



DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY BENGALURU

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

SEPTEMBER WEEK 1

01-09-2025 TO 06-09-2025



REITS, INVITS
AUM CROSSED ₹9
LAKH CR.

LAUNCH OF
NANDINI GHEE IN
U.S.

VIKRAM 32-BIT
CHIP

INDIA, CHINA
COMMITTED TO
FAIR
RESOLUTION

❖ India, China committed to fair resolution of border issue: Modi

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, underlined the importance of peace and tranquillity on the India-China border for continued development of bilateral relations.

- Meeting on the sidelines of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in the northern Chinese city of Tianjin**, the two leaders agreed on the need to strengthen people-to-people ties through direct flights and visa facilitation, building on the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and tourist visas, amid an improving relationship between the neighbours. Mr. Xi said the border issue should not define overall relations.
- “The two leaders noted with satisfaction the successful disengagement last year and the maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the border areas since then. They expressed commitment to a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable resolution of the boundary question,” the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement following the meeting.
- Mr. Modi called for mutual support in combating terrorism and the two leaders exchanged views on balanced bilateral trade, recognising that their economies could stabilise world trade, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a press briefing night.
- They agreed to facilitate trade and investment ties while reducing their trade deficit, he said. The two leaders discussed the international economic situation, with Mr. Modi telling Mr. Xi that growing trade will contribute to a change in the world’s perception of China, the Foreign Secretary added.
- The meeting took place against the backdrop of U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariff wars, but Mr. Modi insisted that the relationship between India and China should not be seen through a “third-country lens”. While the Prime Minister noted that both countries pursue strategic autonomy, the two leaders said they would expand their common ground on bilateral, regional, and global issues and challenges, such as terrorism and fair trade in multilateral platforms, the MEA statement said.
- The Prime Minister also met with Myanmar’s Senior General Min Aung Hlain and reiterated India’s readiness to support developmental needs of the crisis-hit country. He noted that India attaches importance to its ties with Myanmar as part of its ‘Neighborhood First’, ‘Act East’, and Indo-Pacific policies, the MEA said in a statement.
- Mr. Modi expressed the hope that the forthcoming elections in Myanmar will be held in a fair and inclusive manner involving all stakeholders. He underlined that India supports a Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned peace process, for which peaceful dialogue and consultation is the only way forward, the MEA added.



Improved ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in the Chinese city of Tianjin. PMO

Signals support for **Tianjin Declaration**

- The Prime Minister also attended a banquet gala with other SCO leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, hosted by Mr. Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan night.
- Mr. Modi expressed support for China's presidency of the ongoing summit, the MEA said, indicating that he is unlikely to raise any objections to the Tianjin Declaration that is expected to be signed and issued, following the meeting of the heads of state of the 10-member grouping.
- Mr. Modi also invited Mr. Xi to the BRICS summit that India will host in 2026. Mr. Xi "thanked the Prime Minister for the invitation" and extended support for India's presidency of that grouping, the MEA statement added.

❖ **Kolhapuri footwear makers seek PRADA's support**

Context: Kolhapuri footwear makers in Athani have appealed to PRADA, a Italian fashion house that is facing allegations of "stealing" design ideas from India, to set up a training centre for artisans in Athani in Belagavi district.

- This follows a visit of PRADA designers to Kolhapur last week. The European company had faced criticism after one of its footwear had a striking resemblance to Kolhapuri footwear. The Italian team interacted with artisans and traders in Kolhapur, but they are yet to visit Athani and surrounding villages where the footwear is traditionally made.
- **"Most of the production of Kolhapuri footwear happens in Karnataka, while most of the sale is in Maharashtra. They are named after the city they are sold in, not made in.**
- Maharashtra artisans, some of whom are our relatives, have told us that PRADA designers promised them training, scholarships and commissioned production. We are seeking similar benefits too," said Shivaraj Soudagar, who runs a Kolhapuri footwear-making cluster in Athani.
- Manmanth Kumar, an artisan from Madabhavi, near Athani, said that remunerative prices for Kolhapuri footwear would sustain the craft.
- "Children of most artisans are out of the craft now. They are taking up menial jobs like security guards and sweepers in big cities. If our footwear get better prices, there is a likelihood of at least young men and women coming back to take it up," he said.
- Babu Jagjivan Ram Karnataka Leather Industries Development Corporation (LIDKAR) is coordinating with the Italian fashion house, Rakesh Kumar, Commissioner, Social Welfare, said. "Welfare of artisans will form the basis of all our negotiations with PRADA," he said.
- K.M. Vasundhara, managing director, LIDKAR, said Karnataka was the first to send a legal notice to PRADA following the controversy. **"PRADA would not take up developmental or corporate social responsibility initiatives without involving Karnataka.** They are willing to train our artisans and help them sell their produce for better prices, by commissioning craft works or branding local production. They have offered to take artisans to Italy or send their resource persons here," she said.

❖ Launch of 'Annapoorna Scheme' for sanitation workers today

Context: In what is being touted as a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is set to roll out the 'Annapoorna Scheme' for its sanitation workforce.

- Announcing the initiative, BWSSB chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said the scheme “reflects the board’s commitment to combining technology with compassion”.
- “Bengaluru will be the first city to provide direct financial assistance for daily breakfast to sanitation workers. This is our way of saluting the relentless efforts of those who keep our city clean. We want every worker to begin the day with good health, nutrition, and respect,” he said.
- **Under the scheme, more than 700 sanitation workers will be provided smart cards powered by Axis Bank. Each card will be credited with ₹1,500 per month, which workers can use at food outlets of their choice, giving them the flexibility in choosing their meals.**
- BWSSB has described the scheme as a “Smart city with a humane touch” initiative and hopes it will serve as a model for other metropolitan cities across India. The board has also indicated plans to bring in more welfare measures for sanitation staff.

❖ Launch of Nandini Ghee in U.S.

- Karnataka Milk Federation launched its signature products, Nandini Ghee and Sweets, in the U.S. at the 8th NAVIKA World Kannada Summit 2025 in Lakeland, Florida.
- The event, organised by Naavu Vishwa Kannadigaru (NAVIKA), witnessed participation from the Kannadiga community and international delegates.

❖ Telangana passes Bills for 42% quota for BCs

Context: The Telangana government has paved the way for implementation of the 42% reservation to Backward Classes in the elections to local bodies by passing two Bills on Sunday. The Legislative Assembly has passed the Telangana Municipalities (Third Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Third Amendment) Act 2025. The Bills have been passed at a time when two Bills and an Ordinance to the same effect has been awaiting assent of the President.

- Piloting the Bill, Mr. Sridhar Babu said while the reservation for SC and ST communities was proportionate to their population, reservation for Backward Classes was subject to the condition that total reservation for SC, ST and Backward Classes should not exceed 50%.
- The government conducted the socio-economic, education, employment, political and caste survey to obtain comprehensive scientific data covering all households in the State.
- The survey was followed by constitution of a dedicated commission to conduct a contemporaneous and rigorous enquiry into the nature and extent of backwardness among BCs, particularly with reference to their representation in local bodies with a view to determining the proportion of reservation to be provided on a local body wise basis.

- The debate during the passage of the Bills saw the Opposition Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) and the BJP members raising queries about how the government planned to implement the reservation at a time when the Centre was yet to give its consent to the previous Bills passed by the State legislature.
- BRS member G. Kamalakar said the BRS was in support of enhancing reservations for Backward Classes, but advised that the State government follow a methodology on the lines of Tamil Nadu to avoid scope for legal hurdles.
- BJP member Payal Shankar said the BJP was in support of the Bills, but needed certain clarifications. The government promised budgetary allocation of ₹1 lakh crore for Backward Classes in five years, but no step had been initiated so far in that direction, Mr. Shankar said. “Moreover, the corporations representing Backward Classes are starving for funds while no BC official is appointed for any of the top posts,” he said.
- Mr. Sridhar Babu however asked the members to confine to the subject without deviations asking Mr. Payal Shankar to mount pressure on the BJP Government at the Centre if the party was really committed to enhancement of reservations for BCs.

❖ NGO Educate Girls wins Ramon Magsaysay Award

Context:

- Educate Girls, an Indian non-profit organisation working to educate unprivileged girls across the country, has been named as one of the three winners of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, 2025.
- The other winners are Shaahina Ali of the Maldives and Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva of the Philippines.
- Announcing the award for Educate Girls, also known as Foundation to Educate Girls Globally, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation said that it was “an Indian organisation whose groundbreaking work in addressing gender injustice in education in India’s most rural and remote areas creates a ripple effect that uplifts families, communities, and entire societies”.
- “Starting out in Rajasthan, Educate Girls identified the neediest communities in terms of girls’ education, brought unschooled or out-of-school girls into the classroom, and worked to keep them there until they were able to acquire credentials for higher education and gainful employment,” it said.
- Reflecting on the milestone, Safeena Husain, the founder of Educate Girls, said, “Being the first Indian non-profit to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award is a historic moment for Educate Girls and for the country.
- This recognition places a global spotlight on India’s people-powered movement for girls’ education, one that began with a single girl in the remotest village and grew to reshape entire communities, challenging traditions and shifting mindsets.



Bridging the gap: In this photo provided by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Safeena Husain, left, founder and Board member of the Foundation to Educate Girls, talks to a group in Rajasthan. AP

Thrilling news

- “Educate Girls is the first Indian organisation to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award. It is an absolutely thrilling news for us and this award belongs to our teams across the country — our preraks, our team balika, the government, our donors and partners. But mostly this award belongs to our girls. Our girls who work tirelessly to get education,” said Ms. Lobo in a video statement while congratulating environmental activist Shaahina Ali of the Maldives and Fr. Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva of the Philippines, who shot to fame for opposing former President Rodrigo Duterte’s infamous drug war which led to widespread human rights abuse.
- **The Ramon Magsaysay Award was started in 1958 to celebrate “greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia”. Since 1958, over 300 achievers and organisations from Asia have received this award.**

❖ India halts all mails to U.S. due to lack of clarity

Context: India Post has suspended all categories of mail operations destined to the U.S. in the absence of clarity over new rules issued by the U.S. Customs Department.

- Earlier, the country’s Postal department had temporarily suspended postal services for gifts valued above \$100 due to the new custom rules issued by the U.S. government.
- “In continuation of the Public Notice dated August 22, 2025, the Department of Posts has reviewed the suspension of booking of mails to the United States of America. In view of the ongoing inability of carriers to transport U.S.-bound mail and in the absence of defined regulatory mechanisms, it has been decided to completely suspend the booking of all categories of mail, including letters, documents, and gift items valued up to \$100, destined for the USA,” the statement said.



UPSC Integrated Course

ADMISSIONS OPEN

**MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES**

**Don't Miss Out!
Secure Your Spot Now!**

**Exclusive
Opportunity!
Limited Seats**



Context: The Union government has come up with an “action plan” to respond to the tariff escalation by the U.S., which includes short-, medium-, and long-term measures aimed at not only addressing the short-term pain points but also increasing long-term competitiveness, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

- According to sources, the short-term measures include providing immediate liquidity and compliance relief to exporters and helping them maintain order levels and employment in vulnerable sectors.
- “The Government of India is proactively responding with a timely, well-calibrated, and comprehensive multi-tiered strategy designed not only to safeguard Indian exporters but also to strengthen our long-term competitiveness in global markets,” the spokesperson said. “The Department of Commerce has framed a short-, medium-, and long-term action plan to respond to this tariff escalation.”

Tweaking export model



The government is working out ways to deflect the blow to exporters from the U.S. tariffs

- The plan includes short-, medium-, and long-term measures to address pain points and boost competitiveness
- It is based on a few “guiding principles”: providing immediate relief with regard to liquidity, compliances, and order levels, building resilience in supply chains, leveraging existing trade agreements, and providing non-financial assistance

‘Guiding principles’

- According to sources in the Ministry, this action plan is based on a few “guiding principles”: providing immediate relief to exporters with regard to liquidity, compliance, and order levels, building resilience in supply chains, leveraging existing trade agreements, and providing other non-financial assistance to exporters.
- “It is anticipated that exporters may face delayed payments, stretched receivable cycles, and cancelled orders due to the tariff shock,” a source said.
- “To prevent working capital stress and protect employment, the government is considering several steps to ease liquidity, prevent insolvencies, and allow exporters to sustain operations until new markets are tapped.”
- Liquidity crunch is a major concern for exporters as they have already bought the stock that they would have exported to the U.S. under normal circumstances.

‘Critical risk’

- “A critical risk is a drop in order levels, particularly in SEZ-based units which contribute significantly to labour-intensive exports,” the source explained.
- They confirmed about the government tweaking the Export Promotion Mission, announced in the Union Budget 2025, to better align it with the needs of the currently affected export sectors.
- That plan is currently being appraised by the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC). It will include ‘Niryat Protsahan’ or helping exporters with trade finance access such as interest subvention, e-commerce export cards, and collateral support.
- The government is also considering some SEZ policy flexibility norms to help SEZs to sustain production volumes and scale.
- **The medium- and long-term strategy includes leveraging the existing Free Trade Agreements that India has signed, an export diversification push so that large shares of exports don’t go to any single country, establishing strategic autonomy in crucial sectors, and creating digital trade infrastructure in the form of the BharatTradeNet.**

Context: How did the Income Tax Department complete the “mammoth” task of rationalising and simplifying the huge Income Tax Act, 1961 in just about six months, and then implementing the Select Committee’s voluminous suggestions in just one month? By cramming in 75,000 man-hours of work in that time and even putting probationers on the job, that’s how.

- The result was the hugely condensed and significantly more user-friendly Income Tax Act, 2025.
- “The announcement by the honourable Finance Minister was made on July 23, 2024 that within six months the entire process of simplification of the law, to make it more lucid, clear, and precise will be achieved,” R.N. Parbat, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) member in charge of legislation. “The task was given to the Department of Revenue and the CBDT. It was to be done in-house.”
- By August 14, the drafting committee under Chief Commissioner of Income Tax V.K. Gupta was formed, and that’s when the work began in earnest. Subcommittees were formed to look at every aspect of the law with a view to remove redundant sections and review the rest.

26 subcommittees

- As the scope of the work became more clear — the original 1961 Act had 819 sections — the number of subcommittees also grew. By the end of it, there were 26 different subcommittees, according to Mr. Parbat.
- Apart from this, the process also incorporated a review committee that was tasked with reviewing the work done by the drafting subcommittees.
- “Once the review committee completed its work, it came to the Tax Policy and Legislation [TPL] division of the CBDT,” Mr. Parbat explained. “And after that, when a draft was formed, it was reviewed by another set of senior officers of the CBDT.”
- Throughout this, the Revenue Secretary and the Finance Minister took regular briefings with the drafting committee and the TPL, while the Ministry of Law was also consulted.
- “The work was broadbased, with more than 150 officers of the Department working on it,” Mr. Parbat said. “That included our Chairman, who was from the 1988 batch. At the same time, the junior-most person on the team was from the 2018 batch. Officers from all over India were selected for this purpose. We also involved our probationers who were undergoing training in Nagpur involved in the process.”
- The draft of the Bill was laid before Parliament on February 13, 2025, six months after the drafting committee was formed. The number of chapters has been slashed from 47 to 23 and the number of sections from 819 to 536.
- The new Bill included 57 tables as explanations, up from 18, and 46 formulae compared with the previous six.
- The language was greatly simplified, jargon and archaic words such as ‘notwithstanding’ were removed as far as possible, and examples were provided where needed.
- To put this in context, the Parliamentary Select Committee that was tasked with reviewing these changes took five months to submit its report.

- “They forwarded around 1,312 suggestions to us, so again our TPL division officers along with the core committee members of the drafting committee formulated the written replies and submitted them to the Select Committee,” Mr. Parbat said.
- After receiving the written and oral replies from the Revenue Secretary, the Chairman of the CBDT, Mr. Parbat and his team, along with the core members of the drafting committee, the Standing Committee submitted its report to Parliament on July 16, 2025.

‘Mammoth task’

- The revised Bill was then passed in Parliament on August 12, 2025 — just one year after the drafting committee was formed.
- “The process was started and completed within the time given to us, so there is no question any longer of whether we would have preferred more time to do it,” Mr. Parbat said. “It was a mammoth task that involved 75,000 man-hours, so whether you put it in two years or six months, that is the amount of work that was needed.”

❖ ‘Mini-cloudbursts’ are on the rise: IMD chief

Context: There is no “increasing trend” in cloudbursts — 10 cm of rain in an hour or more over 20-30 square km — over India in recent years and they remain “impossible” to forecast. However, there has been an increase in “mini-cloudbursts” — 5 cm of rain per hour, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, India Meteorological Department (IMD), said at a press briefing.

- Rainfall in September — the last official monsoon month — is, as in the previous months, expected to be “above normal”, or 9% more than the usual average of 16.7 cm, he said. Except the northeastern States and parts of “extreme” southern India, the rest of the country is expected to get above normal rainfall.
- The three monsoon months so far have seen “above normal” rainfall, in line with what the IMD forecast in May. Rainfall during June 1 to August 31 was 6% above the 70 cm usual for the three months.

Less rain in the east

- Northwest India — comprising Uttarakhand, most parts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu, Kashmir, Rajasthan, Delhi — got 26% more rainfall than what is typical for the three months.
- Central India and the southern peninsula saw 8.6% and 9.3% more rainfall than usual with only the eastern and northeastern India — which receives the most rain as a bloc during the monsoon — getting 17% less than normal.
- August rainfall in northern India, at 26.5 cm, was the highest since 2001, said IMD data. Rainfall over the southern peninsula, at 25 cm, was the third highest since 2001.
- There were more than 700 instances of heavy rain (20 cm or more in a day) in August 2025, the second highest since 2021 behind the 800-plus in 2024.

Series of disturbances

- The extremely active monsoon in northern India — that saw large-scale destruction of lives and property in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Uttarakhand — was due to a confluence of several western disturbances (storms that travel to India from the

Mediterranean) and storms from the Bay of Bengal moving northwards leading to several episodes of intense rain, he said.

- “This is likely to prevail during September too...since 1980 we have noticed an increasing trend in the rainfall India receives during September,” he told The Hindu.
- **The IMD had a strict definition of a ‘cloudburst’, 10 cm of rain in an hour or more over 20-30 square km, and while there was rising trend in India overall, ‘mini cloudbursts,’ — or 5 cm of rain per hour — were on the rise, Mr. Mohapatra said, referring to a 2018 research study by climate researchers at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune. In that data set, there were only 28 cloudbursts reported from 1969-2015. IMD officials said they did not have updated data on this aspect since 2015.**
- “We issue reports of cloudbursts within 24 hours of the event. For instance, there have been cloudbursts reported in Chennai the previous night (Saturday). But often, it is not possible to categorise this in certain regions because of lack of meteorological stations where the cloudbursts occur. Even with satellite imagery, we can warn of intense clouding or heavy rains a few hours before but cannot predict if it will result in a cloudburst,” he added, “It is well known that landslides can occur even with 2-5 cm of rainfall.”

❖ Home Ministry forms teams to assess damage caused by rain, floods in several States

Context: The Union Home Ministry has constituted Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCT) to assess damage in States affected by unprecedented rainfall, floods, and other disasters over the past few days.

- An IMCT each has been formed for Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to assess the impact of heavy rainfall, flash floods, cloudbursts and landslides, the Ministry said in a statement.
- The teams will make on-the-spot assessments of the situation and relief measures undertaken by the State governments. They are scheduled to visit the affected areas early next week. An IMCT and a Multi-Sectoral Team have already visited Himachal Pradesh.
- Each IMCT is led by a senior officer of the level of Joint Secretary in the Home Ministry or the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), and includes officials from the Ministries of Expenditure, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Jal Shakti, Power, Road Transport and Highways, and Rural Development.
- The Home Ministry said it is in touch with senior officers of the affected States and has extended logistic support, including deployment of National Disaster Response Force teams, Army personnel and Air Force helicopters for rescue operations and essential services. As per a decision taken by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in August 2019, IMCTs are formed immediately after severe disasters for on-the-spot assessment without waiting for a State memorandum. Based on their reports, the Centre provides additional financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund as per procedure.

- During 2025-26, the Centre has released ₹10,498.80 crore to 24 States for relief assistance, including ₹1,988.91 crore from the NDRF to 12 States and ₹3,274.90 crore from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund to 20 States.

❖ The importance of India's federal design

Context: The Supreme Court has recently sought a detailed response from the Centre on the issue of restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. Considering the significance of the principle of the separation of powers, the top court rightly said that it did not possess all the expertise and that there are some decisions to be made by the government.

- The court is hearing the plea in Zahoor Ahmed Bhat versus UT of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been argued that the failure to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is affecting the rights of the citizens there. Another argument in this context is that it is also violating the essential features of federalism and thereby the basic structure of the Constitution.

How are States created?

- There are three processes enshrined in the Constitution of India for creating States — admission, establishment and formation.
 - ✓ **For admission of a new State into the territory of India, the entity should have its own organised political unit.**
 - ✓ **It is also required that admission through acquisition shall be guided by international law. This was the process by which Jammu and Kashmir was admitted into India's territory through the Instrument of Accession in 1947. By executing this Instrument under the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to accede his State to India.**
 - ✓ **For establishing a new State, territory shall be acquired as per the definition of acquisition in international law. India acquired Goa and Sikkim and established them as States.**
- The process of forming a new State has been, in fact, the reorganisation of an existing State which led India to take its number of 14 States in 1956 to 29 States before the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.
- **Article 3 of the Constitution** provides for this process of reorganisation wherein Parliament may by law — form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State; increase the area of any State; diminish the area of any State; alter the boundaries of any State; or alter the name of any State. However, while the Union may diminish the area of a State, it cannot take it away by making it a Union Territory. This would be a step against the federal features of India. Therefore, it is mandatory for the Union to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. It may wait for sometime depending upon the situation at the ground level.

What about India's federal design?

- India has been made a Union of States which means that it is indivisible and that States have no right to secede. **This provision in Article 1 may be interpreted in the sense that the word 'India' reflects a unitary federation while the word**

'Bharat' is a cultural connotation which signifies that India has a composite culture and that there is unity in diversity.

- Despite being a two-tier system of governance, the word 'federation' is not used but rather 'Union' is written expressly.
- The idea behind this unique feature is to ensure India's federal character and unitary spirit. This design is in tandem with the philosophy of the Constitution.
- **While the express use of the word 'Union' makes the Centre strong enough to protect the unity and integrity of the nation, the federal character is created to equitably distribute the resources establishing India as a welfare state.** This is the reason that India's federal character has been included in the **Basic Structure of the Constitution.** Without a federal design, India's union would lose its existence. Hence, the **Rajya Sabha has been made a permanent House in Article 83 (1)** which writes that it shall not be subject to dissolution. The States' representation must always be there at the Union level to maintain and sustain India's unitary federation. Thus, it is imperative that the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir be restored to protect the sanctity of federation.

What next?

- To recall, on December 11, 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 A, and also directed the Union Government to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and hold Legislative Assembly elections.
- Elections for the 90-member Assembly were held in October 2024, but there has not been any hint so far from the Government to restore the statehood as asked by the Court.

Critics may point out that restoration of statehood would definitely empower the elected government in Jammu and Kashmir and that the powers of the Lieutenant Governor would be curtailed affecting the present position of the Union over the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. If this is to be agreed, it would be inconsistent with the constitutional design of India and would definitely erode its federal features.

KPSC SADHANA
ONE COURSE MANY KARNATAKA STATE GOVT EXAMS

ADMISSIONS OPEN

AND MANY MORE EXAMS!

CTI, PSI, REVENUE INSPECTOR, ASST. ENGINEER, SUB-REGISTRAR, EXCISE SI, AO/AAO, STASTICAL INSPECTOR, ACCOUNTS ASST., FDA/SDA, PDO, RTO/MVI

General Studies
DON'T MISS OUT! SECURE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

Communication Paper
GENERAL KANNADA
GENERAL ENGLISH
COMPUTER AWARENESS

PSI Paper 1
ESSAY
TRANSLATION
PRECISE WRITING

WALK-IN FOR FREE COUNSELING TODAY!

Context: The 10-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation “strongly condemned” terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the Pahalgam attack and the attacks on Jaffar Express and Khuzdar in Pakistan.

- The **Tianjin Declaration, signed and adopted by all members, including India, Pakistan, and Russia, called for an end to “cross-border movement” of terrorists.**
- The declaration reaffirmed the bloc’s “firm commitment to fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism”, and stressed the inadmissibility of attempts to use terrorist, separatist, and extremist groups for “mercenary purposes”.
- The member states also opposed “unilateral coercive measures, including those of an economic nature”, that contravene the United Nations charter and principles of the World Trade Organization, in a possible reference to the U.S. tariffs.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping, who chaired the meeting of the heads of the member states, in his opening remarks, criticised the “bullying behaviour” in the world order and called upon leaders to “adhere to fairness and justice” while opposing “cold war mentality”.
- “The shadows of Cold War mentality, bullying, are not dissipating, and there are new challenges that are increasing, not diminishing,” said Mr. Xi, who has often used the term “cold war mentality” to refer to the uncertainties over the U.S. tariffs.
- **The declaration at the summit, which focused on strengthening the Global South amid global uncertainties in trade and a “fluid and chaotic global situation”, opened by stating that the world was undergoing “profound historical changes that affect all spheres of political, socio-economic, and social relations”. Mr. Xi, who chaired the ‘SCO plus’ meeting, proposed a Global Governance Initiative (GGI), calling on countries to work in concert for a more just and equitable global governance system, abiding by international rule of law, practising multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach, and focusing on taking real actions.**
- China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi, following the summit night, said the GGI aims at supporting the UN’s central role in international affairs and encouraging countries to participate in the reform of global governance system by relying on multilateral mechanisms. He also said that Pakistan and Armenia had announced development of diplomatic relationship at the summit.
- Announcing that the grouping has decided to merge the statuses given to non-member countries — dialogue partner and observer — to a single partner status, Mr. Wang said that Laos has been accepted as a partner country of the SCO, taking the total strength of the grouping to 27 with 10 members and 17 partners. Secretary-General of the SCO, Nurlan Yermekbayev, said that an agreement was made to establish an SCO development bank, a long-term ambition of Beijing.
- Taking note of Israel’s ongoing war on Gaza and the catastrophic humanitarian situation engulfing the **Gaza Strip**, all the member states expressed “deep concern” and strongly condemned “actions that have led to numerous casualties among the civilian population” in the enclave. A “comprehensive and just settlement” of the Palestinian issue is the only way to ensure peace in West Asia, the declaration said.

- **India also joined the fellow members of the grouping to strongly condemn the military strikes by Israel and the U.S. against Iran, a member state, in June that targeted Tehran's nuclear facilities.**
- **The member states reaffirmed the importance of the UN Security Council resolution 2231 which included provisions for lifting sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear programme.**
- The declaration also took note of the political situation in Afghanistan, which holds an observer status in the grouping but did not attend the summit. The members reiterated that the formation of an “inclusive government with broad participation of representatives of all ethno-political groups” of the society is the only way to achieve lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.
- **All the member states, except India, also reaffirmed their support for China's Belt and Road Initiative.** Mr. Xi, in his opening remarks, also pledged to provide ¥2 billion in grants to member countries within this year, and an additional ¥10 billion in loan to member banks of the SCO Interbank Consortium over the next three years. He also said that the group should set up an “**SCO development bank**” as soon as possible.
- **The declaration also welcomed a resolution by the UN General Assembly that called for “combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to escalating contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance”.**

❖ Earthquake kills over 800 in Afghanistan

Context: A strong earthquake and multiple aftershocks collapsed homes onto sleeping families in a remote, mountainous region in Afghanistan on Monday, killing more than 800 people and injuring at least 2,800.

- **The 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck just before midnight, rattling buildings from Kabul to neighbouring Pakistan's capital, Islamabad. The epicentre was about 27 km off Jalalabad,** the U.S. Geological Survey said.
- One of Afghanistan's worst earthquakes killed more than 800 people and injured at least 2,800, authorities said, as helicopters ferried the wounded to hospital after they were plucked from the rubble of homes being combed for survivors.
- The disaster is set to further stretch the resources of the war-torn nation's Taliban administration, already grappling with humanitarian crises, from a sharp drop in aid to the pushback of hundreds of thousands of Afghans by neighbouring countries.
- Sharafat Zaman, the spokesperson for the Health Ministry in Kabul, called for international aid to tackle the devastation from the quake of magnitude 6 that struck around midnight, at a depth of 10 km. “We need it because here lots of people lost their lives and houses,” he said.

812 killed

- The quake killed 812 people in the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, said administration spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

- Rescuers were battling to reach remote mountainous areas cut off from mobile networks along the Pakistani border, where mudbrick homes dotting the slopes collapsed in the quake.
- It was Afghanistan's third major deadly quake since the Taliban took over in 2021 as foreign forces withdrew, triggering a cut to the international funding that formed the bulk of government finances.
- Even humanitarian aid, aimed at bypassing political institutions to serve urgent needs, has shrunk to \$767 million this year, down from \$3.8 billion in 2022.

Previous quake

- A 6.1-magnitude earthquake that killed 1,000 people in the eastern region that year was the first major natural disaster faced by the Taliban government.

❖ Three-tier governance structure ushers in a new era in Bengaluru

Context: The Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, that has already come into effect is gradually being implemented. While the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has already been constituted, the last step – the formation of five corporations replacing Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) – is expected to be notified.

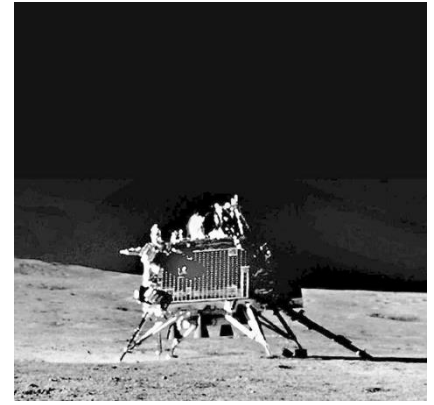
- **The GBG Act, 2024 will bring in a three-tier structure to governance in Bengaluru with the Chief Minister-led GBA at the pan city level, which, for the first time, brings together all parastatals in the city on one platform along with five city corporations and ward committees.**
- **GBG Act, 2024 has retained certain provisions of the BBMP Act, 2020 which are criticised as perpetuating the stranglehold of MLAs on city governance and councillors over ward committees.**
- The law provides for a coordination committee headed by the MLA at the Assembly constituency level, which, though has only advisory powers, brings together councillors, officers of all agencies and gives the committee powers to oversee the implementation of projects and select beneficiaries of welfare schemes.
- Meanwhile, the **ward committee of 15, is led by the councillor, has seven members nominated by the corporation, giving them a majority.** Over and above this, the **councillor has been given a veto power over any decision.**

❖ ISRO calls for proposals to study Chandrayaan-3 data

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) issued an Announcement of Opportunity (AO) for scientific analysis and utilisation of data from all experiments of Chandrayaan-3 lander and rover.

- The Chandrayaan-3 mission achieved historic soft-landing in the southern high latitudes of the moon on August 23, 2023, making India the first nation to touch down on the polar region of the moon.
- “To enhance the science outcome of the Chandrayaan-3 mission, ISRO seeks proposals from the national scientific community (outside ISRO/Department of Space) through this AO, towards scientific analysis and utilisation of data from all experiments of Chandrayaan-3 lander and rover,” the ISRO said.

- The AO is open to all faculty and researchers from recognised academia, research institutions, universities, colleges and government organisations of India. ISRO said that proposals could be submitted by individuals or a group of scientists and academicians from universities, colleges, national institutions, outside ISRO/Department of Space.
- “Only those having a minimum remaining service of four years before superannuation are eligible to lead the project as Principal Investigator (PI). There could be multiple Co-PIs in the proposal, however, PI will be the focal point for all communications related to the proposal. The proposals must be forwarded through the head of the institutions, with appropriate assurance for providing,” the ISRO said.
- It further said that all the proposals will be evaluated by a suitable review committee and the deadline for submission of proposals is October 21, 2025.
- The space agency said that the project shall be completed within three years.
- “Based on science deliverables and recommendations by the review committee, the project may be extended for one more year. Annual progress of all the projects will be reviewed by ISRO and comments will be provided for improving the project activities,” the space agency said.



❖ State secures spot on National Quantum Mission board

Context: In a significant move towards cooperative federalism and deep-tech development, Karnataka has secured representation in the Hub Governing Board (HGB) of the National Quantum Mission (NQM).

- Following a prompt from G. Kumar Naik, Lok Sabha member from Raichur, the Union government acknowledged the need for State participation.
- Union Minister of State for Science & Technology Jitendra Singh promised that representatives from State governments would be given an active role in the highest-level decision-making process.

❖ Convicts are entitled for remission even if sentence is for specified term: High Court

Context: Convicts are entitled to being considered for remission even if the sentence is beyond 20 years or for a specified term, unless the order of sentence makes it clear that the convict shall not be entitled for premature release or remission or parole or the like, said the High Court of Karnataka.

- The court pointed out that Rule 164 of **Karnataka Prisons and Correctional Services Manual, 2021**, is clear that there is no particular embargo on the convict being entitled for remission if the sentence is for 20 years or more, or even for a particular period beyond 20 years.
- Justice Suraj Govindaraj passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Deepa Angadi, who had questioned the rejection of plea for remission of her husband, brother-in-law, and mother-in-law, who were sentenced to 21 years in 2013 in a murder case.

- **A trial court in Belagavi in 2008 imposed the death penalty on Siddappa, husband, Siddalingappa, brother-in-law, and Mallavva, mother-in-law of the petitioner, and the High Court in 2013 modified it to imprisonment for 21 years with the benefit of remission.**
- Their application for remission of sentence was rejected by the prison authorities for the reason that the imprisonment is for a specific period of 21 years.
- However, the High Court clarified that there was no condition in the 2013 order that the convicts would not be entitled for remission or parole.
- Pointing out that the **remission system, which comes with some conditions, aims at the reformation of prisoners, the court said that “remission is held out as a carrot for the detenu so that they behave properly with discipline and good conduct with the hope of being released early by remitting the sentence”, though remission is not a right for any prisoner.**
- Citing a **Supreme Court’s order which stated that convicts sentenced to life are entitled for remission only after 14 years of imprisonment,** the High Court said that the petitioner’s relatives are entitled to be considered for remission as they had completed over 14 years.

❖ Karnataka received more than normal rainfall between June 1 and September 1

Context: Karnataka between this June 1 and September 1 received 786 mm rainfall as against a normal of 675.6 mm during the south-west monsoon. However, seven districts, including Kodagu, Shivamogga, Bengaluru South (formerly Ramanagara) and Hassan, have reported deficient rainfall.

Departure of 16%

- According to India Meteorological Department’s (IMD) seasonal cumulative rainfall data, there was a departure of 16% rain during this period.
- The **three meteorological sub-divisions in the State [coastal, north Interior and south interior]** also saw a departure in rainfall during this period.
- **Coastal Karnataka** received 3,103.6 mm rain as against a normal of 2,790.5 mm with a departure of 11%.
- Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada saw a departure of 5%, 5%, and 18%, respectively.
- **North interior Karnataka** received 508.8mm rain as against the normal of 344.8 mm with a departure of 48%.
- The 11 districts in this sub-division [Bagalkot, Belagavi, Bidar, Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Kalaburagi, Koppal, Raichur, Vijayapura, and Yadgir] received more than normal rainfall. Vijayapura topped the list with 450.9 mm as against a normal of 246.6 mm with a departure of 83%, followed by Gadag which received 427.3 mm rainfall as against a normal of 236 mm with a departure of 81%.
- **South interior Karnataka** received 561.8 mm rain as against the normal 534.4 mm with a departure of 5%. Ballari (departure of 61%), Chickballapur (29%), Chikkamagaluru (34%), Chitradurga (98%), Davangere (57%), Kolar (25%), Mandya (47%), Mysuru (3%), Tumakuru (31%), and Vijayanagara (61%) received more than the normal rainfall during the three months.

Deficient rainfall

- However, Bengaluru Rural (departure of -9%), Bengaluru Urban (-10%), Chamarajanagar (-2%), Hassan (-30%), Kodagu (-12%), Bengaluru South (-40%), and Shivamogga (-27%) recorded deficient rainfall.
- This year, the south-west monsoon arrived earlier than expected in the last week of May.

❖ SC refuses to entertain plea against roll-out of 20% ethanol-blended petrol nationwide

Context: The Supreme Court dismissed a petition challenging the nationwide roll-out of 20% ethanol-blended petrol (E20) which alleged that millions of motorists were being compelled to use fuel unsuited to their vehicles without the option of getting ethanol-free petrol.

- A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran refused to entertain the petition after the Union government defended the ethanol-blending programme as a measure to bolster the income of sugar cane farmers and conserve foreign exchange.
- Senior advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for petitioner Akshay Malhotra, cited NITI Aayog's 2021 report **“Roadmap for ethanol blending in India 2020-25”, which noted that blending ethanol up to 20% could cut fuel efficiency by 6-7% in four-wheelers and 3-4% in two-wheelers.** He clarified that the petitioner was not opposing ethanol blending as a policy, but only sought the continued availability of ethanol-free petrol for vehicles manufactured before April 2023, which are not compatible with E20 fuel.
- Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, representing the Centre, questioned the bona fides of the plea, alleging that the petitioner was merely a “name-lender” and that the challenge reflected the interests of a larger lobby intent on obstructing India’s clean fuel transition.
- “The policy benefits our sugar cane farmers and saves precious foreign exchange. Will people outside the country dictate what kind of fuel India should use?” the Attorney-General remarked during the hearing. “Dismissed,” the Bench said, after a brief exchange, declining to interfere with the government’s policy.
- **E20 fuel has been gradually introduced since 2023, replacing earlier blends such as E5 and E10, which were regarded as more compatible with older vehicles.** These alternatives have now been phased out from almost all of the country’s 90,000 fuel stations. **The ethanol-blending programme is central to India’s strategy to lower carbon emissions and reduce dependence on crude oil imports.**
- Last month, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas endorsed the use of E20, claiming it offers “better acceleration and improved ride quality” in addition to supporting the livelihoods of farmers.
- Officials further clarified that the validity of vehicle insurance policies remains unaffected by the use of E20.

‘Consumer choice’

- The petition contended that the policy violated the **fundamental rights** of vehicle owners whose automobiles are incompatible with E20, as it left them with no option to purchase ethanol-free petrol.
- It further argued that the absence of public awareness and proper labelling of fuel pumps breached the **right to informed consumer choice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- “It is also relevant to mention that as the vehicles are not compatible with ethanol-blended petrol, which will result in damage to the said vehicles, the claim raised in this regard will not be covered by the manufacturers or the insurance companies, as the consumers have violated the terms specified by the manufacturers/insurance companies,” the petition said.
- It sought directions to the authorities to mandate ethanol labelling at all petrol pumps and dispensing units, and to conduct a “nationwide impact study on mechanical degradation and efficiency loss due to ethanol blended fuel to the extent of 20% usage in non-compliant vehicles.”

❖ Indian Navy ships conclude Saudi visit with joint exercise

- Indian Navy warships INS Tamal and INS Surat (in picture) concluded their port call at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on August 30, with a passage exercise alongside the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) corvette HMS Jazan, before proceeding on deployment.
- The ships engaged extensively with the RSNF and Saudi Border Guard through sports fixtures and interactions with personnel.
- On August 28, the vessels hosted India’s Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Suhel Ajaz Khan, onboard.
- The visit underscored India’s commitment to strengthening defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia while offering both navies opportunities to share best practices and explore future engagements.

KPSC PRELIMS CUM MAINS

ADMISSIONS OPEN
MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES

**WALK-IN FOR FREE
COUNSELING TODAY!**

**ENROLL
NOW!!**



**IF YOU CAN DREAM IT
YOU CAN DO IT!!**

**TAKE THE FIRST STEP!
JOIN OUR COURSE NOW!**

❖ Centre launches 'Adi Vaani' to translate Adivasi languages

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs on Monday launched the beta version of its Adi Vaani Adivasi language translation application and website at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi, with Minister of State Durgadas Uikey saying that it will “help bridge communication gaps for tribal communities in remote areas and empower tribal youth digitally”.
- The government, in a statement, called it a “landmark initiative towards inclusive tribal empowerment and linguistic preservation”. The app, which has been in development for over a year now, has capabilities to translate Adivasi languages to and from Hindi and English. In its first phase, the supported languages include Gondi, Bhili, Mundari, Santali, Kui, and Garo.

❖ New Bairabi-Sairang rail line set to improve connectivity in Mizoram

Context: Mizoram will soon be connected to the national railway network when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the 51.38-km Bairabi-Sairang broad-gauge line, constructed at an estimated ₹5,021 crore, in the second week of September.

- The new line terminating at Sairang will connect Aizawl, the State capital about 20 km away, with the rest of the country. The line links Silchar in Assam via Bhodahpur Junction, integrating the network with Assam, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Indian Railways has big plans **to connect the other northeastern States of Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Sikkim with the national network by 2030**, a senior Northeast Frontier Railway official said.
- The official told visiting presspersons that the project fulfilled the cherished dream of Mizoram residents for railway connectivity to the State capital.
- While access by road took long hours of travel, flying was expensive. Travel by train would provide an affordable options to all categories of people, besides boosting economic activities in the region with a special focus on tourism, the official said.
- The new line has 48 tunnels with a total length of 12.85 km, the longest being about 1.37 km; 55 major bridges with the longest being about 1.3 km and the tallest, Krung Bridge at Sairang, being 114 m from the base; 87 minor bridges; five road overbridges; and six road underbridges.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually laid the foundation stone for the project on November 29, 2014. He virtually flagged off the **first passenger train between Bairabi and Silchar on May 27, 2016**.
- The official said almost all essential items to Mizoram were brought from Silchar in Assam, a journey of about 10 hours by road. With the new line, the travel time gets reduced to about three hours.

❖ Larger Bench to rule if minority-run schools are exempted from RTE Act

Context: The Supreme Court referred to a larger Bench the question of whether minority educational institutions are entirely exempt from the purview of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

- A two-judge Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan made the reference in a judgment based on a batch of civil appeals questioning school education departments' insistence on faculty clearing the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) in minority institutions.
- The reference stems from apprehensions over a Constitution Bench verdict of 2014 in Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust case. In the case, a five-judge Bench was testing the constitutionality of **Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act**. The provision mandates educational institutions to provide 25% reservation for children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections at the entry level in order to foster social inclusion in elementary education.
- However, the 2014 judgment concluded that Section 12(1)(c) violated the minority character of these institutions and impacted their institutional autonomy. The Constitution Bench went on to take minority institutions entirely out of the ambit of the RTE law. Justice Datta, writing for the Bench, observed that the Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust judgment has “unknowingly jeopardised the very foundation of universal elementary education”.
- **“Exemption of minority institutions from the RTE Act leads to fragmentation of the common schooling vision and weakening of the idea of inclusivity and universality envisioned by Article 21A.** We are afraid, instead of uniting children across caste, class, creed, and community, it reinforces ‘divides’ and ‘dilutes’ the transformative potential of shared learning spaces,” Justice Datta pointed out.
- The judge wrote that the 2014 judgment has led to misuse. “Minority status seems to have become a vehicle for circumventing the mandate of the RTE Act. In our humble opinion, it has opened up a situation whereby multiple institutions have sought to acquire minority status to become autonomous,” Justice Datta observed.

❖ Manufacturing PMI rises to 17-year high in August

Context: Activity in the manufacturing sector in August 2025 expanded at the fastest rate in more than 17 years, propelled by a demand-driven rise in new orders and production, according to a private sector survey.

- The **HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** climbed to 59.3 in August from 59.1 in July, indicating the “fastest improvement in operating conditions for 17-and-a-half years”, the report said.
- The graphs included in the report show that India's manufacturing PMI was last higher in mid-2008.
- “Companies upped the pace at which additional materials were bought, and more jobs were created, partly reflecting positive expectations regarding the outlook,” the report said.
- The survey report went on to explain that the uptick in the headline PMI figure reflected an acceleration in the growth of production volumes, which grew the quickest in close to five years.
- “The increase of U.S. tariff on Indian goods to 50% might have contributed to the slight easing in new export orders growth, as American buyers refrain from placing orders in the midst of tariff uncertainty,” said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

Context: While north Indian cities such as Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Kanpur are notorious for their air pollution, almost everyone living in India breathes air dirtier than what the World Health Organisation (WHO) has deemed safe.

- According to the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) 2025 annual update, **all of India lives in areas where the annual average particulate pollution level (PM_{2.5}) exceeds the WHO annual average limit of 5 g/m³.**
- The country's northern plains, however, remain the greater offenders, exposing an **estimated 544.4 million people to bad air.**
- The AQLI report is based on global pollution data from 2023. Atmospheric pollution levels rose planet wide in 2023 following two relatively quiescent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The report was put together by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago. The air quality in India is also bad by its own standards, which are more lenient than those of the WHO. **According to the report, 46% of India's people live in areas where the national annual PM_{2.5} standard of 40 g/m³ has been breached.**
- The report also said **Delhi will experience the greatest benefit among India's cities by lowering particulate pollution to the WHO's recommendation, adding 8.2 years to life expectancy. Because the whole country currently breathes subpar air, even those in the cleanest areas could live 9.4 months more if their air is cleaned up, the report found.**
- The problem transcends borders, of course. **Emissions from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan** have together blanketed a big swath of **South Asia** with polluted air.
- **Bangladesh** in particular has consistently been the most polluted country in the region for years. In 2023, the country's air had 12x greater PM_{2.5} concentration than the WHO guidelines — and improving it could add 5.5 years on average to resident Bangladeshis' lives. The report estimated the potential gain to be highest in Gazipur, where residents could live 7.1 years longer.
- **China** noted a consistent decrease in pollution over the last decade. China, however, has been somewhat of a notable exception: while the concentration of harmful particles in its air grew by 2.8% in 2023, the air quality has been improving for a decade.
- This is not accidental. Even with the 2.8% increase in 2023, the particulate concentration was still 40.8% lower than what it was in 2014. Among other policies, the country has restricted the number of cars on the roads in large cities such as **Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou**; cut its iron- and steel-making capacity; banned new coal plants in specific regions; and replaced coal-based home heating solutions with gas or electric heaters, the AQLI report noted. Then again, a lot remains to be done. Even if China's air is cleaner than India's, the people of China are also exposed to more PM_{2.5} levels than the WHO's threshold.
- **Worldwide**, the global PM_{2.5} concentration in 2023 was 1.5% higher than in 2022 and almost 5x times over the WHO limit. Indeed, the report identified particulate pollution as the "greatest external threat to human life expectancy" in 2023.

Context: The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has sought exemption from provisions of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, in a submission made to before the Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority.

- The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has sought exemption from provisions of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, in a submission made to before the Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA).
- BDA claims that its functioning as a statutory body created under the Bangalore Development Authority Act, 1976, cannot be equated with that of private real estate developers.
- The submissions were made in response to complaints filed against the BDA over delay in completing various projects, including the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL).
- The BDA claimed that it is duty-bound to act as an arm of the welfare state by providing affordable housing and development schemes to the people of Bengaluru. Subjecting it to RERA's provisions, it contended, would hamper these welfare objectives and restrict its ability to deliver layouts and civic projects.
- However, stakeholders of the NPKL are dissatisfied with the BDA's submissions, calling the move a tactic to deflect attention from the core issue and to buy additional time.
- M. Ashok, secretary of the NPKL Open Forum, alleged that the BDA is well aware that such claims will not hold, and is merely attempting to delay a discussion on the real concern — the prolonged delay in development. "These submissions were already made once in the past, and were not entertained by the then RERA chairman. Even in other States, such claims have not received a favourable response," Mr. Ashok said.
- The BDA has submitted a detailed response, citing multiple reasons that, according to the authority, should justify exemption from RERA jurisdiction.

Statutory mandate

- The BDA states that it is a statutory body formed to carry out planned development of Bengaluru and its surroundings, with powers conferred under the BDA Act. According to its submission, the BDA Act is a self-contained code, empowering it to acquire land, form layouts, allot sites, and provide infrastructure facilities. These activities are governed by rules framed under the BDA Act and cannot be brought under the purview of RERA.
- "Disputes between the authority and allottees, if any, must be resolved under these rules, and not under RERA provisions," the BDA stated.
- Distinguishing itself from private real estate promoters, the BDA stated that it operates not for profit, but in the public interest.
- "Private developers construct layouts and apartment complexes purely for commercial purposes. The BDA, on the other hand, undertakes development as part of its statutory duty and at rates much lower than market prices," according to its submission.
- The authority highlighted that it allots sites at concessional rates to people from economically weaker sections, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, sportspersons,

and ex-servicemen, fulfilling the welfare obligations of the State. It noted that such reservation cannot be expected from private developers, who function only on commercial considerations.

Acquisition hurdles

- Another major reason cited for delays is the complexity of land acquisition. The BDA said land required for projects is acquired under the principle of eminent domain, often leading to prolonged litigation by landowners. It said many parcels of land remain tied up in legal disputes for years, making it impossible to complete projects within fixed timelines.
- “If BDA has to wait until all litigation is resolved before commencing work, projects will be indefinitely delayed and costs will escalate. This will defeat the very objective of providing affordable housing and layouts to the public,” the authority argued.

Public work and financial autonomy

- Apart from housing layouts, the BDA executes large infrastructure projects such as flyovers, underpasses, and road construction.
- It argued that these activities require financial autonomy and flexibility. Bringing the BDA under RERA would mean registering as a promoter, depositing project funds in dedicated accounts, and restricting their use. The authority said such restrictions would severely hamper its ability to undertake city-wide infrastructure projects that go beyond housing.
- BDA pointed out that its finances are audited by the Government of Karnataka, and used not only for layouts but also for major civic projects. “Unlike private developers who use funds only for specific projects, the BDA is entrusted with broader public responsibilities,” according to the submission by BDA.

❖ **Governors can't sit over Bills endlessly: SC judges**

Context: Three of the five judges on the Presidential Reference Bench orally observed along with the States of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal that Governors could not sit endlessly over Bills placed before them for assent.

- Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai and Justices Vikram Nath and P.S. Narasimha separately remarked that Governors could neither delay the wisdom of the legislature indefinitely nor impede the functioning of the Constitution. “No organ can impair the functioning of the Constitution,” Justice Narasimha said.
- Tamil Nadu, represented by senior advocates A.M. Singhvi and P. Wilson, said Governors “cannot assume to be royalty in a Republic”. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for West Bengal, submitted that high offices under the Constitution must work collaboratively and not combatively with each other.
- “When the Constitution is clear that a Governor should act with immediacy, why should he hold back Bills? There is a sense of urgency associated with the Governor’s assent. Legislation is a sovereign act. It cannot wait,” Mr. Sibal emphasised.
- Mr. Singhvi said that Bills were meant to realise the felt necessity of the times.

- Mr. Sibal argued that “absurdity” would follow if the court agreed with the Centre’s argument that Governors had absolute power to withhold State Bills under Article 200 (Governors’ power to assent to Bills).
- Countering the Centre, he said States cannot go in search of political solutions to coax Governors’ assent. Gubernatorial delay thwarts the constitutional scheme, he said. “This Constitution has its genesis in history, but its alignment is with the future... And who decides the future of this country? You five in this case. The future of India is at stake if you give such absurd powers to the Governor,” Mr. Sibal submitted.
- The Bench is hearing a Presidential Reference of May questioning time limits placed on the Governors and the President to deal with State Bills.
- The Reference followed an April 8 judgment pronounced by a two-judge Bench of the apex court in the case of the Tamil Nadu Governor, who had delayed assent to 10 State Bills since 2020. The Division Bench had imposed a three-month deadline for the President and Governors to decide the fate of the Bills. If the Bills were left pending beyond three months, they would be “deemed” to have received assent and become laws.
- The Bench, however, expressed doubts about the court imposing “general” time limits on the President and Governors and granting “deemed assent” to Bills. “What happens if the time limit of three months set by the Supreme Court [in the TN Governor judgment] is not followed by the President or Governors,” Justice Nath asked. He queried why it was “deemed assent” alone. “Why cannot the other options —withholding assent or reference to the President — also be “deemed”.
- Justice Narasimha said time limits could be prescribed in individual cases after considering the peculiar facts and circumstances of each.
- Chief Justice Gavai said a broad brushstroke of a “general” timeline applicable to all cases of delay may amount to overreaching by the judiciary. “Timelines help in maintaining discipline and immediacy. This dispute began with individual cases. Kerala and Tamil Nadu came with their own cases. However, the problem [gubernatorial delay] has proven to be endemic and repetitive,” Mr. Singhvi said explaining the reason for the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment fixing a “general” three-month deadline.
- Mr. Sibal said the sovereign act of the legislation cannot be impaired by a recalcitrant Governor. “He cannot say ‘I choose to sit back and do nothing’. The Governor is not a postman. He has certain play in the joints. If he feels a Bill requires consideration by the President, the Governor can consult lawyers, etc, and refer it...,” he said.

❖ Arlekar moves SC against CM’s role in selecting V-Cs

Context: Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Tuesday urged the Supreme Court to exclude the State Chief Minister from the process to select the Vice-Chancellors for two State-run universities.

- Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar urged the Supreme Court to exclude the State Chief Minister from the process to select the Vice Chancellors (V-Cs) for A.P.J Abdul Kalam Technological University and Digital University Kerala.

- The Governor, who is also the Chancellor of the two State-run universities, said neither the A.P.J Abdul Kalam Technological University Act nor the Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology Act envisaged a role for the Chief Minister in the selection of V-Cs.
- He further indicated that the Chief Minister's involvement in the process would amount to a person judging his own cause, which was barred by the University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations.

'No role for CM'

- "The Chief Minister being the Executive Head of the State is connected with the number of government colleges, managed by the government and affiliated to the university. Therefore, as per UGC regulations he cannot have any role whatsoever in the appointment of Vice Chancellors," the Governor said in an application filed in his capacity as Chancellor.
- The application sought modification of parts of the Supreme Court's August 18 order, which had appointed former top court judge, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, as chairperson of the search-cum-selection committees for the appointments. The order had been intended to break the impasse between the State government and the Governor over the issue.
- The order had also allowed members of the search panel to be drawn from names suggested by both the Kerala government and the Chancellor.

❖ Maharashtra forms panel for Maratha quota; protest ends

Context: The Maharashtra government issued a Government Resolution (GR) announcing the formation of a special committee to facilitate the issuance of Kunbi caste certificates to eligible members of the Maratha community.

- The decision followed marathon negotiations between State Ministers and activist Manoj Jarange-Patil, who had been on a hunger strike at Mumbai's Azad Maidan for five days, demanding reservation for the Marathas under the Other Backward Classes category. Following the announcement, Mr. Jarange-Patil ended his fast.
- "In accordance with the historical references contained in the Hyderabad gazetteer, a dedicated scrutiny process shall be conducted to verify documents and establish eligibility of persons from the Maratha community for Kunbi caste certificates. The committee shall ensure that every claim is assessed in a time-bound and transparent manner," the GR stated.
- Shortly after the announcement, celebrations erupted at the Azad Maidan and the CSMT Square, where thousands of protesters had gathered.
- Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis hailed the resolution and thanked Mr. Jarange-Patil for calling off the protest. "My government has always worked for the welfare of the Maratha community. The Kunbi certification process ensures that eligible individuals can benefit lawfully while maintaining balance with OBC reservation," Mr. Fadnavis said.

❖ FTs can issue arrest warrants, send 'foreigners' to detention centres

Context: The Union Home Ministry has given the Foreigners Tribunals (FT), so far unique to Assam, powers of a first class judicial magistrate. The fresh Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025, notified paves the way to send persons to a detention or a holding centre if they fail to produce any proof that they are “not a foreigner”. This was earlier enforced through executive orders.

- The 2025 order, which replaces the Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964, empowers the FTs to issue arrest warrants if a person whose nationality has been contested fails to appear in person. The order has been notified under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, passed by Parliament in April repealing four other laws.
- According to Assam's Home Department, there were 11 Illegal Migrant Determination Tribunals (IMDT) in the State that were converted to tribunals after the Supreme Court scrapped the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, in 2005. In total, 100 FTs are currently operational in the State.
- The number of FTs was increased after the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published in 2019 in Assam on the orders of the Supreme Court. The NRC, again unique to Assam, excluded 19 lakh out of 3.29 crore applicants and FTs were to give adequate opportunity to the those excluded from NRC to present their case.
- Though the order is applicable across the country, FTs are functional only in Assam.
- In other States, an illegal migrant is produced before a local court.

Curbs on employment

- The order also bars employing foreigners in private undertakings that are engaged in the supply of power or water, in the petroleum sector, in the fields of defence, space technology, nuclear energy and human rights without the Central government's nod.
- “The designated Border Guarding Forces or the Coast Guard shall take steps to prevent illegal migrants attempting to enter into India by sending them back after capturing their biometric information and available demographic details on the designated portal of the Central Government,” the order said. It added that matters related to detection and deportation of illegal migrants settled in the country shall be closely monitored by a nodal officer designated for this purpose by the State government.
- The order states that a foreigner may be refused entry or stay in India, “if he is convicted on charges of anti-national activities, espionage, rape and murder, crime against humanity, terrorist and subversive activity... human trafficking, racketeering in fake travel document and currency (including crypto currency), cyber crime, child abuse or found involved in such offences.”
- The Ministry notified the Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025 exempting Nepal and Bhutan citizens, Tibetans, and Sri Lankan Tamils from the Act.

❖ SJM seeks lower rate of GST on beedi and plastic waste

- The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), the economic wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Tuesday requested Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to reconsider the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on beedi and plastic waste, saying higher tax will affect the people working in this sector.

- In a letter to the Finance Minister, the SJM said that the beedi industry is a major source of employment, especially for women in more than nine States of India.
- Similarly, millions of ragpickers are engaged in collection of plastic waste and an 18% GST reduces incentives for rag-pickers who collect and recycle plastic waste, the SJM said. The GST council is set to meet on September 3 and 4.

❖ Singapore PM Wong begins India visit for partnership talks

Context: Continuing the celebratory activities to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore, Lawrence Wong, Prime Minister of the city-state.

- The External Affairs Ministry said the visit would provide an opportunity to review the “robust” relation between India and Singapore.
- During the three-day visit, Mr. Wong will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the two leaders will inaugurate Phase 2 of PSA Mumbai (Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal).
- Mr. Modi visited Singapore in September 2024, when the two sides agreed to upgrade the partnership to the level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- The visit by Mr. Wong will be observed keenly as it is one of the major incoming visits by a head of government after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed 50% tariffs on India.
- Mr. Wong will hold a closed-door meeting with Indian business leaders. He will also meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The celebratory events to mark the important diplomatic calendar started in January with the State visit by President Tharman Shanmugaratnam.
- Mr. Wong is being accompanied by Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, Acting Minister for Transport and Senior Minister of State for Finance Jeffrey Siow, and Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade and Industry Gan Siow Huang.
- The visit by Mr. Wong comes weeks after the two sides held the third India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR) here on August 13. The ISMR, which saw participation by multiple Ministers from both sides, firmed up the agenda of the visit of the Prime Minister of Singapore.
- The ISMR was structured along six pillars — advanced manufacturing, connectivity, digitisation, healthcare and medicine, skill development and sustainability — that gave a hint of the programme that Mr. Wong would follow during his visit.

❖ COP-30 to focus on known solutions, says its President

Context: Instead of big-ticket announcements, the forthcoming edition of the UN climate summit is expected to focus on “well-known solutions”, with the host country, Brazil, moving to cleave the “negotiations” aspect of climate talks from the “implementation” of agreements.

- The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will hold its 30th Conference of Parties (COP-30) in November, in the Brazilian port city of Belem, a gateway to the Amazonian rainforest.

- With U.S. President Donald Trump having withdrawn his country from the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement for the second time and casting global trade into flux with his tariffs, diplomats and seasoned climate negotiators said that this was a "difficult year and things could go bad" for the COP process.
- However, COP-30 president André Corrêa do Lago, a Brazilian Minister, insisted that there are also "grounds for optimism". Addressing a conclave organised here by the Council on Energy Environment and Water (CEEW), he said: "In the run-up to COP-30, we are trying to de-couple the process of negotiation – and agreements like the UNFCCC are designed for negotiation – from that of implementation."
- The typical process of climate negotiations in most COPs focusses on creating a "text", said Mr. Lago, noting that it was "horribly difficult" to assemble all countries and have them agree on one.

COP-21 Paris Agreement

- The Paris Agreement ironed out at COP-21 in 2015 is considered historic as it committed all countries, not just developed countries, to take action to contain greenhouse gas emissions to keep the increase in average global temperatures from exceeding 2 degrees Celsius and "as far as possible below 1.5C" by the turn of the century. However, scientific assessments suggest that the impact of all countries' current commitments, even if implemented, will still lead to an increase of more than 2.6 C.



UPSC Integrated Course

ADMISSIONS OPEN

**MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES**

**Don't Miss Out!
Secure Your Spot Now!**

**Exclusive
Opportunity!
Limited Seats**



❖ Parliament panel seeks better rural mobile services

Context: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament, headed by Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, has directed India's leading telecom service providers to share details of steps taken to improve the network.

- Expressing concern over poor connectivity of mobile networks in rural areas, the PAC, at a meeting, discussed the subject of "Levy and regulation of fees, tariffs, user charges, etc. on public infrastructure and other public utilities".
- "Today, the Public Accounts Committee deliberated over the audit report that flagged the delay of payments by private providers to the Telecommunications Department due to various reasons. We thoroughly examined the issue," Mr. Venugopal said at the conclusion of the meeting. The members pointed out that the problem was pronounced in border districts, especially in the northeastern States, sources said.
- Connectivity is extremely poor in villages on the India-Nepal border that many residents opted for Nepal networks, one of the members said.
- The four service providers were asked by the panel to take more care to expand their networks in such remote districts. The members also flagged the lukewarm progress made by the National Broadband Mission.

❖ PM Modi receives first Made in India Vikram 32-bit chip

Context: Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw presented Prime Minister Narendra Modi a memento containing the 'Made in India' Vikram 32-bit Processor Launch Vehicle Grade chip at the Semicon India 2025.

- The microprocessor chips were designed and developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh.
- Utilised for space flights, it is an advanced refurbished version of the indigenously designed 16-bit VIKRAM1601 microprocessor, which has been used in the Avionics system of ISRO's launch vehicles since 2009.
- Other than the 'Made in India' chip, the memento also contained 31 more prototype chips created by academic institutions including IIT Jammu, IIT Roorkee, IIT Dhanbad, NIT Durgapur, NIT Calicut and IIT Ropar, among others.
- In his address at the annual semiconductor conference, the Union Minister overseeing technology observed that in the three-and-a-half years since the inauguration of the Indian Semiconductor Mission "the world is looking at India with confidence".
- Elaborating on India's progress in the realm, Mr. Vaishnaw said construction of five semi-conductor units was going on at a rapid pace, with the pilot line of one unit completed.
- Two more units are expected to start production "in a few months from now", he said. "Overall, foundation of the foundational industry is laid very well," he observed.
- Pitching India as a potential manufacturing hub to the participants from the semiconductor ecosystem on Tuesday, Mr. Vaishnaw said, "In these uncertain times, you should come to India because our policies are stable, we have attempted to cover all important aspects of the manufacturing sector."

❖ 'States to 'net gain' via GST rate rejig'

Context: States will remain 'net gainers' of the proposed GST rate rationalisation exercise with their GST revenue, including devolution, estimated to be over ₹14.10 lakh crore this fiscal, as per a SBI Research report.

- It said as was evidenced in the earlier exercise of GST rate rationalisation in 2018 and 2019, an immediate reduction in rates can cause a short-term dip of around 3-4% in month-on-month collections (roughly ₹5,000 crore, or an annualised ₹60,000 crore).
- The Centre proposed a rationalisation of rates and slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) by moving to a two-tier tax structure of 5 and 18% and 40% rate for select few items.
- Currently, GST is a four-tier structure of 5, 12, 18, and 28%. Also, a compensation cess in the range of 1-290% is levied on luxury and demerit goods.
- However, eight Opposition-ruled States have demanded revenue protection or compensation, saying that post the rationalisation, the average revenue loss is expected at about ₹1.5-2 lakh crore.

❖ GST Council approves two-rate tax slab effective September 22

Context: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, during its 56th meeting, decided to revamp the tax structure into a primarily two-rate system, as proposed by the Central government, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

- **Apart from the two rates of 5% and 18%, the new GST system would also include a 40% "special rate" on sin goods such as tobacco and luxury items such as large cars, yachts, and helicopters.**
- The decisions will come into **effect from September 22** for most items, she said. **Only tobacco and tobacco-related products will move to the new structure** at a date to be specified by the Finance Minister.
- The government also calculated that the net fiscal implication of the rate cuts, **based on consumption patterns in 2023-24**, would be ₹48,000 crore. However, the officials clarified that the real implication would be known on the basis of current consumption, and that the rate rationalisation was expected to result in a buoyancy effect, and improved compliance.
- "These reforms have been carried out with a focus on the common man," Ms. Sitharaman said. "Every tax levied on the common man has gone through a rigorous looking into, and in most cases, the rates have come down. **Labour-intensive industries have been given good support.**
- Farmers and agriculture will benefit from the decisions. Health-related sectors will also benefit."
- She said **common-use and middle-class items will see a reduction**, with products such as hair oil, soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, bicycle, table and kitchen ware, and other household articles being moved to 5% from either 18% or 12%. The other items moving down to the 5% rate include namkeens, sauces, pasta, instant noodles, chocolates, coffee, and butter.

- **Twelve specified bio-pesticides, bio-menthol, and labour-intensive items** such as handicrafts, marble, travertine blocks, granite blocks, and intermediate leather goods would move from 12% to 5%. Notably, cement will move from 28% to 18%.
- **No tax on Indian bread:** The Finance Minister further said that items such as ultra-high temperature milk, paneer, and all Indian bread, including rotis, chapatis, and parathas would see their tax rate fall to 0% from the earlier 5%.
- **On insurance services,** individual life insurance policies and individual health policies will move to 0% from 18%. A total of 33 life-saving medicines will move from 12% to 0%, The tax on electric vehicles has been retained at 5%.
- Products such as air-conditioners, all TVs, dishwashers, small cars, and motorcycles of engine capacity less than or equal to 350cc would see their tax reduced from 28% to 18%.
- Buses, trucks and ambulances, as well as all auto parts, would also attract a GST rate of 18%. Spectacles to correct vision would move from the 28% slab to 5%.
- “The long-pending inverted duty structure is being rectified for the manmade textile sector by reducing the GST rate on manmade fibre from 18% to 5% and manmade yarn from 12% to 5%,” Ms. Sitharaman said.
- The inverted duty structure regarding the fertiliser will also be rectified, with the duty on sulphuric acid, nitric acid and ammonia being reduced from 18% to 5%.
- The **special rate of 40% will apply only on particular sin and super-luxury goods such as pan masala, cigarettes, gutka, chewable tobacco, zarda, unmanufactured tobacco and beedi, as well as goods such as aerated water, caffeinated beverages, mid-size or large cars, motorcycles of engines exceeding 350cc, among others.**
- On insurance services, individual life insurance policies and individual health policies will move to 0% from 18%.
- Ms. Sitharaman said that the **GST rate on pan masala, gutka, cigarettes, chewable and unmanufactured tobacco, and beedi would remain at 28%**, in addition to a compensation cess. Once the Centre discharges the loans it had borrowed to compensate States, these tobacco and tobacco-related items will move to the 40% slab.

❖ **Governors must act ‘forthwith’ on Bills, States argue in SC**

Context: States ruled by non-BJP parties argued in the Supreme Court on Wednesday that even a three-month deadline given in the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment may be too long, and State Bills presented to Governors must be assented to by these “titular heads” forthwith.

- West Bengal, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh said the will of the people, which the proposed laws manifest, cannot be sacrificed on the altar of the whims and fancies of Governors. They said sitting over Bills was a quiet disguise for denying assent, but without necessarily having to return the proposed laws to the legislature for reconsideration.
- The three States said that if the Centre wanted them to presume that a high constitutional authority like the Governor would act with integrity while dealing with

Bills, the same courtesy must be extended to State legislatures, which also happened to be high constitutional authorities.

- Appearing before a five-judge Presidential Reference Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for West Bengal, said **Article 200 required the Governor to return a Bill to a State Legislature “as soon as possible” in case he disagreed with it.**
- Mr. Sibal interpreted **“as soon as possible” to mean “forthwith or immediately”.** **“Forthwith’ must apply to Governors and President, who is actually the Union government, while dealing with grant of assent.**
- Bills cannot wait,” he submitted. **The Governor had no business questioning the constitutionality of Bills. He was bound to grant assent if the legislature re-passed them. Later, once the Bills are notified as laws, citizens could test their constitutionality in court,** he said.
- He drew attention to **Article 167, which made it the Chief Minister’s duty to apprise the Governor of laws being contemplated by the State Cabinet. This was done as a part of the pre-legislative process.**
- The senior lawyer said the Chief Minister would meet the Governor for an informal interaction to discuss the crafting of a law and taking in suggestions. Later, once the Bill was passed by the legislature, the Governor was expected to give his assent.
- Besides, Mr. Sibal pointed to the **proviso of Article 254(2) of the Constitution that allowed Parliament to neutralise a repugnant State law by “adding to, amending, varying or repealing” it.**
- Justice Surya Kant observed the proviso acted as a “second filter” on State Bills.
- “But prevention is better than cure, no?” Justice Vikram Nath interjected.
- Mr. Sibal replied there was a presumption of constitutionality associated with Bills passed by the legislature. References to the President by Governors were once rare instances. “Now, Governors create conflict by sitting over Bills for years together. Their doubts about the constitutionality of Bills, especially in the case of re-passed Bills, is bogey... **The power given to Governors to assent, withhold assent or refer State Bills to the President under Article 200 are not discretionary choices, but constitutional routes,**” he responded.
- Karnataka, represented by senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam, said **State Legislatures cannot allow other constitutional authorities to invade upon their legislative powers. He noted that the Centre’s argument that the President and Governors have wide discretionary powers was “fundamentally flawed”.**
- **“In the parliamentary form of democracy, the aid and advice of the Cabinet is central. There cannot be a dyarchy within a State. Governors have to act under the aid and advice of the State government. Governance cannot happen in a constant state of conflict or threat of conflict,”** Mr. Subramaniam submitted.
- Advocate Anand Sharma, a former Union Minister, said **neither the President nor Governors have any role in lawmaking.**

❖ Every fourth adult in State is hypertensive as per NFHS, says Health Minister

Context: Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a significant health concern in Karnataka, with the NFHS-5 report indicating a prevalence of around 25% for women and 26.9% for men in the above-15 age group, higher than the national average, said Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao.

'Silent epidemic'

- The Minister, who inaugurated a sensitisation workshop on hypertension and other non-communicable diseases, said hypertension is a silent epidemic and if left unchecked, it leads to strokes, heart attacks, kidney failure, and premature deaths.
- “NFHS-5 findings show that every fourth adult in Karnataka is hypertensive. This means lakhs of people in our State are living at high risk of chronic illness and sudden medical emergencies, often without being aware of it. The economic burden is also significant - rising hospitalisations, loss of productivity, and financial strain on families,” the Minister said.
- Stating that it calls for urgent collective action - early detection, healthy lifestyle choices, and reliable treatment services, the Health Minister said, “Our government is committed to expanding screening, ensuring medicines at every Health and Wellness Centre, and driving community awareness campaigns.”
- He said the community-level screening under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) will be expanded. “Lifestyle interventions such as diet, exercise, and reduced salt intake will be promoted through awareness campaigns. Besides, we will ensure the availability of essential medicines and diagnostics for hypertension management at all Health and Wellness Centres,” he said.

In childhood

- Oncologist U.S. Vishal Rao, who spoke on childhood hypertension, said no State government is screening children for hypertension in schools. “Studies show a rising trend of hypertension in children, in both urban and rural areas. Factors such as obesity, consumption of oily and junk food, lack of awareness about disease status and sedentary lifestyle contribute to the high burden,” he added.

❖ Total lunar eclipse on the intervening night of September 7 and 8

Context: A total lunar eclipse will occur on the intervening night of September 7 and 8, which will be visible from all parts of the country between 8.58 p.m. and 2.25 a.m.

- According to the Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium, the penumbral eclipse will begin at 8.58 p.m. followed by the partial eclipse, which will commence at 9.57 p.m. on September 7. It added that the total eclipse will begin at 11 p.m.
- While the maximum eclipse is at 11.41 p.m., the total eclipse will end at 12.22 a.m., the partial eclipse and penumbral eclipse will end at 1.26 a.m. and 2.25 a.m. respectively.
- Lunar eclipses occur on a full moon day when the Earth comes in between the Sun and the Moon and when all the three objects are aligned. There are three types of lunar eclipses: total, partial and penumbral.

- A total lunar eclipse will occur when the whole Moon comes under the umbral shadow of the Earth and the partial lunar eclipse occurs only when a part of the Moon comes under shadow of the Earth.

No special equipment

- The Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium said that no special equipment is needed to view the lunar eclipse.
- “It is safe to view through the unaided eye. The public can view this eclipse from their respective places, provided the sky is clear. This eclipse is visible all over India,” it said.
- It further said that demonstration lectures about the lunar eclipse will be organised late in the evening of September 7 at the planetarium. “Any eclipse viewing activity will be subjected to sky conditions during the monsoon period,” it said.

❖ Packaging of sugar in jute bags: HC declines to interfere with policy

Context: Observing that “a judge, based on inputs, cannot assume the role of a supreme adviser to the administration of policies governing innumerable activities of the State”, the High Court of Karnataka has declined to examine the issue on whether the presence of jute batching oil in jute bags, used for packing sugar, leads to any serious health hazard, as well as the correctness of the policy decision to use jute bags.

- The court stated that it is the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC), operating under the provisions of the **Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory Use in Packing Commodities) Act, 1987**, and the experts who will examine the claim regarding the alleged presence of carcinogenic material in jute batching oil.

Not arbitrary

- Also, the High Court said that **making sugar industries compulsorily use 20% jute bags for packing sugar cannot be termed as arbitrary when the apex court, several years ago, had upheld the legality of this policy when the sugar industry was mandated to use 100% jute bags for packing sugar.**
- Justice M. Nagaprasanna made these observations while dismissing a petition filed by the South Indian Sugar Mills Association-Karnataka, Bengaluru, and the Indian Sugar Mills Association, New Delhi.
- The associations had questioned the notifications issued by the **Ministry of Textiles under the 1987 Act, which mandated the use of 20% jute bags for packing sugar.**
- Pointing out that it is for the first time that the petitioners have claimed before the court about certain reports with regard to the alleged presence of carcinogenic material in jute batching oil, the High Court said that it is not inclined to examine these reports as they have to be looked into by the SAC, which meets annually to decide on the use of jute bags.
- Justice Nagaprasanna said that “the jute batching oil, after its usage, is again covered by another thin layer to block perforation and pilferage of sugar or dropping out of sugar, causing moisture of sugar owing to its hygroscopic nature. Since this has been in usage, all of which can be analysed for the ensuing year by the SAC”.

- “By taking oath of office as a judge, an ordinary man turns himself into a man with magic wand and qualifies himself to be an unquestionable authority to advise on policies is inconceivable. It is further trite that the court would not sit in the armchair of those experts who have promulgated such policies and overrule them...,” the High Court observed while declining to accept that the policy on usage of jute bags effected the right of sugar industry to carry on their trade.

❖ Jaishankar meets German Foreign Minister, pushes for EU-India FTA

Context: India and Germany committed on Wednesday to doubling trade and expediting efforts to complete the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement under negotiation, amid uncertainty over whether Europe would follow the U.S. in imposing secondary sanctions on countries for buying Russian oil.

- After talks with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said the two sides discussed the “twin challenges” of economic volatility and political uncertainty, a reference to the U.S. imposition of 50% tariffs and sanctions.
- Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Mr. Wadepful called Russia and China the two biggest challenges to the international world order.
- “We would like the [India-EU FTA talks] to move to a decisive conclusion in the coming days,” Mr. Jaishankar said, referring to the next round of talks between trade negotiators. He added that an FTA would help stabilise the global economy as a “ballast which today the world economy really needs”.
- Indian and EU negotiators have fast-tracked their talks and expect to meet more regularly, possibly every month in order to reach the year-end deadline set by EU President Ursula Von der Leyen and Prime Minister Narendra Modi when they met in February this year. However, as with the India-U.S. trade negotiations, the two sides have differences over issues such as agricultural market access for food and dairy products.
- Another major issue may arise between the two sides if the EU leadership follows U.S. President Donald Trump in imposing secondary sanctions on Indian companies due to the purchase of Russian oil. On Friday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced that Germany and France would push for the U.S. and the EU to enforce sanctions on “other nations whose purchases of oil and gas finance a large part of Russia’s war economy”.
- In New Delhi, Mr. Wadepful did not respond directly to a question about whether Germany would endorse the penalty tariffs against India, but said their intention was to ensure Russia would come to the negotiating table with Ukraine.
- “We have not used tariffs but sanctions that we have imposed on Russia so as to ensure that Russia which has to fund its war will be less able to do so”, he said, adding that while the EU countries did not want to stop countries from accessing the oil they need, Russia should not be able to use “detours” to sell its oil to Europe. In the last round of sanctions, the EU had banned trade with Nayara Energy, a consortium of Russian oil major Rosneft and other companies in India.
- The German Foreign Minister, who arrived in India a day after Mr. Modi’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping made

international headlines, also lashed out at Russian and Chinese “aggression”, and said he welcomed Mr. Modi’s call for a ceasefire in Ukraine during his meetings.

- “China’s increasingly aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific is cause for concern for both our countries,” Mr. Wadephul said, adding, “Security in the Indo Pacific is closely linked to security in Europe.
- Russia’s war of aggression, for us in Germany and Europe, remains the biggest challenge to our security policy.”
- Mr. Jaishankar sidestepped the comments by the German Minister, saying India believed that a “multi-polar world with strategic autonomy can best respond [to economic and political challenges] through more intensive consultations and cooperation among key member states”.

❖ SC has championed the right to dignity through multiple judgments: CJI

Context: Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Wednesday described human dignity as the “soul of the Constitution” which sources and binds together core values such as personal liberty, freedom to choose, equality and fraternity.

- The Supreme Court has championed the right to dignity through multiple judgments to better the lives of women, prisoners, ordinary workers, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised and minority groups over the decades, he said.
- Through its interpretations of the value of dignity, the Supreme Court has ensured that the Constitution remained a living instrument, capable of responding to evolving societal challenges while remaining faithful to its foundational values, the CJI said.
- Chief Justice Gavai was delivering the keynote address at the 11th Dr. L.M. Singhvi Memorial Lecture on “Human dignity as the soul of the Constitution: judicial reflections in the 21st century”.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla; senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, MP; and Vice-Chancellor of the O.P. Jindal Global University C. Raj Kumar spoke on the occasion.
- The CJI said the court had intervened to declare human dignity as a “Constitutional value that remains inviolable, even within the confines of incarceration”.

‘Not just physical survival’

- Thus, the court’s interventions were not limited to ensuring physical survival of the affected persons, but its verdicts had touched upon broader conditions which would enable the aggrieved and disempowered sections of society to lead a life of self-respect, freedom, and opportunity, he said.
- “Human dignity is intrinsically connected to an individual’s autonomy and capacity to make decisions about their own life. It encompasses the freedom to exercise choice, personal agency, and self-determination,” Chief Justice Gavai said.

❖ India, EFTA trade pact to come into force from Oct. 1

- The free trade agreement between India and four-European nation bloc EFTA, which will come into force from October 1, will have legally binding provisions, Switzerland.
- **“For the first time, India has laid down legally binding provisions on trade and sustainable development in a free trade agreement,”** it said in a statement.

- **The European Free Trade Association members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**

❖ Cabinet approves ₹1,500 cr. scheme for critical minerals recycling

Context: The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved a ₹1,500-crore incentive scheme to develop recycling capacity in the country for the separation and production of critical minerals from secondary sources.

- Recycling of critical minerals entails recovery of critical minerals from end-of-life products such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements.
- The **incentive would form part of the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM), which seeks to build domestic capacity and supply chain resilience in critical minerals.**
- Set with a **tenure of six years from FY2025-26 to 2030-31, e-waste, lithium-ion battery (LIB) scrap, and other stock as catalytic converters in end-of-life vehicles would qualify as eligible feedstock.**
- The scheme earmarks **one-third of the total outlay to small and new beneficiaries although beneficiaries may include both large and established recyclers.**
- The government has specified that incentives would be accorded to eligible entities for investments in new units as well as for expansion, modernisation or diversification of existing units.

❖ At least 21,000 children disabled in Gaza war: UN

Context: At least 21,000 children in Gaza have been disabled since the war between Israel and Hamas began on October 7, 2023, a United Nations committee.

- Around 40,500 children have suffered “new war-related injuries” in the nearly two years since the war erupted, with more than half of them left disabled, said the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Reviewing the situation in the Palestinian territories, it said Israeli evacuation orders during the Army’s offensive in Gaza were “often inaccessible” to people with hearing or visual impairments, “rendering evacuation impossible”.
- “Reports also described people with disabilities being forced to flee in unsafe and undignified conditions, such as crawling through mud without mobility assistance,” it said.
- Meanwhile the committee said the restrictions on humanitarian aid being brought into the Gaza Strip were disproportionately impacting the disabled. “People with disabilities faced severe disruptions in assistance, leaving many without food, clean water, or sanitation and dependent on others for survival,” it said.
- The committee said 83% of disabled people had lost their assistive devices, with most unable to afford alternatives such as donkey carts.

❖ Iran increased uranium stock before Israeli strikes: IAEA

Context: A confidential report by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog circulated to member states said on Wednesday that Iran increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels before Israel launched its military attack on June 13.

- The report said that as of June 13, Iran had 440.9 kg of uranium enriched up to 60%, an increase of 32.3 kg since the IAEA's last report in May. The report stated that this figure is "based on the information provided by Iran, agency verification activities between 17 May 2025 and 12 June 2025, and estimates based on the past operation."

❖ Should reservations exceed the 50% cap?

Context:

- The leader of the opposition in Bihar, Tejashwi Yadav, has declared that if voted to power, their alliance would increase reservation to 85%.
- In another development, the Supreme Court has issued notice to the Union government on a petition demanding the introduction of a 'system' similar to the 'creamy layer' for reservations among the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)

What are constitutional provisions?

- Articles 15 and 16 guarantee equality to all citizens in any action by the state (including admissions to educational institutions) and public employment respectively. In order to achieve social justice, these Articles also enable the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or Other Backward Classes (OBCs), SCs and STs. A brief summary of important developments with respect to reservations at the central level is provided in the Table. The reservation in the Centre at present stands as follows — OBCs (27%), SCs (15%), STs (7.5%) and for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), 10%, resulting in a total reservation of 59.5%. The reservation percentages vary from State to State according to their demographic profile and policies.

What have courts ruled?

- The issue arises due to two ostensibly competing aspects of equality — formal and substantive. The Supreme Court in *Balaji versus State of Mysore* (1962) noted that reservations under Articles 15 and 16 for backward classes should be 'within reasonable limits' and should be adjusted with the interests of the community as a whole. The court further ruled that such special provisions for reservation should not exceed 50%. This is seen as an endorsement of formal equality where reservations are seen as an exception to equality of opportunity and hence cannot exceed 50%.
- Substantive equality on the other hand is based on the belief that formal equality is not sufficient to redress the difference between groups that have enjoyed privileges in the past and groups that have been historically underprivileged and underrepresented. A seven-judge Bench in *State of Kerala versus N. M. Thomas* (1975) have broached the aspect of substantive equality. The court in this case opined that reservation for backward classes is not an exception to equality of

opportunity but is an assertion and continuation of the same. However, since the 50% ceiling was not a question before the court, it did not give a binding judgment on this aspect in the case.

- In the Indra Sawhney case (1992), a nine-judge Bench upheld the 27% reservation for OBCs. It opined that caste is a determinant of class in the Indian context. Further, in order to uphold the equality of opportunity, it reaffirmed the cap of 50% for reservation as held in the Balaji case, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The court also provided for the exclusion of a creamy layer within OBCs. In the Janhit Abhiyan case (2022), the court by a majority of 3:2 upheld the constitutional validity of the EWS reservation. It held that economic criteria could be a basis for reservation and opined that the 50% limit set in the Indra Sawhney case was meant for backward classes while the EWS reservation of 10% is for a different category among unreserved communities.

What are the competing arguments?

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his Constituent Assembly speech in November 1948 justified the need to have reservations for backward communities that have been left out in the past. He also opined that reservations should be confined to a minority in order to uphold the guaranteed right of 'equality of opportunity.'
- However, there has been a growing demand for increasing the reservation percentage beyond the judicial cap of 50% to reflect the proportion of backward classes in the population. The demand for a caste census has been strong in order to have actual data about this proportion rather than mere estimates. It must also be noted that as per various government replies in Parliament, 40-50% of seats reserved for OBCs, SCs and STs in the Central government remain unfilled.
- Another contentious issue relates to the concentration of reservation benefits. The Rohini Commission, set up for providing recommendations on the sub-categorisation among OBC castes, has estimated that 97% of reserved jobs and seats in educational institutions have been garnered by just around 25% of the OBC castes/sub-castes at the central level.
- Close to 1,000 of around 2,600 communities under the OBC category have had zero representation in jobs and educational institutes.
- A similar issue of concentration of reservation benefits persist in SC and ST categories as well. There is no exclusion of 'creamy layer' for these communities. In State of Punjab versus Davinder Singh (2024), four judges of a seven-judge Bench impressed upon the Central government the need to frame suitable policies for the exclusion of 'creamy layer' in SC and ST reservations. However, the Central government in a cabinet meeting in August 2024 reaffirmed that the 'creamy layer' does not apply to reservations for SCs and STs.
- Critiques who are against the extension of a 'creamy layer' to SCs and STs argue that the vacancies for these communities are anyway not fully filled. Therefore, the question of a 'creamy layer' within such communities usurping the opportunities of even more marginalized castes does not arise. It is also likely that the exclusion of a 'creamy layer' based on any criteria will result in an even more increased backlog of vacancies. There is also a fear that such backlog vacancies may be converted in the long run to unreserved seats thereby depriving the SCs and STs of their rightful share of opportunities.

What can be the way forward?

- Right to equality of opportunity is a fundamental right and an increase in reservation up to 85% may be seen as violating such right.
- Nevertheless, substantive equality through affirmative action is required to uplift the underprivileged. Based on empirical data of the ensuing Census in 2027, which will also enumerate backward castes, there must be wide ranging discussions with all stakeholders to arrive at a suitable level of reservation. Equally important is to implement sub-categorisation among the OBCs as per the Rohini Commission report based on Census data. With respect to SCs and STs, as demanded in the plea before the Supreme Court, a 'two-tier' reservation system may be considered. Under such a scheme, priority would be given to more marginalised sections before extending it to those who are relatively well-off within those communities. These measures would ensure that benefits of reservation reach the more marginalised among the underprivileged in successive generations.
- It must also be borne in mind that considering the opportunities available in the public sector and the young population of our country, any scheme of reservation would not meet the aspirations of large sections of the society. There must be sincere efforts to provide suitable skill development mechanisms that would enable our youth to be gainfully employed.

❖ Auto, pharma sectors cheer GST slabs; airlines say wings clipped

Context: While the goods and services tax (GST) rate changes authorised by the GST Council brought cheer to the auto, insurance, consumer appliances, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy sectors, among others, some of that was tinged with reproach. A few sectors are outright upset with the tax changes.

UNCHANGED RATES

Gold & silver at 3%	Electric vehicles at 5%
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted, of sale value not exceeding ₹2,500 per piece at 5%	Footwear of sale value exceeding ₹2,500 per pair at 18%



Major reductions in GST revamp

A category-wise list of items whose prices are set to change. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the decisions would come into effect from Sept. 22 for most items



FOOD

Item	Existing GST rate	New rate
Ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk	5%	0%
Butter, ghee, cheese, and dairy spreads	12%	5%
Dates, mangoes, citrus and other fruits	12%	5%
Vegetable products	18%	5%
Fish fats and oils	12%	5%
Refined sugar goods	12%	5%
Chocolates and cocoa products	18%	5%

Item	Existing GST rate	New rate
Cereals and cereal	18%	5%
Pastry, biscuits, and cakes	18%	5%
Nuts	12%	5%
Coffee and coffee extracts	18%	5%
Ice cream and other edible ice	18%	5%
Paratha, parotta and other Indian breads	18%	0%
Pan masala*	28%	40%
Soya milk drinks	12%	5%



AUTOMOBILE

Item	Existing GST rate	New rate
Motor vehicles	28%	18%
Motorcycles of engine capacity exceeding 350 cc	28%	40%
Bicycles and other cycles	12%	5%



CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Item	Existing GST rate	New rate
Air conditioners, dishwashers, television sets, monitors	28%	18%

- **The airlines** slammed the higher GST on non-economy seats.
- **Vegetable oil producers** called for the resolution of the inverted duty structure on edible oils, which means that the GST rate on raw materials in their industry is higher than the rate on the finished product. This mismatch was something that the Council corrected for the fertilizer and man-made textiles industries.
- The increase in the GST rate for labour charges, from 12% to 18%, has also led to some resistance, with small entrepreneurs saying that they would be hit hard by the change.

Mixed response

- While the **textile industry** has welcomed the revision of GST rates for both man-made fibre and cotton sectors, it has also expressed its disappointment over the 18% duty for garments priced above ₹2,500 each.

HEALTHCARE			EDUCATION			TOBACCO			RENEWABLE ENERGY			SERVICES					
Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate			
All drugs and medicines intended for personal use	12%	5%	Mathematical boxes, geometry boxes and colour boxes	12%	5%	Cigars, cigarettes, and nicotine-based substitutes	28%	40%	All solar-power based devices such as cookers, water-heaters, lanterns	12%	5%	All individual health insurance, along with reinsurance thereof	18%	0%			
Medical apparatus	18%	5%	Maps, charts, and globes	12%	0%	Beedis	28%	18%	Windmills	12%	5%	Air transport of passengers in other than economy class	12% with ITC*	18% with ITC			
PERSONAL CARE			OTHERS			TEXTILES			SPORTS & TOYS								
Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate	Item	Existing GST rate	New rate			
Talcum powder, hair oil, shampoos, toothbrushes	18%	5%	Tables, paper products, cotton and jute handbags, tools	12%	5%	Sewing thread, twine, textile materials, fabrics, carpets	12%	5%	Bio gas plants	12%	5%	Sports gloves, tricycles, dolls, playing cards	12%	5%	Hotel accommodation (₹7,500 or below)	12% with ITC	5% with ITC
Combs, diapers, napkins	12%	5%				Quilted textile materials	12%	18%				Admission to casinos, race clubs, any place having casinos or race clubs, or sporting events like the IPL	28% with ITC	40% with ITC			

- The **Cloth Manufacturers Association of India** pointed out that such garments are also consumed in large numbers by the common man, especially in the form of woollens, wedding wear, traditional clothing, handlooms, and embroidered clothes. Charging 18% GST on these will make them significantly more costly, it said.
- This nuanced cheer can be seen in the auto sector as well. **Auto manufacturers** have welcomed the rate rationalisation for the sector, along with the removal of the GST Compensation Cess applicable on cars. As per the new rates, entry-level and mid-segment cars priced up to ₹14 lakh will see a tax reduction of up to 13 percentage points, while high-end cars with engines above 1200 cc too are set to see an 8 to 10 percentage point cut in their tax rate. Auto dealers, however, have voiced some worries about consumers postponing their purchases until September 22, when the new rates come into force, and have called for greater clarity on what happens to the cess on vehicles they have already bought from manufacturers but not yet sold to customers.
- The **healthcare industry's** reaction has been more unequivocally positive, saying that the decision to reduce GST from 12% to 5% on a wide range of medical products.
- **Consumer appliance makers** were also upbeat about the GST rate cuts, saying they would boost demand, especially in the run-up to the festive season.

❖ Centre and Manipur govt. ink peace pact with Kuki-Zo groups

Context: “Though the agreement speaks about territorial integrity of Manipur, it also mentions political settlement within the Constitution of India. The Constitution speaks about the integrity of the country, not a district or a State.”

- He added that “negotiated political settlement within Constitution of India” is a new inclusion in the agreement as it was not there in the 2008 text when the demand was for territorial councils in Manipur.
- **The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), a conglomerate of civil society organisations, agreed to open the National Highway-2 (Imphal-Dimapur) passing through Kangpokpi district “for the free movement of commuters and essential goods”,** the Ministry said.

❖ Revised SoO pact tightens norms for Kuki-Zo groups

Context: The revised Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement signed between the Ministry of Home Affairs, Manipur government and 24 Kuki-Zo insurgent groups lays down the mechanism to monitor activities of cadres, and requires them to obtain Aadhaar cards.

- According to the 2008 SoO pact, signed in the aftermath of the Kuki-Naga clashes in the 1990s, around 2,200 cadres under the umbrella of the Kuki National

Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) were entitled to a stipend of ₹6,000 per month, which was stopped since ethnic violence erupted in the State on May 3, 2023.

- The revised pact, stipend will be paid only through Aadhaar-linked bank accounts to those members who are present in camps during inspection. Photo identity cards shall be provided by the Manipur Police, it says.

Six camps each

- The agreement states that the **KNO and UPF shall have six camps each, instead of the 14 they operate presently and the camps shall not be located close to populated areas, National Highways and within areas vulnerable to conflict. The camps are to be located at reasonable distance from the Myanmar border as well.**
- A complete list of the cadres will be prepared by the government with name, date of birth, and other details along with latest photographs. Foreign nationals, if any, shall be deleted from the list of leaders and cadres, the pact says.
- The preamble of the pact states that it was mutually agreed to review the implementation of the ground rules, and KNO and UPF shall “completely abjure the path of violence and abide by the Constitution of India, laws of the land, and territorial integrity of Manipur”. “SoO agreement shall be followed by tripartite dialogue with KNO and UPF to pave the way for a negotiated political settlement under the Constitution of India in a time-bound manner,” it says.
- The pact bars groups from having association with any other armed group, within the country or outside; from recruiting new cadres; and carrying out offensive operations against security forces, other groups, and the public. **The Army, Assam Rifles, Central Armed Police Forces and the the State Police shall not launch operations against the groups “as long as they abide” by the agreement.**

❖ State govt. for use of ballot papers in local body polls in future

Context: Amidst allegations of “vote theft” by the Congress, the State government on Thursday recommended to the State Election Commission (SEC) to revert to using ballot papers instead of EVMs in future elections to local bodies, citing the “erosion of confidence” in EVMs.

- The Cabinet also recommended revision of voters' list for such elections. There has been much anticipation in political circles over the long-delayed elections to the taluk and zilla panchayats, besides the newly formed five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority.
- The State government plans to bring in suitable amendments to various provisions of law to bring back ballot papers in local body polls.
- **Amendments would be brought to Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964, and Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, that govern the conduct of elections. He also acknowledged that the State Election Commission (SEC) is an independent body under Articles 243 (K) and 243 (ZA) of the Indian Constitution.**

Binding on SEC

- “At this point in time, the Cabinet has made recommendations, which may be accepted or not. However, once we make suitable changes in the laws and rules, it will be binding on the SEC.”

Power to prepare rolls

- In the light of “vote chori” allegations, Mr. Patil also said that the Cabinet has decided to recommend to the SEC to consider revision of voters list for the elections to the local bodies. “Till now, the voters list prepared for the Assembly constituencies were being considered. We are seeking changes in the light of ‘vote theft’ discussions. There have been discrepancies in in the voters list.” The recommendation is to consider revising or redoing the voters list, he added.
- Government sources said that the recommendations for the voters list had come after the SEC sought necessary amendments based on the provisions in the GBA Act. Seeking necessary amendments to the GBA act, the SEC has said that the if the State government did not intend to adopt the Assembly electoral rolls, the SEC may be given power to prepare the electoral rolls for the elections of councillors under GBA Act.
- **It pointed out that the GBA Act is silent with respect to preparation of electoral rolls by the SEC or adopting the Assembly electoral roll. The SEC Commissioner G.S. Sangreshi, in his letter, has also said that the constitutional provisions do not direct the SECs to adopt the Legislative Assembly electoral rolls.**
- He has sought framing of rules related to **Registration of Electoral Rolls by the SEC itself similar to that of Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, framed under The Representation of People’s Act, 1950, or bring amendment to Section 35 of Greater Bengaluru Governance Act regarding preparation of electoral rolls similar to provisions in Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964, and Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1976.**

❖ SEC ready to revert to ballot papers

Context: Following the State Cabinet’s recommendation, the State Election Commission (SEC) has said that it is ready to revert to ballot papers for the panchayat and urban local body (ULB) polls, as per rules.

- The commission will conduct the polls by revising the electoral rolls as per recommended rules. “We have been using ballot papers for gram panchayat polls so far. EVMs were used in ZP/TP and urban local body polls. Now we are ready to use ballot papers for both gram panchayat and ZP/TP polls,” he said.
- Stating that elections to the five corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) will most likely be held in February next year, Mr. Sangreshi said the conduct of Zilla Panchayat (ZP)/ Taluk Panchayat (TP) polls will depend on revision of the electoral rolls. “We will have to see how much time the revision of rolls will take. These elections will be announced after the State government fixes reservations for various constituencies,” he said.
- The ZP/TP elections in Karnataka have been pending since May 2021 owing to a delay in the delimitation of panchayat constituencies and notifying reservation. The

State government in 2022 divested the State Election Commission of its powers to carry out the delimitation exercise and draw up the reservation.

- However, the State government failed to carry out these two exercises in time and thus delayed the polls. **After much persuasion, it did complete the delimitation process in December 2023 but it is yet to notify reservation of seats.**

❖ IIT-Madras tops NIRF rankings; Pradhan criticises 'peer perception' parameter

Context: For the seventh straight year, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras claimed the top overall position in the higher education rankings announced by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). It also remained the country's best engineering college for the tenth straight year.

- The NIRF's methodology, however, came in for some criticism from Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who presented the India Rankings 2025 awards. He was especially skeptical about the 'peer perception' parameter, that carries 10% of marks for the ranking, and suggested that the NIRF should ensure that government-funded institutions do not fall behind because of this yardstick.
- After the 2024 rankings, States and State-run educational institutions had alleged that the rankings reflected "regional bias" as metropolitan education institutions score higher on the 'peer perception' criteria, in comparison to suburban or State-run higher education institutions.
- The other parameters that the NIRF considers are teaching, learning, and resources; research and professional practice; graduation outcomes; and research and inclusivity.
- Mr. Pradhan said he was confident that the NIRF would evolve into one of the best accreditation frameworks by including more parameters such as entrepreneurs created by an institution, involving more data-driven approaches, and including more categories and institutions in the future.
- The top 100 institutions in the overall category comprised 24 State universities, 22 private deemed universities, 19 IITs and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), nine private universities, eight National Institutes of Technology, seven Central universities, five medical institutions, four Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, one college, and the Indian Agriculture Research Institute.
- IISc, Bengaluru topped the universities category for the tenth consecutive year and also stood first in the research institutions category for the fifth consecutive year. IIM Ahmedabad was the best institution for management studies for the sixth consecutive year. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi occupied the top slot among medical institutions for the eighth consecutive year and also topped the rankings in the dental category for the first time.

❖ IISc retains second rank among top 100 HEIs

Context: Several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from Karnataka including premiere institutes, figure among India's top 100 institutions in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)-2025 list released by the Union Ministry of Education.

- Institutions, including the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB), National Institute of Technology Surathkal (NITK), National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, and Mysore and Bangalore universities are on the list.



Six IITs make it to the **best 10** higher educational institutions in the overall ranking

1	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
2	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
3	Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
4	Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
5	Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur
6	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
7	Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
8	All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi
9	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
10	Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK

- IISc has retained its second rank among the top 100 HEIs across the country and best university, and also tops as the best research institute in the country.
- While NITK has got the 54th rank, NIMHANS has secured 60th place among top 100 HEIs.
- Three private institutions Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), JSS Academy for Higher Education and Research and CHRIST (Deemed to be University) have secured 14th, 38th and 96th places, respectively.
- But, among top 100 universities, even as IISc leads, it is followed by MAHE ranked third, JSS Academy for Higher Education and Research at 21st rank, Bangalore University at 65, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) at 62, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) at 63, University of Mysore at 71, NITTE University at 80, and University of Agriculture Sciences Bengaluru (UAS-B) at 95th rank.
- Bangalore University, which ranked 81 among all HEIs in 2024, has improved its ranking to 65 this year.
- “This is a significant achievement which will motivate us to continue striving for academic excellence and to further enhance the quality of education and research at our university,” said Dr. Jayakara S.M., Vice-Chancellor, Bangalore University.
- Despite having 32 State-run universities, only four universities managed to rank in the top 50 public universities in the list.
- The University of Mysore (UoM) has secured 20th rank, Bangalore University (BU) 26th rank, UAS-B 37 and Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) 50th rank.

Degree colleges

- **Meanwhile, four degree colleges — Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru has ranked 34, M.S. Ramaiah Arts, Science and Commerce College, Bengaluru 67, St. Aloysius College, Mangaluru 73, and St. Joseph’s Commerce College Bengaluru has secured 98th rank — figure in the top 100 colleges category. No government-run colleges are on the list.**
- While NLSIU, Bengaluru, has retained its first rank in NIRF Law Rankings-2025 for the eighth consecutive year, IIMB has been ranked second among management colleges in the country.

❖ UAS-B ranked 11th in India, no. 1 in State in agri and allied sectors

Context: The University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore (UAS-B) stands 11th among the total of 75 institutes of higher education and research in agriculture and allied sectors in the country as per the ranking under the National Institutional Ranking Framework.

- While the UAS-B, the oldest agricultural university in the State, is ranked 11th nationally, it tops the State among the agricultural, horticultural, and veterinary universities as well as research institutes. Karnataka has a total of seven universities in agriculture and allied sectors.
- University of Agricultural Sciences-Dharwad, which has been ranked 35 nationally, is the only other agricultural university from Karnataka to figure in the list that has identified the top 30 institutes. Though the State has a slew of ICAR research institutes in the sectors of horticulture, veterinary, and entomology, none of them have figured in the list of 30 best institutes of the country. For the UAS-B, it has been a status quo as it had been ranked 11th in the previous year's ranking too. Incidentally, the UAS-B has secured A+ rating this year from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

❖ Kristu Jayanti secures 34th rank in NIRF 2025

Context: Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University) has been ranked 34th in the Colleges category of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025 released by the Ministry of Education. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced the rankings.

- This marks the highest position achieved by a college from Karnataka in this category, according to the university release. The institution received evaluation across six NIRF parameters, including Teaching, Learning and Resources, Research and Professional Practice, Graduation Outcomes, Outreach and Inclusivity, and Perception. The university has aligned its efforts with national development goals under Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

❖ Bidadi township will be developed into India's first AI-powered township: DKS

Context: The long-delayed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) will be developed as India's first and largest Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered integrated township, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

- Spread across 8,493 acres, preliminary notification for which was issued in March earlier this year, the "work-live-play" model township at Bidadi, about 30 km from Bengaluru, is envisioned as Karnataka's second central business hub, estimated to cost over ₹20,000 crore and will be completed over the next three years, Mr. Shivakumar said.
- "Over 2,000 acres have been earmarked for AI-based industries and ancillaries. The project is expected to create lakhs of new jobs across IT, AI, start-ups, and service sectors. Dedicated skilling centres will train the workforce for AI-driven and future-ready industries," he said.

- **GBIT will include residential spaces, healthcare, education, and cultural facilities. More than 1,100 acres will be reserved for parks and open spaces, making it one of India's most sustainable green cities.**

Compensation package

- Since the project requires 6,731 acres of private land across nine villages, the government has planned compensation under a framework aligned with the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013.**
- **In a first-of-its-kind measure, the government will provide livelihood support** from the date of the final notification until monetary compensation is paid or developed sites are handed over.
- Under the plan, Kushki landowners will receive ₹30,000 per acre annually, Tari landowners ₹40,000, Bhagait landowners ₹50,000, and landless families ₹25,000 per year. The Deputy Chief Minister also assured that habitations in the notified township area will be retained and not acquired.

Better connectivity

- The township will be located 9 km from STRR Road, 11 km from NICE Road, 5 km from the Mysuru–Bengaluru Highway, and 2.2 km from the Bengaluru–Dindigul Highway.
- Financial resources for the project have been secured in advance. Internal funding of ₹2,950 crore has been set aside from Bengaluru Metropolitan Region Development Authority's existing funds, while ₹17,500 crore will be raised externally through financial institutions, backed by government surety.
- In total, the authority has over ₹20,000 crore at its disposal and will begin disbursing compensation once the land acquisition process is completed.

❖ Seven airports operationalised under UDAN scheme connecting 118 routes

Context: Of the nine airports in Karnataka, seven have been operationalised under the Regional Connectivity Scheme — Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (RCS-UDAN).

- As per information by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol to a question in the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, airports at Bidar, Mysuru, Vidyanagar, Hubballi, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, and Shivamogga have been developed under RCS-UDAN, and 118 routes have been operationalised under the scheme.
- “An amount of ₹146.89 crore has been utilised under the UDAN scheme for this purpose. All the seven airports are currently operational. Bidar airport is connected to Bengaluru by Star Air,” he said.
- He added that most of the routes under the scheme, which completed their RCS tenure, have demonstrated financial viability and continue commercial operations.
- “Flight operations on a few routes were discontinued after the expiry of the RCS tenure. To revive these routes, special bidding rounds are conducted to operationalise them,” he added.

- In reply to another question on current status of development of airports in Ballari, Kolar, Kushalnagar, Raichur, and Hassan under the scheme, the Minister said, “Under UDAN 5.2, bids have been received for small aircraft operations (less than 20 seats) for Ballari and Kolar airstrips”.
- No bids have been received for Kushalnagar, Raichur, and Hassan airstrips. “The Ministry of Civil Aviation has requested the State government to provide consent, and confirm the availability of land for the development of these airports. This includes ensuring that the land is provided free of cost and free from encumbrances, and is suitable for operating small aircraft (2B) initially, with the potential for future expansion to category 3C,” he said.
- The Minister added said that the actual timelines for airport projects depend upon various factors, such as land acquisition, mandatory clearances, and removal of obstacles.

❖ ‘India’s birth rate down, first dip in TFR in 2 years’

Context: India’s Crude Birth Rate (CBR), the number of children born per 1,000 people in the population in a year, has declined 0.7-points from 19.1 in 2022 to 18.4 in 2023.

- The country’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen for the first time in two years to 1.9 in 2023, according to the latest Sample Registration Survey Statistical Report for 2023. In 2021 and 2022, India’s TFR remained constant at 2.0.
- The report, released by the Office of the Registrar General of India this week, revealed that the highest CBR was in Bihar at 25.8, and the lowest was in Tamil Nadu at 12. Bihar reported the highest TFR (2.8) among the bigger States and Union Territories (UTs), and Delhi reported the lowest (1.2).
- The report pointed out that 18 States and UTs had reported a TFR of below the replacement level TFR of 2.1. Replacement level TFR denotes the average number of children each woman needs to give birth for one generation to replace the other.
- The RGI released the Civil Registration System (CRS), Sample Registration System (SRS), and Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD) reports for 2021 after a four-year delay in May this year, and in June, the SRS, CRS, and MCCD data for 2022 were released. While the SRS for 2023 has been made public, the corresponding CRS and MCCD datasets are yet to appear on the Census website.
- The SRS 2023 datasets showed that the proportion of the elderly in the country (people above 60) rose by 0.7 percentage points in a year to 9.7% of the population. Kerala has the highest proportion of elderly population at 15%. Assam (7.6%), Delhi (7.7%), and Jharkhand (7.6%) reported the lowest proportion of their respective populations to be above 60.
- The TFR data, which denotes the average number of children expected to be born per woman during her entire span of reproductive period, further showed that all States reporting TFR that is higher than replacement level were in northern India – Bihar (2.8), Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), Rajasthan (2.3), and Chhattisgarh (2.2). The States and UTs reporting the lowest TFR included Delhi (1.2), West Bengal (1.3), Tamil Nadu (1.3), and Maharashtra (1.4).

❖ Singapore backs India on patrolling Malacca Straits

Context: Singapore acknowledged India's plans to patrol the strategically important Malacca Straits.

- The discussion was part of the agenda when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong at Hyderabad House where the two sides signed five agreements, including one to export green energy from India to Singapore through dedicated ports.
- Our cooperation will not remain confined to traditional areas. In keeping with the needs of changing times, advanced manufacturing, green shipping, skilling, civil nuclear energy, and urban water management will also emerge as focus points of our collaboration," said Mr. Modi welcoming his Singaporean counterpart who paid a three-day visit to India.
- A joint statement said the two sides will deepen defence technology cooperation in "quantum computing, AI, automation and unmanned vessels". Both sides will cooperate to enhance maritime security, "submarine rescue" in the "Indo-Pacific" and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, said the statement, adding that "Singapore acknowledges with appreciation India's interest in the Malacca Straits Patrol".
- India is interested in patrolling the Malacca Straits as it is next to the Andaman Sea and said that talks are on. Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore patrol the Straits and India is expecting some kind of synergy among member countries.

❖ Cars get cheaper, festive sales likely to hit top gear

Context: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) overhaul will make cars cheaper this festive season across segments. Entry-level and mid-segment cars priced ₹14 lakh and below will see a reduction up to 13% in GST and cess, making them more attractive to a price-sensitive customer base. High-end cars with engines above 1,200 cc are set to become 5-10% cheaper.

- Small cars that run on petrol, LPG and CNG with engines below 1,200 cc, and diesel cars of up to 1,500 cc and with a length under 4 metres will attract a GST of 18% instead of 28%. The cess of 1% and 3% will no longer be applicable.
- "The benefit is greater for entry and mid-level segment as there is price sensitivity. The news will definitely bring cheer to buyers, and we expect more footfall at showrooms," said Vinkesh Gulati, vice-president, Automotive Skill Development Council, and former president of the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association.
- Unsoo Kim, managing director of Hyundai Motor India Ltd., called the GST revision a move that will "strengthen consumer confidence". The company has 60% of its internal combustion engine portfolio under the 18% slab rate, with the remainder at 40%. All mid-sized and large cars, up to and above 1,500 cc and over 4 metres in length, will attract a higher GST of 40% instead of 28%. But the net savings of 5-10% come from a complete removal of cess, which stood at 17% for passenger vehicles with up to 1,500 cc engines, 20% with over 1,500 cc engines, and 22% for SUVs.
- "Government listened to the automotive industry's long-standing wish list of rationalising GST rates. This will induce the much-needed impetus by boosting consumption and bring momentum to the automotive industry which essentially

remains the pulse of the Indian economy,” said Santosh Iyer, managing director & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India, in a press statement.

- The flat GST on electric vehicles remains unchanged at 5%.
- Higher GST for bikes: However, motorbike enthusiasts have been left disappointed as high-end two-wheelers with bigger engines will invite a higher GST of 40% instead of the prevalent 31% rate that includes 28% GST and 3% cess for bikes with engines above 350 cc.
- There is also small relief expected in vehicle servicing and repair costs as the GST on spare parts has been brought down to 18% from 28%, but due to the varying taxation for different items such as rubber and fibre, the eventual benefit will accrue where there is a net drop.
- The GST on commercial vehicles such as buses and trucks has dropped from 28% to 18%. “This will not only reduce logistics costs for the economy, but encourage customers to upgrade their fleets with modern, fuel efficient and safer trucks and buses,” said Vinod Aggarwal, vice-chairman, EML, and managing director & CEO of VE Commercial Vehicles.
- But dealerships rue that the implementation of the new rates comes into effect three weeks later on September 22. They fear that this will result in some buyers postponing their purchase. Also, due to the removal of cess, dealerships are staring at a loss of ₹2,500 crore because of credit payments made on the cess for the inventory already purchased from automakers.
- Dealers deposit the cess as a credit item at the time of their purchase and make the actual deposit on the GST portal once they sell the car to a buyer.
- There is a lowering of tax on farm equipment too from 18% to 5% for tractors and parts. “These GST reforms will accelerate mechanisation by making tractors, harvesters, balers and implements more affordable, while lowering overall operating costs for farmers,” said tractor and construction equipment maker CNH India’s president & managing director, Narinder Mittal.

❖ White goods makers anticipate a cracker of a festive season

Context: The consumer appliances industry welcomed with enthusiasm the reduction of GST rates on air conditioners and dishwashers and the standardisation of rates for all television variants, especially ahead of the festive season.

- The GST Council slashed rates on air-conditioners and dishwashers from 28% to 18%, while it standardised the rate on all types of televisions to a lower 18%. Previously, the purchase of televisions housed two tax rates — 18% and 28% — depending on the screen size being within or more than 32 inches.

No change for phones

- The council, however, did not alter the GST on smartphones, tablets and laptops. While welcoming the revision for consumer appliances, Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman at the India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA), said, “We also remain hopeful that the rationalisation of GST on smartphones and laptops will be considered in the future, given its potential to improve affordability and strengthen digital inclusion.”

❖ Zero GST is expected to increase penetration of health, life insurance

Context: The healthcare industry has welcomed the zero GST on individual health and life insurance policies, calling it a master stroke.

- The GST Council's decision to bring down the GST on individual life and health insurance policies from 18% to zero will make more families opt for medical cover, said analysts and industry executives.
- An insurance cover will ease burden on families when medical inflation is rising sharply and is unchecked, they said.
- **The move made health protection a right, not a privilege.**
- "This progressive reform will directly benefit patients by lowering treatment costs, improving affordability, and expanding access to essential medical technologies,".
- Scrapping the tax on insurance services would mean that insurers would lose access to input tax credits on expenses linked to such policies. Insurers will be required to reverse input tax credits relating to these exempt outputs. This embedded tax could eventually feed into the costing structure, impacting the profits of the companies, they said.
- "The exemption also extends to the reinsurance of these individual policies, ensuring tax neutrality across the risk management chain. However, the benefit is limited to individual covers. Group insurance policies, such as employer-sponsored health or life schemes, will continue to attract 18% GST with no input tax credit available to the employers,".
- "This makes it clear that the policy intent is to directly ease costs for households rather than institutional buyers,".
- **While healthcare services by doctors, hospitals, and diagnostic centres were exempt under the GST regime, the government has announced a series of GST rationalisation measures to promote a health-positive tax regime, the Health Ministry.**

❖ Premium air travel to become costlier; industry anguished

Context: The airline industry has termed the Centre's decision to raise goods and services tax on premium air travel, including premium economy and business class flight tickets, from 12% to 18% "disappointing".

- The revised taxes will come into effect from September 22 and apply both for domestic and international flights offered by Indian and foreign carriers.
- "Aviation has tremendous potential to contribute to India's economic growth, both directly as Indian airlines grow, and indirectly through increased connectivity for travellers and businesses alike. It is therefore disappointing to hear of a decision to increase the GST on non-economy travel with no clear justification," said International Air Transport Association's regional vice-president, Asia Pacific, Sheldon Hee.
- Over the years, this component of tax had more than doubled, growing from the 8.6% rate in 2017 under the service tax regime to 18%, he added.

'Must consider risks'

- While first-, business- and premium economy-class travel is offered by foreign carriers, among Indian airlines, Air India offers business and premium economy travel on domestic and international flights. IndiGo too has introduced business-class seats on flights to Mumbai and Bengaluru from New Delhi as well as to Singapore, Bangkok and Dubai, which will grow to 12 total routes by the end of 2025.

❖ 18% GST on labour charges alarms MSMEs

Context: The GST rate for labour charges (job work) has been increased from 12% to 18% and it is expected to hit hard the Micro, Small, and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs).

- The long-pending demands of the job working/sub-contract industries in the manufacturing sector is the reduction of GST on job work to 5% from 12%. However, the government has increased it to 18%. This will create several challenges for the job working in micro and small-scale industries.
- The Coimbatore District Small Industries Association has urged the government to have a relook at the rates for job work. The government should put in place a system so that lower GST rates for job work benefit the MSMEs that are vendors to larger industries and get only labour charges. The 18% duty will block the liquidity for the MSMEs, it said.

ADMISSIONS OPEN

UPSC Optional Courses

Scan QR
to ENROLL
Now!

- Kannada Literature
- Public Administration
- Anthropology
- Sociology
- History

The graphic features a purple background with a white banner at the top left that says 'ADMISSIONS OPEN'. Below this, the text 'UPSC Optional Courses' is written in large, bold, black letters. To the right of the text, there is a QR code and the instruction 'Scan QR to ENROLL Now!'. On the right side of the graphic, there are five circular icons, each representing a different optional course: Kannada Literature (books), Public Administration (government building), Anthropology (people), Sociology (group of people), and History (ancient ruins). Each icon is accompanied by its respective course name in a colored box.

❖ Centre approves creation of new, independent class of 'environment auditors'

Context: The Environment Ministry has authorised the creation of a new, independent class of “environment auditors” to supplement the work of State pollution control Boards in inspecting and verifying projects for compliance with environmental laws. Private, accredited agencies can also undertake environment impact assessment studies that will then be appraised by expert committees.

- Under the new rules, called the **Environment Audit Rules, 2025**, private agencies can get themselves accredited as auditors. Environment auditors can get licences and be authorised to evaluate project compliance with environmental laws and adherence to best practices in prevention, control, and abatement of pollution.
- “The overall framework for monitoring and compliance within the existing environmental framework is presently supported by the Central Pollution Control Board, the Regional Offices of the Ministry, and the State PCBs/Pollution Control Committees, which are facing constraints in terms of manpower, resources, capacity, and infrastructure.
- These limitations hamper their ability to monitor and enforce environmental compliance across the vast number of projects and industries operating,” said a press statement by the Ministry.
- “This scheme aims to bridge the manpower and infrastructure deficits, thereby strengthening the effective implementation of environmental compliance mechanisms. Furthermore, the scheme is designed to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and credibility in the compliance monitoring process, fostering trust among stakeholders and promoting sustainable environmental governance.”
- Audits undertaken can be used for compliance with Green Credit Rules, under which individuals and organisations can gain tradeable “credits” for afforestation, sustainable water management, and waste management, among other activities.

❖ Renewable energy industry sees boost to domestic manufacturing

Context: The GST Council’s recommendation to reduce the taxation rate on renewable energy devices relating to solar, wind and biogas, and on parts required to manufacture them, from 12% to 5%, has been welcomed by the industry as a step towards spurring domestic manufacturing by easing capital expenditure.

- Furthermore, industry associations stipulate this may translate to potentially lower tariffs for consumers.
- National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) said the move was a “positive step” and adhered to a long-standing request of the industry for a return to status quo.

❖ Jaishankar to join BRICS virtual summit of BRICS nations convened by Brazil to discuss U.S. tariffs: MEA New Delhi.

Context: Meeting convened by Brazil President Lula da Silva to discuss tariffs imposed by the U.S.

Summit would discuss the impact of U.S. tariffs on global trade, and measures to strengthen multilateralism in order to counter the effects of unilateral economic measures.

- The U.S. has imposed 50% tariffs on goods from Brazil, like India, the two countries with the highest levies worldwide. China and South Africa also face high 30% tariffs, and Indonesian goods are levied 19% tariffs, with a waiver for its most important agricultural exports such as palm oil, cocoa and rubber.
- All other BRICS nations including Russia and Iran, which are among the most heavily sanctioned countries, are on the lowest rung of 10% tariffs.
- BRICS is a 11-member grouping of emerging economies.
- India is the next Chair of the BRICS grouping, and will host the summit of countries including Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and new members Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

❖ Meitei group rejects govt.'s SoO pact with Kuki-Zo outfits

Context: The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), one of the largest Meitei civil society groups in Manipur, has rejected the signing of Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with the Kuki-Zo insurgent groups.

- It said the decision taken by the Centre “reflects an undemocratic and hegemonic imposition upon the indigenous people and its elected representatives of Manipur”.
- The Home Ministry and the Manipur government signed the pact with the Kuki-Zo groups on Thursday with “re-negotiated terms and conditions or ground rules”. It comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s expected visit to Manipur on September 13.
- This is his first visit to Manipur since ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people erupted on May 3, 2023.
- The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), a conglomerate of civil society organisations, agreed to open the National Highway-2 (Imphal-Dimapur) passing through Kangpokpi district “for the free movement of commuters and essential goods,” the MHA said.
- The COCOMI, which has been in talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to find a roadmap for peace in Manipur, said the extension of the SoO agreement despite “the series of terrorist and criminal acts” committed by these groups was a decision that ran completely against the interests of the indigenous people of Manipur.
- The COCOMI said the popularly-elected government of Manipur had, through a Cabinet decision on March 10, 2023, unanimously resolved to abrogate the SoO pact. “Under the current President’s Rule, the administration is being run by an authority appointed from New Delhi, which lacks the legitimacy to represent the people of Manipur. The decision to extend the SoO under such circumstances is illegitimate,” COCOMI said in a statement on Friday.
- It said that by extending legitimacy and recognition to the armed groups under the deceptive pact of the SoO, the Government of India had raised serious doubts about its role and responsibility in dealing with narco-terrorism in the region.

❖ HUDCO approves ₹9,303.66 cr. loan for Tunnel Road project

Context: The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has issued a loan sanction letter to Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE), approving a loan of ₹9,303.66 crore for the construction of the first corridor of the Twin Tunnel Road project (North-South corridor).

- HUDCO has instructed the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) B-SMILE to furnish the required supporting documents and execute a formal agreement before the loan is operationalised.
- The North-South corridor, which stretches 16.8 km, is estimated to cost ₹17,780.13 crore.

Interest rate

- According to the sanction letter dated August 4, 2025, reviewed by, the loan will primarily be disbursed on the guarantee of the State government.
- The loan will have an interest rate of 8.95% for the first year, finalised after a rebate of 0.10%.
- The loan has a total tenure of 24 years and 2 months (290 months), which includes a draw period of 4 years and 2 months (50 months), followed by a repayment period of 20 years (240 months). The disbursement of funds will be carried out in mutually agreed phases, according to the letter.

Signboards

- The letter further stipulates that B-SMILE must display signboards at all project sites, particularly in high-visibility locations, clearly acknowledging HUDCO's financial assistance.

❖ Areca growers upset over 18% GST on copper sulphate

Context: The Union government's decision not to reduce the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on copper sulphate has upset arecanut growers and cooperatives marketing arecanut.

Only safeguard

- Technical-grade copper sulphate, the key constituent of Bordeaux mixture, is an essential agricultural fungicide used almost entirely by small and marginal growers. It is the only proven effective safeguard against devastating crop diseases such as fruit rot (Mahali/Kole Roga) in arecanut and fungal diseases in other plantation crops like coffee, cardamom, rubber, and pepper.
- "Since as early as 1910, when Dr. Leslie Coleman first investigated fruit rot disease in arecanut, no fungicide other than copper sulphate used in Bordeaux mixture has been found effective. It is a traditional, proven treatment for many diseases, in addition to being a soil health enhancer. In this context, the continued levy of 18% GST on technical-grade copper sulphate is unjust, insensitive, and unbearable for farmers already reeling under the burden of heavy rains, crop losses, and mounting input costs," A. Kishore Kumar Kodgi, president, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (CAMPCO) Ltd, told The Hindu.

- “We fail to understand the rationale behind taxing technical-grade copper sulphate at 18%, while all other major fertilizers and farm inputs are taxed at only 5%,” Mr. Kodgi said.

Confusion

- Mr. Kodgi said that copper sulphate is listed under Chapter 28 with HSN code 28332500 as a sulphate, which attracts 18% GST. It is also categorised under the same chapter as a micro-nutrient, attracting a 5% GST. “This lack of uniformity, coupled with the absence of a distinct HSN Code for agricultural-grade copper sulphate, has opened the doors for confusion, misinterpretation, and ultimately exploitation of farmers,” he said. Mr. Kodgi said that the cooperative has appealed to the government to fix the GST at 5% on all copper sulphate manufactured under C1B/FCO 1985 licences and used for agricultural purposes. “Introduce a separate HSN Code for technical-grade copper sulphate used in agriculture, clearly distinguishing it from industrial-grade copper sulphate,” he said.
- Mahesh Hulkuli, vice-president of the Shivamogga-based Malnad Areca Marketing Cooperative Society (MAMCOS) Ltd, said that leaders from the cooperative and farm sectors will meet Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman again to apprise her of the need to fix the GST on copper sulphate at 5%.

GST on pan masala

- Referring to GST on pan masala fixed at 40%, the CAMPCO president said: “Since arecanut is the principal ingredient in pan masala, such taxation has unfairly reinforced the false and unscientific notion that arecanut itself is carcinogenic.” Mahesh Puchchappady, president, Puttur-based All India Areca Growers’ Association, said that there is an immediate need to reduce GST on copper sulphate to 5%.

❖ Recent recusals in higher courts send mixed signals on upholding transparency

Context: Recent recusals in a top tribunal, a High Court, and finally, the Supreme Court have sent confusing signals about whether judges must reveal why they choose to walk out of cases.

- At the country’s top court, for instance, August 26 witnessed the inexplicable and sudden recusal of Justice M.M. Sundresh from hearing a bail plea filed by activist and advocate Surendra Pundalik Gadling in the Surjagarh iron ore mine arson case of 2016. The bail case had been with Justice Sundresh’s Bench since July 9, 2024. For well over a year, the case had seen a series of 13 adjournments till the day of the judge’s recusal, on August 26.
- The recusal order does not reveal the reason why the judge chose to suddenly recuse after so many adjournments. The one-line order blandly read: “Subject to orders of the Honourable The Chief Justice, post before another Bench, in which one of us, Justice MM Sundresh, is not a member.”

Notable exceptions

- The impenetrable veil thrown over judicial recusals was partially lifted recently when a judicial member of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), Justice Sharad Kumar Sharma, recorded in an order that he was recusing himself from a

corporate insolvency appeal as a “revered member of the higher judiciary” had approached him for a favourable order for one of the parties.

- Again, a Madhya Pradesh High Court judge, Justice Vishal Mishra, chose transparency by recording in his recusal order that a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA had “attempted to call him” about an illegal mining case.
- However, these two instances, that of the NCLAT member and the High Court judge, are exceptions. The style of Justice Sundresh’s recusal order, non-explanatory and brief, is the general rule.

No formal rules

- There are no formal rules governing recusals by judges. Judges who choose to opt out of a case can do so without giving any reason.
- Justice Kurian Joseph (now retired), in his separate opinion in the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) judgment, had emphasised the need to frame specific rules for judicial recusal. “It is the constitutional duty, as reflected in one’s oath, to be transparent and accountable, and hence, a judge is required to indicate reasons for his recusal from a particular case,” Justice Kurian had observed.
- He had argued that giving reasons for recusing oneself served the legal principle that “justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done”.

❖ New technology, innovation conclave to ‘replace’ Science Congress to be held in Nov.

Context: Signalling a break from the past, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) is set to organise the first-ever Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC) in November.

- The ESTIC may ‘replace’ the Indian Science Congress, the oldest congregation of scientists in India, with a rich history predating Independence. Over the years, it has gone into oblivion, with the last being held in 2023.
- “You could see it as a replacement of the Indian Science Congress,” a senior official.
- Since 2015, the government has nurtured the India International Science Festival (IISF) that is organised by the science-related departments. It has among its organisers Vijnana Bharti — a science popularisation outfit affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.
- “The IISF is more of a festival, a ‘mela’ (fair), and meant to popularise science among students and young people. It is not a forum where scientists and technologists can discuss bigger themes of science, technology and innovation,” said the official.
- This year, the IISF is expected to be held at the Panjab University, Chandigarh.
- The IISF does not usually see participation by international Nobel Laureates, nor does Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit it in person. However, he has made virtual appearances or sent video messages for the IISF.
- The ESTIC website says that Mr. Modi is expected to be present at its inaugural session.
- Traditionally, the Indian Science Congress, organised by the Indian Science Congress Association, Kolkata, and funded by the DST and held in the first week of January, has always had the Prime Minister at the inaugural. However, the last time Prime

Minister Modi appeared in person was at the 107th Science Congress at Lovely Professional University, Ludhiana, in 2020. The following two years, the event was not held, citing the pandemic.

- In 2023, Mr. Modi made an appearance, but only online, at the 108th edition. In 2024 and this year, the Science Congress was not held due to a spat between the DST and the ISCA's executive body over the organisation of the event. The DST has said that it would no longer fund the ISCA.
- The inaugural ESTIC will be held at the Bharat Mandapam here from November 3-4. All the science-related Ministries, ranging from atomic energy to space and information technology, will be involved in it. According to the ESTIC website, there will be 11 thematic technical sessions and 75 exhibition stalls by 'deep tech' start-ups at the event. Nobel Laureate Andre Geim (2010, Physics) is expected to make an appearance. Jean-Yves Le Gall, former president of the French Space Agency, and Professor Masaru Tomita, Keio University, Japan, are among the foreign dignitaries expected.
- In a meeting earlier, Science Minister Jitendra Singh said the ESTIC would "showcase cutting-edge research, deep-tech breakthroughs, and thought-provoking discussions, igniting a new era of scientific leadership towards Viksit Bharat 2047".

❖ India plans to strengthen nuclear deterrence, drone warfare capabilities

Context: India has set out an ambitious plan to reinforce its nuclear deterrence and expand drone warfare capabilities under the Technology Perspective and Capability Roadmap (TPCR-2025), a 15-year blueprint for military preparedness.

- The document highlights measures to sustain credible nuclear deterrence through survivability systems and advanced delivery platforms. While it avoids reference to specific warhead technologies, it outlines future acquisitions such as nuclear command-and-control infrastructure, radiation detection tools, and mobile decontamination units.
- Unmanned ground vehicles for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) reconnaissance are also on the agenda, aimed at strengthening protection against potential nuclear or chemical fallout.
- On the aerial front, the Army has projected requirements for stealth remotely piloted aircraft with ranges of up to 1,500 km and altitudes of 60,000 feet. These drones would carry electronic warfare payloads; nuclear, biological, and chemical detection equipment, and even guide artillery fire.

Loitering munition

- The road map also places emphasis on loitering munitions, designed to carry out precision strikes with artificial intelligence-enabled targeting and reusable warhead systems. In addition, integrated surveillance and targeting drones are expected to boost the battlefield capabilities of mechanised forces.
- India is also preparing for the emerging threat of hostile drone swarms.
- The TPCR-2025 envisages adaptive jamming systems and electronic denial bubbles with a 15 km radius to neutralise such attacks, underscoring the rising importance of electronic warfare in modern combat.

- Officials said the initiatives were closely aligned with the government's self-reliance push in defence production by reducing dependence on foreign imports.
- With the road map, India has signalled a strategic shift towards integrated deterrence — combining nuclear resilience, electronic warfare, and unmanned strike platforms — to strengthen national security in the coming decades.

❖ Not easy to switch to domestic from global, say exporters

Context: Multiple factors, such as low surplus absorption capacity and different specifications, severely inhibit a shift to the domestic market for exporters struggling to sell in the U.S. because of the 50% tariffs.

- Trade experts and exporters believe international market diversification is a more feasible option, but even that cannot happen overnight and would need active support from the government.

Market stress

- “Diverting export products to the domestic market is not a big possibility as there is oversupply. Already, all domestic players are under stress, as you can see from their heavy discounts. International market diversification is definitely a solution, but it is not an immediate option,” pointed out Sanjay Jain, chairman, ICC National Textiles Committee.
- Rationalisation of GST rates could expand the domestic market for some sectors such as footwear, but not for others like diamonds and jewellery, because for every product, the domestic market's capacity to absorb will be different, explained Ajay Sahai of FIEO. “For low-value items like some handicrafts, there might be demand in the domestic market, but for high-value items like carpets, the capacity to absorb may be limited due to high price and because it is not a fast-moving item,” he said.

Long-term solution

- Thirukkumaran Natarajan, chairman of Tiruppur-based Esstee Exports India Pvt. Ltd., said diversifying to domestic markets can only be a long-term solution. “The set-up is different for exports and domestic (demand) as markets are different and overheads are also different, said Mr. Natarajan, who is also the Secretary of Tiruppur Exporters Association.
- Exporters need to keep supplying to their foreign markets to retain the major brands that source supplies from them, said Mithileshwar Thakur of AEPC.
- “If exporters stop supplying to major foreign brands, they may just leave. So, exporters will try their best to retain them,” Mr. Thakur said.
- The domestic market cannot substitute the export market for India, pointed out Biswajit Dhar from the Council for Social Development.
- “India is a hugely import-dependent country. We need the foreign exchange,” he said. Mr. Dhar added that the best way to deal with the loss of U.S. market would be to **diversify to newer markets in Africa, Latin America and Central Asia and the Centre should provide all support.**

❖ 'REITs, InvITs AUM crossed ₹9 lakh cr.'

Context: Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) instruments are becoming popular in India as their combined assets under management have crossed ₹9 lakh crore in the last nine years, as per industry bodies IRA and BIA.

- The combined AUM of REITs and InvITs are expected to touch ₹25 lakh crore by 2030, as per the projections of The Indian REITs Association (IRA) and Bharat InvITs Association (BIA).
- At present, there are five listed REITs in India – Brookfield India Real Estate Trust, Embassy Office Parks REIT, Mindspace Business Parks REIT, Nexus Select Trust, and Knowledge Realty Trust.
- Currently, there are 27 Sebi-registered InvITs, and out of these, five are publicly listed on the stock exchanges, while 23 are privately listed.
- The first InvIT was registered in 2016, while the first REIT got listed in 2019.
- IRA and BIA, which jointly hosted the first product awareness programme in the national capital, highlighted assets under management (AUM) of InvITs and REITs currently stand at around ₹7 lakh crore and ₹2.25 lakh crore, respectively.

-----All the best! -----

Why choose Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy?

