sectors such as aerospace, technology, and advanced manufacturing. Indian businesses are making the most of the U.K.'s ecosystem and the U.K.-India CETA will boost this further," he observed.
- He said he was confident that the new comprehensive strategic partnership would see closer partnerships in defence, education, climate, technology, and innovation.
- The technology security initiative (TSI), signed last year, would lead to increased collaboration in areas including telecom security which would unlock investment, he stated.

- “We believe that this agreement will have a significant impact on our economies. With its potential to double bilateral trade by 2030, this agreement is expected to have a lasting impact on both economies,” said Prashant Gokhale, president, BCIC.

❖ Won't interfere with govt. decision to have its own education policy: HC

Context:

- Observing that courts do not interfere in policy decisions of governments unless they are violative of constitutional or statutory rights, the High Court of Karnataka on Tuesday declined to interfere in the State government's decision to come out with its own education policy by ignoring the National Educational Policy (NEP)-2020.
- A Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Ramachandra D. Huddar, passed the order while dismissing a PIL petition filed by two Bengaluru-based advocates, Girish Bharadwaj and Ananda Murthy.
- It was pointed out in the petition that though NEP-2020 was implemented in Karnataka from the academic year 2021-22, the new political regime decided to withdraw NEP-2020 and frame its own policy.
- It was contended in the petition that the discontinuation of NEP-2020 was not in the interest of the students, faculty members, and the education system in the State, as the objective of NEP-2020 is to have a uniform education system across the country.
- While declining to entertain the petition, the Bench said that courts cannot compel the State to adopt a particular policy while pointing out that the role of courts in interfering with policy decisions is minimal.

❖ Online gaming will be regulated based on panel report: Home Minister

Context:

- The government will take action on regulating online gaming based on the recommendations of a committee headed by IPS officer Pranab Mohanty.
- The committee, which was set up in April 2025, is expected to submit its report in September, Home Minister G. Parameshwara informed the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

❖ SC questions 'potentiality of abuse' of BNS Section 152

Context:

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked if “potentiality of abuse” by the state of Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which punishes “acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India”, could be a ground to declare the law itself unconstitutional.
- A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi raised the question to senior advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, appearing for the Foundation of Independent Journalism and Siddharth Varadarajan, one of the founding editors of the online news portal The Wire, who is facing an FIR under Section 152 and other offences under the BNS at Morigaon Police Station, Assam, for the publication of a news article.
- The petition submitted that the arrest of Mr. Varadarajan and/or others was “imminent”.The Bench protected Mr. Varadarajan and the members of the Foundation from any coercive action by the police. It issued notice to the Union government and the State of Assam, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

- Ms. Ramakrishnan argued that Section 152 of the BNS, though worded differently and avoiding the term ‘sedition’, was “in essence” the colonial sedition provision of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Senior counsel submitted that Section 152 was vaguely worded, its ambiguity cloaking an immense capacity to chill free speech, especially of journalists.
- Justice Bagchi agreed with Ms. Ramakrishnan that vagueness in a penal provision was a valid ground to challenge it.
- Justice Bagchi said the top court’s judgment in the Kedar Nath Singh case had clearly defined that sedition could not be invoked under Section 124A until there was clear proof that words or action had incited violence.
- “The acts which come within Section 124A and Section 152, by way of comparative interpretation, would be covered by the ratio of the Kedar Nath Singh verdict that unless there is a clear threat to unity and sovereignty, the offence [of sedition] need not be attracted,” Justice Bagchi observed.
- Justice Kant said a general list of acts endangering sovereignty could not be prepared by the court; it would depend on a case by case basis. “For example, mere political dissent cannot endanger sovereignty,” Justice Kant said.
- Mr. Mehta asked whether a challenge to a provision could be used as a ground to gain anticipatory bail or seek the quashing of an FIR under Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Justice Kant responded by asking Mr. Mehta whether custodial interrogation was necessary in the case of journalists. Mr. Mehta replied that journalists could not be considered a “separate class” under the law.

❖ Aadhaar, voter ID not proof of citizenship: Bombay HC

Context:

- The Bombay High Court on Tuesday rejected the bail plea of Babu Abdul Ruf Sardar, accused of illegally entering India from Bangladesh and obtaining forged Indian identity documents, citing national security concerns, and the risk of absconding.
- Passing the order, Justice Amit Borkar observed, “In my opinion, the Citizenship Act, 1955 is the main and controlling law for deciding questions about nationality in India today. Merely having documents such as an Aadhaar card, PAN card, or voter ID does not by itself make someone a citizen of India. These documents are meant for identification, but they do not override the basic legal requirements of citizenship as prescribed in the Act.”

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❖ Committee on simultaneous elections Bills gets extension

- The parliamentary committee scrutinising the two Bills on implementing simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies was on Tuesday granted an extension till the last week of the Winter Session.
- The Lok Sabha passed a motion moved by P.P. Choudhary, Chairperson of the Joint Committee of Parliament, by a voice vote amid Opposition protests.

❖ Govt. refrains from specifying valid IDs for citizenship

Context:

- The Union Home Ministry did not specify the “categories of valid documents” required for people to prove citizenship in India, while responding to a question in the Lok Sabha. Citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955 and its rules, the Ministry said.
- The special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is presently under way in Bihar, with birth certificates among the 11 documents listed by the Election Commission that can be furnished for inclusion in the voter rolls.
- The Ministry was responding to a question by Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) member Sudama Prasad, who asked for the “details of categories of valid documents that are required for people to prove citizenship in India”, and the “total number of birth certificates issued nationwide during the last 25 years and whether the Government received reports about low coverage of issuance of birth and death certificates vis-à-vis number of births and deaths by the State Government and the list of top 10 States”.
- “The citizenship of India is governed under the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and rules made thereunder,” Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in a written reply.
- Without specifying the admissible documents, the reply said that citizenship “can be acquired by birth (Section 3), by descent (Section 4), by registration (Section 5), by naturalisation (Section 6) or by incorporation of territory (Section 7) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. The eligibility criteria for acquisition and determination of citizenship is as per the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955”.
- On August 5, the Ministry said the Citizenship Act requires the Centre to compulsorily register every Indian citizen and issue national ID cards to them.

❖ Amid Opposition protests, two Bills passed in Lok Sabha

Context:

- Amid repeated adjournments, the Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the Mines and Minerals Bill and the Indian Ports Bill. The government also introduced another legislation to amend the law on insolvency and bankruptcy.
- The proceedings of the Lower House were repeatedly disrupted as the Opposition continued its protest against the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, raising slogans and at one point even hurling torn papers at the Chair.
- The House passed the Indian Ports Bill, 2025 amid the din. The Bill seeks to set up and empower State Maritime Boards for the effective management of non-major ports, and will also establish the Maritime State Development Council to foster the structured growth and development of the port sector.
- The House was adjourned following the passage of this Bill. When it reassembled, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2025 was passed by a voice vote after a brief discussion, even as the Opposition continued its protests. The Bill seeks to widen the scope and territorial domain of the National Mineral Exploration Trust to enable the use of the funds accrued to it

within India, including offshore areas, and outside India for the exploration and development of mines and minerals.

❖ Cabinet gives approval for four semiconductor plants

Context:

The Union Cabinet approved four projects under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM). Two of the projects will be in Bhubaneswar in Odisha, and one each will be in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh.

- The cumulative value of the projects is ₹4,594 crore. This brings the number of projects under the ₹76,000-crore mission, which provides financial support to semiconductor units, to 10.
- The first chip from one of the previous six units — some are competing, so it's not clear which — is expected to be rolled out by the end of the year.
- The firms behind the four new projects are SiCSem (which will make a silicon carbide integrated facility in Info Valley, Bhubaneswar); Continental Device India Private Limited, which will expand its existing “discrete semiconductor manufacturing facility” in Mohali; 3D Glass Solutions Inc., which will set up a “vertically integrated advanced packaging and embedded glass substrate unit” in Bhubaneswar; and Advanced System in Package (ASIP) Technologies, which will set up a semiconductor unit in Andhra Pradesh, with the location yet to be chosen.
- Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said that having the capacity to work on silicon carbide technology, an “evolving” field, was strategically important for India. “IIT Bhubaneswar already has a ₹45 crore investment in a silicon carbide research unit, and the results have been very good,” he added.



❖ India produces 239.3 million tonnes of milk, says Centre

- **Uttar Pradesh is the largest milk producer in the country, followed by Rajasthan**, according to a reply tabled in Lok Sabha by Union Minister of State, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying S.P. Singh Baghel.
- **The country's total milk production in 2023-24 was 239.3 million tonnes. As much as 53.12% of the total milk produced was contributed by cows, while buffaloes' share was 43.62%.**

❖ IAF prioritises induction of long-range missiles after Operation Sindoor success

Context:

- Following the successful use of long-range stand-off weapons during Operation Sindoor, the Indian Air Force (IAF) is now prioritising the induction of air-to-ground and air-to-air missiles with strike ranges exceeding 200 km.
- This shift is aimed at enhancing India's ability to engage targets from safer distances, beyond the reach of enemy air defence systems.
- During the operation, the IAF employed advanced long-range weapons such as the BrahMos, SCALP, Rampage, and Crystal Maze missiles — each capable of striking targets well beyond 200 km. These systems enabled the IAF to neutralise enemy air bases and strategic assets from stand-off ranges of 250 km to 450 km, effectively bypassing Chinese HQ-9 air defence systems.

- Building on this operational success, the IAF has requested the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to accelerate the development of longer-range variants of the Astra missile, India's indigenous air-to-air missile system. The IAF has also shown strong interest in acquiring the Russian R-37 missile, known for its impressive range of over 200 km, which could provide a significant tactical edge against both western and northern adversaries.
- The IAF is also pressing for rapid progress on Project Kusha, an indigenous initiative led by DRDO to develop a long-range air defence missile system. At the same time, plans are under way to procure at least two additional squadrons of the Russian S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile system, depending on the availability and capacity of the manufacturer.
- Highlighting its growing capabilities, the IAF recently set a record by shooting down a surveillance aircraft at a distance of over 300 km. The deployment of the S-400 systems has already had a deterrent effect, forcing the Pakistani Air Force to alter its flight paths — either staying deep within its territory or flying at low altitudes to avoid detection and targeting.

❖ Paytm secures payment aggregator licence from RBI

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted in-principle approval to Paytm Payments Services Ltd. (PPSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications Ltd. (OCL) for a Payment Aggregator (PA) licence.
- “We would like to inform you Reserve Bank of India has granted ‘in-principle’ authorisation to PPSL vide its letter dated August 12 to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007,” OCL said in a filing.

❖ Govt. fails to transfer ₹3.69 lakh-cr. cess to designated funds: CAG

Context:

- As of 2023-24, the Centre had failed to transfer ₹3.69 lakh crore worth cess collections to the relevant funds for which they were levied, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found.
- In its report tabled in Parliament, the CAG found shortfalls in transfers to funds created for investor education and protection, monetisation of national highways, development of oil industry and health and education in the country.

Gas/oil cess

- The single-largest source of this shortfall in transfers was to do with the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB). The Oil Industry (Development) Act, 1974 had provided for the setting up of the OIDB for the development of the oil industry. For that purpose, a cess was imposed on crude oil and natural gas.
- “We found since FY1974-75 to FY2023-24, total cess on crude oil collected by the Government was ₹2,94,850.56 crore (including ₹18,845.98 crore during FY 2023-24,” the CAG said, and “since FY 1974-75 to FY 1991-92, only ₹902.40 crore has been transferred to the OIDB and thereafter no funds have been transferred.”
- An analysis by The Hindu of the government's budget documents showed it transferred ₹17,730 crore in 2024-25 and budgeted a transfer of ₹19,376 crore in 2025-26 to the fund.
- The other large cess collected but not adequately transferred to the relevant fund was the Health and Education Cess. The Government had imposed an Education Cess at 2% with effect from April 1, 2004.

Health & education cess

- In 2007, the Government levied an additional Secondary and Higher Education cess of 1% on income tax and surcharge. From April 1, 2018, the levies were replaced with a single 4% Health and Education

Cess. The CAG found the Centre did not transfer a total of ₹37,537 crore collected as cess from 2018-19 to 2023-24 to the education and health funds.

- In its reply, the Finance Ministry said between 2018-19 and 2023-24, it transferred ₹3.66 lakh crore to the designated funds, which was in excess of what it had collected from the relevant levies during that time.

Need to reconcile

- However, the CAG pointed out Government accounts showed transfer to the funds at ₹2.65 lakh crore.
- “This needs to be reconciled by the Ministry,” it added. Other funds where there was shortfall were Investor Education and Protection Fund (₹2,505.5 crore) and Monetisation of National Highways Fund (₹5,968.1 crore).

❖ ‘Global gold prices likely to double if dollar is devalued’

Context:

- International spot gold prices may touch \$7,000 an ounce by 2030 in the event of a dollar devaluation, said Anindya Banerjee, head, currency and commodities, Kotak Securities. This is a little over twice the current price of about \$3,400 an ounce.
- “The United States is trying to morph from the world’s consumer of last resort into a net producer. That pivot requires a cheaper currency and smaller capital inflows —outcomes that are bullish for real assets and especially gold,” said Mr. Banerjee.
- A cheaper dollar may be achieved even as an outcome of policies such as immigration control and tariffs, among others, to achieve a zero-trade deficit, he pointed out.
- U.S. President Donald Trump, during a recent interaction with the American media, said “you make a hell of a lot more money with a weaker dollar. When you have a strong dollar, you can’t sell anything. It’s only good for inflation, and it’s good psychologically.” The American government is reportedly mooting the idea of devaluing the dollar to shore up exports and cut the trade deficit, the immediate consequence of which would be a surge in international gold prices, analysts say.

‘Unlikely’ move

- An active devaluation might be unlikely because that might reduce dollar’s status as a reserve currency, said Maneesh Sharma, AVP of commodities and currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers.
- He, however, said even without a planned devaluation, a cheaper dollar, which is the outcome of tariffs and trade controls, would invariably lead to a surge in gold prices.

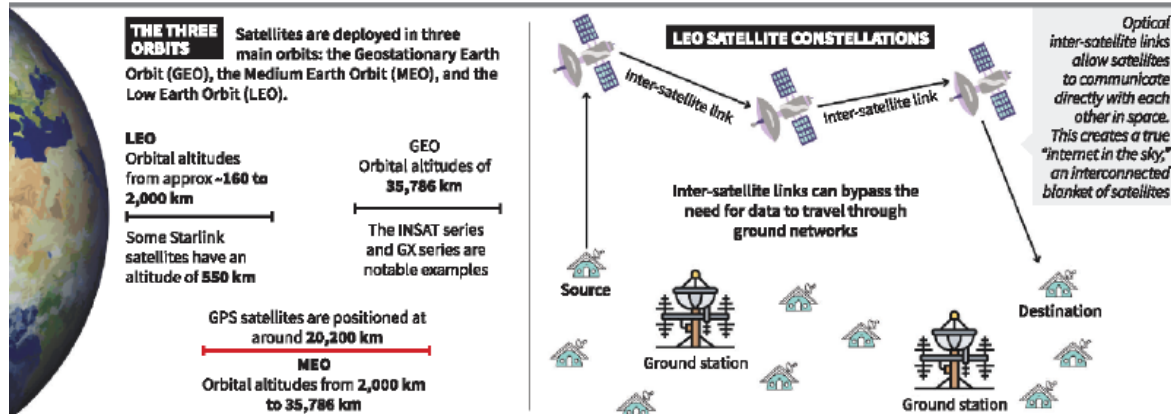
Safe-haven demand

- “There could be a possibility that gold could now act as a hedge against inflation and also the safe-haven demand would come back probably in the last quarter of the year or the first half of the next year. So, that would propel gold to a new high in that period. We are looking at about \$3,800 to \$3,850 per ounce in the international spot market,” he said, adding a price of more than \$4,000 could be a “very well achievable,” in the next one to two years, considering an economic slowdown and inflation trajectory in the U.S. as an outcome of tariffs.

❖ How does satellite internet work?

- In today's increasingly digitised world, internet connectivity is an absolute necessity, across both military and civilian domains. With Elon Musk's Starlink about to make its debut very soon in India, internet infrastructure is going to fundamentally change.

Why do we need satellite internet?



- Ground-based networks use cables and towers. They are the most common form of internet provision, especially in densely populated urban areas. However, they have some limitations. Their reliance on physical infrastructure makes them economically unviable in sparsely populated regions. They are also vulnerable to disruptions from natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Furthermore, they often cannot meet the demand for on-the-go connectivity in remote locations or for temporary operations.
- Satellite internet emerges as a powerful solution to these challenges. Functioning on a global scale, it provides extensive and resilient coverage. This coverage functions regardless of terrain or the presence of terrestrial infrastructure. It can be deployed rapidly to manage sudden demand surges, and also provides connectivity within moving platforms like airplanes and remote sites such as offshore oil rigs. Thus, satellite internet is not merely a backup system. It is a transformative technology with the potential to reshape the digital economy, civil infrastructure, and military strategy.

What are the features of satellite internet?

- The advent of satellite mega-constellations such as Starlink signals a new era in space-based internet. These comprise hundreds or even thousands of satellites orbiting a few hundred kilometres above Earth. This "internet in the sky" offers a plethora of applications in military operations, disaster response, healthcare, agriculture, and transportation. However, this technology has a dual-use nature, serving both civil and military ends. This introduces complex security dynamics.
- Contemporary events underscore this technology's profound impact. When Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas coast in 2017, it knocked out 70% of cell towers in affected regions. Viasat's satellite internet became a lifeline for coordinating rescue operations. Similarly, in the Russia-Ukraine war, SpaceX's Starlink has been pivotal for Ukrainian defence forces. They have relied on it for coordinating troop movements, medical evacuations, and drone operations. Ukrainians even fitted Starlink devices on drones to bypass Russian jamming systems. Satellite internet also enhances operational readiness in isolated conflict zones, as shown by the Indian Army's use of it on the Siachen Glacier. Conversely, its borderless nature facilitates illicit use. Security forces in India have confiscated smuggled Starlink devices from insurgent groups and drug rackets. These instances reveal that control over satellite internet infrastructure is becoming a new dimension of national power.

How does satellite internet work?

- A satellite internet network is composed of a space segment and a ground segment. The space segment consists of the satellites in orbit, while the ground segment includes all equipment on Earth that communicates with them. The satellites are the most capital-intensive component. They carry communication payloads for data transmission and have a service life of five to 20 years. Their deployment requires careful planning, especially concerning orbital altitude, which determines the satellite's capabilities and coverage. Satellites are deployed in three main orbits: the Geostationary Earth Orbit (GEO), the Medium Earth Orbit (MEO), and the Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

What are differences between satellites deployed in different orbits?

- GEO satellites orbit at 35,786 km above the equator. They match the Earth's rotation, allowing them to remain stationary relative to a point on the ground. This high altitude allows a single GEO satellite to cover nearly one-third of the Earth's surface, though not the polar regions. Viasat's Global Xpress (GX) system is a notable example. GEO satellites are also typically large. They act as "bent-pipes," simply relaying signals back to Earth without processing them. Their significant drawback is high propagation latency. The long distance signals must travel result in delays, making GEO systems unsuitable for time-sensitive applications like video conferencing or real-time transactions.
- MEO satellites operate at altitudes between 2,000 km and 35,786 km. They offer a compromise between GEO and LEO systems. Their latency is lower than that of GEO satellites, but they still require a constellation for global coverage. The O3b MEO constellation, for instance, consists of 20 satellites. However, their latency is often insufficient for many real-time applications, and the satellites remain large and costly to launch.
- LEO satellites orbit at altitudes below 2,000 km. Their proximity to Earth results in very low latency. They are also smaller, often table-sized, making them cheaper and quicker to deploy. Their main disadvantage is their smaller coverage area. A single Starlink LEO satellite's footprint is comparable to an Indian metropolitan city. To achieve global coverage, LEO systems form "mega-constellations". These are networks of hundreds or thousands of satellites working in unison. Starlink has over 7,000 satellites in orbit, with plans for up to 42,000.

How do mega-constellations work?

- LEO mega-constellations leverage their numbers to turn limitations into strengths. The smaller satellites are capable of on-board signal processing. This enhances data transmission efficiency, improves signal quality, and allows for greater flexibility. This on-board intelligence simplifies the user terminals on the ground. Terminals become smaller, cheaper, and more accessible to individual households.
- A key innovation was the use of optical inter-satellite links. These allow satellites to communicate directly with each other in space. This creates a true "internet in the sky," an interconnected blanket of satellites. This network can route data globally with minimal reliance on ground stations, reducing latency and increasing efficiency. However, maintaining continuous connectivity is a challenge. LEO satellites move at nearly 27,000 km per hour. They stay within a user's line of sight for only a few minutes. To ensure uninterrupted service, the network must seamlessly "hand-off" the connection from one satellite to the next. This is achieved with steerable antennas that can track multiple users and ground stations simultaneously, much like moving spotlights on a stage.

What are the applications of satellite internet?

- For the end-user, modern LEO satellite internet is a major advancement. User terminals are now compact and easy to set up without professional help. However, the service is still more expensive than terrestrial broadband. While terminals cost around \$500, and monthly services start at about \$50, the cost is often justified for those in remote areas or in industries where connectivity is paramount.

- The future promises even greater accessibility. Companies like AST SpaceMobile and Starlink are testing direct-to-smartphone services. This innovation could eliminate the need for separate user terminals altogether. As the technology becomes mainstream, specialised hardware may be integrated directly into devices like smartphones and laptops.
- The applications for satellite internet are vast and transformative. In communications, it provides network access to remote areas and enables the Internet of Everything (IoE). In transportation, it will enhance navigation systems, support self-driving cars, and improve logistics. In public administration and disaster management, it can power smart cities, provide early warnings, and coordinate rescue efforts. The healthcare sector can benefit from telemedicine and remote patient monitoring. Agriculture can leverage it for precision farming and crop health analysis. It also has significant applications in environmental monitoring, energy exploration, tourism, and defence.
- Therefore, satellite internet presents immense opportunities but also creates complex security and regulatory challenges. Nations now recognise satellite internet as a new dimension of power.
- It is imperative for countries like India to develop comprehensive strategies to integrate the technology into national resilience plans. India should also leverage it to bridge the digital divide and foster economic development. Finally, active participation in shaping its international governance is crucial as these mega-constellations will define the next era of global connectivity and strategic advantage.

❖ Govt. tweaks export plan as U.S. ups the trade ante

Context:

- The Indian government is tweaking its earlier plans for an **Export Promotion Mission** to make it more targeted towards specific sectors in the wake of the increased tariffs imposed by the U.S. on imports from India.

- This would entail reducing the cost of credit for medium, small and micro enterprise (MSME) borrowers in the worst-hit sectors, expediting clearances, and providing them with some sort of export incentives.
- It is a joint effort across several Ministries and involves detailed consultations with industry stakeholders.
- The sectors which will face the brunt of the U.S. tariffs are apparel and textiles, shrimp exporters, organic chemicals, and machinery and mechanical appliances, according to an analysis by the Global Trade Research Initiative.
- **“The Export Promotion Mission announced in the latest Budget is being tweaked now to provide more help to sectors that are likely to be hit by the [U.S.] tariffs,”**
- **“The broad contours are to provide credit guarantees to MSME exporters, speed up their clearances, and there is some discussion on how to provide export incentives,”**
- In the Union Budget for 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced an **Export Promotion Mission with a ₹2,250 crore allocation for the current financial year, which would “facilitate easy access to export credit, cross-border factoring support, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets”**.
- The official said that the **tweaked Mission would cover these targets as well, adding that the Mission would now include coordination with the Ministry of Textiles and Department of Fisheries, in addition to Ministries of Commerce, Finance, and MSME.**

Bracing for impact

The govt. is tweaking its Export Promotion Mission to target the sectors that will likely be worst-affected by Trump's tariffs



- Affected sectors will include **textiles, organic chemicals, and machinery**

- This effort, spanning across Ministries, provides **easier export credit access** and speedier clearances for **MSME exporters**

- An official confirmed that a **credit guarantee scheme** was being prepared to help exporters

- Industry players have also confirmed that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been in regular touch with them to receive their feedback and inputs. Trade analysts, too, confirmed this.
- “Internally, authorities are consulting extensively with exporters and sector representatives to fine-tune immediate relief measures and shape a long-term, resilient trade strategy capable of withstanding global shocks.”

Focus on MSME exports

- The government had, as far back as January, announced a credit guarantee scheme for the MSME sector, which would cover **loans up to ₹100 crore**.
- The Finance Ministry official said that this scheme was being revamped to “focus on the export aspects of these MSMEs’ activities”.

❖ Thousands of forest rights titles ‘vanish’ in Chhattisgarh records

Context:

- Thousands of forest rights titles distributed across at least three districts in Chhattisgarh seem to have disappeared from the records of the State government’s Tribal Welfare Department at various points over the last 17 months, according to documents accessed through the Right to Information Act.

- A total of 4.82 lakh IFR titles and 4,396 CFRR titles had been distributed across 30 districts of the State.
- In Bastar district, for instance, the total number of individual forest rights (IFR) titles as of January 2024 was 37,958, which fell to 35,180 by May 2025, according to the data.
- In Rajnandgaon district, similarly, the total number of community forest resource rights (CFRR) titles halved within a month last year, from 40 to 20.
- In Bijapur district, there were 299 CFRR titles distributed till March 2024; by the following month, this was reduced to 297.
- These reductions can be seen in the State’s district-wise monthly progress reports on the FRA, sought under the RTI Act.
- The Centre’s publicly available FRA progress reports only record data at the State level. Some FRA researchers and experts have termed such a decrease as an “anomaly”, as there is no process under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 to withdraw titles which have been granted.
- **The Act recognises and vests rights to use forests to Scheduled Tribe and other forest-dwelling communities.**
- **As per the FRA, once titles are granted, they are neither transferable nor alienable but can only be inherited.**
- Activist Alok Shukla of Hasdeo Aranya Bachao Andolan said despite this, the State government had “cancelled” some in 2016 and the Chhattisgarh High Court is yet to rule on whether this is permissible.
- Responding to questions on the decrease in forest rights titles, a senior State government official claimed this was because of “miscommunication” between officials working at the gram sabha, sub-divisional, and district levels that had resulted in the need for “correction” of the records. “It may be seen as a reporting error,” the official said.

Lost rights

Several individual forest rights titles distributed in at least three districts in Chhattisgarh have ‘disappeared’

2,788 individual forest rights (IFR) titles have gone missing in Bastar district

50% of community forest resource titles in Rajnandgaon reduced within a month last year

■ The Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognises the rights of Scheduled Tribes and other forest-dwelling communities to use forests



- State officials said the FRA is not implemented in Raipur, Durg, and Bemetara districts. The Centre's data on the FRA shows that, as of May 2025, **Chhattisgarh accounts for over 43% of the forest area over which FRA titles have been granted.**
- In the three districts declared free of Naxalism by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs over the last year, FRA implementation has been slow, this data shows. In Bastar, there was a drop of over 2,700 in the number of IFR titles, though there were 12 more CFRR titles added between January 2024 and May 2025. In Dantewada, there was no increase in CFRR titles, while there was net growth of 55 IFR titles. In the Mohla-Manpur district, no new IFR titles were distributed, while two CFRR titles were added in the same time period.
- In Bastar, IFR claims also dropped by almost 3,000 by May 2025, from the 51,303 claims filed as of January 2024.

❖ Bill tabled to give more clarity on functioning of GBA

Context:

- The Greater Bengaluru Governance (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly for providing clarity regarding the functioning of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and the relationship between civic authorities in the Greater Bengaluru Area.

Role of coordinator

- The Bill said that GBA should discharge the role of coordinator among all the city corporations and other agencies in the Greater Bengaluru Area.
- The GBA would discharge several functions, including finalisation of its common cadre and recruitment rules, and for the city corporations to submit to the government for approval.
- The Bill would empower the GBA to make appointments of Group A (junior level) and Group B officers in accordance with the common cadre and recruitment rules. The GBA would also make rules for the chief commissioner of GBA and for the Group C and D posts.
- The government notified five corporations carved out of the existing city civic limits.

❖ 'Tariff hike a blessing in disguise for renewable energy sector'

Context:

- The hike in tariffs is a "blessing in disguise" for India's renewable energy sector, as it may help restrict exports, trigger scale of growth in local markets, bring down the cost of production and in turn make the industry globally competitive.
- "The recent tariff increase by the U.S government is a blessing in disguise for the RE sector.
- The Indian government has introduced many schemes and incentives to encourage production of cells, modules and also wind turbines for the local market.
- But many manufactures are now exporting them and this is not in the interest of the country,".
- The U.S. tariffs will discourage those exports and encourage Indian manufactures of cells, modules and wind turbines etc. to focus on local markets and bring in scale, maturity and ability to compete globally.
- **Under the new U.S. tariff regime, the landing cost of these products would be much higher in the U.S., making exports unviable for Indian manufacturers.**
- At the same time, power generators in India were not getting cells and modules from other markets and they were not allowed to import these from China because of certain reactions.

- “The government should take a balanced view to stabilise the market environment and growth. It should also introduce some restrictions on exports, not just on imports,” commented.

- **Since 2023, the Asia Development Bank has set aside \$100 billion towards investments in the renewable energy sector in the Asia Pacific region, according to an official of the bank.**
- **In 2024 alone, the region got \$8 billion from ADB and interestingly, India alone had a share of up to \$5 billion, indicating a boom in India’s RE sector.**

❖ Bill passed to relax conversion of farmland for industrial use

Context:

- The Legislative Assembly has passed the Karnataka Land Reforms and Certain Other Law (Amendment) Bill, 2025, for allowing the conversion of agricultural land up to two acres for the establishment of new industries, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- **At present, any person holding agricultural land must apply to the Deputy Commissioner for permission to divert it for non-agricultural use, as per Section 95 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act.**
- The Deputy Commissioner’s permission was not required for entrepreneurs to convert farmland up to two acres for industrial use without any difficulties.
- The Bill would not only ensure ease in governance, but also provide a lot of relief to those who wanted to set up MSMEs on agricultural lands. **An amendment would eliminate all middlemen in the conversion of agricultural lands into non-agricultural purposes up to two acres.**

For renewable energy

- The Bill has proposed doing away with the need to convert agricultural land for non-agricultural use for the establishment of renewable energy projects.
- The amendment would encourage renewable energy projects for increasing the generation of clean energy projects, such as solar or wind, in the State, subject to payment of the prescribed fees to the authorities concerned.

Penal clause

- The Bill proposed to remove a three-year imprisonment clause for people who sell agricultural land for non-agricultural use without prior approval. At present, this offence carries a fine of ₹10,000 along with a three-year imprisonment.
- However, it has increased the penalty to ₹1 lakh. However, the penalty would not be applicable to causes which were regularised by the government by formulating a special scheme.

Property registration

- In order to reduce human intervention during the registration of properties and the use of digital signatures of competent authorities, the Assembly passed the **Registration (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2025.**
- The Bill would ensure due diligence is undertaken by the Sub-Registrar at the time of registration of property, in the interest of the public.
- It would ensure integration of property software to prevent illegal registration of properties in urban areas also and to simplify property registration.
- It would also enable **e-Registration/Remote Registration of some compulsory registrable documents** without the physical presence of either party in the Sub-Registrar’s offices, and certified copies would be made available through a centralised virtual distribution system to avoid delay.

Authorities Bills

- The Assembly passed a Bill related to the **authorities of Banavasi, Basavakalyan, Kittur, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Heritage Area, and Kaginele development to make the Revenue Minister or any other Minister as chosen by the Chief Minister the chairman of the authorities.**
- **At present, the Chief Minister is the chairman of all authorities.**

❖ Aid and advice: LG's nominations without government nod could affect J&K's electoral process

Context:

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs' assertion to the J&K High Court that the Lieutenant Governor (LG) can nominate five Assembly members without the "aid and advice" of the elected government overrides democratic accountability.
- Consequential decisions such as nominating members who have voting rights in an elected assembly must flow from democratic mandate, not administrative discretion.
- The High Court's constitutional question could not be more direct: do the 2023 amendments to the J&K Reorganisation Act, allowing the LG to nominate five Assembly members "which have the potential of converting the minority government into a majority government and vice-versa," violate the Constitution's basic structure?
- Rather than addressing this, the Ministry delves into legal technicalities. Its submission argues that nominations fall outside the elected government's remit, seemingly invoking the **K. Lakshminarayanan vs The Union of India** precedent from Puducherry while claiming the "sanctioned strength" includes elected and nominated members.
- It even references Section 12 of the 1963 Union Territories Act (voting procedures) as justification for bypassing democratic consultation.
- When five nominated members could determine government stability in a 119-member Assembly, the issue transcends statutory definitions of "sanctioned strength".
- The real question is whether any legal framework allowing appointed officials to potentially overturn the people's electoral verdict violates the democratic essence of the Constitution.
- The amendments inserted Sections 15A and 15B into the 2019 Act, allowing the LG to nominate two Kashmiri migrants (including one woman) and one from the Pakistan-occupied J&K community, besides the existing power to nominate two women, if inadequately represented in the elected Assembly. This effectively creates five nominated seats.
- The High Court's framing of this issue acknowledges the stakes involved: this could "convert minority government into majority government and vice-versa", potentially subverting the electoral process.
- This concern is not unsubstantiated — in 2021, three years after Lakshminarayanan, Puducherry saw nominated members and defecting elected MLAs contributing to the collapse of the Congress-led government.
- Also, J&K's trajectory to Union Territory, without consultation with elected representatives, makes democratic accountability even more crucial.
- The unfulfilled promise of Statehood restoration, acknowledged by the Supreme Court and despite overwhelming support in J&K, reinforces that current arrangements should strengthen democratic governance.
- The Ministry's argument that nominations exist "outside the realm of the business of the elected government" also contradicts evolving Supreme Court jurisprudence.

- In the Delhi services cases of 2018 and 2023, it ruled that the LG should act on elected governments' aid and advice, with discretionary powers treated as exceptions. Seen in this light, the Ministry's arguments do not hold water.

❖ 'Undocumented migrants leaving via eastern border tripled in 2025'

Context:

- The number of undocumented migrants — suspected to be from Bangladesh — apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) while attempting to voluntarily leave India through the eastern border this year was over three times higher than in 2024, government data show.
- In 2024, as many as 1,049 undocumented people were apprehended while leaving the country while till July 15 this year, 3,536 undocumented people were caught by the BSF, a senior government official said.
- The number of people who were stopped when they tried to enter the country from Bangladesh last year stood at 2,425, while till July 15 this year, the number was 1,372.
- The official said that post the political changes in neighbouring Bangladesh on August 5, 2024, there has been a surge in the number of undocumented migrants exiting the country voluntarily.
- The voluntary exits are different from the “pushback” drive against alleged illegal migrants being pursued by police across the country on the directions of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22.
- After the regime change in Bangladesh last year, the MHA asked police to detect and deport Bangladeshis who had illegally entered the country and were living here on forged documents. The drive assumed momentum after the Pahalgam terror attack and the MHA asked States to deport the undocumented migrants but in most cases “pushback” is happening, the latter not defined under law. According to various estimates, around 2,500 people, thought to be from Bangladesh have been “pushed back” across the eastern border.

❖ Bihar SIR a battle between EC's power, citizens' right to vote: SC

Context:

- The special intensive revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls is a battle between the Election Commission's “power” over elections and the ordinary citizen's right to be named in electoral rolls, and to be allowed to vote, the Supreme Court observed.
- Justice Joymalya Bagchi, part of the Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant, hearing petitions against the SIR, observed that poll-bound Bihar was in the middle of a contest between Article 324, which empowers the Election Commission (EC) to control elections, and the constitutional right of adult suffrage enshrined in Article 326 of the Constitution.
- The judge's observation was in response to arguments raised by senior advocates A.M. Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan that the procedure of sending pre-filled enumeration forms to electors, only to later delete 65 lakh of them from the electoral roll without any prior enquiry or physical hearing was, to say the least, a “casual way of doing away with citizens' right to vote”.

Does this provision [Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act] give the Election Commission some residuary discretion to introduce additional elements?

—JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI



- “An elector means someone who is already in the electoral roll. The enumeration form, indicative documents are just figments of the imagination of the EC. There is no such procedure in the Representation of the People Act. **The procedure for removal from the electoral roll is ‘absolutely strict’ as intended by the Parliament.** Removal would only be subsequent to an enquiry, even for one elector. It is the concept of the ‘little man’ laid down in the Supreme Court by Justice Krishna Iyer... Who gave the EC power to do this, under which law and what authority?” Mr. Sankaranarayanan submitted.
- Justice Bagchi referred to the “elbow room” provided to the EC under Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, which says that the EC can conduct a “special revision” in “such manner as it may think fit”. “Does this provision give the EC some residuary discretion to introduce additional elements [like enumeration forms, indicative documents]?” Justice Bagchi asked the petitioners.
- However, Mr. Sankaranarayanan responded that Section 21(3) only contemplated a special revision of “any one constituency or a part of a constituency”.
- “Can the provision be used to change the electoral rolls of the entire country from a time of your own choice? Does it authorise EC to embark on an en masse revision of the electoral rolls across the country?” the senior advocate responded. Section 21(3) was meant to be resorted to only in “exceptional circumstances”, he said.
- Summarising Section 21(3), Justice Bagchi said that it authorised the EC to devise procedures for special revision of the electoral roll in case of exceptional circumstances like a natural disaster. “Otherwise, the EC has to strictly follow Rules 4 to 24 of the Registration of Electors Rules,” Justice Bagchi said.
- Justice Bagchi and Mr. Singhvi debated on whether giving citizens an option to choose from as many as 11 ‘indicative’ documents to prove their citizenship and find their way back to the electoral roll could be considered “voter-inclusive” rather than “voter-exclusionary”, as argued by the petitioners.
- The judge pointed out that earlier summary revisions provided a choice of only seven documents.

❖ Many reject plastics treaty draft that omits curbs on production

Context:

- On the penultimate day of countries being expected to finalise a treaty on plastic pollution, a majority of countries expressed their disappointment with a draft agreement, which does away with a key demand of countries agreeing to limit the production of plastics.
- This version however favours a minority bloc, which includes **several Arab states and India**, that has consistently advocated for addressing plastic pollution without such cuts on production.
- “This represents my best attempts to consolidate various positions that have been expressed through various delegations and groups,” said Chair of proceedings Luis Vayas Valdivieso. “This is however still a proposal that can be discussed.”
- Kuwait has made a statement that is largely approving of the text. Naresh Gangwar, who led the Indian delegation said, “We support the statement made by Kuwait. While there are some improvements that we can suggest we are happy to discuss this.”
- “The proposed draft text is entirely unacceptable and we cannot use it as a basis for negotiations,” said Sebastian Rodriguez, the delegate from Colombia who was the first to speak but whose statement received resounding applause.
- “Our red lines and that of the majority of the members of this hall have been spat upon. This is not simply about closing a treaty at any cost but about closing a wound that has hurt our oceans and our livelihood. We need a new text. This is something that we cannot work with,” said Juan Carlos

Monterrey Gomez, the delegate from Panama. About 80 member states expressed their disapproval on these lines.

Balance sought

- “This text is a milestone that demands some reflection. However there are points that we need some balance between various articles in the text,” said Abdulrahman Al Gwaiz, the delegate from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His remarks invited a measure of applause from petrochemical countries and from the members of the Indian delegation.
- Independent observers expressed disappointment. “The Chair’s text that dropped today in advance of the plenary is disappointing. The text does not fulfil the mandate of resolution 5/14 as it does not address the full life-cycle of plastics. Chemicals of Concern also does not find place in the text. There is also no attempt made to reduce plastic dependency through mandating reuse and refill systems. This text is lopsided and will do nothing, even at the level of downstream waste management to address plastic pollution,” said Swathi Seshadri, petrochemicals specialist, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).
- “The new Chair’s text makes a mockery of a three-year-long consultative process that showed broad support for an ambitious plastics treaty that addresses the full life-cycle of plastics, including production. While there are token references to human rights, and human health, the provisions that follow undermine any and all measures that follow. This is a treaty that all but ensures that nothing will change. It gives in to petrostate and industry demands with weak, voluntary measures that guarantee we continue to produce plastic at increasing levels,” said David Azoulay, Centre for International Environmental Law.

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❖ SC issues notice to Centre on plea for ‘creamy layer’ like system in SC, ST reservation

Context:

- The Supreme Court has decided to examine a petition to introduce a “system”, similar to the creamy layer concept for the Other Backward Classes (OBC), to achieve equitable distribution of reservation benefits among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
- A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi issued notice to the Union government on a petition filed by Ramashankar Prajapati highlighting that the current reservation policy disproportionately benefited groups within the SCs and STs who were already well-off and enjoying social clout, while the most deprived members continued to swirl in the cycle of extreme poverty.
- “There is an urgent need to integrate economic criteria into the reservation policy,” Mr. Prajapati, represented by advocates **Sandeep Singh and Reena N. Singh**, submitted in court.
- The petition sought the introduction of a two-tier reservation system to be implemented within SC/ST categories, prioritising individuals from economically weaker sections before extending benefits to those who are relatively well-off.
- “The proposal for restructuring does not involve any reduction in the current percentage of reservation for SC/ST or other minority communities... This reform proposal does not seek to abolish or undermine caste-based reservation but rather to refine them to serve their intended purpose more effectively by introducing an income-based prioritisation mechanism within SC/ST reservations,” Mr. Singh argued for the petitioner.
- Justice Kant remarked during the hearing that the concept revolved around the ability of the State to assess the economic capacity within the communities. The Bench, listing the case on October 10, advised a careful dealing of the issue considering the sensitivity of the reservation policy and the likelihood of divergent views.

❖ RBI prescribes seven sutras for AI adoption in financial sector

Context:

- A committee set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to develop a Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of Artificial Intelligence (FREE-AI) in the financial sector has recommended the establishment of shared infrastructure by regulated entities (REs) to democratise access to data and compute, and for the creation of an AI Innovation Sandbox.
- The panel submitted its report, which has been uploaded on the RBI website. The report sets a framework to guide on the use of AI in the financial sector, aiming to harness its potential while safeguarding against associated risks.
- The committee has developed 7 sutras to serve as the foundational principles for AI adoption. Guided by the 7 sutras, the committee has recommended a forward-looking approach, containing 26 actionable recommendations under six strategic pillars.
- The report envisions a financial ecosystem where encouraging innovation is in harmony, and not at odds, with mitigation of risk, the RBI said.
- The 7 sutras include Trust is the Foundation, People First, Innovation over Restraint, Fairness and Equity, Accountability, Understandable by Design and Safety, Resilience and Sustainability.
- Using the sutras as guidance, the committee has recommended an approach that fosters innovation and mitigates risks, treating these two seemingly competing objectives as complementary forces that must be pursued in tandem. This is achieved through a unified vision spread across 6 strategic pillars that address the dimensions of innovation enablement as well as risk mitigation, it said.

- Under innovation enablement, the focus is on Infrastructure, Policy and Capacity and for risk mitigation, the focus is on Governance, Protection and Assurance. Under these six pillars, the report outlines 26 recommendations for AI adoption in the financial sector. To foster innovation, the panel has recommended the establishment of shared infrastructure to democratise access to data and compute; the creation of an AI Innovation Sandbox and the development of indigenous financial sector-specific AI models.
- To mitigate AI risks, the committee has recommended the formulation of a board-approved AI policy by REs, the expansion of product approval processes, consumer protection frameworks and audits to include AI related aspects and the augmentation of cybersecurity practices and incident reporting frameworks.

❖ RBI permits transition to continuous cheque clearance

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to transition the Cheque Truncation System (CTS) from the current approach of batch processing to continuous clearing with settlement on realisation in two phases.
- Phase 1 will be implemented on October 4, 2025 and Phase 2 on January 3, 2026, the banking sector regulator said.
- All banks have been advised to make their customers adequately aware of the changes in the cheque clearing process.

❖ 1950 quake that broke mountains is a portend of things to come

Context:

- On August 15, 1950, India was celebrating its Independence Day. The mood was upbeat throughout the country. Just as celebrations were winding down for the day, a great disaster struck. At around 7:30 pm, an earthquake of magnitude 8.6 — the strongest ever recorded on land — jolted the country's Northeast and some neighbouring areas beyond the border.
- According to some reports, the earth shook for about four to eight minutes. Mountains stumbled and buildings fell, causing widespread death and destruction. An English botanist and explorer named Frank Kingdon-Ward was camping at Rima (Zayu) on the day.
- He reported later: "I was seated writing my diary near the entrance to our tent. Suddenly, after the faintest tremor, there came an appalling noise, and the earth began to shake violently. ... We were immediately thrown to the ground. The lantern too was knocked over and went out instantly."
- The earthquake was felt over an area of 3 million sq. km across India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, Tibet, and South China. It wrecked homes, farms, and railway tracks, bridges, and other utilities. A field investigation report described how "rail tracks were torn up and twisted into snake-like patterns", in a vivid demonstration of how the land and structures deform in response to shear waves.
- **On the Indian side alone**, more than 1,500 people lost their lives, and 50,000 to 1,00,000 cattle were killed.
- The quake was felt as far afield as Lhasa and Sichuan, and in Yunnan province in China. In the Medog area of Eastern Tibet, Yedong village slid into the Yarlung Zangbo river, and more than 4,000 casualties were reported from Tibet. **Severe damage was wrought in the Sibsagar-Sadiya area of Assam as well.**

- More destruction was to follow in the days after the earthquake. Many hills had been sheared by the earthquake. Rocky debris falling into the valleys below blocked rivers — before giving way days later, producing flash floods downstream that killed hundreds of people living on the rivers' banks.
- On September 9, two weeks after the earthquake, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said in a nationwide broadcast on All India Radio: “The Brahmaputra was blocked up for a while, and then broke through, they came down with a rush and a roar, a high wall of water sweeping down and flooding large areas and washing away villages and fields and gardens. ... The remains of villages, animals, including cattle and elephants, and large quantities of timber floated down these raging waters...”.

Revisiting the earthquake

- **The source of the Great Assam Earthquake lay 40 km west of Rima (Zayu), the village near the India-Tibet border in the Mishmi hills where Kingdon-Ward was camped. The quake occurred along the boundary where the Indian and Eurasian Plates collided, near the eastern terminus of the Himalayas, at a depth of 15 km. The rupture extended from the Mishmi thrust of the Eastern Himalayas to the Himalayan Frontal Thrust of Arunachal Pradesh, completing a curvilinear motion around the mountainous bend/**
- As it happened, the shaking also occurred at a time when seismographic networks were expanding worldwide, providing great impetus to earthquake monitoring and the subsequent development of the theory of plate tectonics. It was also the time instrumental monitoring of earthquakes in India had started. **India had the Meteorological Department (IMD) set up its first seismological observatory at Alipore in Kolkata district in 1898.**
- Today, we understand the **Great Assam Earthquake happened on a plate boundary formed by the collision of continental plates, like those along other parts of the Himalayan plate boundary.**
- However, it is differentiated by the fact that its source was in the **Eastern Himalaya, which is tectonically very complex.**
- GPS data indicate that while the *Indian and Eurasian continental plates are converging at about 20 mm/year on average across the Himalayas, in the Eastern Himalayas it ranges from 10 mm to 38 mm/year.*
- This variation could very well be due to difficulties in capturing tectonic complexity and differences in data quality. While the main arcuate Himalaya plate boundary resulted from the collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates, **the Sunda plate is also involved in the northeastern Himalaya, creating a complex structure.**
- Due to plate rotation, major structural elements also take sharp turns, and the regional strike shifts from the general NE-SW direction to the NW-SE direction post-collision, forming what geologists call the Eastern Himalayan Syntaxis (EHS). This is where the Great Assam Earthquake likely occurred.
- Unlike other Himalayan earthquakes, which have exhibited a thrusting mechanism — where one block of the fault thrusts over the other — the Assam earthquake displayed a component of strike-slip motion, with both blocks sliding past each other along the fault. This suggested it was connected with the EHS trending in the NW-SE direction.
- Models also indicate a thrusting component, likely resulting from the propagation of earthquake faulting towards the west, where thrust tectonics are predominant. The possibility of multiple faults being linked to the Assam earthquake is also supported by the distribution of revised aftershock locations, spread over a wide zone east of the main shock epicentre.
- Indeed, most researchers believe the earthquake may have started off on the Syntaxial bend while also activating Himalayan thrust faults to the west. Historical documents from the Ahom period (1228-1826) reveal the Northeast India region experienced earthquakes in 1548, 1596, and 1697 AD, all of uncertain

magnitudes. Geological studies have also revealed a major medieval earthquake between 1262 and 1635 AD.

Quakes of the future

- Looking back, the Great Assam Earthquake delivered to scientists a significant lesson on the destructive potential of major earthquakes in the Himalayas. Can a similar earthquake strike Northeast India again? As the Indian plate continues to move forward, earthquakes are an integral part of its future. Yet our current knowledge doesn't allow us to predict when, where, or how strong the next quake will be.
- For now, we only know the Central Himalayas are the most potentially active segment and could generate a 1950-type earthquake in the future.
- The seismic event also highlighted that we are more vulnerable today, primarily due to the exponential growth of the built environment and urban areas, leaving the landscape to look very different from the way it did 75 years ago.
- As we plan for more developmental activities and undertake heavy infrastructural projects, including large dams, in this tectonically fragile area, we must reflect on the images from the 1950 quake.
- Finally, the event also proved the Himalayan tectonic segments along the 2,500-km-long stretch are fully capable of producing earthquakes of magnitude 8.6 or higher.
- **As both China and India prepare to build large hydroelectric projects in the Eastern Himalayan bend, one of the most seismically vulnerable parts of the majestic range, it's clear the road ahead will be long and challenging.**

❖ Publish names of 65 lakh excluded voters: SC to EC

Context:

- The Supreme Court, in an interim order, directed the Election Commission to publish an enumerated list of approximately 65 lakh electors not included in the draft electoral roll published on August 1, during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in poll-bound Bihar.
- A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi said the list should be complete with the individual reasons, such as death, migration, being untraceable, and duplicate registrations, for each exclusion on the draft roll.
- "If, according to you, 22 lakh of the 65 lakh non-included voters are dead, why are their names not being disclosed? There is a narrative doing the rounds that family members do not know their kin have been left out as dead in the draft roll. If you put out the names in the public domain, that narrative disappears... In short, we want a 'Poonam Devi's' family in Bihar to know that her name has been deleted because she is dead," Justice Kant addressed the EC, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi.
- The court upheld the **voters' right to remain on the electoral roll in a democracy**. "People have a right to know. A high degree of transparency is required to inspire voters' confidence. Put up the names of excluded electors with reasons out there for all to see," Justice Bagchi addressed the EC.
- It also said electors whose names were excluded could file their objections by applying with a copy of Aadhaar. "Aadhaar is a statutorily recognised instrument of identity and residence. It can be submitted as a document," Justice Bagchi observed.
- This is the **first time the court has formally directed the use of Aadhaar as a proof of identity and residence in the Bihar SIR exercise**.

- The 65 lakh names, out of the 7.89 crore registered electors in Bihar, were dropped from the draft roll despite the fact that their names had featured in the voters' list prepared after a summary revision, merely months ago, in January 2025.
- The court ordered the EC to publish the information (voters left out and reasons) on the websites of the District Electoral Officers (DEOs) across Bihar. Physical lists have to be displayed on the notice boards of the block development/panchayat offices to facilitate manual access to the public.
- The court asked the EC to provide the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer with soft copies of the list, which should to be displayed on his official website. The poll body has to arrange wide publicity by issuing a "layman-friendly" public notice in vernacular and English newspapers, on radio, TV and authorised social media accounts of the DEOs/Bihar Chief Electoral Officer about the publication of the list.
- "For a migrant worker who has been deleted as dead, even if he is illiterate, his neighbours or friends would alert him... It is only fair to have a procedure that does not block a person from exercising his right to adult franchise. There are civil consequences involved here," Justice Kant pointed out to the EC.

Proof of compliance

- The EC would compile proof of compliance from booth-level officers (BLOs)/DEOs and place on record before the court a collated status report on August 22, the next date of hearing, at 2 p.m. The list and reasons should be searchable by typing in the EPIC number of the voter concerned, the court said. The interim order would play a pivotal role in future disputes regarding SIR exercises in other States.
- The EC initially resisted the court's decision in favour of transparency, saying it had BLOs and booth-level agents (BLAs) working on the ground to assist the left-out voters and usher them back on the electoral roll. But the court said the voters' right to know about the deletion and their constitutional entitlement to be on the electoral roll cannot be dependent on agents of political parties and booth officers.
- "The way you [EC] do your intensive revision has to be comfortable for the voters and not give them strain... For a migrant worker who has been deleted as dead, even if he is illiterate, his neighbours or friends would alert him," Justice Bagchi observed.
- Justice Kant said voters should not be dependent on the will and convenience of the BLOs to know why they have been deleted from the roll.
- "If the names and reasons of deletion are displayed, it would minimise manual interventions. People should not be dependent on political workers [BLAs] who have their own political ideology. Voters must have an independent right to check their status without recourse to either BLOs or BLAs," Justice Kant remarked.

❖ **Caste census: It is a must to enter Aadhaar details of all people above six being enumerated during survey**

Context:

- The Karnataka government has set the ball rolling for the second socio-educational survey of the State's population to identify the status of the backward classes, with an order issued to this effect. Importantly, entering the Aadhaar of all people above the age of six being enumerated with the other details has been made mandatory.
- While the deployment of teachers for the enumeration work has become a bone of contention, with Minister for School Education and Literacy Madhu Bangarappa voicing his opposition, the State government has asked officials, teachers, and others to work under the supervision of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes.

- The survey, the order said, will be conducted digitally, and the required digital support will be given by the e-Governance Department.

SC survey

- One of the important aspects of the survey is entering the Aadhaar of the individual above the age of six during the survey. A similar method had been implemented in the survey on Scheduled Castes population conducted by the H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission. The entry of Aadhaar is expected to make the survey more robust and accountable.
- In the **first survey conducted by the H. Kantharaj Commission in 2015, the Aadhaar of the persons had not been entered, and caste groups, which were opposed to the findings, attacked the survey as “unscientific” and error-prone.**
- The government has asked the commission to utilise publicly available electoral rolls on the lines of the survey of Scheduled Castes.
- The Congress government, in June, announced re-enumeration of caste data in Karnataka to address concerns of some communities who complained of being left out of the survey that was conducted 10 years ago.

❖ Wild elephants killed 97 people in three years, says Khandre

Context:

- Environment and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre informed the Legislative Assembly that wild elephants have trampled to death 97 people in the State during the last three years. The government has paid ₹13.65 crore as compensation.
- In a reply to Harish Poonja of the BJP, Mr. Khandre said wild elephants attacked and killed 48 people in 2023-24, 36 in 2024-25, and 13 people till this July-end.
- For reducing man-animal conflicts, he said 428 km of railway barricades had been erected till now and eight elephant task forces had been formed.
- The Minister said an increase in the number of wild elephants and wild animals, coupled with reduced forest areas, led to man-animal conflicts.

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❖ India, U.S. to hold military exercise in Alaska this month

Context:

- Amid trade uncertainties, India and United States will hold a joint military exercise in Alaska this month.
- According to the External Affairs Ministry, the India-U.S. defence partnership, underpinned by foundational defence agreements, is an important pillar of the bilateral ties.
- The cooperation has strengthened across all domains. “We are expecting a U.S. Defence Policy Team to be in Delhi in mid-August.
- The 21st edition of the joint military exercise Yudh Abhyas is expected to take place this month.
- Both sides remain engaged to convene the 2+2 intersessional meeting at the working-level towards the end of the month,” the Ministry said.

❖ ‘India’s trade deficit shrank in April-July’

Context:

- India’s overall trade deficit in the current financial year 2025-26 as of July shrank 3.7% to \$31.3 billion as compared with the same period in the previous year, official data showed. This was due to a faster growth in exports than in imports over this period.
- Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed that India’s overall exports — including both merchandise and services — stood at \$277.6 billion in the April-July 2025 period, up 5.2% as compared to the exports in April-July 2024.
- Total imports grew a relatively slower 4.2% over this period to \$308.9 billion.
- “Despite an uncertain global policy environment, India’s goods and services exports in July as well as in the April-July period have grown substantially and far faster than the global growth level,” Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said at a press briefing to release the data.
- Within the overall trade, India’s merchandise exports grew 3.1% to \$149.2 billion in April-July 2025, while merchandise imports grew at a faster rate of 5.4% to \$244 billion during this period. As a result, India’s merchandise trade deficit widened to \$94.8 billion in April-July 2025 from \$86.8 billion in the same period of the previous year.
- The Commerce Secretary, however, emphasised that India’s seemingly-lacklustre merchandise export activity is clouded by the impact of falling oil and petroleum prices. The data shows that non-petroleum merchandise exports grew 7.7% to \$127.5 billion in April-July 2025.
- Services exports, on the other hand, witnessed the opposite trend as merchandise, with exports growing faster than imports. India’s service exports grew 7.9% to \$128.4 billion in the April-July 2025 period, while service imports remained virtually flat at \$64.9 billion, 0.3% higher than in the same period as last year.

❖ PM calls for self-reliance, flags ‘demographic plot’

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a strong pitch for self-reliance in his Independence Day address, with policy prescriptions for economic- and security-related reforms. For any nation, even today, the yardstick of aatma samman (self-respect) remains aatmanirbharta (self-reliance), he said, also using the speech to warn of a conspiracy to change the country’s demographic make-up.

- The speech gains significance in the context of the 50% tariff on Indian goods announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, and included an oblique reference to the consequent challenges faced by India.

- Starting with the deployment of Indian arms and weapons systems during Operation Sindoor, Mr. Modi said that self-reliance in defence and economic spheres is the cornerstone of a developed India.

- The Prime Minister announced two major task forces, one to initiate second generation reforms of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, eight years after its introduction, and a high powered task force for next generation economic reforms.

- **The government would create a new corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, which would give a ₹15,000 one-time grant to first-time employees in the private sector, and incentives to the private sector to create employment.** The government also aims to reduce the compliance cost for medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSMEs), hoping the relief from fear of arbitrary legal actions will give a fillip to a sector that creates jobs.

- **“India will launch ‘Made-in-India’ semiconductor chips by the end of 2025,”** Mr. Modi said.

- He emphasised the need for **innovation in AI, cyber security, deep-tech, and operating systems for global competitiveness.**

- Six semiconductor units are already on the ground, and four new units have been given the green signal, he said.

- Mr. Modi made a mention of the **anti-Naxal operations especially in Chattisgarh where he said terror corridors had now become green corridors.**

- Repeating that he would stand like a wall between the world and the interests of Indian farmers, a reflection on U.S. demands in its tariff negotiations with India, the Prime Minister said the **need of the hour was to reduce fertilizer dependency on other countries.**

Key announcements

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address, announced economic- and security-related reforms, and emphasised self-reliance. Highlights from the speech:

Mission Sudarshan Chakra

India will be building an air defence system by 2035 to not only shield military and civilian areas but also to strike back in a precise, targeted manner



Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

The scheme would give a one-time grant of ₹15,000 to first-time employees in the private sector and incentives to the private sector to create employment

PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Made-in-India semiconductors

India will launch ‘Made-in-India’ semiconductor chips by the end of 2025

Nuclear energy capacity

India will aim at increasing its nuclear energy capacity 10-fold via its 10 nuclear energy plants by 2047

❖ Major GST shake-up: 12% and 28% slabs to be axed

Context:

- The Centre has proposed to reduce the number of slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, retaining the 5% and 18% slabs, while introducing a lower concessional rate below 1% and a high “sin rate” of 40% on just five to seven items each, according to official sources.

- **This would mean eliminating the 12% and 28% tax brackets entirely.** Of these, **99% of items currently in the 12% slab will be moved to the 5% rate, and 90% of goods and services in the 28% bracket will be moved to 18%.**

- There will be no additional cess levied over and above the GST rates.

- “There will, of course, be a hit to revenue, but it will not be so huge as to materially affect the fiscal deficit.”

- “The thinking is that the **lower rates will increase**

Rate revisions

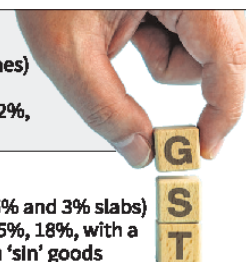
The 12% and 28% GST slabs will be done away with soon. Of these, 99% of items currently in the 12% slab will be moved to the 5% rate and 90% of goods and services in the 28% bracket will move to 18% slab

CURRENT SLABS

- 0.25% (diamonds & semi-precious stones)
- 3% (jewellery & precious metals)
- Apart from these, the slabs were 5%, 12%, 18%, 28% and compensation cess

PROPOSED SLABS

- Less than 1% (only items earlier in 0.25% and 3% slabs)
- Apart from this, the main slabs will be 5%, 18%, with a 40% rate applicable on only five to seven ‘sin’ goods



consumption, reduce evasion, and widen the tax net, leading to higher revenues by the end of the financial year.”

- **Ministry of Finance:** The Centre has sent its proposal on GST rate rationalisation and reforms to the **Group of Ministers (GoM), which has been constituted by the GST Council to examine the issue.**
- It added that the GST Council would deliberate in its next meeting — likely be held in September or October, according to sources — on the recommendations of the GoM and would strive to implement the bulk of the reforms within this financial year.
- The Centre would be engaging with the States over the next few weeks to achieve a consensus on these reforms. The reason the Centre had to put forth such a proposal in the first place, a source confirmed, was because the GoM tasked with simplifying the GST only comprises representatives of the States.
- **“Even though the Centre is part of the GST Council, it has no voice when it comes to these changes, such as rate rationalisation or what happens with insurance.”** “And so we had to submit our proposal to the GoM.” It is **now up to the States to accept or reject the proposals.**

Revenue impact

- According to sources, the 28% tax slab currently accounts for 11% of the revenue from the GST, the 12% slab accounts for 5%, and the 5% slab accounts for 7% of the revenue. The bulk of the revenue — around 67% — comes from the 18% slab.
- **The Centre has also proposed that the rates on aspirational items, such as white goods, would be reduced.** Air conditioners are currently taxed at 28%, which will see a reduction, while other white goods currently taxed at 18% could potentially see their rates reduced as well. This includes daily-use items such as toothpaste, soap, and shampoo.
- There would be **only five to seven “sin goods”, such as tobacco and gutka, in the 40% category,** while the concessional rate of less than 1% would apply to the few items that are currently taxed below 5%. These include **precious metals like gold and silver.**

❖ Yet again, talks for a global plastics treaty end in a stalemate

Context:

- **Countries, for the second time since October 2024, failed to agree on a legally binding agreement to an ambitious treaty to end plastic pollution.**
- **The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC 5.2), a group of about 180 countries, has been deliberating at the United Nations offices in Geneva since August 5 towards a consensus agreement.** The process was to conclude on the August 14.
- However multiple draft versions of the text couldn't reconcile deep differences between blocs of nations on whether cutting plastic production was integral to ending plastic pollution.
- A majority of the countries, about 80-100, back an “ambitious” treaty that, at its heart, has a phase-out plan for plastics.
- As many as 57 countries called for toxic-free reuse, refill and repair systems; 89 demanded cuts to plastic production; 120 supported strong controls on chemicals; another 120 backed voting in the Conference of the Parties to break the deadlock and 130 championed a dedicated Article on health.
- **Primarily led by the European Union and its 27 member states, the countries looking for an ambitious treaty include several countries in Africa, several Pacific Island states, countries in Latin America and Japan.**
- However the countries opposed to them, which also includes China, represent a larger share of the world's population.

- Several of the Arab states, the United States and India are also against any curbs on the production of plastic polymers.
- “We came to Geneva to secure a global plastics treaty because we know the stakes could not be higher,” Jessika Roswall, European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, said in a statement. “While the latest text does not meet all our ambitions, it is a step forward. The perfect must not be the enemy of the good.”
- Inger Andersen, Executive Chairperson, UN Environment Programme, at a press conference said, “I am disappointed...but this is how the multilateral treaty works. History shows that it takes multiple years of negotiations to evolve the substantial treaties of the past. We have for the first time heard the deep red lines been mentioned in a true way that will enable a pathway for us to move forward.”

❖ Before Sepoy Mutiny, palegars of Chitradurga attempted rebellion against the British

Context:

- The story of seven chieftains (palegars), who attempted a rebellion against the British rule in Chitradurga, eight years before the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, is one of the lesser-known episodes in the fight against the British Raj. The records of British officer Major General **R.S. Dobbs** show that a group of people made a valiant effort to overthrow the British in Chitradurga in 1849, but failed.

Historical Background:

- Chitradurga, about 200 km from Bengaluru, was governed by palegars, who were feudatories earlier, under the Vijayanagara Empire. After they were defeated by Hyder Ali of Mysuru in 1779, the region came under the rule of the Mysore kings. Following the **fourth Anglo-Mysuru war**, in which Tipu Sultan died, the place came under the rule of the Wadiyars of Mysuru, who were guided by a British resident.
- **Later in 1831, the British** took over the administration due to the unrest caused by the oppression by cultivators in the State. Under the British rule, the family members of palegars, who had lost power, were forced to reside in Bengaluru, the seat of government, and they were restricted from visiting villages without special permission. Among them, seven palegars formed a group, “escaped from Bengaluru”, and proceeded to the town of Dodderi, near Challakere. Keeping Dodderi as the centre, they moved around in the daytime to mobilise support and held meetings during the night. They recruited about 50 people and garnered the support of many more.
- All these developments were recorded by **Mr. Dobbs, who was the commissioner of Chitradurga** in those days. He gave a brief note about the rebellion that occurred in 1849, in his book **Reminiscences of life in Mysore, South Africa, and Burmah, published in 1882**. Mr. Dobbs, in his account of events, says he sent information to the Chief Commissioner in Bengaluru and commissioners in the neighbouring districts. As the days went, the rebel group moved to Holalkere and settled at a hillock.
- Mr. Dobbs instructed the commanding officer at Chitradurga to reach the hill. Lieutenant Harkness, another young British officer, accompanied by the soldiers, attacked the palegars and captured all of them.

Research & Novels:

- Noted writer B.L. Venu, who is known for his historical novels, penned Durgada Bedardange in 2021. Taking the basic facts about the rebellion from Mr. Dobbs’s work and other sources, he narrated a story. “I got the idea of this novel after listening to a lecture delivered by B. Nanjundaswamy, a Tumakuru-based researcher, in February 2018,” he said.

- In the novel, the **British officers hang the rebels in the historic fort of Chitradurga**. Mr. Venu was convinced that the **British must have punished them with the death penalty, as they did with other rebels, including Sangolli Rayanna** in the past. **“There had been many rebellions against the British, much before the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, which we call the first war of Indian Independence,”** he said.
- Mr. Venu stated that the rebellion by the people of Chitradurga was a significant episode in Karnataka’s history. **“However, the rebellion did not receive due recognition. There should be further research on it and the State government should build a memorial so that the present generation remembers the sacrifice of our ancestors,”** he added.

❖ **Celebrities cannot use their status to influence the law, cautions top court**

Context:

- The Supreme Court, by cancelling Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa’s bail in the Renukaswamy murder case, has sent a strong message that celebrity status cannot be used to sway the law.

- **“No individual – however wealthy, influential, or famous – can claim exemption from the rigours of law. A celebrity status does not elevate an accused above the law, nor entitle him to preferential treatment in matters like grant of bail. Popularity cannot be a shield for impunity,”** the Supreme Court cautioned.

‘Not a passive onlooker’

- **“He was not a passive onlooker but an active conspirator who played a pivotal role in the planning and executing the crime,”** Mr. Luthra had submitted.
- The crime was not the result of a sudden provocation or emotional outburst. It was cold, calculated.
- **“Celebrities serve as social role models — accountability is greater, not lesser.** They, by virtue of their fame and public presence, wield substantial influence on public behaviour and social values. Granting leniency to such persons despite grave charges of conspiracy and murder, sends a wrong message to society and undermines public confidence in the justice system... In a democracy governed by the rule of law, no individual is exempt from legal accountability by virtue of status or social capital.
- **Article 14 of the Constitution mandates that all persons — regardless of their popularity, power, or privilege — are equally subject to the law,”** the Supreme Court emphasised.
- The apex court warned the State of Karnataka that the day it heard any of the accused in the murder case was provided five-star treatment in jail, the first step it would take would be to suspend the jail superintendent and other officials involved in the misconduct.

❖ Forest advisory committee defers KPCL's Sharavathi PSP proposal

Context:

- The forest advisory committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has deferred the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited's (KPCL) proposal for the Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project (PSP), seeking clarification with regard to the felling of trees in the project area.
- The **KPCL has proposed the project to generate 2,000 MW of power in the Sharavathi Valley, using the Talakalale and the Gerusoppa reservoirs.**
- The KPCL has sought the diversion of 54.155 hectares of forestland for the project with the outlay of ₹10,240 crore.
- The advisory committee, in its report on August 7, stated that it had a detailed discussion with the Deputy Director General of Forests (Central) of the regional office in Bengaluru and the nodal officer of the State government.

NBW meeting

- Making a reference to the recommendations of the standing committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBW) in its 84th meeting held on June 26, the committee wanted the status of compliance.
- The NBW, in its recommendations, stated that most of the 518 trees in the area where a surge tank had been proposed could be saved if an alternative underground structure was constructed with a narrow opening for an air outlet.
- Further, the NBW stated that over 12,000 trees, enumerated for felling for the construction of the 12.3-km road from Nagarabasti Kere to Begodi, could be saved if the proposed underground road was extended up to the base of the pump house.
- Such a modification in the plan could also **help the lion-tailed macaque, the flagship species of the sanctuary.**

❖ Zelenskyy seeks Indian help to end Ukraine war

Context:

- Offering his congratulations on Independence Day, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a pitch for India to play a role in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- India and Ukraine “share the experience of standing up for freedom and dignity, as well as the pursuit of peace and development”.
- “We hope that India will contribute to efforts aimed at ending the war, so that our freedom and sovereignty are truly secure,” Mr. Zelenskyy added, indicating an outreach to New Delhi, at a time when Ukraine is worried about the outcome of the Trump-Putin talks.
- While Ukraine and the European Union have called for peace, but without ceding any territory to Russia, Mr. Trump has said that he expected some “land swaps” on the agenda for any ceasefire agreement with Mr. Putin.
- Meanwhile, New Delhi has hoped cautiously for some sort of Trump-Putin agreement leading to Ukraine-Russia talks on a ceasefire, so that the 25% penalty tariffs placed by the U.S. on Indian goods can be rolled back before they go into place on August 27.

❖ U.S. and India will rise to modern challenges together, says Rubio

Context:

- India and the U.S., “working together”, would rise to the modern challenges of today and ensure a brighter future for both countries, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, describing the “historic relationship” between New Delhi and Washington as “consequential and far-reaching.”
- “The historic relationship between the **world’s largest democracy and the world’s oldest democracy** is consequential and far-reaching,” Mr. Rubio said.
- Two countries were united by “our shared vision for a more peaceful, and secure Indo-Pacific region” and the partnership spanned industries, pushed the boundaries of critical and emerging technologies, and extended into space.

❖ India to build indigenous air defence system by 2035: PM

Context:

- India will develop an indigenous air defence system by 2035 not just to neutralise enemy attacks, but also to hit back strongly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Independence Day address.
- The mission, announced on the eve of Krishna Jayanti, will be called ‘Sudarshan Chakra’ in honour of Lord Krishna’s mythological shield.
- “By 2035, all the important places of the nation, which include strategic as well as civilian areas, like hospitals, railways, any centre of faith, will be given complete security cover through new platforms of technology. This security shield should keep expanding, every citizen of the country should feel safe,” Mr. Modi said.

Missile systems

- **India currently has three S-400 missile systems developed by Russia**, which played a crucial role in taking down Pakistani drones and missiles fired towards more than 15 Indian cities in retaliation for Operation Sindoor in May. India’s Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) played a pivotal role in maintaining air superiority over Pakistan.

❖ Why Maharashtra’s small, marginal farmers are rejoicing over U.K. FTA

Context:

- In Nilwande village, 50 km from Nashik, 35-year-old Chhaya Thete heads to her farm to see if the stems in her vineyard have changed colour. Due to unseasonal rain, she is worried about diseases on the leaves and if the yield might reduce.
- But there is one thing she looks up to this year – **more income on export quality grapes**.
- She is excited about the **India – U.K. Free Trade Agreement, (FTA) whereby Indian grapes can enter U.K. duty-free**. For Thete, with a **marginal holding of almost two acre**, it promises **better income, standard of living and disposable income**.
- **Nashik district is called the grape capital of India**.
- In 2023-24, India exported over 3 lakh metric tonne of grapes, valued at over \$400 million.
- **Maharashtra is its biggest producer**.
- **U.K. has consistently been one of our top importers**. And most of the harvest goes to the European market.

- With the FTA, Indian grapes will now become more competitive in the European market and stand a **better chance among competitors like South Africa and Chile** exporting to the U.K. sans tariffs.
- **Indian grapes were levied an 8% tariff** earlier but for small and marginal farmers, a majority in India, the chance of exploiting the opportunity comes with collective farming.
- “We test our soil five times a year. We also test our vineyard regularly. The petiole testing is crucial. The **European market is very strict. They test taste, colour, variation. They want each berry to be the same size, to have the same taste and colour. They don’t want chemicals in the grapes. We follow all the international norms.** Our grapes are the best quality for eating. Even we eat them right from the vineyard. If we buy grapes from the market, we need to wash them thoroughly. But that is not the consideration for the export quality grapes we grow.”
- The secret behind the change in fortune is collective farming. They are **all a part of the 14,000 farmers associated with a Farmer Producer Company (FPC) – Sahyadri Farms.** In a country where over 90% farmers are small and marginal farmers, the collective has given them bargaining power and strength to generate volumes to compete in international markets.
- The demand for premium fruits is increasing. Food safety-related standards will force the farmer community to give better quality.”.

❖ U.S. has no alternative to India in diamonds, say industry leaders

Context:

- **Already grappling with job losses and a slowdown in orders, Gujarat’s diamond sector has been dealt with another setback as the U.S. its largest export destination, raised import duties to 25% with an additional tariff of 25% coming into effect from August 27, taking the total to 50%.**
- The hike, announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, has raised concerns among exporters who warn the rates are “unsustainable” for long-term trade.

Mounting challenges

- It comes at a time when the industry is still struggling with the fallout of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the growing presence of cheaper lab-grown diamonds in global markets.
- Industry estimates show the U.S. alone accounts for more than 30% of India’s gem and jewellery exports, making it the single-largest overseas buyer.
- In Gujarat, where almost 90% of natural diamonds imported to India are cut and polished, trade bodies say more than one lakh workers have lost jobs since April this year.
- “Nearly 90% of India’s supply is processed here. What other alternatives do they have? We have the best ‘ratnakalakars’ (diamond artisans) in the world, and a customer buying diamonds will never compromise on quality.”.
- He compared the American affinity for diamonds to the Indian love for gold, noting just as Indians continue to buy gold despite soaring prices, U.S. consumers were steadfast in preference for diamonds.

Choosing diamonds

- “No matter the circumstances, they pick diamonds over gold. We expect the market to steady ahead of Christmas and New Year, with fresh orders starting to flow in,” he said, adding over 7.5 lakh artisans are working in 3,500 small, large units.
- Data from the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), India’s apex body for the industry, shows in 2024–25 fiscal year, India shipped cut and polished diamonds worth \$4.8 billion to the U.S.. The U.S. market thus accounted for over a third of India’s total diamond exports amounting to

\$13.2 billion for the year. As per GJEPC, India's rough diamond imports fell sharply in 2024–25 to \$9.52 billion, down from \$14.26 billion in the previous fiscal.

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