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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

AUGUST WEEK 3

18-08-2025 TO 23-08-2025



OpenAI

**I-TAX ACT, 2025
GETS PRESIDENT'S
ASSENT**

**ETHANOL
BLENDING**

**PM VIKSIT
BHARAT ROJGAR
YOJANA**

**SIMPLIFIED
TWO-RATE GST
STRUCTURE**



❖ Centre's GST reforms will benefit the poor and middle class: Modi**Context:**

The proposed changes to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will benefit the poor, middle class, traders, and entrepreneurs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- The new GST structure, with 18% and 5% rates, will have the twin objectives of making tax categories and compliance processes simpler and more rational.
- “The new GST regime will make our taxation more equitable and will see reduced taxes.
- The template will be more from the consumers’ point of view, and will be explained to the States from the consumers’ point of view.”
- The Centre expects any reduction in revenues to be soon offset by new buoyancy in the economy stemming from the rate rationalisation and process simplification. “Reduced rates will not lead to reduced revenues, and we expect compliance and collection going up,” an official said, adding that the forthcoming regime will be “fiscally sustainable”.
- **Most of the items in the 28% rate of the GST will move to 18% and “a few” will go to a 40% bracket, which will apply to exceptional items, termed as “sin goods”.**
- **Two Groups of Ministers (GoMs) comprising representatives of the State governments — one on rate rationalisation and another on compensation cess — will have to approve the changes before they are sent to the GST Council for approval.**
- **Plan on the Cess:** The compensation cess will soon cease, before its legal end-date of March 31, 2026. However, this also creates a problem for the Centre as the **cess also applies on sin goods like tobacco.**
- “If the cess ends, then this would substantially lower the effective rate of tax on **tobacco, gutka, and other sin goods,**” the source explained. “And this is something the Centre cannot be doing. So, this was yet another reason why the GST revamp needed to be done soon.”

❖ Inscription in Sanskrit dating back to Vijayanagar period discovered**Context:**

An inscription written in Sanskrit on a pillar has been discovered at the Sri Venugopala Swamy Temple in Mereddipalli of Gorantla mandal in Sri Sathya Sai district, according to historian MyNaa Swamy.

- Speaking to reporters at Gorantla, he said that the inscription, reading “Sri Gopalakrishnaya Namaha Sri,” was unearthed on a pillar in the “Mukha Mandapam” of the shrine.
- The single-line inscription highlights the importance of the temple, which dates back to the early Vijayanagar period of 14th Century, the historian added. “Four pillars adorned with sculptures are located in the “Mukha Mandapam”, which stands in front of the sanctum sanctorum built for the revered Venugopala Swamy.
- The first pillar on the left features a sculpture of Narasimha Swamy, and below it, Sri Mahavishnu is depicted holding a conch and wheel, offering protection to devotees. The inscription is located between the sculptures of Narasimha and Vishnu and is written in the **Nandi Nagari script.** This inscription may belong to either **Devaraya I or Devaraya II of the Sangama dynasty,**” MyNaa Swamy said.
- The historian also pointed out that an inscription of **Bukka Raya II,** dating back to 1388 CE, records the construction of the Mereddipalli tank and the excavation of a water supply canal.

- This Telugu inscription is presently lying neglected in the fields of Karavulapalli Subhash and deteriorating due to exposure to **sun and rain**.

❖ Uttarakhand Cabinet clears Bill for minority education institutions

Context:

In what could be the **first-of-its-kind draft legislation**, the Uttarakhand Cabinet approved the **Uttarakhand Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2025**, which, if enacted, would **extend benefits** hitherto available only to Muslim educational institutions in the State **to educational institutions of Sikh, Jain, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsi communities**.

- “The Uttarakhand Madrasa Education Board Act, 2016 and the Uttarakhand Non-Government Arabic and Persian Madrasa Recognition Rules, 2019 will stand repealed from July 1, 2026,” an official involved in planning the Bill said.
- The State authority will ensure education meets the standards set by the Uttarakhand Board of School Education, and student evaluations remain fair and transparent, as per the Bill.
- “The **Bill does not interfere in the establishment and administration of minority educational institutions, but ensures that educational excellence is maintained**.
- **To obtain recognition**, educational institutions must be registered under the Societies Act, Trust Act, or Companies Act. Ownership of land, bank accounts, and other assets must be in the name of the institution. Recognition can be withdrawn in cases of financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, or activities against religious and social harmony.”

❖ Nepal PM likely to visit India next month; officials meet in Kathmandu

Context:

Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is likely to visit India in September, sources said as Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Mr. Oli in Kathmandu.

- Mr. Misri, who reached Kathmandu, met Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and held a detailed meeting with officials of the Nepal Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by his counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai.

‘Neighbourhood first’

- “We discussed the full range of India-Nepal relations, with a focus on strengthening our connectivity, trade and development cooperation. **Nepal appreciates India’s neighbourhood first policy and looks forward to continued growth of our bilateral ties**,” said Ms. Rana Deuba after meeting the Foreign Secretary.
- Earlier, Nepal supported India’s fight against terrorism when New Delhi launched Operation Sindoor.
- On July 22, India and Nepal held Home Secretary-level talks in New Delhi where a decision was taken to strengthen bilateral security cooperation and border management.

❖ CJI Gavai inaugurates Bombay HC circuit Bench

- Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai inaugurated the Bombay High Court’s new circuit Bench in Kolhapur district.
- The Bench was inaugurated after years of demands raised by different stakeholders to ease the burden for litigants and lawyers facing difficulty in travelling to Mumbai.

- **At present, apart from the principal Bench in Mumbai, the High Court has two more Benches — at Nagpur in the Vidarbha region and Aurangabad (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar) in the Marathwada region. A third Bench of the High Court sits in adjoining Goa.**

❖ **Bill to decriminalise minor offences to be introduced in the Lok Sabha**

Context:

The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to decriminalise certain minor offences to promote ease of living and business**, will be introduced by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in the Lok Sabha.

- The Minister will introduce the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, “to amend certain enactments for decriminalising and rationalising offences to further enhance trust-based governance for ease of living and doing business”. Over 350 provisions are proposed to be amended through the Bill.
- The legislation is part of the government’s effort to improve the country’s business climate.
- Earlier, in 2023, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment to Provisions) Act was enacted, which decriminalised 183 provisions in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries and departments.
- Through the Act, the government removed imprisonment and/or fines in some provisions. Imprisonment was removed and fine was retained in a few rules, while in some cases imprisonment and fine were converted to a penalty.
- The government earlier abolished more than 40,000 compliances deemed unnecessary. It has also scrapped over 1,500 obsolete laws.

❖ **Grassland invaders stifle Assam’s island-like national park home to feral horses: study**

Context:

A new study has identified at least two native plants that have joined invasive species to alter the riverine ecosystem of **eastern Assam’s Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (DSNP), the only habitat of feral horses in India.**

- These species have added to the changes in the grassland-dominated DSNP landscape, largely attributed to the **recurring Brahmaputra river floods and increasing anthropogenic pressures** from villages located within its boundaries, the study said.
- The **native “grassland invaders” are Bombax ceiba and Lagerstroemia speciosa — flowering trees known as Simalu and Ajar in Assamese.** Their impact on the local vegetation has been as worrying as that of the invasive species, which include shrubs *Chromolaena odorata* and *Ageratum conyzoides*, herb *Parthenium hysterophorus* and climber *Mikania micrantha*.
- The study titled *Grasslands in Flux*, analysing the land use and land cover (LULC) changes in Dibru-Saikhowa from its designation as a national park in 1999 through 2024, was published in the latest issue of *Earth*, an international, peer-reviewed journal on earth science.
- The researchers used remote sensing and geographic information systems to analyse the LULC changes in DSNP, an island-like formation between the Brahmaputra to the north and the Dibru river to the south.
- According to their study, grasslands covered 28.78% of the 425 sq. km DSNP in 2000, followed by semi-evergreen forests (25.58%). By 2013, shrubland became the most prominent class (81.31 sq. km), and degraded forest expanded to 75.56 sq. km.
- “During this period, substantial areas of grassland [29.94 sq. km], degraded forest [10.87 sq. km], semi-evergreen forest [12.33 sq. km], and bare land [10.50 sq. km] were converted to shrubland. In 2024, degraded forest further increased, covering 80.52 sq. km [23.47%],” the study said.

- This change was the outcome of the conversion of 11.46 sq. km of shrubland and 27.48 sq. km of semi-evergreen forest into degraded forest, indicating a substantial and consistent decline in grassland, the study noted. Forest degradation can lead to loss of biodiversity, threaten the survival of local fauna, and reduce carbon storage, potentially intensifying climate change.
- The study stated that the changes in the “natural structure and function” of the DSNP landscape pose a serious threat to the survival of grassland-obligate faunal species, many of which are already globally threatened due to ongoing habitat loss.
- “The concern is heightened by the fact that numerous species are endemic to the grasslands found in the floodplains of this region. Notable species which are rapidly decreasing include the Bengal florican [*Houbaropsis bengalensis*], hog deer [*Axis porcinus*], and swamp grass babbler [*Prinia cinerascens*],” the study said.
- The DSNP is also home to some 200 feral horses, which are descendants of military horses abandoned during World War 2.
- The study recommended a targeted grassland recovery project that would encompass the control of invasive species, improved surveillance, increased staffing, and the relocation of forest villages and support community-based conservation efforts.

❖ What has been the impact of ethanol blending?

Context:

E20 petrol, which contains 20% ethanol and is being sold by Indian oil refiners, has been much in the news lately.

- India has achieved its target to blend 20% ethanol per litre of fuel five years ahead of the target under the National Policy on Biofuels.
- **Ethanol blending in India rose from just 1.5% in 2014 to 20% in 2025**, backed by the government’s strong fiscal incentives to the sugarcane industry.
- While the government says ethanol blending achieves a range of goals such as cutting greenhouse gas emissions, bolstering farmers’ incomes and reducing India’s oil import bill, its benefits to the environment require closer scrutiny.

How are vehicle owners reacting to this change?

- Vehicles sold in India from 2023 come with E20 stickers, indicating compatibility with 20% ethanol blended petrol.
- Additionally, manufacturers have addressed the concerns of those who own older vehicles.
- Hero Motocrop says in its website, “The material composition such as rubbers, elastomers and plastic components that are directly exposed to fuel also need to be changed to E20 compatible materials.”
- However, according to Local Circles, two in three petrol vehicle owners are against the E20 mandate. Only 12% of the 36,000 people surveyed across 315 districts are in favour of the switch. Critics cited a drop in mileage and increased maintenance costs. The survey urged the Union government to allow consumers to choose the type of fuel they want.
- While the Centre admitted to a “marginal drop” in engine efficiency, it said this “can be further minimised through improved engine tuning and use of E20-compatible materials.” Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has called the consumer angst a “vilification campaign” facilitated by “vested, economic interests”. While the Union government attempts to defend its E20 policy, its own think tank, the NITI Aayog, has urged the government “to compensate the consumers for a drop in efficiency from ethanol blended fuels”, by way of “tax incentives on E10 and E20 fuel”.

- According to the Minister, “since 2014-15 India has already saved more than ₹1.40 lakh crore in foreign exchange through petrol substitution.” But has the benefit been passed to the end consumer?
- An analysis by The Hindu showed that Coal India Ltd, Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), and Gas Authority of India Ltd collectively contributed ₹1.27 lakh crore, or 42.3% of the total ₹3 lakh crore dividends the Union government received from non-banking Public Sector Undertaking (PSUs) between 2020-21 and 2024-25. IOC and BPCL together saw a 255% rise in their dividend payouts since 2022-23 and a 65% decrease in oil prices. However, the two PSUs only passed on a 2% decrease in petrol prices to the public.

What about the impact on agriculture?

- Sugarcane-based ethanol supply has grown from 40 crore litres in FY14 to nearly 670 crore litres, derived from about 9% of total sugar output, in FY24. The Union government says it has paid “over ₹1.20 lakh crore to farmers” since FY15. But how environmentally friendly is India’s dependence on sugarcane for ethanol?
- About 60-70 tonnes of water is required to cultivate one tonne of sugarcane. Many sugarcane growing regions in India do not receive the 1,500 to 3,000 millimetre rainfall that is necessary for the crop’s optimal growth. This leads to groundwater extraction and unsustainable irrigation methods.
- A 2023 Central Groundwater Board report says that sugarcane growing districts in Maharashtra extract more groundwater than nearby regions. Distress among sugarcane growers in that State has been widely reported. Unsustainable agriculture practices accelerate land degradation. The Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India 2021 found that almost 30% of India’s land is degraded. The water intensive nature of sugarcane and the impact on ground water reserves at a time of extreme weather has been absent from the discussion on ethanol-blended petrol.
- The Centre, however, says it is looking to diversify ethanol supplies. The Food Corporation of India’s rice allocation for ethanol jumped to a record 5.2 million metric tonnes, which is about 3.6% of output, from less than 3,000 tonnes allocated last year. Similarly, in 2024-25, over 34% of corn output was diverted for ethanol production. This diversion forced India to import about 9.7 lakh tonnes of corn during 2024-25 — a six-fold increase over the previous year’s 1.37 lakh tonnes.
- Despite diversification efforts, area under sugarcane cultivation this year is estimated to be 57.24 lakh hectare against 57.11 lakh hectare last season. The assured payment mechanism for sugarcane, the Fair and Remunerative Pricing, is the key reason farmers bet on the crop as a source of stable income. While this rise is marginal, an analysis by the OECD-FAO says that 22% of India’s sugarcane will be used for ethanol production by 2034.
- India’s booming ethanol economy has also come under the gaze of the U.S. The Trump administration is pushing India to relax restrictions to its ethanol imports. The 2025 National Trade Estimate report noted India’s policy as a significant “trade barrier.” Import relaxation could potentially undermine years of investment and capacity building in ethanol production. The Indian Sugar Mills Association has urged the government to maintain the restrictions.

Will it affect the transition to EVs?

- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said the shift to ethanol-blended petrol “has helped India reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 700 lakh tonnes.” Shifting to EVs, however, will achieve far higher rates of emissions reductions and speed up transport’s decarbonisation, which is the third largest carbon emitting sector globally after energy and industry. The success of cities like Beijing in cutting air pollution is mainly due to the rapid adoption of EVs. Of course, this switch has to be backed by renewable energy rather than coal, to aid in decarbonising transport.

- Adoption of EVs has been much slower in India when compared to other large economies like the U.S., the European Union and China. About 7.6% of vehicle sales in 2024 was electric. Sales of EVs have to increase by over 22% in the next five years to reach the government's own target of 30% by 2030.
- Another challenge to wider EV adoption in India is its dependence on Rare Earth Elements (REE). According to the Ministry of Mines, before China's export curbs were imposed, only 2,270 tonnes of REEs and compounds of REEs were imported in 2023-24. But this relatively lower level is critical for the industry to sustain the current level of EV production. The production and processing of many REEs is geographically concentrated in China, making global supply vulnerable to several risks.
- The automotive industry has also sounded alarm bells about the disruption in rare earth supply. India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki reduced its near-term production targets for its new EV, e-Vitara, attributing it to delays in receiving rare earth magnets. Other manufacturers too are bracing themselves for disruptions.
- Crisil Ratings Senior Director Anuj Sethi has said, "The supply squeeze comes just as the auto sector is preparing for aggressive EV rollouts." The recent detente in bilateral relations with China might help the industry to address the crisis in the short term. The Union government is engaged in diplomacy with Beijing to address the rare earth supply crunch, mainly germanium.
- Going forward, there is uncertainty on whether the Centre wants to push ahead with ethanol blending beyond 20%. While Minister Puri said the government will push for blending beyond 20%, the Union government in March said that there has been no decision yet.

❖ Zelenskyy and Trump hope for trilateral talks with Putin to end war

Context:

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and President Donald Trump expressed hope that their critical meeting with European leaders at the White House could lead to three-party talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin to bring an end to the Ukraine war.

- Mr. Trump also said he would back European security guarantees for Ukraine as European leaders gathered in Washington to show support for Kyiv.
- Mr. Trump stopped short of committing U.S. troops to the effort, saying instead that there would be a "NATO-like" security presence but that all those details would be hashed out in their afternoon meeting with EU leaders.
- "They want to give protection and they feel very strongly about it and we'll help them out with that," Mr. Trump said. "I think its very important to get the deal done."
- Mr. Trump also said Mr. Putin had at summit talks last week accepted that there would be security guarantees for Ukraine as part of any peace deal. "In a very significant step, President Putin agreed that Russia would accept security guarantees for Ukraine and this is one of the key points that we need to consider and we're going to be considering that at the table, also who will do what essentially," Mr. Trump said. "I think the European nations are going to take a lot of the burden. We're going to help them and we're going to make it very secure," he said.

❖ POCSO case can apply to a woman too, says HC

Context:

The High Court of Karnataka refused to quash a criminal case, rarest of its kind, registered against a 52-year-old woman for allegedly compelling a 13-year-old boy to penetrative sex with her at her residence in the city.

- Rejecting a petition filed by the accused woman, Justice M. Nagaprasanna ruled that sexual assault can be alleged even against a woman under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 as this law is gender neutral.
- Though the alleged assault took place in 2020, the complaint was lodged by boy's mother last year after the victim, who underwent psychological distress, took four years to disclose it to his parents.
- Declaring that the offence of penetrative sexual assault can be alleged even against a woman under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, as this law is gender-neutral, the High Court of Karnataka on Monday refused to quash a criminal case against a 52-year-old woman, who allegedly compelled a 13-year-old boy for sex with her at her residence here during 2020.
- The two instances of sexual assaults had allegedly taken place between May and June, 2020, when the accused woman Archana, an artist aged around 48 and the boy who was around 13 years and 10 months old then.
- The accused, who was the boy's neighbour, had come in contact with him through his mother, who initially sent him to the house of the accused to help her post her paintings on her Instagram account following the request made by the accused.

Boy distressed

- The boy, who was psychologically distressed, had immediately not disclosed the alleged acts to his parents, who later decided to settle down in Dubai and shifted there in August, 2020, along with him and his younger sister.
- He disclosed the alleged acts only in 2024 and narrated details to a therapist in Dubai, and then the complaint was lodged with the HAL police station by the boy's mother in June, 2024.
- The boy was aged around 17 when his statements were recorded by the magistrate and the child protection officer. It was alleged that accused woman had convinced the boy not to disclose the acts with anyone, stating that both of them would be in trouble. The accused woman's husband and daughter are said to be living abroad.

'Law is clear'

- Rejecting the argument on behalf of the accused that offence of aggravated sexual assaults or rape cannot be invoked against a woman, the court pointed out that Sections 4 and 6 of the POCSO Act makes it clear that anyone who "compels a minor child to do penetrative or other sexual acts with him or other persons", is an offender.
- Though the pronoun "he" and its derivatives were not defined under the POCSO Act, which only states that a child is any person below the age of 18, Justice M. Nagaprasanna, relying on the definitions in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), held that the pronoun "he" and its derivatives in POCSO will also have to be used, "of any person, whether male or female."

"The language of the provision clearly indicates inclusivity," the court observed.

- It was argued on behalf of the accused that the victim boy could not have had an erection if he was in shock when the accused had allegedly made sexual advances. However, the court said, quoting a study, "State of shock is a psychological concept. Erection is purely a physiological or a biological concept. Psychological concepts would not sometimes control physiological and biological actions."

No stereotypes

- To the submission that in an intercourse the woman is only a passive participant and a man is an active participant, the court pointed out that "this thought itself is archaic". It said that the jurisprudence of the present times "does not allow stereotypes to cloud legal scrutiny".

- The delay of four years in registering the complaint and non-conduct of potency test of the boy, cannot become the reason for quashing the case, owing to the alleged offence and the age of the victim boy, the court said.

❖ Foxconn starts production of iPhone 17 at Devanahalli

Context:

Taiwanese manufacturing major Foxconn has started production of iPhone 17 from its new manufacturing facility at Devanahalli, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil.

- Interestingly, this development from Foxconn, Apple's manufacturing partner in India, comes close on the heels of U.S. President Donald Trump's recent diktat to Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, that he does not want the tech giant building its products in India. Also, Apple has been ramping up manufacturing in India to reduce its dependence on China.
- "Pleased to share that Foxconn has commenced production of the latest iPhone 17 at its new manufacturing facility in Devanahalli, Bengaluru. This is Foxconn's 2nd largest unit outside China, built with an investment of \$2.8 billion (₹25,000 crore)," read the Minister's post on X.

❖ Shakti enters book of records

Context:

The Shakti scheme, Karnataka's free bus travel initiative for women in State-run non-premium buses, has entered the Golden Book of World Records for ferrying the highest number of women passengers under the scheme.

- Minister for Transport Ramalinga Reddy said that under the scheme, 500 crore women passengers travelled in non-premium government buses operated by the four State-run transport corporations-KSRTC, BMTTC, NWKRTC and KKRTC between June 11, 2023 and July 25, 2025.

❖ Enrolment in govt. schools declined by 10.38% in three years

Context:

Enrolment to government primary schools and high schools across the State has shown a steady decline since the 2022-2023 academic year, according to data placed by the Department of School Education and Literacy before the Legislative Council. The enrolment has shown a decline by 10.38% in three years.

- While 45.46 lakh students were enrolled during 2022-2023, the number dipped to 42.94 lakh by 2023-2024, a decline by 2.52 lakh. The numbers have further fallen in 2024-2025 with an enrolment of 40.74 lakh, a further decline by 2.18 lakh.
- Responding to a question from Congress member Anil Kumar, Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa told the House that several reasons could be attributed to the decline.

Reasons cited

- "Lack of bilingual school, absence of pre-primary classes that could attract students, shortage of teachers and poor maintenance of toilets were among the reasons for the declining numbers," he said.
- The department, he said, hopes to increase the enrolment with permission provided to 5,000 schools to start pre-primary classes, while teacher recruitment would be conducted. "Bilingual schools along with these measures would increase the enrolment," the Minister said.

Context:

The aluminium extrusion industry in Karnataka is concerned about global headwinds, including volatility in raw material prices, high energy costs, and the recently announced 50% tariff by the U.S administration, according to Jitendra Chopra, President, Aluminium Extrusion Manufacturers Association of India (ALEMAI).

- Aluminium extrusion is a manufacturing process where melted aluminium alloy is forced through a die to make hard aluminium in various sizes, shapes and lengths for the consumption of diverse industries.
- Addressing a press conference in Bengaluru on August 18, Mr. Chopra said, “Karnataka, being a strategic location, has emerged as a key growth engine of India’s aluminium extrusion industry with an individual production contribution of over 10%, thanks to its rapid industrial growth, strong export potential and a thriving manufacturing base. However global headwinds were impacting the prospects of the sector and industry players here are worried that these would impact the export competitiveness of the sector.”
- According to him, other than the tariff burden, what is hurting the industry is under-utilization of domestic manufacturing capacity due to cheap imports.
- “The high tariffs by the U.S are a challenge, but a bigger challenge is the under-utilisation of domestic manufacturing capacity due to cheap imports. The total installed aluminium extrusion capacity in India is 3.5 million tonnes per annum, but the utilisation is only around 2 million tonnes, with the remaining 1.5 million tonnes imported,” he said.
- He also cited a need to put in place safeguards in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Far East countries and other nations to revive domestic units.
- Mr. Chopra said aluminium extrusion is a fast-growing sector in Karnataka. While Bengaluru-based Jindal Aluminium Limited (JAL) remains India’s largest aluminium extrusion company, Hindalco and Boruka Group also have manufacturing facilities in the City.. Moreover, there are hundreds of MSMEs and small-sized aluminium extrusion manufacturing facilities catering to construction, electric mobility, aerospace, renewable energy, and consumer durables.
- The push from government-led initiatives, like the Smart Cities Mission, affordable housing schemes, and clean energy programmes, is fuelling sustained growth in aluminium extrusion output and consumption, he stated adding, “Karnataka is rapidly becoming a hub for aluminium extrusion with its unique advantages of manufacturing strength, technology, and export potential. The State plays a critical role in meeting India’s domestic demand as well as exports, and holds immense strategic value for the industry.”
- India’s aluminium extrusion market stood at \$3.51 billion in 2024, and is projected to reach \$4.61 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 4.5%. While north India remains the dominant market, growth in the southern region is led Karnataka, according to ALEMAI, that represents over 200 industry players.
- Karnataka accounts for over 10% of India’s total production of 1,079,875 metric tons. Jindal is a major contributor, producing approximately 12,000 tonnes per month.
- The industry body in association with Hindalco, Vedanta, JNARDDC, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Mines, and the Ministry of MSMEs, is scheduled to hold a four-day aluminium extrusion exposition, ALUMEX India 2025, in New Delhi between September 10 and 13.

❖ Any person missing from draft rolls may file a claim with copy of Aadhaar: EC

Context:

On a day that the Opposition INDIA bloc again questioned the Election Commission and its functioning, the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer on Monday issued an “important public notice” stating that “the electors whose names are not included in the draft roll and are dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card”.

After SC order

- “In light of the interim order passed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court on 14.08.2025 in writ petition(s) (Civil) No (5) 640/ 2025 (Association of Democratic Reforms vs Election Commission of India) it is hereby notified that the list of such electors whose names were included in the electoral roll of the year 2025 (before the draft publication) but are not included in the draft roll published on August 1, 2025 along with reasons (deceased/ permanently shifted/ absent/ repeat entry), has been published on the websites of the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar and all District Election Officers of the State of Bihar,” CEO Vinod Singh Gunjiyal stated in the notice.
- The notice further stated that “all such electors, whose names are not included in the draft roll, may obtain information about their entry and the reasons thereof by using their EPIC number in the published list”. “The list relating to such electors not included in the draft roll published on 1.08.2025 has also been displayed at all Block Offices, Panchayat Offices, Urban Local Body Offices, and at the polling stations. Through these, such electors can obtain information regarding their entries along with the reasons. Any person dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card,” it stated.

❖ Indian astronaut to land on moon in 2040: Jitendra Singh in Lok Sabha

Context:

An Indian astronaut will herald “Viksit Bharat” by landing on the moon in 2040, Union Minister Jitendra Singh informed the Lok Sabha as the House took up the discussion on astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla being the first Indian to visit the International Space Station.

Future initiatives

- Mr. Singh said that after opening up the space sector for private players in 2020, India’s space economy had already reached \$8 billion and would touch \$45 billion in the next decade.
- Mr. Singh said India would undertake an uncrewed space mission involving a robot, Vyommitra, in 2026, followed by its maiden human spaceflight — Gaganyaan — in 2027. “India will set up its own Bharat Antariksh Station in 2035 and in 2040, an Indian astronaut will set foot on the moon,” he added.

❖ Centre rolls out PM Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana portal

Context:

The Union government launched the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana portal on Monday. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya asked first-time employees and employers to take benefit of the scheme.

- The Centre had said that the scheme, recently approved by the Cabinet, will generate 3.5 crore jobs.
- Dr. Mandaviya said all employers and first-time employees are covered under the scheme.

- He said the beneficiaries can avail incentives by registering on the portal or by uploading their Universal Account Number on the UMANG application.
- Part A of the scheme is for first-time employees and Part B is for employers.

❖ Rajya Sabha passes Indian Ports Bill as Oppn. boycotts debate over SIR

Context:

The Rajya Sabha passed the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, on Monday that replaces the Indian Ports Act of 1908. While piloting the Bill, Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said in the Upper House that the revamped legislation was a strategic intervention to reposition India's maritime sector for the 21st century.

- The Bill provides for the establishment of the Maritime State Development Council by the Union government, which would be responsible for making recommendations to the government for the growth of the port sector and to promote competition and efficiency in the operation of ports. The Bill empowers the government to notify a new port or to alter the limits of any port and to formulate a national perspective plan for maritime trade.
- Mr. Sonowal said the Bill was more than a legislative change and added that despite the progress made, the sector was still governed by a colonial law, the Indian Ports Act of 1908. "This outdated statute lacks provisions for long-term planning, modern environmental safeguards, and efficient dispute resolution. It is a legislative framework from a bygone era, unsuited for a modern, digitalised maritime ecosystem. The Indian Ports Bill, 2025, is our answer to this challenge. It is the product of extensive consultation with coastal States, industry stakeholders, and the public, embodying the spirit of cooperative federalism," he said.
- After a brief discussion, the Bill was passed. The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill earlier last week.

❖ Govt. introduces Bill in LS to decriminalise over 200 provisions

Context:

The government introduced the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha. The Bill aims to amend 355 provisions across 16 Central Acts to ease their applicability.

- Of these, 288 provisions are proposed to be decriminalised, and 67 provisions are proposed to be amended to facilitate "ease of living". The government has asked the Speaker of the House to refer the Bill to a Select Committee for review. This Bill would build upon the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which was the first consolidated legislation to decriminalise minor offences across multiple Acts, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a release.
- The 2023 Act decriminalised 183 provisions in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries or Departments. The main features of the amendments proposed in the 2025 legislation is for first-time contraventions to only attract an advisory or warning for 76 offences under 10 Acts.
- Further, the release said that imprisonment clauses for minor, technical or procedural defaults will be replaced with monetary penalties or warnings. The penalties, too, will be made "proportionate", with penalties gradually increasing for repeated offences.

❖ Unemployment rate declines to 5.2% in July: govt. survey

Context:

The rate of unemployment in the country declined to 5.2% in July from 5.6% in June, shows the Periodic Labour Force Survey released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

- The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women showed a marginal increase to 25.5% in July from 24.5% in June. The LFPR for men stood at 57.4%, while for all persons, it was 41.4%.
- The LFPR for men aged 15 and above in rural areas was 78.1% and for women, it was 36.9%. “In urban areas, the LFPR among females of age 15 years and above during July was 25.8% compared with 75.1% observed for males of the same age group,” the survey noted.
- The unemployment rate (UR) for persons aged 15 and above stood at 5.2%. In rural areas, it was 4.4% and 7.2% in urban areas. For women in rural areas, the UR was 3.9%. For men, it was 4.6%. For women in urban areas, the UR was 8.7% compared with 6.6% among men.
- The Worker Population Ratio (WPR), which defines the proportion of those who are employed among the total population, in rural areas for persons aged 15 and above was 54.4%. In June it was 53.3%. The WPR in urban areas was 47% and at the national level, it was 52%, 0.8 percentile points higher than June.
- The Labour Bureau surveyed 89,505 (49,355 in rural areas and 40,150 in urban areas) households and the number of persons surveyed was 3,79,222 (2,16,832 in rural areas and 1,62,390 in urban areas).

❖ 23% of PM Jan Dhan accounts inoperative

- As many as 23% of the total 56.04 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts are inoperative, said Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary. Out of 56.03 crore PMJDY accounts at the end of July 31, 2025, 13.04 crore such accounts are inoperative, he said in a written reply in Lok Sabha.
- Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of inoperative Jan Dhan accounts of 2.75 crore, followed by Bihar at 1.39 crore and Madhya Pradesh at 1.07 crore, he added.



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❖ India bats for import tariffs for 3 years on some steel products

- India has recommended a three-year import tariff of 11%-12% on some steel products to curb shipments from top producer China.
- The levy, if imposed, will start at 12%. It will be eased to 11.5% in the second year and to 11% in the third year, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) said in a notification dated August 16.
- “The Authority concludes that there is a recent, sudden, sharp and significant increase in imports,” the notification said, adding that this could cause serious injury to the domestic steel sector.
- The DGTR also said due to 50% tariffs on steel imports into the U.S., coupled with similar steps by other countries, a bulk of steel volumes are lying with manufacturers across the world.
- “Therefore, safeguard duty must address, not only the serious injury suffered by the domestic industry... but also the threat of serious injury likely to arise in the future.”

❖ Cabinet nod for internal reservation, slices SC quota into three categories

Context:

In a historic decision that is expected to bring a closure to the more-than-three-decades-old struggle for internal reservation in Karnataka, the State Cabinet **approved a reservation matrix slicing the 17% reservation for Scheduled Castes with 6% each to Dalit Right (Holeyas) and Dalit Left (Madigas) groups and 5% to Lambani, Korama, Koracha and Bhovis (touchable castes), along with 59 microscopic communities.**

- The decision comes just over a year after the Supreme Court allowed internal reservation to be provided among Scheduled Castes.
- Government sources said that an **ordinance** with this regard will be promulgated after the Monsoon session, and prioritisation of categories will be spelt out.
- However, in what is seen as succumbing to Dalit right and touchable castes, the State Cabinet decided **to drop 1% reservation to microscopic communities and 1% reservation given to Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravida and Adi Andhra, as recommended by the one-man commission headed by retired judge H.N. Nagamohan Das.**
- The commission, which submitted its report to the government on August 4, had recommended 5% reservation to Dalit Right, 6% to Dalit Left and 4% to touchable castes.

❖ ‘Bill for joint polls gives EC a free hand’

Context:

The proposed legislation for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies confers “unfettered discretion” to the Election Commission, former Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna told a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).

- The committee headed by BJP MP P.P. Chaudhary **is reviewing the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, commonly called the one nation, one election Bill.**
- Justice Khanna is the fifth former Chief Justice of India to underline this issue with the proposed legislation. Before him, Justice U.U. Lalit, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Jagdish Singh Kehar and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud also had pointed out various legal infirmities in the proposed legislation.
- The committee had a three-hour meeting where the members queried Justice Khanna on all aspects of the legislation.
- **The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, proposes to insert Article 82A as well as clauses to Articles 83 and 172 of the Constitution.**

- **Basic Structure:** Justice Khanna said **Clause 5 of the proposed Article 82A “confers unfettered discretion” to the Election Commission to decide when the election to a Legislative Assembly cannot be conducted along with the Lok Sabha election. “This clause will be open to question as violating and offending the basic structure of the Constitution on the ground of being arbitrary and offending Article 14 of the Constitution,”** he noted in his written submission, which he also explained at meeting.
- **Federal Structure:** He also articulated that **this clause gives powers to the EC and the government beyond what was envisaged in the Article 356 of the Constitution. “Postponement of elections by the Election Commission may result in indirect President’s Rule – in other words the Union Government taking over the reins of the State Government. This will be questionable judicially, as violating the federal structure envisaged by the Constitution,”** Justice Khanna noted.
- Justice Khanna said the Bill does not meet the basic objective of reducing policy paralysis induced by the differing election cycles in various States and the Lok Sabha. He was answering questions by the members. As per sources, he argued that the **Model Code of Conduct will come into play whenever there are elections to the State Legislative Assemblies on premature dissolution**, therefore it defeats the purpose for which the legislation has been mooted.
- Mr. Chaudhary, the panel chairperson, told that the committee will now be meeting economists to evaluate the **financial implications** of the proposed legislation. **The government has argued that the legislation will significantly reduce expenditure.**

❖ States question Centre’s move seeking SC opinion to overrule ‘binding’ order

Context:

Two States, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, are asking whether the Centre, through the rare Presidential Reference mechanism, is egging the Supreme Court on to give an “opinion” which would overrule its own “binding” judgment.

- The States argue the judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case has comprehensively answered constitutional questions about the powers and discretion of the President and State Governors while approving, withholding or reserving assent to proposed State laws.
- On April 8, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by **Justice J.B. Pardiwala fixed three-month timelines for the President and the Governors to deal with State Bills under Article 200 and 201 of the Constitution.**
- The timelines were not an invention of the Supreme Court, something pulled out of thin air. They were based on twin Office Memorandums issued by the Home Ministry in February 2016 highlighting the problem of “undue delay” caused by the President and Governors in taking a final decision on State Bills. The States highlighted the fact that the Union government has not assailed the April 8 judgment in a review or a curative petition. This would necessarily mean the Centre has accepted the timelines. If so, what is the need for a Reference now, they ask.
- The Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai have agreed to give the two States first audience to argue the maintainability of the Presidential Reference on August 19.
- **A Reference made by the President to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution was contingent on the fact that ‘a question of law or fact has arisen, or is likely to arise’ and hence was not res integra (unsettled law). The States have argued that 11 of the 14 questions raised by the President in the reference have already been answered in the April 8 judgment.**
- Kerala and Tamil Nadu point out that the questions referred to the Supreme Court ex facie show that no question of law or fact had arisen, or was likely to arise. “As the very questions stand conclusively and

determinatively answered by the Supreme Court in the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment,” they point out.

- The States have urged the court to reject the Reference as a gambit by the Centre to overrule a judgment already delivered. They want the Reference to be returned unanswered. Besides, the two States have asked how an opinion of the court on a Presidential Reference could overrule a binding judgment. **A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the Ahmedabad St. Xavier’s College Society v. The State of Gujarat has held that a report made to the President in a reference was entitled to “great weight”, but could not supplant a judgment.**
- **The Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment was ‘law’ declared by the Supreme Court under Article 141, and binding upon the Council of Ministers. “An opinion rendered by the current Constitution Bench in its advisory jurisdiction under Article 143 cannot supplant or supersede or override such law, and being only an opinion, and not being law under Article 141, would not bind the President,” the States have argued.**
- Incidentally, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have criticised the Reference for “suppressing” the very existence of the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment of April 8. This alone, they say, was ground enough for the Constitution Bench of the court to reject the Reference.

❖ Governor can act independently: A-G

Context:

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani submitted before a five-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai that a Governor’s power to withhold assent to a proposed State legislation is an act independent of the Council of Ministers.

- He said a Governor, in such cases, acts outside the aid and advice of the Council, and even contrary to the mandate of the House/Council of Ministers. “A power to withhold necessarily involves personal independent judgment, guided by settled principles of laws,” he said.
- He referred to the post-1970s Constitutional Amendments which had modified the President’s duties but left the Governor’s role largely untouched. **“The 42nd Amendment made Article 74(1) explicit that the President ‘shall... act in accordance with’ the Cabinet advice. But Article 163 (Governors) was not amended to match Article 74,”** he said.
- He said that a Governor cannot be expected to be bound by the advice of the House if the proposed State law was found to be unconstitutional.

❖ Home Minister to introduce 3 Bills for removal of PM, CMs, Ministers held on serious criminal charges

Context:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to introduce three Bills in the Lok Sabha to provide legal framework for removal of the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Ministers in States and Union Territories who are “arrested and detained in custody on account of serious criminal charges”.

- The Bills say that the **Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Ministers of States and Union Territories who are arrested and detained in custody for 30 consecutive days on allegation of committing an offence punishable with imprisonment for five years or more, shall be removed from office by the 31st day by the President, Chief Minister (in case of State Ministers), Governor (for Chief Ministers) and Lieutenant-Governor (for Chief Minister in Union Territories).**
- The Bills say that **they could be subsequently reappointed on release from custody.**

- Mr. Shah wrote to the Lok Sabha office informing that the following three Bills be passed in the ongoing session — the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 2025.
- The statement of objects and reasons of the **Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill**, circulated among Lok Sabha members, said “the elected representatives represent hopes and aspirations of the people of India.
 - ✓ It is expected that they rise above political interests and act only in the public interest and for the welfare of people.
 - ✓ It is expected that the character and conduct of Ministers holding the office should be beyond any ray of suspicion.”
 - ✓ It said that a Minister, who is facing allegation of serious criminal offences, arrested and detained in custody, may thwart or hinder the canons of constitutional morality and principles of good governance and eventually diminish the constitutional trust reposed by people in him.
- “There is, however, **no provision under the Constitution for removal of a Minister who is arrested and detained in custody on account of serious criminal charges**. In view of the above, there is a need to amend Articles 75, 164 and 239AA of the Constitution, for providing legal framework for removal of the Prime Minister or a Minister in the Union Council of Ministers and the Chief Minister or a Minister in the Council of Ministers of States and the National Capital Territory of Delhi in such cases,” it said.
- The other two Bills define the process of removal of Chief Minister, Ministers in the Union Territory of Puducherry and J&K.

❖ Bill allowing leaseholders to mine rare minerals passed

Context:

The Rajya Sabha cleared the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill.

- The Bill, which the Lok Sabha had passed on August 12, **empowers the Union government to promote development of market, including trading of minerals and its forms through mineral exchanges**.
- It empowers mining leaseholders to add rare minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel to their existing operations without paying additional royalty.
- The Bill amends the original Act of 1957.

Huge demand

- The Centre has **identified 24 critical and strategic minerals and launched the National Critical Mineral Mission with an outlay of ₹34,000 crore to increase domestic production, including from offshore areas**.
- “India is a big market. From cellphones to airplanes, laptops to space technology, and even in the agriculture sector, critical minerals are required. There is a huge demand. Our challenge is to increase production,”.
- The National Mineral Exploration Trust will now be known as the **National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust**.

❖ No change in Taiwan policy, says India after China readout

Context:

The Union government stressed that it had not changed its policy on Taiwan after a Chinese Foreign Ministry readout claimed that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had, in his meeting with Chinese

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, said that Taiwan belonged to China. The readout, issued in Mandarin Chinese, was also released in English.

- The differences over the comment represented a prickly moment in an otherwise productive two-day visit by the Chinese Foreign Minister to India, his first since 2021. “Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that under the joint guidance of leaders of both countries, India-China relations have moved from the bottom and are continuously improving and developing, with exchanges and cooperation between the two sides across various fields moving toward normalisation,” the readout issued in Beijing said.
- “Stable, cooperative, and forward-looking India-China relations serve the interests of both countries. **Taiwan is part of China,**” the statement added.
- In a statement issued at the end of Mr. Wang’s visit, the External Affairs Ministry said the **Chinese side had “raised” the issue of Taiwan.** “**The Indian side underlined that there was no change in its position on this issue.**” “**It pointed out that, like the rest of the world, India had a relationship with Taiwan that focuses on economic, technological and cultural ties and that this would continue,**” the statement said, adding that China also cooperates with Taiwan in these very domains.

❖ ISRO moots heavy-lift rocket that can carry payload of 75,000 kg

Context:

More than four decades after developing the first indigenous launch vehicle SLV-3, capable of carrying a modest 35-kg payload, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is now aiming for a giant leap. The agency is conceiving an advanced heavy-lift rocket that can carry a 75,000 kg payload to space.

- “This rocket will be the height of a 40-storey building. We are also in the advanced development stages of Gaganyaan and its first unmanned mission is planned very shortly,” ISRO Chairman and Secretary, Department of Space, V. Narayanan.
- “Chandrayaan-4 programme is approved. The Bharathiya Anthariksh Station shall be a reality by 2035 for which the initial modules will start as early as 2027. An Indian must land on the moon and return safely by a fully indigenous moon mission by 2040.
- A Venus Orbiter Mission has also been approved and we shall be sending a spacecraft to study planet Venus. A heavy-lift Next Generation Launch Vehicle with recoverable first stage has also been approved.”

❖ ‘India eyes 10% global green hydrogen demand’

Context:

India aspires to capture 10% of the global demand for green hydrogen, which is expected to exceed 100 MMT by 2030, Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy said. The goal is to make India a major producer of green hydrogen and a global hub for its export.

- This would need India to continue innovating to ‘strengthen certification and trading mechanism(s), ensure offtake certainty and unlock green finance via viability gap funding, green bonds and multilateral bank support.’”

❖ CM announces permanent SC panel

Context:

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a permanent commission for Scheduled Castes to review the categorisation from time to time, based on the mobility of castes within it and available data.

- Currently, a similar commission for Backward Classes functions in the State.
- The Chief Minister made the announcement in the legislature while making a statement on the international reservation cleared by the Cabinet.
- Defending the Cabinet decision to bring down the number of categories to three from the recommended five, by merging two categories, Mr. Siddaramaiah told the Legislative Assembly that the decision was to ensure social justice and equality among the Scheduled Castes in education, public employment, etc.
- He said that while the government has decided to withdraw cases against those activists who fought for internal reservation, the Chief Minister also announced that the recruitment process, which has been stopped, will be restarted, and a one-time age relaxation for the eligibility criteria will be given.
- Stating that the guidelines set by the order of the Supreme Court, which enabled States to implement internal reservation, have been followed, he said that the State government is committed to bringing changes in the categories based on the data that will come out as part of the General Census.
- “I am happy to present the report of the commission headed by H.N. Nagamohan Das, which has been modified and accepted by the government. We believe that our decision has brought justice to a decades-long struggle. Our government has proved that Karnataka, which is a developed State, is in the forefront of social justice.”
- Instead of five categories of A, B, C, D and E recommended by the commission, the Chief Minister said that the government has decided to have Category ‘A’ for Dalit Left (Madigas) with 6%, Category ‘B’ for Dalit Right (Holeyas) with 6% and Category ‘C’ for ‘touchables’ (Lambani, Bhovi, Korma, Korcha and 59 microscopic communities) with 5%.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah said that after identifying that the commission had brought Paraya, Mogera and other castes related to the Dalit Right group with the Dalit Left group, the government had decided to bring them with the Dalit Right and increase the quota for the Dalit Right to 6% (the commission had recommended 5%).
- The population of 4.74 lakh identified as Adi Dravida, Adi Karnataka and Adi Andhra will be equally divided between the Dalit Left and Dalit Right categories, he added.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah said that a population of 5.22 lakh belonging to 59 castes, which was given 1% under Category ‘A’, has been grouped with ‘touchable’ castes that the commission has given a 4% quota due to technical reasons, and the quota for this has been raised to 5%.

❖ Are elected govts. at mercy of Governors’ fancies: SC to Centre

Context:

The Supreme Court asked the Centre if elected State governments were at the mercy of the whims and fancies of Governors, who could fail Bills by merely withholding assent.

- A Presidential Reference Bench headed by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai was examining a submission by the Centre, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta and advocate Kanu Agarwal, that State Bills would lapse if Governors withheld assent to proposed laws presented to them for approval under Article 200 of the Constitution.

- “So, are Governors being given total powers to sit in appeal over the elected representatives? This way, if Bills are failed by Governors, governments formed by majority will be at the mercy of their whims and fancies,” Chief Justice Gavai quizzed Mr. Mehta’s interpretation of Article 200.
- Mr. Mehta said the power of a Governor to withhold assent was meant to be used sparingly, especially when a State Bill frustrated the very democratic will of the nation, or violated fundamental rights.
- Senior advocate Kapil Sibal interjected to point out that if a Governor had the power to lapse a Bill by withholding assent, the same logic would apply to the President of India under Article 111.
- “The President can also withhold and fail Bills passed in Parliament,” Mr. Sibal submitted.

Governor’s options

- The Solicitor General argued that a Governor had “four” options under Article 200. Besides the options of granting assent to the Bill, withholding assent to the Bill due to which the proposed law lapses, and reserving the Bill for consideration to the President in the substantive part of the Constitutional provision, the proviso to the Article allowed the Governor to exercise a “fourth” option, that is, to return the Bill to the State Legislative Assembly. If the Assembly re-passed the Bill, the Governor would be bound to grant assent, the law officer contended. In such cases, the Governor could not withhold the Bill, though he could refer it to the President on the ground of repugnancy.
- High Constitutional authorities, including the President and Governors, were presumed to act within the law and uphold the dignity of their offices, Mr. Mehta said.
- Governors were not “nobodies”, he submitted. They were representatives of the President, who was bound by the aid and advice of the Union Cabinet, which represented the interests of the nation. “Governorship is not a sanctum for retired politicians,” Mr. Mehta said.
- But the Chief Justice asked the Solicitor General whether, over the years, the expectations of the Founding Fathers and Mothers regarding these Constitutional functionaries had actually been fulfilled.
- “Governors and the elected Ministers of the States are expected to function in harmony, are they?” the Chief Justice queried.
- Justice Narasimha reasoned that Constitutional interpretation by courts could not be idealistic. Judicial review had to take into account the present-day realities. Governors and Speakers were idealistically considered high offices, presumed to function within the law, but the flood of litigation said otherwise.
- The judge referred to the cases filed in the apex court under the anti-defection law (the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution).
- The Tenth Schedule was introduced with the best intentions and with ideal expectations about the high office of the Speaker, Justice Narasimha said. But views had changed over the years. “Constitutional interpretation cannot be static,” Justice Narasimha observed.
- The Chief Justice said the outcome of the litigation in many Tenth Schedule cases had been “operation success, patient dead”.
- Mr. Mehta enumerated instances when Governors were not bound by the aid and advice of the State Cabinet. One of these instances was the Governor’s application of discretion to decide which party or political front had a majority to form a government in a State.
- “We have seen how, in some cases, the Governors have exercised their discretion and end up in litigation in the apex court,” the CJI responded.
- The Solicitor General dismissed them as “aberrations”. It was “hazardous to interpret the Constitution based on aberrations”, Mr. Mehta said.

❖ Bengaluru Urban among top districts with high PM2.5 emissions from DG sets

Context:

Bengaluru Urban ranks among the top districts in the country to have the highest PM2.5 emissions from almost all categories of diesel generator (DG) sets and the highest total PM2.5 emissions from all types of DG sets.

- According to findings of a report, “Switch on, Smoke off: Reducing Emissions from Diesel Generator Set” released by Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Patna (Bihar), Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), Bengaluru Urban (Karnataka), Mumbai city (Maharashtra), and North 24 Parganas (West Bengal) have the highest PM2.5 emissions from almost all categories of DG sets and the highest total PM2.5 emissions from all types of DG sets.
- As per the ranking of different districts based on PM2.5 emissions from different categories of DG sets, Bengaluru Urban ranks third among the top 10 districts in the 5–75 kVA (kilovolt-amperes) category.
- In the 76–375 kVA category, it ranks second, in the 376–750 kVA and above 750 kVA categories, Bengaluru Urban ranks third and sixth, respectively. The only other district from Karnataka to feature in this list is Belagavi, ranked 10th in the 76–375 kVA category.

Frequent power cuts

- The report further stated that many districts in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Maharashtra show high PM2.5 emissions, driven by high installed capacities of DG sets and frequent power cuts.
- “DG sets, used for power backup across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, are prominent hyperlocal sources of air and noise pollution throughout India. The current study estimated that a total of 14.7 lakh DG sets, with a capacity of over 5 kVA and a cumulative capacity of 2,72,576 MVA, were operational in India in 2022,” said the report.
- It further said that these DG sets contributed to 42 Gg of particulate matter, 23 Gg of black carbon, and 877 Gg of nitrogen oxides (NOX) in India. “Additionally, older and poorly maintained DG sets tend to emit significantly more than regular ones and were termed as super-emitters in this study,” the report states.
- The report said that based on the procured data, it was found that DG sets are most commonly used in commercial (40%) and industrial (34%) sectors. “In the commercial sector, DG sets are used in retail establishments (25%), telecom towers (15%), hotels (15%), offices (15%), and hospitals (10%). In the industrial sector, DG sets are primarily used in manufacturing industries (74%),” it said.

❖ Crowd control Bill tabled in Assembly

Context:

Following the stampede during the RCB’s victory celebrations that claimed 11 lives in Bengaluru, the Karnataka government brought out Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Place of Gathering) Bill that prescribes steps to effectively control the crowd and manage mass gatherings at programmes to prevent unlawful gatherings, and also to make provisions for punishment to offenders.

- The Bill, which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday by Home Minister G. Parameshwara, prescribes imprisonment of three to seven years and a penalty of up to ₹1 crore or both for those organising events without permission from relevant authorities.
- Whoever disturbs or attempts to disturb the orderly crowd in any event by way of creating rumours, false statements, acts or causing any breach of peace including a threat of collective violence, destruction of property or other unlawful acts shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with a fine of ₹50,000 or both, according to the provisions of the Bill.

- Similarly, whoever causes or becomes a reason for a crowd disaster will be liable for imprisonment of three to seven years with respect to injuries and to a sentence of 10 years to life in case of fatalities, states the bill.
- Offences under the proposed legislation are cognisable, non-bailable and triable by first class judicial magistrate .
- If there is damage to any property, both private and public, the organisers are liable to compensate for the loss as calculated by the trial court. Whoever wants to organise any event will have to obtain permission from the officer in charge of the police station when the crowd is less than 7,000; jurisdictional Dy. SP when the crowd is more than 7,000 but less than 50,000, and from the jurisdictional SP or the Commissioner of Police when the crowd is more than 50,000.

❖ ‘U.S. curbs on India aimed at ending the Ukraine war’

Context:

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on India to bring an end to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt has said.

- Mr. Trump has imposed tariffs totalling 50% on India, including 25% for Delhi’s purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27.
- Replying to a question at a press briefing on Tuesday, Ms. Leavitt said that Mr. Trump has put “tremendous public pressure” to bring the nearly four-year war “to a close”.
- “He has taken actions, as you have seen, sanctions on India and other actions as well. He has made himself very clear that he wants to see this war end,” she said.
- Meanwhile, Ms. Leavitt once again claimed that Mr. Trump had ended the military conflict between India and Pakistan.

❖ In Moscow, Jaishankar flags challenges that tariffs pose to India-Russia trade

Context:

In the backdrop of U.S. President Donald Trump’s imposition of penalty tariffs on India, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Moscow raised the challenge posed by “tariff and non-tariff trade barriers” against Russia-India trade and called for the “early conclusion” of a Free Trade Agreement between India and the countries of the Eurasian region.

- Mr. Jaishankar made the remarks during the 26th Session of the India-Russia Inter-Government Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) where the Russian side was being led by First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Denis Manturov.
- Delivering his opening remarks, Mr. Jaishankar said some of the main issues before the IRIGC-TEC were “tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, removing bottlenecks in logistics, promoting connectivity, and effecting payment mechanisms smoothly”.

Free trade pact

- He said in Moscow also finalised the terms of reference of the India-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement of which Russia has been a leading proponent as it aims at removing obstacles for overland trade among Russia, China, India and the Central Asian countries.
- “...We are all acutely aware that we are meeting in the backdrop of a complex geopolitical situation. Our leaders remain closely and regularly engaged,” Mr. Jaishankar said indirectly referring to the trade-related anxieties in India-U.S. relations.

- India's trade with Russia grew from \$13 billion in 2021 to \$68 billion in 2024-25. The bulk of this trade is in hydrocarbon that Russia supplies to India.

❖ Russia welcomes Wang Yi's visit and the positive turn in India-China ties

Context:

Russia has welcomed Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to India and the positive turn in India-China relations. Addressing a press meeting at the Russian Embassy, senior Russian diplomats further said that India-Russia energy trade has not been impacted by U.S. President Trump's penalty tariffs targeting India, and that Russia currently supplied more than 40% of India's total crude oil.

- They also said that Russia would step up cooperation in India's defence sector and participate in the development of jet engines and the multi-layered air-defence system – Sudarshan Chakra.
- "We welcome the very successful visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi," said Roman Babushkin, Chargé d'affaires at the Russian Embassy, highlighting the need for stronger ties among members of the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- The senior Russian official, accompanied by Russia's Deputy Trade Commissioner in India, Evgeny Griva, said that BRICS member countries can come up with a collective response to the tariffs imposed by Mr. Trump.

❖ India successfully tests Agni-5 missile

Context:

India successfully test-fired its intermediate-range ballistic missile Agni-5 from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.

- In a statement, the Defence Ministry said the launch validated all operational and technical parameters and was conducted under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command. "The intermediate-range ballistic missile Agni-5 was successfully test-fired from Chandipur on August 20. The launch validated all operational and technical parameters," the Ministry said.
- The missile tested was a variant of Agni-5, India's indigenously developed intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of 5,000 km. Designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the system has been developed keeping in view the country's long-term security requirements.
- The previous trial of Agni-5 was conducted on March 11, 2024, when the DRDO successfully tested the missile equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle technology, allowing it to strike multiple targets with a single launch.

❖ Union govt. approves renaming of U.P.'s Jalalabad

Context: The Union Home Ministry approved the renaming of Jalalabad in Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh to Parashurampuri.

- The Centre asked the State government to notify the new name, Parashurampuri, by registering it in Devanagari and Roman scripts, and in all regional languages.
- The Uttar Pradesh government, in a letter to the Home Ministry, had said that Jalalabad was known as the birthplace of Parashuram, the saint, and houses an ancient temple dedicated to him. The Jalalabad municipal board had passed a resolution to rename it after Parashuram.

❖ Lok Sabha clears Bill that bans real money gaming

Context:

The Lok Sabha passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, by a voice vote.

- The Bill seeks “to prohibit the offering, operation, facilitation, advertisement, promotion and participation in online money games”, targeting firms that offer fantasy sports and card games where users can deposit and risk money.

- Speaker Om Birla urged MPs to unite around the Bill and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav referred to cross-party support for the goal of the proposed law. “This is a good Bill. We are seeing suicides and families getting destroyed every day [due to these platforms] ... Bringing such a Bill is in the national interest,” Mr. Birla said.

- “[T]he lack of a coherent and enabling legal framework has hindered the sector’s structured development and the promotion of responsible gaming practices, requiring urgent policy intervention and support mechanisms,” the Bill’s introduction said. The Bill provides for the creation of an authority that will promote e-sports, which the government is keen to develop as a creative and recreational industry. “[T]he parallel proliferation of online money games ... offering monetary returns against user deposits has led to serious social, financial, psychological and public health harms...,” it added.

- “Online money games have become a matter of great concern in our society,” Mr. Vaishnav said. “Many people get addicted, lifetime savings evaporate in games, and with the algorithms in use, there may be untold levels of fraud and cheating,” he added.

- The Bill was not released in draft form for consultation. Mr. Vaishnav said it did not make sense to open a prohibition law up for consultation and pointed out that the government had been engaging with the real money gaming industry for years. “There is political unanimity on the problem of online money gaming,” he said. “A political call had to be taken on what had to be done,” Union IT Secretary S. Krishnan told The Hindu. “The industry has been saying that they wanted clarity on how they should be regulated... So that clarity has been provided.”

- The Bill may face pushback from the industry. “If passed in its current form, the Bill is likely to face a constitutional challenge on grounds of trade restriction and legislative competence,” Vidushpat Singhania, managing partner at Krida Legal, said.

Sweeping measures

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025 prohibits offering, operation, facilitation, advertisement, promotion and participation in online money games

- ‘Real money gaming’ refers to platforms such as Dream11 and PokerBaazi where players risk their money for winnings

- The industry has argued that fantasy games are those of ‘skill’ and cannot be regulated by States as gambling

- The Bill makes the distinction between games of chance and skill irrelevant, as it seeks to ban all “online money gaming”

- The industry says it has annual revenues exceeding ₹31,000 crores and that it employs over two lakh people

PUNISHMENTS

- The Bill proposes imprisonment up to three years and/or fine of up to ₹1 crore for entities offering or facilitating online money gaming

- The Bill also seeks to prohibit advertisement related to online money games and bars banks and financial institutions from transferring funds for any of such games

- Advertising can attract imprisonment up to two years and/or fine up to ₹50 lakh. Facilitating financial transactions can lead to imprisonment up to three years and/or fine up to ₹1 crore

❖ Uttarakhand House passes controversial Bills amid din

Context:

The Uttarakhand Assembly cleared nine Bills amid uproar on Wednesday, including amendments to controversial Bills on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and religious conversion, and an equally controversial legislation related to minority education.

- Among the Bills was the Uniform Civil Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which increases punishments with regard to illegal live-in relationships.
- The amendment to Section 380(2) says a married person entering a live-in relationship can be punished with jail term of up to seven years and a fine.

- The government has also amended sub-sections of Section 387 which now says getting into a relationship by force, pressure or fraud will attract imprisonment of up to seven years.

Anti-conversion Bill

- The Freedom of Religion and Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion (Amendment) Bill, 2025 allows jail terms ranging from three years to life for persons found guilty of “forced conversions”.
- Previously, the maximum jail term for a “forced conversion” was 10 years. Accused can also be booked for “false promises of marriage” under the Bill. Hiding one’s religion with the intention of marriage will attract imprisonment of three to 10 years, and a fine of ₹3 lakh.
- The government faced maximum opposition when passing the Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2025, which extends benefits of minority status to educational institutions of Sikh, Jain, Christian, Parsi, and Buddhist communities.
- With the passage of the Bill, all madrasas running in the State will have to seek affiliation from the Uttarakhand Education Board by July 1, 2026, and then apply for minority status with the Uttarakhand State Authority for Minority Education.
- Only if necessary conditions are fulfilled will the institutions be granted minority educational status and unrecognised madrasas will be shut down.

❖ Global solar alliance plans to establish research hub in India

Context:

By the end of the year, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) will set up 17 centres of excellence in as many countries, and going ahead, establish a Global Capability Centre (GCC) in India, akin to a “Silicon Valley for solar”, Ashish Khanna, director general, ISA.

- These 17 centres, which Mr. Khanna did not disclose, will provide testing, lab training, and a “start-up ecosystem” in “Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-like” universities, and the GCC would act as a “hub” connecting all these centres, Mr. Khanna said at an event organised by think tank The Energy and Resources Institute, adding, “Those 17 could soon rise to 50 as several countries are looking to India to improve their human capability.”
- **The ISA is a collaborative body set up by India and France, conceptualised on the sidelines of the climate Conference of Parties in 2015 in Paris. It is headquartered in Gurugram, Haryana, and has a membership of around 100 countries.**
- “Several countries are looking to engineers from India to supply the vital human capital necessary to implement solar projects. This includes digital tenders, operation and maintenance and all the reskilling that is needed in the world,” he added.
- **India has cumulatively installed about 119 gigawatts (GW) of solar capacity as of July 2025, according to official estimates.**

❖ Terms of Reference signed to begin India- Eurasia trade deal

Context:

India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic, on Wednesday signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) to begin negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the Indian government announced.

- This comes amid pressure from the U.S. — in the form of additional tariffs on imports from India — to reduce its economic ties with Russia.

- The ToR were signed by Ajay Bhadoo, additional secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India and Mikhail Cherekaev, deputy director, Trade Policy Department, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC).
- “Both sides noted the growing trade turnover between India and the EAEU, at \$69 billion in 2024, registering a 7% increase over 2023,” a Ministry of Commerce and Industry release said. The combined GDP of the region was \$6.5 tn, it added.

❖ Aadhaar to be used for Starlink KYC, says UIDAI

Context: SpaceX’s satellite internet service Starlink will use Aadhaar to validate Indian users under Know-Your-Customer rules (KYC), the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) announced.

- The Elon Musk-owned service has already obtained orbital slot appointments from the Department of Telecommunications but is yet to roll out.
- Parnil Urdhwarshhe, Director at Starlink India, was with UIDAI CEO Bhunesh Kumar, where Starlink officially registered as a Sub-Authentication User Agency and Sub-eKYC user agency, allowing it to accept Aadhaar details from customers for the purpose of authenticating them.

❖ Should SC sit powerless as Governors block Bills: CJI

Context: Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai asked the Union government if the Supreme Court is supposed to suspend its role as the “custodian of the Constitution” and sit powerless while Governors make competent State legislatures defunct and thwart the democratic will of the people by sitting on Bills for years together.

- The Chief Justice, heading a Presidential Reference Bench of five judges, referred to how the Tamil Nadu Governor had kept crucial State Bills pending for almost four years without a word explaining why.
- The oral observations from the Chief Justice came in response to Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta’s submissions for the Union government that the top court, through its April 8 judgment, had encroached into the terrain of law-making and slighted high Constitutional authorities like the Governors and the President by imposing time limits on them.
- Mr. Mehta said that inaction on the part of a Constitutional authority like the Governor was better addressed in the political sphere. The Supreme Court was not the only problem-solver in the country. Every problem cannot be resolved through a judicial order, he said.
- The Solicitor-General said the court should stick to its rule declared in the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) judgment that each organ of governance — the legislature, executive, and judiciary — must stick to its turf.
- “We do not intend to micro-manage the government. We will never interfere. But suppose, if a particular function is entrusted to the Governor, and for years together he withholds a Bill, will that also be beyond the power of judicial review of this court... **When this Court has in the past set aside the very Constitutional Amendment [The Forty-second Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976], which had limited the power of judicial review as a violation of the Basic Structure, can we say this court is now powerless?**” CJI Gavai asked Mr. Mehta.
- The Solicitor General responded that time limits may apply to statutory authorities like a District Collector, but not to Constitutional powers like the President and Governors. He said a **Governor’s position was sui generis, as they are appointed by the Union government but are also an integral part of the State legislature.**

- The law officer said there may be several reasons, at times political or democratic, for a Governor to delay assent to a State Bill. How could the Supreme Court step in and prescribe deadlines when none exist in the Constitution, he asked.

‘In vacuum’

- Justice P.S. Narasimha said State Bills would be left hanging in vacuum if no outer time limits were set for the Governor to grant assent.
- **“Though you cannot specify a time limit, but, at the same time, there should be some way by which the process [of assenting to Bills] works. Can it be a situation when it means ‘full stop’ if the Governor chooses to not act on a Bill... there is nothing further?”** Justice Narasimha asked.
- Mr. Mehta responded that only “two or three States” have come to the Supreme Court complaining of their Governors. There was no flood of litigation against Governors.
- To this, Justice Surya Kant observed that Governors’ decisions to act or not act varied from State to State. He asked whether the Centre was shutting off aggrieved States from approaching the court against gubernatorial inaction.
- Justice Narasimha said seeking a solution in the political sphere each time would result in a logjam. The Solicitor replied that issues like delays in assenting to Bills were not solvable by the court. The solution lay in the political sphere where elected representatives were answerable to the people, at least every five years.
- “But the Governor is not answerable to the people,” the CJI pointed out.

❖ Simplified two-rate GST structure gets GoM’s nod

Context: The Group of Ministers (GoM) on Rate Rationalisation, formed by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, has decided to accept the Centre’s two-rate structure proposal for GST and will be recommending this to the GST Council, the GoM chairperson and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary.

- This is the first of two steps the proposals must pass before implementation. The second step would be for the GST Council to accept the changes.
- “It was the Centre’s proposal to end two slabs of GST, the 12% and 28% slabs,” Mr. Choudhary told reporters. “We discussed that proposal and have supported it. We have recommended it, and now the GST Council will decide on this.”
- The Centre has not announced the date of the next GST Council meeting, although it is expected to take place in early September.
- Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal, a member of the GoM, said the proposal from the Union government was not discussed in detail by the GoM.
- “The discussion should happen within the GST Council, and the Council will take a final decision. The GoM has forwarded the proposal of the Centre with some observations that it should discuss the possibility of loss in revenue for the States too. We have suggested that there should be a mechanism to compensate the States,” Mr. Balagopal said.

Effective rate

After the rationalisation, the weighted average GST rate (effective rate) is expected to decline from the notional rate of 14.4% in May 2017 to 9.5% in FY26-27*, according to the SBI Research

May 2017	14.4%
Nov. 2017	12.6%
Jan. 2018	12.2%
July 2018	11.8%
Dec. 2018	11.6%
Sept. 2019	11.6%
FY26-27	9.5%*

* based on SBI estimates



- In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the “next-generation GST reforms” would be a “Deepavali gift” from the Centre. The reforms will bring down the “tax burden on the common man”, he added.
- **The Centre’s proposal involves retaining just the 5% and 18% slabs in the current GST structure and doing away with the 12% and 28% slabs. This would entail 99% of the items in the 12% slab moving to 5%, and 90% of the items in the 28% slab moving to 18%.**
- The remaining items in the 28% slab — comprising ‘sin’ goods and services such as tobacco, cigarettes, and online real-money gaming — would be moved to a higher 40% slab. However, the compensation cess currently being levied on the items in the 28% slab would no longer apply.

❖ U.S. asked India to buy oil from Russia, says Jaishankar in Moscow

Context: The United States asked India to do “everything to stabilise” global energy market “including buying oil from Russia” and the latest U.S. accusations have “perplexed” India, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Moscow, defending New Delhi’s energy policy as India deals with the aftermath of penalty tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

- Mr. Jaishankar met President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and highlighted India’s plans to access Russian market and called for fast processing of cases of Indians who were fraudulently recruited to fight for Russian Army in Ukraine.
- “We are a country where the Americans have said for the last few years that we should do everything to stabilise the world energy market, including buying oil from Russia. Incidentally, we also buy oil from the U.S., and that amount has increased,” he said. “So honestly, we are very perplexed.”
- Mr. Jaishankar is the second high official from the Indian side to receive an audience with Mr. Putin this month. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had met Mr. Putin on August 7 as trade ties between India and the United States were hit with uncertainties after Mr. Trump imposed additional sanctions on India citing expanding energy trade between India and Russia.
- Earlier in the day, Mr. Jaishankar met Mr. Lavrov, where he raised a number of issues including the necessity to focus on infrastructure and logistics to enhance overland and maritime connectivity between India and Russia and termed the ties between the two countries “among the steadiest of the major relationships in the world after the Second World War”. He identified sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture and textiles as areas where India can enhance exports to Russia and help in correcting the imbalance that exists in India-Russia trade.
- Mr. Jaishankar also took up the opening of two new Indian consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg that will increase people-to-people ties and help in recruiting Indian manpower for Russian industrial sectors that are facing labour crunch in recent years. He also stressed on the urgency to take up the issue of Indians who were fraudulently recruited by transnational trafficking agents to fight in Ukraine.

❖ Assam to stop issuing first-time Aadhaar to adults from Oct.: CM

Context: From October, people above 18 years of age will not get first-time Aadhaar cards in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said after a Cabinet meeting.

- He said the Cabinet approved the notification of a revised standard operating procedure as a precautionary measure to eliminate or reduce the chances of illegal immigrants, specifically from Bangladesh, getting hold of Aadhaar cards in a bid to get Indian citizenship.
- However, this rule will be relaxed for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people and tea garden workers for a year from the implementation of a notification from the first week of October.

- “We have been intercepting Bangladeshi nationals continuously over a year, with seven of them pushed back yesterday [Wednesday]. We are not sure if we succeed 100% in catching such people, but we want to ensure no one can enter Assam with an Aadhaar card in hand,” the Chief Minister said.
- He insisted that the decision is part of State’s bid to prevent people from getting citizenship illegally.
- “Aadhaar saturation in Assam is 103%, which means no one beyond 18 years is left out except in the case of the SC, ST, and tea garden (Adivasi) people. Adults from other castes, left out in the rarest of rare cases, can apply to the District Commissioner concerned for Aadhaar enrolment by September,” Mr. Sarma said.
- The Deputy Commissioner will have to run such applications through the Special Branch of the State police, Foreigners’ Tribunals, and other agencies to verify if the applicants are genuine citizens.

❖ Council clears 1% fire cess on high-rise buildings

Context: The Legislative Council on Thursday adopted the Karnataka Fire Force (Amendment) Bill, 2025, enabling the State government to levy a 1% fire cess on the property tax of newly constructed high-rise buildings.

- Introducing the Bill, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said the move is aimed at strengthening the efficiency of the Fire and Emergency Services Department.
- “This step was necessitated after the Comptroller and Auditor General of India wrote six letters over the last four years urging the State to implement such a cess,” he said.
- The cess will apply only to buildings taller than 21 metres, and will not be levied on buildings owned by the State and the Central governments, or other public authorities.
- Residential buildings taller than the specified height will also come under its ambit, though separate rules will govern schools and colleges, he said.
- Members argued that the cess would disproportionately impact residents of Bengaluru, where most of the State’s high-rises are located.
- They said citizens are already burdened by price rise and multiple taxes. They described the cess as a form of “tax assault” and urged the government to focus on modernising Fire and Emergency Services.
- Dismissing these concerns, the Home Minister said citizens were overburdened due to the high GST rates on commodities.

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❖ Crowd control Bill referred to House panel after Opposition seeks clarity

Context: The Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Places of Gathering) Bill, 2025, drafted following the stampede near M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on June 4 during RCB victory celebrations and introduced in the Legislative Assembly, was referred to a House committee.

- The Bill seeks to hold event organisers responsible for any mishaps and ensure that an event in which 7,000 people gather gets police permission. Organisers should apply for permission 10 days before the event, it says. It also requires organisers to execute an indemnity bond of ₹1 crore.
- The Bill prescribes imprisonment of three to seven years and a penalty of up to ₹1 crore or both for those organising events without permission. Offences under the proposed legislation are cognisable, non-bailable and triable by a first-class judicial magistrate.

The exemptions

- Home Minister G. Parameshwara sought to clarify that family functions or events, such as marriages, mass marriages, religious events, government events and student protests within the university campus will be exempted from the proposed legislation.
- However, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok said the Bill has many sensitive issues and drawbacks. The Bill should clearly divide commercial events, such as the one involving RCB and musical nights, and non-commercial events, such as festivals or farmers' protests.

❖ State ranks ninth in country for groundwater depletion

Context: The groundwater levels in Karnataka are falling steadily, and the State now ranks ninth in the country in terms of water depletion, noted Minor Irrigation Minister N.S. Boseraju, even as the Legislative Council passed the Karnataka Groundwater (Regulation and Control of Development and Management) (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

- The Bill aims to check the year-on-year depletion of groundwater levels and to increase the availability of groundwater. The Bill makes it mandatory to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for digging borewells in notified areas. It also proposes levying charges for groundwater extraction, along with several other regulatory measures.
- He noted that the Bill is being brought in line with directions from the Central government, and similar legislation has already been implemented in 15 other States.
- The Bill offers exemption from obtaining NOCs for borewells drilled for domestic use, rural drinking water schemes, and those drilled exclusively for drinking water purposes by urban and rural defence establishments, and institutions of the armed forces.
- However, large-scale water supply users will be charged appropriately depending on the quantum of groundwater drawn. While industries, mining, infrastructure projects, residential apartments, and housing societies are exempted from obtaining NOCs, the law specifies the daily limits on the amount of groundwater they may extract.
- Members, cutting across parties, urged the government to take steps not only to reduce groundwater usage but also to augment recharge.

❖ Bill passed to seize properties derived from illegal mining

Context: The Legislative Assembly passed the Karnataka Appointment of Recovery Commissioner for Seizure and Attachment of Property of Illegal Mining and Proceeds of Crime Bill, 2025, which seeks to appoint a recovery commissioner to seize and attach properties derived from illegal mining activities.

- The Bill said a serving or retired officer, not below the rank of Additional Chief Secretary, would be appointed as the recovery commissioner to supervise recovery proceedings.

Recovery Commissioner

- The Bill said the recovery commissioner shall issue directions to subordinate officers for the timely enforcement of attachment or forfeiture orders, receive complaints from individuals, and recommend further legal or criminal action where necessary. The Bill also provides the recovery commissioner with powers similar to those of a civil court, and ensures that officers cannot be prosecuted for acts done in good faith.

Shepards' welfare

- The House passed the Karnataka Traditional Migratory Shepherds (Welfare Measures and Protection Against Atrocities) Bill, 2025, for registration and identification of traditional migratory shepherds and to establish a fund for implementing welfare schemes for shepherds.

Bill passed again

- After the defeat in the Legislative Council on Wednesday, the Karnataka Souharda Sahakari (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was passed in the Assembly again on Thursday.

❖ Only 18% trained candidates got jobs under Skill Mission against mandated 70%: CAG

Context: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India report said that only 18% of the trained candidates under the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation (KSDC) secured placements post-training, falling far short of the mandated 70%.

- The Skill Mission was unrealistic in its target during 2017-23, and only 1,15,822 individuals were trained against the target of five lakh youth per year during 2017-2023, the report said.
- A flagship training scheme of the Department of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, it was launched in 2017 to train five lakh youth annually.
- The report tabled in the Legislative Assembly said the mission could not effectively utilise the available funds during the first three years, and there was a lapse of ₹173.35 crore. The release of funds totalling ₹341.11 crore without the formulation of a need-based action plan resulted in an unspent balance of ₹119.89 crore, lying with the agencies.
- There were instances of diversion of funds ₹7.56 crore and excess release of funds ₹12.98 crore.
- The registration of the number of SC and ST candidates was significantly below the mandated 20% and 7% in 88 training centres, it said.
- There was a noticeable regional disparity in the implementation of training programmes by the Skill Mission in Bengaluru Rural, Kolar and Uttara Kannada districts. The proportion of candidates trained amounted to less than 1% of the total trained in all districts over five years, it said.
- The Karnataka State Unorganised Workers' Social Security Board was formed in 2009 for implementing schemes for different sections of the unorganised sector workers.
- The board has retained over ₹97 crore in unutilised funds. The board has collected data on drivers, conductors, and cleaners of commercial vehicles, thus limiting the reach of the welfare schemes to workers in these categories, the report said.
- With regard to the Karnataka Labour Welfare Board (KLWB) established in 1969 under the Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1965, the Board received ₹279.98 crore during 2018-23, but it spent only ₹41.84 crore towards welfare schemes of labourers, the CAG said.

❖ Ensure universal registration of births, deaths: RGI to States

Context: The Registrar General of India (RGI) asked States to take steps towards achieving universal registration of births and deaths. Officials were told that following the directives of the Supreme Court, all government hospitals have been declared “registrars” of births and deaths.

- Hospitals have to report the event within 21 days. If the event has taken place in a hospital, a medical officer in-charge is required to report it under Section 8(1)(B) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, officials were told at a conference.
- The Act, which was amended in 2023, makes online registration of births and deaths compulsory on the RGI portal. Earlier, States maintained their own database and shared statistics with the RGI office that functions under the Union Home Ministry. The database with the RGI can be used to update electoral rolls, National Population Register (NPR), and ration cards.
- From October 1, 2023, the digital birth certificate is the single document to prove the date of birth for various services such as admission to educational institutions, government jobs and marriage registration among others.
- The efforts of State governments in achieving significant progress in birth and death registration were acknowledged, the RGI said in a post on X.

❖ Notices issued informing voters that Aadhaar can be submitted with claims: EC

Context: The Election Commission (EC) informed the Supreme Court that its public notices have expressly mentioned that copies of Aadhaar cards can be submitted along with their claims by voters aggrieved by non-inclusion in the draft Bihar electoral rolls.

- The application filed by the EC seeking to place on record a status report follows an interim order passed by a Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant on August 14 directing the poll panel to publish an enumerated, booth-wise list of 65 lakh electors not included in the draft electoral rolls during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in poll-bound Bihar.
- The EC said the list of names and details of 65 lakh electors in Bihar who were not included in the draft rolls published on August 1 had been posted on the websites of all 38 District Electoral Officers in the State. The list also contained the reasons for their non-inclusion, including death, shifting of ordinary residence or duplicate entries.
- Physical copies of the list have been displayed in panchayat bhavans, block development offices and panchayat offices in villages across Bihar for people to easily access them and enable enquiry.
- The EC said advertisements about the online availability of the lists had been issued in major newspapers and posted on social media.

Right to know

- The court upheld the Bihar voters’ “right to know” and to preserve their Constitutional 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 in the public domain for all to see,” the Court had addressed the EC.
- The 65 lakh names were dropped from the draft rolls despite the fact that their names had featured in the voters’ list prepared after a summary revision, merely months ago, in January 2025.

Context: The Supreme Court directed political parties contesting the Bihar Assembly election to help the Election Commission (EC) bring back voters left out of the draft electoral roll published as part of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) exercise.

- A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi directed State party chiefs to instruct their booth level agents to assist excluded voters file their claims and objections for inclusion in the rolls.
- The court order conveyed a sense of urgency, with barely over a week left before the claims-and-objections stage of the SIR ends on September 1.
- The court clarified that voters can file their claims and objections online in a bid to save time. **Excluded voters can either attach their Aadhaar card, as permitted by the SC, or any of the 11 indicative documents listed by the EC, as proof of identity and residence, with their claims.**
- Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the RJD, urged the court to extend the deadline beyond September 1. Justice Kant asked the EC to “examine” this aspect if there was an “overwhelming response” from excluded voters.
- Justice Bagchi remarked that with the inclusion of Aadhaar as a relevant document in the claims-and-objections stage, the EC may need more time to complete the verification of the pleas filed for inclusion in the electoral roll.
- At one point, the court seemed to blame the political parties for not taking the initiative to assist the voters, and for bringing things to such a pass at the eleventh hour.
- “We are surprised why the parties are not doing anything. Political workers are the best persons in rural areas and villages. Why is there a distance between the people and the local political workers?” Justice Kant asked.
- The EC, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, criticised political parties for taking a contrarian view about the SIR. He assured the court that no eligible voter would be left out of the electoral process.
- “Political parties have 1.6 lakh BLAs. Each BLA can verify 10 excluded names on the list. That would be 16 lakh names a day. It will take only five days for BLAs to verify the list. This is in addition to individual excluded voters also coming forward to file claims,” Mr. Dwivedi said, conveying the EC’s optimism in court.

84,305 claims so far

- He said that 84,305 claims have been initiated so far. **Over 2.5 lakh new voters who have recently reached the age of 18 in Bihar have come forward to join the electors’ ranks, signalling the groundswell to join the electoral process.**
- “Political parties merely raise hue and cry to serve their political ends... Political parties could appoint more BLAs, but they will not,” Mr. Dwivedi said, expressing the poll body’s disappointment with the conduct of the parties.
- The Bench said that claims and objections may not come from all the 65 lakh excluded voters. It quoted the EC’s figures that 22 lakh among the 65 lakh were dead, while 36 lakh had migrated out of Bihar, and eight lakh were duplicate entries on the roll. “So, it is just that names from the migrated 36 lakh have to come forward with claims,” Justice Kant summarised.

❖ Forest rights of tribals not settled for Great Nicobar project: council

Context: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration made a false representation to the Centre claiming that rights of the tribal people under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, had been “identified and settled”, which eventually led to forest clearances being granted for the ₹72,000-crore mega infrastructure project on the Great Nicobar Islands, a council representing the Nicobarese has said in a complaint to Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Jual Oram.

- The proposed Great Nicobar Island Project will include a transshipment port, an airport, a power plant, and a township.
- Local tribes people had raised several concerns, including the diversion of nearly 13,075 hectares of forest land for the project and its impact on vulnerable groups in the area.

Certificate issued

- “In the last two months, we have found that the administration in A&NI issued a certificate in 2022 saying the FRA rights were identified and settled, and that the consent for diversion of forest land was taken only after this,” a member of the Tribal Council of Little Nicobar and Great Nicobar.
- The council is the key representative body of the Nicobarese on the islands, and has been interacting with the administration on various issues.
- The council, in a letter to Mr. Oram dated July 21, clarified that it had not given its consent for the project. “We write to you to inform that the process of settlement of forest rights under the FRA has not even been initiated. Therefore, there is no question of forest rights being settled.” The council said it had recently been made aware of an August 2022 “certificate”, issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Nicobar District that claimed the opposite.
- According to this forest diversion certificate under the FRA issued on August 18, 2022, the administration said: “The complete process for identification and settlement of rights under the FRA has been carried out for the entire protected forest area of 121.87 sq. km. and deemed forest of 8.8 sq. km. falling under the project.”
- The Union Territory administration has told the Ministry in its monthly reports that it need not implement the FRA on the islands as the forests there are already protected under the **Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Act of 1956 (PAT56)**.
- While the PAT56 gives the administrator of the islands full authority to divert forest land, the FRA allows such diversion only after rights are first settled and then consent is taken from the Gram Sabhas concerned. It was not clear if the diversion of forest land for the project was made under the FRA or PAT56.
- The Centre has maintained that due process was followed for getting clearances. A Gram Sabha meeting held on August 12, 2022, had consented to the diversion of forest land, it said. However, the council says the Nicobarese of Great Nicobar were not part of the meeting.

❖ ‘India-China trade through Lipulekh unacceptable’

Context: A decision by India and China to restart border trade through the Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand has come under fire in Nepal, as it lies in the contested Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura region, which is claimed by Nepal.

- This development is “unexpected and unacceptable” to Nepal, but Kathmandu will not let it disrupt dialogue with India, said a leading member of Nepali Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli’s party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist.

- India and China took the decision on border trade during the August 18 and 19 visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Delhi, at a time when South Block had also extended an invitation to the Nepali Prime Minister to visit India. “This kind of an agreement between India and China is unexpected and unacceptable to us,” said Pradeep Gyawali, CPN-UML deputy general secretary.

❖ I-Tax Act, 2025 gets President Droupadi Murmu’s assent

Context: President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to the Income-tax Act, 2025, which will replace the archaic Income Tax Act, 1961.

- The Income Tax Act, 2025, will come into effect from the next financial year, beginning April 1, 2026.
- The new Act will make tax laws simple and reduce wordage in the legislation, making it easy to understand.
- The Income Tax Bill, 2025, was passed by Parliament on August 12.
- The new Act does not impose any new tax rate and only simplifies the language, which was required for understanding the complex Income Tax laws.
- The new law removes redundant provisions and archaic language and reduces the number of Sections from 819 in the I-T Act of 1961 to 536 and the number of chapters from 47 to 23.

❖ J&K L-G Sinha sacks two govt. employees under Article 311

Context: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha terminated the services of two government employees after security agencies’ reports suggested their involvement in anti-national activities in the Union Territory.

- Invoking special provisions of Article 311, which do not require any departmental inquiry, the orders issued by the L-G administration terminated the services of Khurshid Ahmad Rather, a teacher, and Siyad Ahmad Khan, an assistant stockman in the Sheep Husbandry Department. Mr. Rather was teaching in a school close to the Line of Control in Kupwara.
- The L-G has terminated 77 government employees since amended provisions of Article 311 were introduced in 2020 in J&K.

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❖ NITI Aayog report recommends model policy for homestays

Context: The NITI Aayog's report on "Rethinking Homestays: Navigating Policy Pathways", released in New Delhi, aims at advancing a framework that States can adopt to harmonise regulations and establish an inclusive homestay ecosystem in the country.

- The planning body believes that alternative accommodation such as homestays is an opportunity with immense economic potential that can help in promoting sustainable growth of India's tourism sector.
- The report offers a "strategic road map" to unlock the potential of homestays and Bed and Breakfast (BnB) providers in India's tourism landscape.
- NITI Aayog said in a statement that the report draws insights from aggregators, hosts, and policymakers and highlights the role of homestays in offering travellers "culturally immersive experiences" while fostering local entrepreneurship and employment generation.
- "It emphasises the need for light-touch, transparent regulatory frameworks that ensure the safety of tourists and homeowners, protect heritage, and support inclusive, sustainable economic growth," it said.
- The panel also recommended financial incentives for promoting tourism at the destination level rather than focusing solely on individual homestay amenities.

❖ Migration is essential to globalisation: Amartya Sen

Context: Migration is essential to globalisation and it has been a major source of advancement across times, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen said during an interaction with students in Kolkata.

- Professor Sen emphasised that diversity formed the bedrock of Indian society and promoted the growth of the country and its people in its true form.
- "Migration has been one of the major sources of global progress and advancement across generations and times, it is important to recognise that. There is enormous benefit in interacting with each other," the senior economist said while addressing a question on forced and voluntary migration among people.
- Professor Sen highlighted that "almost nothing would happen" without migration of people across places, be it within or outside the country since ancient times.
- He cited an example that Brahmagupta's book on mathematics was translated six times into Arabic because language, progress, culture among other things were collaborative endeavours, including food, music, and more.
- This talk on the benefits of migration comes at a time when migrants from West Bengal have faced multiple attacks in other States in the past few months.

Problem with SIR

- Professor Sen said the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls might create multiple problems while trying to solve one. "Many people in India do not have any documents. This may lead to many of them losing their voting rights," he said.
- He asserted that human rights for all should be the motto behind policies and laws so that discrimination based on caste, class, language, religion, and gender does not happen in a diverse country like India. He said diversity was the biggest factor behind the thriving culture of the nation.

❖ OpenAI set to open office in New Delhi

Context: ChatGPT maker OpenAI will open its first office in India in New Delhi, the company announced.

- “Opening an office in India reflects OpenAI’s support for the government’s IndiaAI mission and commitment to partnering with the government to build AI for India, with India,” the firm said.
- An Indian entity, OpenAI India Private Limited, appeared on the Registrar of Companies’ index.
- “It will also allow OpenAI to better serve its users in India, including the millions of students, educators, professionals, and developers who use OpenAI’s tools to learn, be more creative, and solve problems for themselves and others,” it added.
- The move marks the firm’s first major entry — following visits by CEO Sam Altman as part of a series of blitz Asia tours — into what is shaping up to be among its largest markets by population.
- “India is ChatGPT’s second-largest market by users, after the U.S., and one of its fastest-growing,” OpenAI said.
- In just the last year, usage from India has grown fourfold, the company said, adding that it is also in the top five markets by developers using the platform.
- “While details on the office’s exact location in New Delhi are yet to be confirmed, OpenAI has officially established an entity in India and has begun hiring a dedicated local team,” the company said.
- The firm had three job openings — all in sales — on its website at the time of the announcement.

❖ ‘GST Council to meet Sept. 3 on GST cuts’

Context: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council will hold its 56th meeting on September 3-4 in New Delhi, the Council said in a memorandum issued.

- During the meeting, the Council is expected to discuss the recommendations of various Groups of Ministers, including on reforming the GST system into a two-rate structure in line with the Union government’s recommendations.
- On August 15, Ministry of Finance said it sent proposals to the GoM on Rate Rationalisation. GoM Chairperson and Bihar Deputy CM Samrat Chaudhary said the group deliberated on and forwarded the Centre’s proposals to the GST Council.
- The Council is likely to extensively debate on the proposals. Kerala FM K.N. Balagopal, a member of the GoM, the States were concerned about the revenue implications of the proposals. The meeting will take place over eight months after the last one in December 2024. According to rules, it must meet at least once a quarter.
- UN declares famine in Gaza, blames Israel for ‘systematic aid obstruction’
- The UN officially declared a famine in Gaza on Friday, blaming “systematic obstruction of aid” by Israel, hours after Defence Minister Israel Katz threatened to destroy the territory’s largest city.
- Israel rejected the UN-backed report as “based on Hamas lies laundered through organisations with vested interests”.
- Hamas urged the UN and UN Security Council to “stop the war and lift the siege”, calling for unrestricted access for food, medicine, water and fuel.
- The Rome-based Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative (IPC) said famine was affecting 500,000 people in the Gaza governorate, which covers about a fifth of the Palestinian territory including Gaza City.
- Israel has pressed ahead with plans to seize Gaza City despite an international outcry, saying it is key to defeating Hamas.

- The IPC projected that the famine would expand to Deir el-Balah and Khan Yunis governorates by the end of September, covering around two-thirds of Gaza.
- With the vast majority of the territory's population displaced at least once, the UN said nearly a million people currently live in Gaza governorate.
- UN agencies and aid groups had warned for months of a looming famine in Gaza, where Israel has severely restricted aid and at times completely cut it off during its nearly two-year war with militant group Hamas.
- UN aid chief Tom Fletcher said the famine was entirely preventable, saying food could not get through to the Palestinian territory "because of systematic obstruction by Israel".

War crime

- UN human rights chief Volker Turk said it was "a war crime to use starvation as a method of warfare" and said it "may also amount to the war crime of wilful killing".
- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a ceasefire, saying: "We cannot allow this situation to continue with impunity." "After 22 months of relentless conflict, over half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions characterised by starvation, destitution and death," the IPC report said.
- In early March, Israel completely banned aid from Gaza for two months, leading to severe shortages of food, medicines and fuel.
- Mr. Katz warned: "The gates of hell will open upon the heads of Hamas's murderers and rapists in Gaza — until they agree to Israel's conditions for ending the war, primarily the release of all hostages and their disarmament."
- "If they do not agree, Gaza, the capital of Hamas, will become Rafah and Beit Hanoun," he added, referring to two cities in Gaza largely razed during previous Israeli operations.

❖ China calls for regional cooperation ahead of SCO meet

Context: It is important to have regional solidarity amid turbulence in international landscape, China said on Friday as it prepared to host heads of states and international organisations for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin on August 31 and September 1.

- Chinese President Xi Jinping will chair the summit, which is expected to be attended by a host of world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.
- Briefing reporters about the summit, China's Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Bin said it will follow new visions to overcome "cultural wars and cold war mentality", while looking into new measures to advance development, maintain security, and promote prosperity.
- The meeting, hosting more than 20 world leaders, comes against the backdrop of uncertainties in global trade, triggered by the tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump.
- "In today's world, outdated mindsets of hegemonism and power politics still have influence, with certain countries attempting to prioritise their own interests above others, seriously threatening world peace and stability," Mr. Liu said without naming any specific country while emphasising on the need to strengthen regional cooperation.
- The SCO aims at stability to foster lasting peace, harmony, and friendship while addressing uncertainties in international environment, Mr. Liu said, adding that the summit will focus on practising multilateralism and safeguarding regional stability.



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