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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

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SEPTEMBER WEEK 4

22-09-2025 TO 27-09-2025

**GST 2.0 A
FESTIVAL OF
SAVINGS**

**BBMP'S E-KHATA
WINS NATIONAL
AWARD 2025**

**QATAR ENABLES
UPI**

**NISAR SENDS
FIRST RADAR
IMAGES**

❖ GST 2.0 a festival of savings: Modi

Context: Hours before the new two-slab Goods and Services Tax regime was rolled out at, Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed it a “bachat utsav”, a festival of savings, and the first step towards “aatmanirbharta”, or economic self-reliance.

- In a televised broadcast to the nation, Mr. Modi drew connections between the simplification of the GST regime from a four-slab to a two-slab system, ease in compliance, and the reduction in prices resulting from it to a larger point about the need for Indians to weed out foreign-made products from their everyday life, and adopt products made in India, boosting the country’s Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- “Be proud to say you are swadeshi, and buy and sell swadeshi goods,” Mr. Modi said, adding that, in the past, India was a prosperous nation on the strength of the world-class commodities produced and traded by it.
- The Prime Minister described the GST reforms, along with income tax exemption of up to ₹12 lakh a year for individuals, a double bonanza for the middle and neo-middle class.
- He said that it would lead to savings of nearly ₹2.5 lakh crore in households because of cheaper goods. He termed it his government’s “nagarik devo bhava” (citizen is akin to god) attitude in public policy. “On the first day of Navratri itself, the country is taking its first steps towards aatmanirbharta,” the PM said. He went on to describe the decision to adopt a GST regime in 2017 after considerable discussions with stakeholders, and with all State governments on board. He provided details of how four slabs in GST had been reduced to two, with many daily use goods, which earlier attracted a tax of 12%, now in the 5% slab.
- “I am happy that our traders and the MSME sector has welcomed the GST next generation reforms. My expectation from the MSME sector is to recall that the basis of India’s past prosperity has been the excellence of its manufacturing, especially of the MSME sector, and adopt the attitude to regain that space and reputation for world-class goods,” Mr. Modi said.
- He made an appeal to boost domestic consumption, said that his government had, over the past 11 years, lifted 25 crore people from below the poverty line.

❖ One-time H-1B visa fee is only for new applicants, says U.S.

Context: White House clarifies that the fee will not be applicable for current visa holders; announcement eases fears that had triggered a surge in last-minute flight bookings to the United States.

- A day after U.S. President Donald Trump hiked H-1B visa fees to \$100,000, the White House clarified that the fee will not be an annual feature, but rather a “one-time” payment that will have to be made by companies for fresh H-1B visa applicants, starting with the “next upcoming lottery cycle”.
- The announcement eased the fears that had triggered a surge in last-minute flight bookings to the United States by Indian H-1B visa holders currently outside the country, after U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick’s earlier remarks indicating that the fee would have to be paid every year.
- However, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt contradicted Mr. Lutnick in a social media post early on Sunday.
- “To be clear: This is not an annual fee. It’s a one-time fee that applies only to the petition. Those who already hold H-1B visas and are currently outside of the country right now will not be charged \$100,000 to re-enter. H-1B visa holders can leave and re-enter the country to the same extent as they normally would: whatever ability they have to do that is not impacted by yesterday’s proclamation,” the Press Secretary said.
- “This applies only to new visas, not renewals and not current visa holders. It will first apply in the next upcoming lottery cycle,” Ms. Leavitt added, clarifying the way the proclamation will be implemented.

Lutnick’s remarks

- During the signing of the presidential proclamation by Mr. Trump, Mr. Lutnick had said, “No more will these big tech companies or other companies train foreign workers. They have to pay the government a hundred thousand dollars and then they have to pay the employee.
- So it’s just non-economical. If you are going to train somebody, you are going to train one of the recent graduates from one of the great universities across our land.” He added, “A hundred thousand dollars a year for H-1B visas and all of the big companies are onboard.”

Rush for tickets

- In its first response on September 20, the Ministry of External Affairs had cautioned that the order would have “humanitarian consequences” due to family disruptions. Soon after the proclamation, several corporate giants, including Microsoft, JPMorgan

Clarity emerges

The White House issued a clarification after an initial announcement on the H-1B visa fee led to panic

- The \$100,000 fee will be a ‘one-time’ payment
- The fee applies only to new applicants. Those applying for renewals or current visa holders need not make the payment
- U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had initially said that the fee would be applied annually, leading to much of the confusion



and Amazon, instructed their H-1B visa holding employees who were outside the U.S. to return before midnight on Saturday and others to remain in the U.S.

- Mr. Lutnick's remarks at the signing ceremony created a rush among H-1B visa holders for last minute purchases of air tickets. The Hindu reported on Sunday that travel agents observed a surge in last-minute flight bookings to the U.S. on Saturday as H-1B visa holders attempted to reach the U.S. ahead of the September 20-21 midnight deadline when the proclamation came into effect. Officials also observed the spike in last-minute flight bookings, following which the Indian government instructed its missions and embassies across the world to provide "all possible help" to Indians trying to return to the U.S. before the deadline.

❖ IAF's iconic MiG-21 fighter to fly into sunset after six decades of service

Context: The Indian Air Force will officially retire its legendary MiG-21 fighter jets on September 26, marking the end of nearly six decades of service for the aircraft widely hailed as the "workhorse" of India's air defence.

- A ceremonial flypast and decommissioning event will be held at the IAF base in Chandigarh and will be attended by senior military leaders and veteran pilots who have flown the jet across generations.
- **Inducted in 1963, the MiG-21 was India's first supersonic fighter, with its maiden squadron — the 28 Squadron at Chandigarh — earning the nickname 'First Supersonics'. Over the years, India inducted more than 700 MiG-21s of different variants, many built domestically by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.**
- The aircraft was the backbone of the IAF till the mid-2000s, playing crucial roles in the 1965 and 1971 wars, the 1999 Kargil conflict, the 2019 Balakot air strikes, and most recently Operation Sindoor. It was in a MiG-21 that Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman (then Wing Commander) shot down a Pakistani F-16 in 2019 before being captured across the border.
- Besides combat successes, the MiG-21 also boosted India's aerospace industry, pushing indigenous manufacturing and technological capabilities to new levels.
- As the MiG-21 squadrons are phased out, the IAF's combat strength will dip to 29 squadrons. However, senior officers have hinted that the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A will step in to replace the ageing fighter in the years to come.

❖ Embassy flags cases of illegal migration by Indian nationals

Context: The Embassy of India in Guatemala has flagged the problem of Indian nationals illegally entering Central American countries to migrate to Mexico and subsequently to the United States.

- Responding to a set of queries raised under the Right to Information Act, 2005, the Embassy said the illegal entry of Indian nationals to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras as a pathway to the United States had been a "complex issue".
- Whenever migrants without a visa or proof of legal entry to Guatemala are arrested by the local police, the Embassy officials help the distressed Indians, providing interpretation and taking care of their well-being, the Public Information Officer (PIO) said.

Illegal entry

- The Embassy did not provide specific figures in response to the RTI query about the number of Indians deported from various prisons and detention centres in Central America and the steps taken by the Embassy against human trafficking from India to Central America.
- The PIO said that one Indian was held in a Guatemala detention centre for eight years on charges of human trafficking. He was released after the Embassy's intervention and sent back to India in September 2022. Another Indian was arrested in March 2023 for entering El Salvador illegally en route to the United States. The Embassy took steps for his release and deportation to India in June 2023.
- An Indian had died on the Guatemalan border on March 8, 2023, while on his way to enter the U.S. illegally, and was buried by the local authority as an anonymous body. On receiving information from his family in India, his body was exhumed in coordination with the local government and the mortal remains were sent to his family in July 2023 for cremation as per religious rituals.
- Saying there was no shelter operated by the Embassy of India in Guatemala, the PIO said that the mission opened in 2011 with very few consular services provided.
- In 2023, the Embassy organised over 100 cultural and commercial events across Guatemala.

❖ U.K., Australia and Canada recognise Palestinian state in a seismic shift

Context: Britain, Australia and Canada recognised a Palestinian state in a seismic shift in decades of western foreign policy, triggering swift Israeli anger.

- Portugal was also to recognise Palestinian statehood later on Sunday, as Israel came under huge international pressure over the war in Gaza triggered almost two years ago by the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack.
- "Today, to revive the hope of peace for the Palestinians and Israelis, and a two-state solution, the United Kingdom formally recognises the State of Palestine," U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a message on X.
- Britain and Canada became the first G-7 countries to take the step, with France and other nations expected to follow at the annual UN General Assembly which opens on Monday in New York.
- "Canada recognises the State of Palestine and offers our partnership in building the promise of a peaceful future for both the State of Palestine and the State of Israel," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney wrote on X.
- It is a watershed moment for Palestinians and their decades-long ambitions for statehood.
- But the move puts those countries at odds with the U.S. and Israel, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacting angrily and vowing to oppose it at the UN talks.
- Calls for a Palestinian state "would endanger our existence and serve as absurd reward for terrorism," Mr. Netanyahu said on Sunday.
- Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy acknowledged at the UN in July that "Britain bears a special burden of responsibility to support the two-state solution".

- Over a century ago, the U.K. was pivotal in laying the groundwork for the creation of the state of Israel through the **1917 Balfour Declaration**.

❖ Can timelines be fixed for Governors?

Context: The Supreme Court is currently hearing a Presidential reference made in May 2025 that has sought the opinion of the Court on 14 questions, primarily surrounding the interpretation of Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution.

What is the current reference?

- The current reference is a result of a Supreme Court judgment in April 2025 (The State of Tamil Nadu versus the Governor of Tamil Nadu & Anr) that had specified timelines for Governors and the President to act on Bills passed by State legislatures. It had held that if the Governor was to withhold assent or reserve the Bill for consideration of the President, contrary to the advice of the State Council of Ministers, he/she should do so within a period of three months. It further held that if a Bill for which assent has been withheld is again passed by the State legislature, the Governor shall assent to such Bill. It had prescribed a timeline of three months for the President to decide on State Bills reserved for his/her consideration. The court had also held that decisions by Governors and the President on such Bills, including delays beyond the prescribed timelines, will be subject to judicial review.
- The government has raised questions regarding the authority of the Court to prescribe timelines when they are not specified in the Constitution.

What does the Constitution say?

- Article 200 of the Constitution lays down that when a Bill, passed by a State Legislature, is presented to the Governor for his/her assent, he/she has four alternatives: (a) may give assent to the Bill (b) may withhold assent to the Bill, that is, reject the Bill in which case the Bill fails to become law; (c) may return the Bill for reconsideration of the State Legislature; or (d) may reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.
- As held by the Supreme Court in various cases including the Shamsheer Singh case (1974), the Governor does not exercise his/her discretionary powers while withholding assent for a Bill. He/she is required to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers. The return of any Bill to the State Legislature for reconsideration is also to be done based on ministerial advice. As explained in the Constituent Assembly by T.T. Krishnamachari, this may be done if the Government feels that the Bill needs modifications. The Governor shall assent to such a Bill if it is passed again by the State Legislature.
- As far as reserving any Bill for consideration of the President, the Governor must reserve certain Bills like those which reduce the powers of the High Court. He/she may reserve certain Bills based on the advice of the Council of Ministers like those that relate to a subject enumerated in the Concurrent List, to ensure operation of its provisions despite repugnancy to a Union Law. It is only under rare circumstances that the Governor may exercise his/her discretion and reserve a Bill where he/she feels that the provisions of the Bill contravene any of the provisions of the Constitution and therefore, reserve it for the consideration of the President.

- The Constitution does not lay down any time limit within which the Governor is required to make a decision with respect to any Bill presented for his/her assent. The main part of Article 200 states that once a Bill is presented to the Governor, he/she 'shall' declare that he/she assents to the Bill or withholds assent or reserves the Bill for consideration of the President. The proviso to the article adds that the Governor may 'as soon as possible' return the Bill for reconsideration of the State legislature.

What are the recommendations?

- The Sarkaria Commission (1987) had stated that only the reservation of Bills for consideration of the President, that too under rare cases of patent unconstitutionality, can be implied as a discretionary power of the Governor. Apart from such exceptional cases, the Governor must discharge his functions under Article 200 as per the advice of Ministers. It further recommended that the President (Central Government) should dispose of such Bills within a maximum period of six months. The Punchhi Commission (2010) had recommended that the Governor should take a decision with respect to a Bill presented for his/her assent within a period of six months.

What are the arguments?

- Article 163(1) of the Constitution requires the Governor to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers except in so far as he/she is required by or under the Constitution to act as per his/her discretion. Article 163(2) further provides that if any question arises on whether the matter is a matter which the Governor is required to act as per his/her discretion, the decision of the Governor in such cases shall be final and shall not be called into question.
- The Centre has argued that the Governor enjoys discretion as per the above Article which cannot be inquired into by the courts and consequently no timelines can be fixed. It also raised objections to the three-month timeframe that has been stipulated for the President to decide on Bills which have been reserved. Article 201 that deals with this matter does not stipulate any timeline. The Centre has maintained that any issues between the elected government in a State, the Governor and the President need to be resolved politically within the framework of the Constitution and that the courts cannot be an adjudicator for every such impasse.
- However, Opposition-ruled States have argued that the Governors in such States have been selectively delaying assent or reserving Bills, against the advice of the Council of Ministers, for the consideration of the President. They have argued that such deliberate delays cannot be termed as discretion and that it disrespects the popular mandate of the people of the State.

What should be the way forward?

- All the issues stated above are in the nature of symptoms. The underlying disease that has plagued our federal set up has been the politicisation of the gubernatorial post. Many political leaders starting from C.N. Annadurai to Nitish Kumar have called for the abolition of the Governor's post in the past. However, as per our Constitutional scheme, there is a need for a nominal head of the State executive just like the President for the Union executive.

- Nevertheless, federalism is also a basic feature of our Constitution and the Governor's office should not undermine the powers of popularly elected governments at the States.
- The Court usually exercises restraint while stipulating timelines for action by constitutional authorities where none is provided in the Constitution. However, when there are unreasonable delays, the Court has stipulated timelines in the past like in K. M. Singh case (2020) where it laid down a three-month timeframe for Speakers to decide on the Tenth Schedule disqualification.
- The Supreme Court has purposively interpreted the words in Article 200 in its judgment in April 2025. It has interpreted that the main part of Article 200 uses the words 'Governor shall' and hence it is not a discretionary power. It relied on its own past judgments including the Nabam Rebia case (2006), the recommendations of various commissions as well as the Office Memorandum of the Home Ministry in 2016 to prescribe the timeline of three months for actions by Governors and the President.
- The Centre and the Governors should follow the timeline prescribed by the April 2025 judgment to uphold democratic and federal principles. Hopefully, the opinion of the Supreme Court in the Presidential reference would also reiterate this position.



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❖ Jaishankar, Rubio meet amid trade, visa tensions

Context: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in an apparent bid by both sides to repair relations ruptured by a number of U.S. actions, including the 50% tariffs on Indian goods and an increase in H-1B visa fees.

- Talks on the sidelines of the **80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** came even as Indian and U.S. trade negotiators prepared for their next round of talks.
- Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Rubio: “Our conversation covered a range of **bilateral and international issues of current concern**. [We] agreed on the importance of sustained engagement to progress on priority areas.
- During his last visit, Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Rubio had held the **Quad Foreign Minister’s Meeting along with their counterparts from Australia and Japan**.
- **No date has yet been announced for the Quad summit, which would bring U.S. President Donald Trump and other Quad leaders to Delhi for the meeting due in November.**
- U.S. President Trump will address the UNGA on Tuesday, while Mr. Jaishankar will address the Assembly on September 27.
- **According to media reports, Mr. Trump is expected to repeat claims on “stopping wars”, including conflicts such as India-Pakistan, Egypt-Ethiopia, Rwanda-Congo, Thailand-Cambodia, Israel-Iran, and Azerbaijan-Armenia.**



❖ Children in urban slums are suffering from moderate child food poverty: Study

Context: A recently-published study to estimate “child food poverty” among children aged between 2 and 5 in urban slums found that they lacked adequate nutrition in energy and protein. Most children in urban slums were suffering from moderate child food poverty and had poor feeding practices.

- Inadequate dietary intake in early childhood can lead to failure of children reaching their growth potential.
- The study, “A Prospective Observational Study to Determine the Energy and Protein Adequacy in Children Aged Two to Five Years in the Urban Field Practice Area of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Bengaluru, India” was published in Cureus, an open access general medical journal.
- Rose Treesa Mathew and Jyothi Jadhav from the Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Bengaluru, are the main authors.

WHO growth charts

- The study was conducted among 110 children selected using a simple random sampling method, and data were collected using a pretested, semistructured questionnaire from October 2024 to December 2024.
- **Malnutrition was assessed by plotting appropriate WHO Growth Charts. Child food poverty was measured using the UNICEF and WHO dietary diversity score. Of 110 participants, the adequacy of nutrition in energy and protein was found in 30 participants (27.27%) and 18 participants (16.36%), respectively.**

- **The proportion of moderate child food poverty was found to be 71 (64.54%). Unhealthy snacking patterns and poor feeding practices were present. Age, parents' education, socio-economic status, type of family, and birth order of the child were found to be significantly associated with nutritional adequacy.**

Updated evidence

- “The study was needed because malnutrition and food poverty remain high among pre-school children in India, even with long-standing government nutrition programmes. Previous research suggested very low adequacy of energy and protein intake in this age group, but there was limited recent data from urban slum populations. This study aimed to provide updated evidence on the quality of diets and associated risk factors among young children in Bengaluru’s slums,” she said.
- “Fewer than 8.69 % met both energy and protein needs. Around two-thirds faced ‘moderate child food poverty,’ meaning their diets lacked diversity.
- Processed snacks like biscuits and chips were common, while fruits, pulses, and meat were less consumed.
- Children from poorer households, nuclear families, and with less-educated mothers were more at risk. Food restrictions during illness further worsened nutrition,” she said.
- She added that the problem is not unique to Bengaluru and similar patterns of inadequate diets and child food poverty are reported across India and in other low-income settings worldwide.

On policymaking

- What should policymakers take as a lesson from it? “Ensure affordable access to protein-rich and diverse foods, not just calories, use anganwadi and community health workers to deliver nutrition education and support to mothers, counter harmful feeding practices and reduce reliance on ultra-processed snacks, consider taxing ultra-processed and junk foods to reduce their consumption,” she said.
- She further suggested introducing pictorial warnings or labels on packaged foods—similar to the veg/non-veg pictograms—to help parents easily recognise “junk” foods and make healthier choices, as well as address the socio-economic roots of food poverty through subsidies, school/anganwadi meals, and poverty alleviation.

❖ BBMP's e-Khata wins National Award 2025

Context: The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) e-Khata initiative has been conferred with the National eGovernance Award 2025 at the 28th National eGovernance Awards held in Visakhapatnam.

- Recognised for its transformative impact on digitising property records, enhancing transparency, and improving citizen service delivery.

❖ **Basic structure: There can be no restriction in a public event on the basis of religion**

Context: The Supreme Court of India recently reaffirmed that secularism is a fundamental principle and part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India.

- While this is a welcome restatement, it is concerning that the Court has to periodically reiterate this foundational aspect of Indian nationhood.
- The need arose from a misguided petition that sought to communalise a moment of celebration for all Indians.
- The Karnataka government had invited International Booker Prize-winning Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq, who is Muslim, to inaugurate the Mysuru Dasara festival at the Chamundeshwari Temple.
- **This festival, a State-sponsored cultural event that is not purely religious, serves as an occasion for all communities to come together and share in the joy of the festival.**
- The petition filed in the Court alleged that Ms. Mushtaq's participation violated **Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, which guarantee freedom of religion.**
- A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta rightly dismissed the petition, clarifying that the **Dasara festival is a State event, not a private religious ceremony.**
- The Court emphasised that the **State cannot discriminate based on religion when organising public events and questioned whether the petitioner had even read the Constitution's Preamble, which unambiguously promotes equality and secularism.**
- The **Karnataka High Court had previously upheld the government's decision, stating that a person of one faith participating in the events of another does not violate anyone's constitutional right.**
- **The constitutional right to practise and profess religion cannot be interpreted as a right to restrict others from participating in a faith's practices. Restricting participation in any public gathering based on religion is indefensible in a pluralistic society. Although some places of worship still limit access to certain groups, such practices remain a source of legal and ethical debate.**
- Those who perceive a threat to their religion from someone who is voluntarily and happily joining its festivities are either cynical or cunning.
- In fact, over many centuries and across different geographies, festivals and pilgrimages have united India's diverse population, often transcending social barriers.

- The acceptance of this shared, mixed cultural heritage is a common thread among all Indian political parties, even amid their disagreements. However, a new group of political opportunists is exploiting this harmony by creating communal rifts, turning the logic of coexistence on its head. As the Supreme Court has demonstrated, these individuals need to be held accountable.

❖ Supreme Court judge says it's high time defamation was decriminalised

Context: The remark mirrors the top court's anxiety over the rampant use of the criminal defamation law, and reopens the question of whether 'defamation of any person by a private person can be treated as a crime, for it does not serve public interest'

- A Supreme Court judge voiced his exasperation at the increasing use of criminal defamation law by private individuals and political parties to get even, highlighting the need "to decriminalise" slur.
- "I think time has come to decriminalise this," Justice M.M. Sundresh remarked
- Less than a decade ago, the **Supreme Court upheld the Constitutional validity of criminal defamation, saying it protected reputation, a part of the fundamental right to life.**
- The top court, in **Subramanian Swamy versus Union of India, in 2016, had concluded that the criminal defamation law was a "reasonable restriction" to the right to free speech and expression enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.**
- Justice Sundresh's single remark, mirroring the court's anxiety over the ramped-up use of the criminal defamation law, reopens the question raised in the Subramanian Swamy case as to whether "defamation of any person by a private person can be treated as a 'crime', for it does not serve any public interest".
- The judge made the oral observation while heading a Bench hearing a petition filed by the Foundation for Independent Journalism, which manages The Wire news website, and a journalist, to quash summons issued to them by a court in a criminal defamation case filed by former Jawarharlal University Professor Amita Singh.
- Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the petitioners, referred to the multiple times the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, had approached the top court to stay summons issued against him by trial courts on the basis of criminal defamation complaints filed by private individuals.
- In January, the top court stayed criminal defamation proceedings against Mr. Gandhi for his remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.
- **In its March 2025 judgment in the Imran Pratapgarhi case, the Supreme Court had quoted that words or acts claimed to be criminally defamatory "must be judged from the standards of reasonable, strong-minded, firm and courageous men, and not those of weak and vacillating minds, nor of those who scent danger in every hostile point of view".**

Case file

Justice M.M. Sundresh's remark reopens the question of whether defamation by a private person can be treated as a crime

■ In the Subramanian Swamy versus Union of India case (2016), the top court had upheld the constitutional validity of criminal defamation, deeming it a 'reasonable restriction' on the right to free speech



■ In recent months, various SC Benches have stayed summons in criminal defamation cases, often making critical comments such as 'do not be so touchy' or 'the court is not a forum to settle political scores'

❖ Justice Kant flags need for evaluation of judges

Context: The Supreme Court judge Justice Surya Kant highlighted the necessity of putting in place a “performance evaluation” mechanism for judges, with specific parameters and guidelines, to gauge and steer workflow on the Bench.

- Justice Kant, who is next in line to be the Chief Justice of India, said he was not trying to be a “school principal” but underscored the value of introspection in every institution.
- The remarks of the judge came while hearing a bail petition in a murder case from Jharkhand.
- “There are judges who work day in and day out. Their disposal rate is outstanding. Unfortunately, there are judges who cannot deliver for reasons good or bad. We do not know. That depends on the circumstances,” Justice Kant noted.
- The judge pointed out the disposal rate for criminal appeals were different from bail cases.
- Disposing one criminal appeal a day after extensive hearing cannot be used as a parameter for deciding on bail pleas. “Judges must know what is the task before them and must deliver. This is the legitimate expectation of the public at large,” Justice Kant said.
- Justice Kant said every jurist must self-evaluate. Cases cannot be allowed to piled up. He also said that adjournments cannot be a solution. Constant adjournments were demoralising, and even dangerous, he added.

❖ 54 vessels are being built for Navy; 10 to join fleet this year

Context: India has set a target of expanding naval strength to over 200 warships and submarines by 2035; exercise to enhance maritime security, build partner capabilities, promote regional cooperation.

- The Indian Navy is undertaking its largest-ever shipbuilding programme, with 54 vessels currently under various stages of construction in Indian shipyards.
- The initiative is central to India’s long-term maritime strategy, aimed at safeguarding national interests, and countering regional challenges from China and Pakistan.
- Positioned as a “first responder” and “preferred security partner” in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the **Navy is advancing India’s “SAGAR” (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.**
- The shipbuilding exercise will strengthen the Navy in enhancing maritime security, build partners’ capabilities, and promote regional cooperation.
- According to senior officials, several ships are nearing delivery, with a few to be commissioned this year. **All 54 vessels are expected to join the fleet by 2030.**
- **India has set a target of expanding naval strength to over 200 warships and submarines by 2035, with the possibility of reaching 230 by 2037.**
- The indigenous drive is being powered by the government’s Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Each project not only strengthens self-reliance in defence manufacturing,



but also generates substantial employment across ancillary industries, an official said.

- **“The Indian Navy has transformed from a ‘Buyer’s Navy’ to a ‘Builder’s Navy’, with significant number of warships under construction in Indian shipyards,”** the senior official noted.
- The Navy is also set to commission up to 10 domestically built warships by December 2025, marking one of the largest single-phase inductions in recent years.

Transition point

- This year also marks a transition point in India’s naval modernisation. On July 1, the **Navy commissioned INS Tamal, a stealth multi-role frigate built in Russia — its last major warship constructed abroad. It was also the eighth Krivak-class frigate inducted over the past two decades.**
- At home, momentum in indigenous shipbuilding continues. The recent delivery of INS Androth, the second in a series of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, underscores the progress. With more than 80% indigenous content, Androth stands as a testament to India’s growing capabilities, said another senior official.
- The Navy’s expanding shipbuilding programme highlights not just an increase in fleet size, but a strategic leap towards achieving long-term maritime self-reliance.

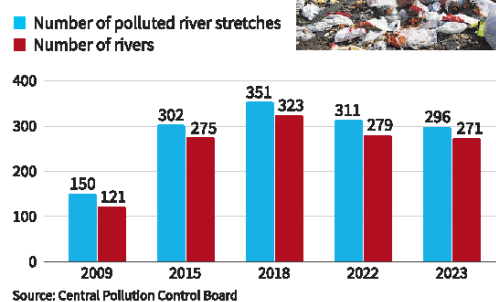
❖ Number of polluted river sites are showing a slight reduction: CPCB

Context: The number of locations in Indian rivers unfit to bathe saw an incremental dip to 807 in 2023 from 815 in 2022, according to a report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) made public. There was, however, a reduction in the number of river locations considered “most polluted”.

- The agency monitors and compiles data in two-year phases on river health — specifically measuring a parameter called biological oxygen demand (BOD) of India’s rivers.
- **BOD is proxy for organic matter dissolved in water with a low number indicating a healthy river.**
- **A BOD greater than 3 milligrams per litre indicates rising pollution and is considered unfit for bathing.**
- **Two continuous locations exceeding the criterion in a single river is counted as a ‘polluted river stretch’ (PRS).**

Cleaner currents

The chart displays contaminated river stretches documented in years when environmental assessment reports were released



PRS of rivers

- In 2023, there were 296 PRS/locations found in 271 rivers. In 2022, there were 311 PRS/locations in 279 rivers.
- Maharashtra (54) had the highest number of PRS or locations followed by Kerala (31), Madhya Pradesh and Manipur with 18 each, and Karnataka (14). However, Tamil

Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand had the highest number — five — of stretches or locations in 'Priority 1'.

- In the 2022 assessment, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of 'Priority 1' river stretches (6), Maharashtra had the highest number of polluted river stretches at 55, followed by Madhya Pradesh (19), Bihar (18), Kerala (18), Karnataka (17), and Uttar Pradesh (17).
- **PRS with a BOD exceeding 30 mg per litre are considered 'Priority 1', meaning, the most polluted and thus needing urgent remediation. In the latest assessment, the number of 'Priority 1' stretches reduced to 37 from 45 over the 2022 assessment.**
- The CPCB network monitors water quality at 4,736 locations across the country including rivers, lakes, creeks, drains and canals.

❖ 'India's H-1B visa dependence on a decline in last 6-8 years'

Context: Though most Indian IT firms still have considerable dependence on H-1B visas as percentage to staff base in the U.S., this proportion has been on the decline over last 6-8 years, industry observers said.

- For instance, 2016 saw 8,473 H-1B visa approvals for the top six tech providers comprising TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Tech, Tech M and LTIMindtree against 43,860 applications while in 2024, these players received 7,105 H-1B visa approvals against 24,269 applications, as per Equirus Securities, a brokerage tracking tech sector.
- Interestingly, so far in CY2025, these firms received 2,144 H-1B visas against a total of 14,056 applications they put in cumulatively, indicating a huge slide in the number of applications from earlier years. Equirus Securities also observed there was a negative growth (CAGR) both in terms of total visa approvals and the total number of applications they submitted between 2016 and 2024 at -2.2% and -7.1%, respectively.
- Avinash Vashistha, chairman and CEO, Tholons, a GCC consulting and IT services firm and former chairman and CEO Accenture India, **"The new visa fee structure will force both Indian tech providers and U.S counterparts to tweak talent strategies and talent deployment to reduce dependence on H1-B visas."**

Reassess dependence

- With higher costs and added friction for sponsoring foreign workers, many firms were already reassessing dependence on U.S. visas and leaning more heavily on Global Capability Centres (GCCs) or Dedicated Delivery Centres (DDCs), observed Sachin Alug, CEO, NLB Services, a staffing solutions firm based in Atlanta.
- Atul Gupta, partner- labour and employment, Trilegal, a full-service law firm, said, "Indian service providers and U.S clients will need to think hard about which roles and positions warrant such a steep investment," Mr. Gupta further said adding, it was quite likely many positions (jobs) would shift to neighbouring countries in the same or similar time zone (like Canada or Mexico) or come back to India.
- Therefore, it opened up additional opportunities for Indian tech firms to boost value proposition in handling more core services from India and strengthening GCC capabilities.

- Prawega Tech Solutions, Founder CEO, Vasishta Haavanur said the \$1,00,000 visa regime would only further shrink operating margins of Indian tech firms.
- Meanwhile, several mid-cap tech firms in India such as Mphasis, Hexaware, Persistent Systems, Cyient, said they have been reducing reliance on H-1B visa in the last couple of years by raising local hiring (in the U.S) and deploying AI. The visa fee hike came up even as Indian IT sector is worried about the possible slapping of tariffs on software exports to U.S.
- “Well, tariffs on software exports is the only thing that is left now. If that happens, even if it is 10% or 25%, it would mean the death knell for India’s current tech ecosystem,” cautioned B.S Murthy, CEO, Leadership Capital, a CXO advisory firm.

❖ France and other countries prepare to recognise a Palestinian state at UN

Context: More than 140 world leaders to descend **on New York for the annual United Nations General Assembly**; one world leader who will miss the gathering is Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President whom Washington denied a visa, sparking rebuke.

- **France and other countries prepared to recognise a Palestinian state** as the UN’s centerpiece diplomatic week got underway, following a rash of Western governments in symbolically endorsing statehood and sparking Israel’s wrath.
- **Recognition by Britain, Canada, Australia and Portugal on Sunday of a Palestinian state piled pressure on Israel** as it intensifies its war in Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands, devastated the enclave and drawn rebukes from allies.
- President Emmanuel Macron has indicated France will follow suit as he prepares to host a meeting with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman on the moribund **two-state solution — Palestinian and Israeli co-existence**.
- “They want a nation, they want a state, and we should not push them towards Hamas,” Mr. Macron said on Sunday. He also said he would make the release of hostages taken by Hamas during its October 7, 2023, attack on Israel a precondition of opening an embassy to the Palestinian state.
- Israel’s Foreign Ministry said the recognition moves do not “promote peace, but on the contrary further destabilises the region and undermines the chances of achieving a peaceful solution.”
- More than 140 world leaders will descend on New York this week for the annual United Nations General Assembly, which will be dominated by the Palestinian question.

Abbas to speak

- One world leader who will miss the gathering is Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President whom Washington denied a visa, along with his officials. That earned a rebuke from the General Assembly, which will be the focus of world leaders’ speeches and protest walkouts this week. **The assembly voted 145 to five to exceptionally allow Mr. Abbas to speak via video link.**

❖ 'Russia to stick to nuclear arms limits for one more year'

Context: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that Moscow will adhere to nuclear arms limits for one more year under the last remaining nuclear pact with the U.S. that expires in February, and he urged Washington to follow suit.

- Mr. Putin declared that the **termination of the 2010 New START would be destabilising and could fuel proliferation of nuclear weapons.**
- "To avoid provoking a further strategic arms race and to ensure an acceptable level of restraint, we believe it is justified **to try to maintain the status quo established by the New START Treaty** during the current, rather turbulent period," Mr. Putin said in televised remarks.
- "Therefore, **Russia is prepared to keep adhering to the central quantitative limitations of the New START Treaty for one year after Feb. 5, 2026.**" Arms control advocates long have voiced concern about the treaty's looming expiration and warned that it could fuel a new round of nuclear arms race and increase the risk of a nuclear conflict.

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❖ India, China 'primary funders' of Russian war: Trump at UNGA

Context: Oft-repeated allegations against India to the floor of the UN General Assembly, U.S. President Donald Trump accused India and China of being "primary funders" of the Russian war in Ukraine.

- Mr. Trump said he was prepared to impose "very strong tariffs" that would end the purchase of Russian oil but wanted European countries to join in the effort. He said that many NATO countries continued to purchase Russian energy, including gas.
- Despite accusations against multiple countries and the fact that China imports more Russian energy than India, the U.S. has singled out India by imposing "penalty tariffs" of 25%, effectively doubling the tariffs on Indian goods.
- "[It is] inexcusable that even NATO countries have not cut off much Russian energy and Russian energy products," he added.

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the main deliberative and policymaking organ of the UN, **comprising all 193 Member States, each with equal voting rights.**

Purpose and Functions

- The UNGA serves as a unique forum for multilateral discussion on a wide range of international issues, including peace and security, development, human rights, and international law.
- It is responsible for key decisions regarding the **UN budget, the appointment of non-permanent members to the Security Council, and the selection of the UN Secretary-General.**
- The Assembly also adopts resolutions that, while not legally binding, carry significant political weight and reflect the collective will of the international community.

Structure and Sessions

- The General Assembly **meets annually in regular sessions from September to December**, with additional special sessions as needed.
- Each session is presided over by a President elected from among the Member States.
- The Assembly's discussions are organized around agenda items, which lead to the adoption of resolutions on various topics.

❖ IAF's Sarang to take part in festivities

Context: The Sarang Helicopter Display Team of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will be performing in Mysuru as part of the Dasara festivities.

- The Sarang team, formed in 2003, is the brand ambassador of the IAF.
- The team has performed over 1,200 shows at more than 386 venues across India and internationally, **operating the home grown Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv built by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).**

❖ Data collection violates right to privacy, petitioner tells court

Context: The linking of caste particulars with Aadhaar, ration cards, electricity RR numbers, mobile numbers, and geo-tagging of households as part of the Social and Educational Survey, being conducted by the State government through the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, violates the **fundamental right to privacy under Article 21**, it was argued before the High Court of Karnataka.

- However, the commission informed the court that there is no compulsion on people to disclose information to the enumerators during the survey.
- “The data collected is stored digitally and can be hacked or leaked, or published without the knowledge of the person concerned and the Government Order reveals that the State intends to geo-tag each household, assign a Unique Household ID, and link caste particulars with Aadhaar numbers, ration cards, mobile numbers, and electricity (RR) connections, all without the backing of any specific legislation,” it was argued.
- **Unlike the Census Act, 1948, which provides for purpose limitation, confidentiality, data retention norms, and penal consequences for misuse**, the impugned State process is purely executive, lacking statutory safeguards, it has been contended on behalf of the petitioners while claiming that digitally collected data cannot be reversed.
- However, the State government has contended that it is “not a caste census”, while terming the claim of the petitioners as “mis-characterisation” of the survey. It was argued that the **State government is collecting data only to identify the eligible persons to provide benefits under various schemes and it cannot be denied such a right under a federal system.**
- Meanwhile, the commission’s advocate told the Bench that **Aadhaar cards are being used only to identify the persons and the commission is not collecting any data from their Aadhaar.**

❖ Committee formed to review land revenue (Second Amendment) Bill

- The Legislative Assembly has constituted a select committee to review the Karnataka Land Revenue (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was taken up for discussion in the recently-concluded Monsoon Session of the legislature.

❖ Criminal past alone cannot be a ground to deny bail: SC

Context: A Bench headed by Justice Dipankar Datta sets aside a 2024 Kerala High Court decision, overturning the bail granted to the five ‘RSS workers’ in the murder of SDPI leader K.S. Shan

Criminal antecedents alone cannot be a ground to deny bail, especially in cases in which the accused have suffered long incarceration as undertrials, the Supreme Court held in a judgment restoring the bail of five alleged Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) workers involved in the murder of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) leader K.S. Shan in Kerala in 2021.

❖ Andhra Pradesh Assembly passes SC sub-classification Bill

Context: The Andhra Pradesh Assembly has passed a Bill to implement sub-classification among the **State's 59 Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, aiming to ensure a fairer distribution of reservation benefits in education and public employment.

- The measure seeks to promote fairness and equitable access to opportunities for all SCs in the State.
- **Currently, SCs are entitled to a 15% reservation in public sector jobs and educational institutions.**
- **Under the proposed classification, Group I – Most Backward (12 castes) will receive 6.5%, Group II – Backward (18 castes) will receive 7.5%, and Group III (29 castes) will receive 1%.**
- The newly introduced Bill seeks to replace the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Sub-classification) Ordinance, 2025 and formalise these provisions through legislative approval.
- This move follows the **2024 Supreme Court judgment that upheld the constitutionality of sub-classification within SCs.**
- In response, the State had appointed a one-man commission, led by retired IAS officer **Rajiv Ranjan Mishra** to recommend sub-classifications among the SCs.

❖ Penalty in proportion: Criminal defamation is incompatible with democratic debate

Context: When the Supreme Court of India upheld the validity of criminal defamation in Subramanian Swamy (2016), reasoning that reputation is part of the right to life, it may not have anticipated the difficulties of this position.

- On September 22, during criminal defamation proceedings against the Foundation for Independent Journalism, Justice M.M. Sundresh of the Court voiced his unease at the growing use of criminal defamation proceedings by private individuals and political actors as an insurance against criticism and as a means of retribution.
- His observation echoes a broader judicial anxiety expressed in recent proceedings against Rahul Gandhi, Shashi Tharoor and other public figures: that the law is being misused. **Criminal defamation proposes imprisonment for speech that injures reputation, a remedy disproportionate to the harm caused.**
- Unlike physical harm, reputational injury can be addressed adequately by monetary damages or injunctions. While protecting dignity may justify strong safeguards, protecting reputation seldom warrants criminal punishment. Since 2016, criminal defamation has become a tool of intimidation.
- Faced such cases under the Jayalalithaa government, and Mr. Gandhi over remarks about political leaders, with trial courts issuing summons that required the Court's intervention.
- The tendency of the lower judiciary to issue summons without weighing the threshold of defamatory speech has aggravated the problem.
- The law has also become an instrument of propaganda: criminal complainants have weaponised statements taken out of context or distorted in circulation, which the law has compounded by attaching the threat of jail time to contested interpretations.

- In this way, criminal defamation has fostered opportunistic litigation. **For example, Subramanian Swamy versus Sonia Gandhi and Mr. Gandhi (2012-14) entangled rivals in a punishing process rather than seeking timely resolution**, while suits filed by Nitin Gadkari and Arun Jaitley against Arvind Kejriwal and AAP leaders kept the Delhi government from performing its duties.
- **For journalists** in towns, criminal defamation complaints from local politicians or business interests create the risk of arrest and onerous travel to distant courts, fostering self-censorship.
- Instead, those genuinely aggrieved can approach civil courts for damages, injunctions or retractions, which address the harm of reputational injury and strike a balance between free expression and protecting reputation.
- Importantly, civil proceedings also reduce the scope for misuse by the powerful to silence criticism.
- **Many countries, including the U.K., have abolished criminal defamation because such laws are incompatible with democratic debate. It is time for India to follow suit.**

❖ **Right to state: Recognition of Palestine is more than just symbolic**

Context: When the state of Israel was declared in Palestine on May 14, 1948, the U.S. recognised it in just 11 minutes. In the years since, most UN members extended recognition to the Jewish nation, which became a UN member in 1949.

- **When the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) declared a state of Palestine in 1988, much of the Global South recognised it**, but powerful western nations stayed away with the position that recognition would come only as part of a negotiated two-state settlement.
- But this week, at the UN General Assembly, the **U.K., France, Canada and Australia finally recognised Palestine**, which shows their fraying ties with Israel and diminishing faith in a coercion-free diplomatic process leading to a final settlement.
- For Palestinians, the western recognition could be seen as a diplomatic respite but comes too late — Gaza has been devastated by Israeli forces; **Jewish settlements and Israeli checkpoints have mushroomed in the West Bank**; and settler violence has displaced thousands of Palestinians over the past two years.
- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly declares that there will never be a Palestinian state, and Washington offers Israel unconditional support.
- Recognition may not have an immediate impact on the ground. Israel's ruling coalition is incapable of even ending the slaughter in Gaza, let alone discuss a two-state solution.
- Yet, this wave of recognition is not just a symbolic act. It shows cracks in the post-1948 pro-Israel consensus in the West. The U.K. played a decisive role in the establishment of the state of Israel.
- **France** armed it in its early years and helped it build nuclear weapons. These powers bear historical responsibility to find a solution to the problem they were a party to from the beginning. And Palestinians have an internationally recognised right to have their own independent, sovereign state.

- **If Israel** does not stop the war in Gaza, which should be the first step, and continues with the settlements in the West Bank, Europe should impose an arms embargo on Tel Aviv. Israel should be warned against annexing the West Bank, which should be treated as a red line.
- Mr. Netanyahu and his extremist Ministers, though internationally isolated, will not be persuaded. But they will not rule forever. A future Israeli leader could abandon Mr. Netanyahu's militarism.
- This forever war and genocidal tag are not helping Israel's interests either, even though it allows Mr. Netanyahu to cling on to power.
- **The recognition of today should serve as a stepping stone for a Palestinian state tomorrow. That is the best chance for peace for Palestinians, Israelis and West Asia.**

❖ SC directs Himachal govt. to be clear on its disaster management measures

Context: The Supreme Court asked the Himachal Pradesh government to come completely clean on its plans for disaster management, its climate change and tourism policies, constructions and industrialisation, details of mega hydroelectric projects, four-lane highways and even the number of trees felled and prosecutions pending district-wise over the years.

- A Bench led by Justice Vikram Nath, in a suo motu case, quoted the Supreme Court's observation that **"humans, not nature, are responsible for the phenomenon such as continuous landslides, collapsing of houses and buildings, subsidence of roads, etc,"** against the backdrop of landslides and flash floods which have wrecked the State during the monsoon season.
- The court has recorded a series of questions prepared for the State government by its amicus curiae, senior advocate K. Parameshwar, including "whether zoning (if any) is done on the basis of **seismic activity/landslides/ green cover/eco- sensitivity**".
- The court has sought if the State has any ecological sites which prohibit industrialisation/bringing up of mega projects.
- The Bench has sought **details of designated protected areas/reserved forests/wildlife sanctuaries/ national parks and eco-sensitive sites** in the State and whether the eco-sensitive zones have been notified across the protected areas.

'Change in green cover'

- It has sought details of the total designated forest area in Himachal Pradesh and how much of the forest area has been diverted for non-forest use in the last two decades.

❖ Modi to transfer ₹10,000 each to 75 lakh women in Bihar under job scheme

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will transfer ₹7,500 crore as the first instalment to 75 lakh women under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rozgar Yojana in Bihar to help them start businesses of their choice.

- An official statement from the Bihar Chief Minister's Office said the Prime Minister would transfer ₹10,000 each to 75 lakh women through direct benefits transfer at a function here.

1.11 crore applications

- **The Rural Development Department, the nodal agency for the scheme, has so far received over 1.11 crore applications from women, while the Urban Development Department will oversee implementation in urban areas.**
- **The scheme aims to create employment opportunities, particularly for rural women, thereby ensuring economic empowerment and strengthening Bihar's economy.**
- Rural Development Secretary Lokesh Kumar Singh has written to all District Magistrates to organise similar programmes at the district, block, cluster-level federation, and village organisation levels, ensuring participation of Jeevika Self-Help Groups.
- **Priority will be given to women from economically weaker sections or those without a permanent source of income. Applicants must be in the 18-60 age group, from nuclear families, and not income tax payees. All Jeevika SHG members are eligible. Unmarried adult women whose parents are no longer alive will also qualify.**
- The State Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, approved the scheme on August 29. Following a six-month performance review, an additional grant of ₹2 lakh will be given to eligible women entrepreneurs. The initial ₹10,000 assistance will not have to be returned.

❖ President lauds women-centric films

Context: At National Film Awards ceremony, Murmu notes recognition of films focusing on women; she calls for adequate representation of women on the jury panels, says films should spread social awareness; receiving Dadasaheb Phalke Award, actor Mohanlal says cinema is the 'heartbeat of his soul'

- President Droupadi Murmu presented the prestigious **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** for 2023 to actor Mohanlal and gave away awards to the other winners at the 71st National Film Awards ceremony.
- "Cinema is the heartbeat of my soul. Jai Hind," Mohanlal said after receiving the country's highest cinema honour.
- Congratulating all the winners, Ms. Murmu spoke about Mohanlal's phenomenal contributions, stating that the accomplished actor effortlessly portrayed emotions ranging from the most gentle to the most intense.
- She noted that good films focusing on women were being made and recognised. "We all see that women, at some level, struggle with patriarchy and prejudiced attitudes.
- Today, the award-winning films include stories of mothers shaping the moral character of their children, women uniting to challenge social norms..., the stories of courageous women who raise their voices against patriarchal structures," she said, praising such filmmakers.
- The President said there should be adequate representation of women on the central and regional panels of the jury.

- Underscoring the importance of cinema in spreading awareness of, and sensitivity to, social issues, particularly among the youth, Ms. Murmu said cinema should not only be popular but also serve a larger public interest. The President commended everyone involved in the award ceremony for encouraging films that focus on children, especially girls. Six child actors won awards this year.

Notable awards

- The best male actor award went to **Shah Rukh Khan for Jawan and Vikrant Massey for 12th Fail**, which was also declared the best feature film.
- **Rani Mukerji** got the best female actor award for her role in Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway.
- The best direction award was bagged by **Sudipto Sen for The Kerala Story (Hindi)**, which also won in the best cinematography (Prasantanu Mohapatra) category.
- **P.V.N.S. Rohit and Shilpa Rao** were adjudged the best male and female singers for the song Premisthunna in Baby (Telugu), which also won for the best screenplay (Sai Rajesh Neelam) along with Parking (Tamil) and Chaleya in Jawan (Hindi).
- The best debut film award went to **Ashish Bende for Aatmapamphlet (Marathi)**, and the best popular film providing wholesome entertainment to Karan Johar-directorial Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani.
- **Meghna Gulzar's Sam Bahadur was the best feature film promoting national, social, and environmental values.**
- Sudhakar Reddy Yakkanti-directed Naal 2 (Marathi) was adjudged the best children's film and Hanu-Man (Telugu) the best film in the animation, visual effects, gaming and comic category.
- The best male actor in a supporting role award was shared by Vijayaraghavan for Pookkaalam (Malayalam) and Muthupettai Somu Bhaskar for Parking (Tamil). Urvashi won the award for the best female actor in a supporting role for Ullozhukku (Malayalam) along with Janki Bodiwala for Vash (Gujarati).
- The best child artiste award went to Sukriti Veni Bandreddi for Gandhi Tatha Chettu (Telugu), Kabir Khandare for Gypsy (Marathi), and Treesha Thosar, Shrinivas Pokale and Bhargav Jagtap for Naal 2.
- The awards for music direction went to G.V. Prakash Kumar in Vaathi (Tamil) and Harshavardhan Rameshwar in Animal (Hindi); and for lyrics to Karsarla Shyam for the song Ooru Palleturu in Balagam (Telugu).
- Deepak Kingrani won the award for the best dialogue writer for the Hindi film Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai. Rongatapu 1982 (Assamese), Deep Fridge (Bengali), Parking (Tamil), Kandeelu (Kannada), Shamchi Aai (Marathi), Puskara (Odia), Godday Godday Chaa (Punjabi), and Bhagavanth Kesari (Telugu) won in the language film categories.

❖ India to submit updated carbon-reduction targets by the beginning of COP30 on Nov. 10

Context: India will submit its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) around the commencement of the **UN Climate Change Conference COP30 in Brazil** on November 10, likely with an increased target for energy efficiency improvement, sources in the Environment Ministry indicated.

- **India last updated its NDCs in 2022**, when it committed to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% of 2005 levels; source half of its electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources; and create a carbon sink of at least two billion tonnes by 2030.
- **Emissions intensity of the GDP refers** to the amount of carbon emitted per unit of GDP and does not mean a reduction in net emissions. As of December 2023, India reported to the United Nations climate-governing body that the emissions intensity of its GDP had been reduced by 33% between 2005 and 2019. This June, India reported installing at least 50% of its power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources.
- **The updated NDCs, or NDC 3.0** as they are called, is expected to reflect the degree of emissions reductions by 2035. So far, only 30 of the 190-odd countries have submitted their NDCs though it is not uncommon for countries to submit their NDCs just ahead of the annual climate talks.
- **The NDCs are of particular significance this year because Brazil, which assumes the COP presidency in Belém**, has stressed that a major effort this year will be to assess what hindered countries from achieving their stated NDCs. All commitments by countries, even if achieved perfectly, cannot stop the globe from heating to an average of 3 degrees Celsius by the century – well short of the Paris Agreement goals.
- Overall, the ambition to undertake significant emission cuts seems muted.

EU target

- The European Union has yet to announce a 2035 target, though it has a long-term goal to be “net zero” by 2050.
- The EU commission this July had proposed an amendment to the EU climate law enabling a 90% cut in emissions compared to **1990 by 2040**.
- Though they were to vote on a target for 2035 last week, France and Germany weighed in to postpone a vote on the matter.
- **The EU is expected to submit its NDCs ahead of COP30 with an indicative 2035 target** in a range from 66.25% to 72.5%, compared with the 1990 levels. Australia this month updated its NDCs to say that it “aimed” to cut emissions to 62%-70% of 2005 levels by 2035.
- The numbers that have been made public so far will feed into a **UN ‘synthesis report’** expected next month that will add up these numbers to show how far off the globe is from the Paris Agreement targets.
- **India is also expected to operationalise the India Carbon Market by 2026** — under which 13 major sectors will be given mandatory emission-intensity targets — and can trade their resulting savings, via emission reduction certificates.

❖ Private sector growth loses some steam in Sept., PMIs show

Context: India's private sector growth remained strong in September but cooled from August's multi-year high as softer demand tempered new orders and failed to translate into faster job creation.

- HSBC's flash India Composite **Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)**, compiled by S&P Global, fell to 61.9 this month from a final reading of 63.2 in August and below a Reuters poll median forecast of 62.9.
- However, it was the second-sharpest rate of expansion in just over two years and was comfortably above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction. The moderation was seen across the economy, with both factory output and services growth cooling from last month.

❖ 'Huge scope for Indian tea sector'

Context: India has all the ingredients to become the superpower of the tea industry, according to the Executive Director of the International Tea Committee, James Suranga Perera.

- Mr. Perera, who spoke recently at the **India International Tea Convention in Kochi**, that India was the second-largest producer and consumer of tea and the third-largest exporter. **Of the total global tea output of 7.074 billion kg and consumption of 6.97 billion kg in 2024, India produced 1.303 billion kg and consumed 1.22 billion kg.**

Largest exporter

- **On exports, Kenya, which is the largest exporter of tea, ships almost the entire quantity it produces and China, the second-largest exporter, consumes locally a substantial volume of the tea it produces. Sri Lanka shipped 245 million kg worth \$1.4 billion.**
- However, **India exported 255 million kg worth almost \$800 million.** Hence, India should focus on quality to get better realisation and explore newer markets such as South America and Africa, Mr. Perera said.

Per capita consumption

- On the domestic front, Indian consumers are increasingly willing to pay more for quality. **While India's per capita consumption is 840 gm a year, Turkey's per capita consumption of 3 kg a year is the highest globally.**
- If the Indian per capita consumption can touch even one kg, it will consume the entire quantity that it produces. "So, the scope is definitely there (for the Indian tea sector)," he said.

❖ IPR Gandhinagar proposes roadmap for India's fusion power plans

Context: Controlled fusion can only happen in extreme conditions, the kind that exists inside stars; there are currently two popular ways to achieve this: inertial confinement and magnetic confinement. India is already invested in the magnetic confinement technique as a member of the ITER project, which is building a reactor in France

- Researchers at the Institute for Plasma Research (IPR) in Gandhinagar have laid out a roadmap for India to achieve fusion power.
- They envisage developing **India's first fusion electricity generator, called the Steady-state Superconducting Tokamak-Bharat (SST-Bharat), with a power output 5x the input.**
- According to the team, it will be a **fusion-fission hybrid reactor with 100 MW of the total 130 MW provided by fission.** The estimated construction cost is ₹25,000 crore.
- The team ultimately **aims to commission a full-scale demonstration reactor by 2060 with an ambitious output-to-input power ratio of 20 and to generate 250 MW.**

Fission to fusion

- **“Fusion is the process where two small, light atoms come together to form a bigger, heavier atom. When this happens, a huge amount of energy is released,”** Daniel Raju, Dean of academics and student affairs at IPR and lead author of the new study, said.
- Nuclear fusion is the reason stars exist and produce heat and light.
- For decades, fission reactors have provided the backbone for nuclear power. Fusion, however, is more attractive than fission because it produces less radioactive waste, eliminating many (but not all) of the costs and headaches of storing hazardous material.
- Controlled fusion can only happen in extreme physical conditions, the kinds that exist in the belly of a star. There are currently two popular ways to achieve this: inertial confinement and magnetic confinement. Inertial confinement uses powerful lasers to blast a capsule with X-rays to initiate fusion. Magnetic confinement works by recreating some of the conditions inside stars.

- **India is already invested in magnetic confinement as a member of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, which is building a large reactor in France. In this method, scientists heat plasma to 100 million degrees C, then gently guide the nuclei with magnetic fields until they fuse. To compare, temperatures in the sun's core reach 15 million degrees C.**

Maintaining the plasma

- The ratio of the output power to the input, called the Q value, determines efficiency.
- “We need Q to be much greater than 1, meaning the reactor gives us more energy than we use to run it. **Right now, the best result has come from the Joint European Torus in the U.K., which got about 0.67, that is, 67% of the energy back,**” Raju said.
- ITER aims to achieve a Q of 10. Future fusion power plants are expected to achieve a value of 20 to be commercially feasible. The doughnut-shaped reactor vessel in which fusion happens is called a tokamak. Its success is measured by how long it can hold the plasma together without dissipating.
- “The longer we can hold it, the closer we get to continuous and reliable fusion reactions,” Raju said.

- In February 2025, **the WEST tokamak in France maintained plasma for a record 22 minutes. The current state-of-the-art facility in India is the SST-1 tokamak at IPR.** According to Raju, “It has managed to produce plasma for about 650 milliseconds, and it is designed to go up to 16 minutes.”
- **SST-1 is a research machine and not meant to generate electricity. SST-Bharat is presented as the next step beyond this experimental base.**

Digital twinning

- To strengthen the new roadmap, the researchers have proposed digital twins — virtual replicas of physical systems that mimic real-time conditions inside a tokamak. This would allow scientists to test new designs and troubleshoot before building them physically. They also suggest machine learning-assisted plasma confinement and programmes to develop radiation-resistant materials. These innovations are still at an early stage, but the roadmap argues they are critical to making progress.
- Globally, however, timelines remain uncertain. **The U.K.’s STEP programme aims for a prototype fusion plant by 2040.** Several U.S. private firms claim they will demonstrate grid-connected fusion as early as the 2030s. **China’s EAST tokamak has already set records for plasma duration. India’s target of 2060 places it on a longer path — one that may be less competitive but more cautious.**
- Funding and policy are crucial. While the EU and U.S. are investing billions of dollars in fusion R&D and private start-ups, India’s budgets remain modest and almost entirely public-sector driven. The absence of Indian private-sector engagement stands out when compared with the global boom in fusion start-ups. Within India’s wider energy policy, fusion also competes with pressing commitments: net zero by 2070, major expansions in solar and wind, and a long-standing nuclear fission programme.

Rough terrain

- M.V. Ramana, Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security at the University of British Columbia, also struck a note of caution on the prospects for fusion.
- “Timelines in nuclear fusion are realistic and often not achievable,” Mr. Ramana emphasised.
- He also pointed out that the economic viability of fusion power is unproven: “The unstated assumption is that electrical power from this process will be affordable at some future date. There is no reason to expect that to be the case.”
- Raju himself acknowledged the cost challenge: “The economic viability of fusion energy will certainly face a huge challenge while competing with fission and other energy sources due to costs in R&D, construction, and operations.”
- Even if commercial viability remains elusive, the researchers argued that fusion R&D will produce dividends in other areas, including radiation-hardened materials, superconducting magnets, plasma modelling, and high-temperature engineering. These capabilities have strategic value, potentially upgrading Indian industry and strengthening technological autonomy. Partnerships with ITER and global firms may also spark innovation and bring project management expertise into Indian labs.

- “Since its [commercial viability hasn’t been demonstrated so far], we are aware that it would be difficult to push it as a potential source of energy in the near future,” Raju said. “Since a lot of private [entities], start-ups, and government bodies across the world are jumping into fusion energy, it makes sense for us to go with optimism and align our domestic fusion programmes with the world.”

❖ The mapping of the India-China border

Context: During the Simla Conference, the delegate from the Republic of China categorically maintained that Tibet had no claim to the territories of the tribal belt (corresponding to present day Arunachal Pradesh) on the Assam side of the Himalayan divide, for they were not ethnically Tibetan and were self-governing.

Official Manchu maps

- **During the 267-year Manchu rule (1644-1911)**, two major maps of the Empire, drawn to scale with coordinate lines, were prepared with the assistance of European Jesuits.
- The first is Emperor Kang-hsi’s map (1721), depicting the territorial bequest of the Tibet-Assam segment to the then Republic of China (RoC). In the map, Tibet was never conceived as a trans-Himalayan state. Its southern boundary extended only upto the Himalayas, for Tibetans never resided on the southern side of the Himalayan divide.
- Consequently, non-Tibetan Tawang, south of the Himalayan divide, although Buddhist, was not depicted as Tibetan territory. Corroborative evidence in this regard comes from the RoC delegate’s statement during the Simla Conference (1913-14), in which he categorically maintained that Tibet had no claim to the territories of the tribal belt (corresponding to present day Arunachal Pradesh) on the Assam side of the Himalayan divide, for they were not ethnically Tibetan and were self-governing.
- Moreover, the RoC delegate did not claim this non-Tibetan tribal-belt on behalf of his country, leaving it to the Indian delegate to include it in Assam as it had already been under its sphere of influence for centuries. The resultant Indo-Tibetan boundary agreement in March 1914, also called the 1914 alignment, was in keeping with Kang-hsi’s map.
- **The second Manchu map that depicts** its territorial bequest to the RoC in the eastern Turkestan-Kashmir segment is Emperor Ch’ien-lung’s map (1761), which shows that Eastern Turkestan (a region in the northwestern part of the now People’s Republic of China) was never conceived as a trans-Kunlun territory (mountain range abutting eastern Turkistan).
- Consequently, the Manchu never claimed the stretch of desolate area south of the Kunlun mountain extending all the way upto the Hindu Kush-Karakoram mountains, lying further south. A proposal was submitted to the Manchu Foreign Office in 1899 suggesting the division of this area on the watershed principle, resulting in the Kashmir-Sinkiang boundary line, which became the 1899 alignment (related to the Aksai Chin region).

Territorial claims to the contrary

- Apart from the official Manchu maps cited above, there is no subsequent official Manchu map. In 1943, when World War II was at its peak, a tottering RoC felt emboldened enough to set aside the Manchu's territorial bequest (1721 & 1761 maps), resulting in the emergence of a claim to large tracts of Indian territory. On being questioned on the new map, the RoC's response was, "The map was but an unprecise draft, to be corrected later on." A similar map was repeated by the RoC in December 1947, at a vulnerable moment, when a newly independent India's energies were directed on its military conflict with Pakistan.
- China retained the same map-making pattern set by its predecessor regime. In a rare moment of candour in Peking in October 1954, Chou En-lai, the then Chinese Premier acknowledged in the presence of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, '...it is a historical question and we have been mostly printing old maps...At least we do not have any deliberate intentions of changing boundaries as KMT (RoC) had. The whole thing is ridiculous....'.
- It has been shown that during his talks with Jawaharlal Nehru on the boundary question in New Delhi in April 1960, Chou En-lai had, more or less, conjured up a narrative in support of the Chinese position. He did so by attempting to pick holes in the evidence in support of India's claim through a clever play of words and assertions, not backed by facts. However, he was cautious in making a reference to evidence of Chinese origin, for he knew that here he could be skating on thin ice.
- He slowly revealed his tactic to resolve the boundary question: that instead of focusing on maps and documents alone, both sides should agree to the use of a set of principles, enunciated by him, for a resolution. This was a trap, as reasoned by former Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale in his book, *The Long Game*. There appears to be no evidence in the public domain to suggest that Chou En-lai had proposed a territorial swap — where India would concede to the Chinese position in the Aksai Chin region in exchange for Chinese acceptance of India's claim over Arunachal Pradesh.
- Instead, the way forward, as agreed to by both parties, was through a package deal that would aim at resolving not only the entire length of the boundary, but also address other pending geopolitical and trade-related matters. To break the impasse, both sides would need to work towards a "...solution which brings no defeat to any side and that it should be reasonable, equitable and friendly...and which is...consistent with dignity and self-respect of both countries." The broad contours of such a solution could possibly lead to the acceptance of the 1899 and 1914 alignments respectively, with a provision for a territorial swap to meet each other's security concerns.

❖ Leh protest turns deadly; Ministry blames activist

Context: Several people were feared dead and many injured in Leh city in the Union Territory of Ladakh after an ongoing protest demanding the constitutional safeguards of Statehood and tribal status for the region bordering China turned violent.

- The Ministry said a hunger strike was started by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on September 10 to press for **Statehood and inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule (tribal status)**.
- It said the Government of India had been actively engaging with the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), and despite a planned meeting on September 26 with the leaders, “a mob guided by Sonam Wangchuk’s provocative statements” caused violence.
- “The **government stands committed to the aspiration of people of Ladakh by providing adequate constitutional safeguards,**” the Ministry said.
- It added that the demands on which Mr. Wangchuk was on hunger strike were an integral part of the discussion of a high-powered committee.
- The Ministry added that **the process of dialogue through the high-powered committee had yielded phenomenal results, such as increasing reservation for Ladakh Scheduled Tribe from 45% to 84%, providing one-third reservation for women in the councils, and declaring Bhoti and Purgi as official languages.** The process for recruitment for 1,800 posts had also commenced, the Ministry said.

❖ Renowned Kannada novelist S.L. Bhyrappa passes away

Context: Well-known Kannada writer and Saraswati Samman awardee S.L. Bhyrappa, 94.

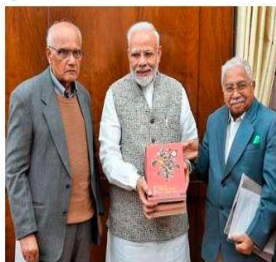
From Hassan



Two of a kind: U.R. Ananthamurthy and S.L. Bhyrappa at the Dharwad Sahitya Sambhrama.



Literary honour: S.L. Bhyrappa being presented with the Saraswati Samman in 2010.



Three's a company: S.L. Bhyrappa and Chandrashekara Kambara with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.



Feted by varsity: S.L. Bhyrappa received an honorary from Mangalore University in 2016. FILE PHOTO

Awards

Award	Year
Padma Bhushan	2023
Padma Shri	2016
Sahitya Akademi (for Daatu)	1975
Saraswati Samman (for Mandra)	2010

- A native of Santheshivara in Channarayapatna taluk of Hassan district, Bhyrappa studied in Hassan and Mysuru districts. He served as a professor of philosophy in various parts of India, including Gujarat and New Delhi, even as he continued to write his novels.
- Bhyrappa was one of the most widely read writers of Kannada and wrote 25 novels, all of which have seen multiple reprints and translated into several languages.
- He announced retirement in 2017 after his novel Uttarakanda, a retelling of Ramayana, from Sita's perspective.
- His novels Parva, Vamsavriksha and Gruhabhanga are considered classics of Kannada literature. Some of his popular novels were turned into equally popular films and television serials.

Widely read

- From his first novel Bheemakaya in 1958 to his 25th and last novel Uttarakanda in 2017, after which he announced his retirement, Bhyrappa remained one of the most popular novelists of Kannada. Each of his novels saw multiple editions and the first novel he wrote when he was 27 is still being reprinted.
- All his novels came to be translated into multiple Indian languages, apart from English. His novels Vamsavriksha, Gruhabhanga, and Parva, a retelling of the Mahabharata, are considered to be classics of Kannada literature.
- He **won the Saraswati Samman award for his novel Mandra in 2010. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2023.**

Retelling epics

- Bhyrappa retold the two epics, the Mahabharata (Parva) and the Ramayana (Uttarakanda), reconstructing them in the social realism mode using the stream of consciousness narrative. In an essay he wrote about researching for Parva, Bhyrappa writes about his travels in North India, visiting the places where the events of the Mahabharata are supposed to have taken place, including the Kurukshetra war.
- His last novel Uttarakanda, told from the perspective of Sita, was well received even by the progressives and was a sort of a departure from his earlier novels, which faced the criticism that he rarely wrote well-etched women characters. His earlier novel Kavalu (2010) had especially received criticism for being what many termed "anti-

Life story



- Born in 1931 in Santeshivara, a village near Channarayapatna in Hassan district
- He completed his schooling in Channarayapatna and Mysuru, and went on to earn a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Philosophy from Mysore University
- Bhyrappa pursued his Doctor of Philosophy on Satya mattu Soundarya at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
- He worked as a professor of logic and psychology at Kadasiddeshwar College, Hubballi
- He also served at Sardar Patel University and later at the National Council of Educational Research and Training in Delhi
- He retired in 1991 from the Regional College of Education in Mysuru

Notable works



Book	Year
Bheemakaya	1958
Doora Saridaru	1962
Matadana	1965
Vamsha Vriksha	1965
Naayi Neralu	1968
Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane	1968
Gruhabhanga	1970
Daatu	1973
Parva	1979
Nele	1983
Sakshi	1986
Anchu	1990
Tantu	1993
Saatha	1998
Mandra	2001
Kavalu	2010
Yaana	2014
Uttarakaanda	2017
Bhitti (autobiography)	1996



feminist.”

- Bhyrappa often experimented with subjects not much explored in Kannada. For instance, while Yaana was a science fiction novel, set in space, Anchu is a psychological novel, and Mandra was on the theme of music.

Conservative outlook

- While Bhyrappa remained popular, many critics from the progressive school argued that his novels had a conservative outlook, which was often in **collision with various literature movements — Navya, Bandaya and Dalit — which dominated the second half of the 20th century. His fictional works ran parallel to these movements.**
- Some of his novels triggered controversies. For example, Avarana faced criticism for its portrayal of Muslim rulers and conversion.

❖ India is mostly with us: Zelenskyy

Context: Saying that India is mostly on Ukraine’s side in its war with Russia, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged Western countries to continue engaging with India.

- Mr. Zelenskyy is attending the **80th session of the United Nations General Assembly**. “I think India is mostly with us,” he said. “We had this question with energy, but I think President [Donald] Trump can manage it,” he added, urging European nations to build a closer relationship with India.

India’s attitude

- Mr. Zelenskyy said everything had to be done to ensure that the Indians do not withdraw, adding that he was sure India would change its attitude to the Russian energy sector.
- “With China, it’s more difficult,” he said, adding that it was not in Beijing’s interest to not support Russia.
- Finnish President Alexander Stubb also expressed similar sentiments. In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Mr. Stubb pushed back against the clubbing together of India, Russia, and China, calling India a “very close ally” of the EU and the U.S., and noting that it was an “emerging superpower”. Mr. Stubb urged western nations to engage closely with India as well.
- Ukraine could fight and win all of the country back “in its original form” in due course, if Kyiv had help from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European nations, Mr. Trump had said, ahead of meeting with Mr. Zelenskyy.
- Apart from imposing a punitive 25% tariff on Indian goods (which already face a 25% ‘reciprocal tariff’) for its oil and arms trade with Russia, Mr. Trump has, in recent days, stepped up the pressure on Europe to end all trade in oil and LNG with Russia.

Context: Mobile networks often slow down or drop in places where signals cannot reach properly. Instead of building more towers or expensive infrastructure, researchers at the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B) have developed **Reconfigurable Intelligent Surfaces (RIS) — panels that act like ‘smart walls’ — to redirect or focus signals.** This makes networks faster and energy-efficient and is expected to play an important role in upcoming 6G systems while improving existing 5G-advanced networks.

- One of the biggest advantages of RIS is that it can be easily added to existing 5G-Advanced networks as these panels can be mounted on walls or poles to fix coverage gaps in hotspots, working like a plug-and-play upgrade without major infrastructure changes.
- For future 6G deployments, RIS can be built directly into the network design, enabling smarter beam management and optimized performance.
- In both cases, it allows telecom operators to provide better coverage with fewer towers, cutting both costs and energy use.
- “The RIS built at IIIT-B is designed as a ‘passive’ surface, meaning it consumes very little power while shaping signals. This makes it ideal and attractive for urban India, where operators need affordable solutions to improve coverage without adding heavy energy costs. Researchers are also exploring ‘active’ RIS (which can amplify signals but require power) and hybrid designs that combine the two for more advanced functions,” Prof. Debabrata Das, Director, IIIT-Bangalore.
- By reflecting and focusing signals, RIS strengthens links in blind spots and extends the range of base stations. This helps operators reduce the number of towers needed without compromising the quality of service.
- “For everyday users, that means fewer call drops and faster internet speeds, especially in hard-to-reach areas, like crowded city blocks or indoor spaces,” Prof. Das explained.

Drawbacks

- RIS does face hurdles. In case of fast-moving users, like people in cars, trains, or drones, signals change too quickly, making it hard for the panels to keep up. This can lead to delays or weaker connections. To solve this, researchers are developing predictive beamforming and AI-based mobility tracking that anticipates user movement and adjusts signals automatically.
- Prof. Das noted that to work effectively, RIS must be coordinated with nearby base stations. This requires updates to existing network protocols and control signalling. IIIT-B researchers are working on building AI-driven systems that automatically adjust the panels in real time, ensuring smooth performance without manual intervention.
- The institute’s next research directions include developing software-defined RIS with AI-driven control and testing multiple panels working together to further boost performance.
- The design can also block unwanted signals in certain directions, helping reduce interference.

❖ Doddasaggere botanical garden in State sees rise in number of species

Context: A botanical park being developed by the Horticulture Department at Doddasaggere in Tumakuru district, modelled on the Lal Bagh in Bengaluru, has reportedly seen a significant rise in the number of species.

- As per an Avifauna Survey conducted at the Doddasaggere Botanical Garden, 75 bird species were recorded in March 2025, a significant rise from 35 in 2021.
- The documented birds include two near-threatened and one vulnerable species, along with five long-distance winter migrants.

Green cover

- “The Doddasaggere Botanical Garden, planned to be developed on 228 acres, will be the **second biggest botanical garden in Karnataka, the first being Lal Bagh in Bengaluru, and the third biggest in India.**
- About 120 acres have been developed so far. In collaboration with IT services company Mphasis and non-profit United Way of Bengaluru, an afforestation drive was taken up on 14 acres within the garden, where 1 lakh saplings of 77 native tree species were planted to recreate a dense dry deciduous forest.
- **The species sighted include Pallid Harrier, Asian Woolly Neck, River Tern, Booted Warbler, Green Sandpiper, Lesser Whitethroat and Tawny Pipit, among others. Over time, the forest cover in the park is expected to sequester approximately 2,100 tonnes of carbondioxide and release around 10,000 tonnes of oxygen annually.**

❖ Global South must work together, says Jaishankar

Context: India hosts meet of 20 ‘like-minded’ countries on sidelines of UNGA; External Affairs Ministersays multilateralism under attack and international organisations are being rendered ineffective

- The concept **of multilateralism** is “under attack”, even as countries of the Global South are seeking more solutions from international organisations such as the United Nations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said.
- He said the state of the world was a cause for concern for all countries, listing a number of “shocks”, including the pandemic, conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, climate change, and trade uncertainties.
- He also called for an “urgent resolution of conflicts that are impacting food, fertilizer and energy security”. Twenty countries took part in the meeting hosted by India, including 10 at the Ministerial level.
- “In face of such proliferation of concerns and multiplicity of risks, it is natural that the Global South would turn to multilateralism for solutions,” Mr. Jaishankar said. “Unfortunately, there too we are presented with a very disappointing prospect. The very concept of multilateralism is under attack. International organisations are being rendered ineffective or starved of resources,” he added.
- Nine countries from Asia, five from the Americas (South and North, including the Caribbean), and six from Africa took part in the meeting held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

- Only Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Mauritius were present from India's neighbourhood among the group.
- The meeting was the first of its kind, although officials did not confirm whether India now planned to hold such meetings regularly. India has hosted the "Voice of Global South Summit" in which about 125 countries have been invited for the past three years.
- It is unclear why the 20 countries present at the UN meeting had been chosen as "like-minded" rather than others, and whether more others had also been invited but declined due to scheduling issues.
- The countries represented at the meeting included Bahrain, Indonesia, Qatar, Singapore, and Vietnam from Asia; St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, and Jamaica from North America; Suriname from South America; and Chad, Ghana, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, and Somalia from Africa.
- The U.S. has drastically cut its funding for the UN this year and withdrawn from several UN organisations, including the UN Human Rights Council and UNESCO. It has called for a review of other memberships in the UN system.

❖ **EC launches e-sign feature for addition, deletion, and correction of voter names**

Context: The Election Commission (EC) has launched **a new e-sign feature on its ECINet portal and app that requires those seeking to register as voters, or applying for deletion and corrections, to verify their identity using their Aadhaar-linked phone numbers.**

- The **ECINet, a one-stop platform integrating over 40 of the EC's earlier mobile and Web applications**, went live during the by-elections in five Assembly constituencies in Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab and West Bengal on June 19.
- Earlier, applicants could submit Forms 6, 7 and 8 meant for addition, deletion, and corrections, respectively, on the Election Commission apps and portal after connecting a phone number with an existing elector photo identity card (EPIC) number, with no verification done of whether the details were those of the specific voter.
- But now, after an applicant has filled the form, they are taken to an external portal hosted by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), where he or she is required to enter their Aadhaar number and then generate an "Aadhaar OTP". The OTP is sent to the phone number linked to that Aadhaar number.
- The applicant has to then consent to the Aadhaar-based authentication and complete the verification. Only then is he or she redirected to the ECINet portal to submit the form.
- The new e-sign feature rolled out by the commission assumes importance in view of allegations of fraudulent deletion and addition of names in some constituencies.

❖ **Simultaneous polls committee meets Montek, Panagariya**

Context: The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) reviewing the legislation on simultaneous elections met three economists — Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Arvind Panagariya, and Surjit S. Bhalla — who presented two contrasting views on the issue.

- Mr. Ahluwalia, former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, **rejected the claim that simultaneous elections would lead to economic growth.**
- Mr. Panagariya and Mr. Bhalla, on the other hand, **argued in favour of it.**
- A report by the High-Level Committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind has said the **synchronised election cycle projected a 1.5% increase in GDP.**
- The JPC is headed by Bharatiya Janata Party MP P.P. Chaudhary.
- Mr. Ahluwalia said the election expenditure would remain unaffected whether polls were held simultaneously or not, sources said. There was no evidence to point at a bump in GDP. There was no hard data backing this claim, Mr. Ahluwalia told the panel. “He argued that **economic growth and the election cycle have no clear-cut connection,**” a member of the panel said on condition of anonymity.
- Earlier in the day, speaking in favour of the **Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024,** Mr. Panagariya, who chairs the 16th Finance Commission, contended that there was “large academic evidence” that government spending rose before elections, leading to a higher fiscal deficit.
- **Government expenditure in this period moves away from capital expenditure to revenue expenditure, pointing to deterioration in the quality of expenditure,** Mr. Panagariya said. To back his points, he said the Finance Commission was impacted by the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the following Assembly elections, resulting in delays in its consultation process. Mr. Panagariya, sources said, contended that not holding elections simultaneously was an impediment to structural reforms.

❖ No takers yet for EV localisation scheme

Context: No applications received for the govt.'s ₹4,150 crore investment-linked import concession programme for e-cars to boost local manufacturing

- Three months after the Centre announced a scheme offering duty concessions on imported electric cars in exchange for commitments to local manufacturing, primarily aimed at wooing Tesla, no automaker has expressed interest.
- The **Ministry of Heavy Industries** launched a portal on June 24 for accepting applications under **the Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI).** The last day to apply for the scheme is October 21, 2025.
- Officials said that auto makers were **waiting for important foreign trade agreements (FTAs) such as those with the U.S. and European Union to conclude, in case those agreements offered attractive concessions.**
- They cited the **FTA with the U.K. as an example, wherein import duties on U.K.-built vehicles, including electric and conventional cars, are cut from over 100% to about 10%, but only for a limited number of vehicles under an annual quota.**

❖ Finance Minister launches GST Appellate Tribunal

- Justice regarding disputes pertaining to the GST will now not only be fair and fast, but also transparent and accessible to all, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, launching the GST Appellate Tribunal.

- The GST Council, during its 56th meeting on September 3, had decided that the GSTAT would be made operational for accepting appeals before the end of September and would begin hearings before December end this year.

❖ Qatar enables UPI, Qatar Duty Free becomes first merchant

- **NPCI International Payments Ltd., in partnership with Qatar National Bank**, has enabled the acceptance of **QR code-based Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** across Qatar via point-of-sale terminals for merchants acquired by QNB and powered by NETSTARS' payment solution.
- This move will **enable Indian travellers to make UPI payments** seamlessly at major tourist attractions and Qatar Duty Free outlets, which is the **first merchant to go live on UPI, NPCI said.**

❖ Will AI fix India's energy demand or will its own needs snowball?

Context: A report estimates that annual global demand for data centre capacity may increase by 19 to 22% from 2023 to 2030, reaching 171 to 219 GW compared to the current demand of 60 GW; this would require building twice the capacity built since 2000 within a quarter of that time frame.

- As artificial intelligence (AI) and its attendant data demand continue to expand in India and worldwide, a curious dilemma has arisen: will AI help transform energy delivery for the better or will the data centres crucial to its operations impose a new burden on the world's power grid?
- In a 2024 report, the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** highlighted the growing interconnections between energy and AI worldwide. It projected that **demand from data centres would more than double by 2030 to around 945 TWh and that AI would be the principal driver.** The demand from AI-optimised data centres was projected to more than quadruple by 2030.
- A McKinsey report has also estimated that the annual global demand for data centre capacity could rise at 19-22% from 2023 to 2030, reaching 171-219 GW, against the total current demand of 60 GW. To avoid a deficit, at least twice as much data centre capacity built since 2000 will have to be in place in less than a quarter of the time.
- Given AI's significant hunger for computing power, energy demand is naturally increasing, Anwasha Sen, an assistant programme manager at Takshashila University studying the impact of technology policy and AI on society, said. She is, however, optimistic that it's "not as drastic when compared to other energy-intensive industries".
- Worldwide, data centres consume 1-2% of total power and that's expected to increase to 3-4% by 2030. To compare, the steel industry consumes around 7% of total power, Ms. Sen said.

Pressure, and potential

- According to McKinsey, India's data centre demand is projected to increase from 1.2 GW in 2024 to 4.5 GW by 2030, driven largely by AI and digital adoption across sectors.
- Mumbai accounts for 41% of the data centre capacity, followed by Chennai (23%) and the National Capital Region (14%).

- AI-driven data centres in India are projected to consume an additional 40-50 TWh of electricity annually by 2030, according to Raghu Raman, Professor and Dean at the School of Business at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham.
- The increasing adoption of AI and digital technologies in India is contributing to a significant rise in energy demand, especially in already energy-intensive sectors like real estate, Vimal Nadar, national director of research at the Mumbai-based India office of Colliers, a global investment company, said. India is the third-largest energy consumer worldwide, after China and the U.S., with coal, crude oil, and natural gas comprising the bulk of its energy mix.
- The energy consumption of data centres is imposing huge pressure on energy systems worldwide, Anish De, global head for Energy, Natural Resources, and Chemicals at KPMG, said, adding: “India will not be any different.”
- According to Ms. Sen, an equal concern is the correspondingly increasing demand for freshwater required to cool the servers in these data centres.
- That said, there is scope to press AI to the service of smarter energy management as well.
- “AI is playing a pivotal role in transforming how energy is delivered, utilised, and managed, both globally and within India,” Mr. Nadar said.
- On the one hand, AI could help develop energy transition technologies and as well as new materials that mitigate India’s dependence on critical minerals it currently has to import from abroad, Dr. De said by way of example.
- “It will also aid faster project development. This is already playing out in the main geographies and will propagate to others quickly,” he added. “We will see energy efficiency and resource efficiency gains that will also be substantial, though not enough to offset the demand. AI itself will support the gains in expansion of clean energy.”
- On the flip side, carbon emissions will also increase. “Despite best efforts it is practically impossible to meet this demand from renewables, both from quality and quantity standpoints,” according to Dr. De.
- The IEA also noted in its report that AI “could intensify some energy security strains” as “cyberattacks on energy utilities have tripled in the past four years and become more sophisticated because of AI,” even as AI tools are becoming critical for energy companies to defend against such attacks.

Renewables rescue

- As energy demand intensifies, real estate stakeholders are increasingly prioritising energy efficiency, sustainability, and emission reduction in both new developments and retrofitting of existing assets, Mr. Nadar said.
- “Concurrently, there is a growing emphasis on renewable energy adoption. Real estate developers are increasingly incorporating rooftop solar solutions and solar-integrated building systems, further reducing the sector’s reliance on conventional energy sources.”
- The IEA has also said a range of energy sources will be tapped to meet data centres’ rising electricity needs although, according to its report, “renewables and natural gas are set to take the lead due to their cost-competitiveness and availability in key markets.”

- **India and many other countries** are taking advantage of AI to enhance energy efficiency and promote sustainable real estate practices, per Mr. Nadar. In India, the Energy Conservation Building Code and the Roadmap of Sustainable and Holistic Approach to National Energy Efficiency scheme aim to integrate AI and data analytics into smart metering, renewable energy management, and sustainable building design.
- Also within the real-estate sector, AI-driven solutions like smart lighting systems, predictive HVAC optimisation, and automated building controls promise to reduce energy consumption by up to 25%. **Green certifications such as GRIHA and LEED further encourage AI-based monitoring of energy and resource usage.**
- Data centres are also adopting AI to optimise cooling systems and server utilisation. As of April 2025, nearly one-fourth of the country's total data centre capacity in major cities had been green-certified, reflecting an explicit focus on creating sustainable infrastructure. Almost 67% of the Grade A office stock across India's top seven cities is also green-certified.

'Need some nudging'

- Under the **National Smart Grid Mission**, AI-enabled systems manage demand and integrate renewables, enhancing grid reliability while reducing wastage, according to Raman.
- The Nextra (Airtel) Data Centres use AI-powered cooling and predictive analytics to cut energy use, paired with renewable power purchase agreements to run green data centres. BrightNight's PowerAlpha AI deployed in India to forecast and optimise hybrid solar-wind-battery plants and ensure 24/7 access to renewable energy while minimising grid stress.
- Tata Power ReNew Power and Hindustan Zinc both use AI for real-time load forecasting, reducing outages and optimising power supply in Mumbai, Dr. Raman added. BESCO in Karnataka has also started using AI to detect faults and 'heal' grid sections and thus mitigate downtime. Similarly, smart meters in Uttar Pradesh have been using AI to detect power theft as well as manage demand-side issues.
- "A digital energy grid approach aims to build a unified and interoperable power infrastructure, and its potential can be amplified using AI," Ms. Sen said.
- She added that companies are also working to develop "sustainable AI" that uses recycled water and has higher power use efficiency.
- "As the race to build the most capable AI systems has got companies investing in massive data centres, a transition of the energy grid itself to use more sustainable power sources is required and might need some nudging by governments," Ms. Sen said.

❖ How are courts protecting personality rights?

Context: How are Bollywood actors like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan flagging the misuse of their voices and likeness through AI-generated content? What are personality rights? Will such injunctions by the judiciary restrict free speech?

- The Delhi High Court has recently issued a series of orders protecting the personality rights of Bollywood celebrities from unauthorised commercial use.

- On September 9 and 10, Justice Tejas Karia granted relief to actors Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan, after they flagged the misuse of their images and voices through AI-generated content and merchandise.
- A week later, Justice Manmeet P.S. Arora extended similar protections to filmmaker Karan Johar, by barring the unauthorised use of his persona through deepfakes, and other digital manipulation.
- Actors Amitabh Bachchan, Anil Kapoor, and Jackie Shroff have already secured such protections. These petitions signal a wider push for judicial recognition of personality rights in the digital era.

Are personality rights protected?

- **Personality rights safeguard an individual's name, likeness, image, voice, signature, and other distinctive traits from unauthorised commercial exploitation.**
- **Though not codified in a single statute, personality rights in India are grounded in common law doctrines of privacy, defamation, and publicity rights, and reinforced through judicial precedents.**
- Courts may grant injunctions, award damages, or issue takedown orders to curb misuse in advertisements, merchandise, AI-generated content, or digital platforms.
- **Statutory protection** is dispersed across intellectual property laws. The Copyright Act, 1957, grants performers both exclusive rights under Section 38A and moral rights under Section 38B, allowing them to control how their performances are reproduced and to object to any distortion or misuse. The Trade Marks Act, 1999, permits individuals, particularly celebrities, to register distinctive attributes of their persona, such as names, signatures, or even catchphrases, as trademarks.
- For instance, actors such as Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Ajay Devgn, and Amitabh Bachchan have registered their names as trademarks. However, the most robust safeguard lies in the common law tort of "passing off" under Section 27 of the Act, which protects the goodwill of an unregistered mark and prevents misrepresentation that could deceive the public or imply false endorsement. This protection is neither automatic nor absolute, as courts generally require clear evidence of reputation and goodwill before granting relief.
- **At the heart of personality rights lies the right to autonomy and privacy rooted in Article 21 of the Constitution.** When a celebrity consents to appear in a film, advertisement, or public campaign, they exercise control over their public identity. But when third parties print their image on merchandise or use AI tools to generate deepfakes or chatbots without authorisation, that autonomy is stripped away and the individual's dignity and agency are compromised.

What have courts ruled so far?

- The jurisprudence on personality rights in India traces its origins to the seminal 1994 judgment in *R. Rajagopal versus State of Tamil Nadu*, where a magazine sought to publish the autobiography of Auto Shankar, a death-row convict, recounting details of his private life and alleged links with State officials. The government moved to restrain the publication on grounds of privacy and defamation. The Supreme Court recognised that individuals possess a legitimate interest in controlling the use of their identity, grounding this protection in the constitutional right to privacy.

However, it clarified that remedies for privacy violations must follow publication, through actions such as defamation suits, rather than through prior restraint by the state. The court held that personal details may be published without consent if they are already part of the public record.

- Two decades later, the Madras High Court crystallised the emerging doctrine in a case involving actor Rajinikanth. The lawsuit, filed against the producers of the film *Main Hoon Rajinikanth*, alleged misuse of the actor's name, image, and distinctive style of delivering dialogues. The court stressed that infringement does not require proof of falsity, confusion, or deception if the celebrity is readily identifiable, and accordingly upheld the actor's right to restrain the unauthorised commercial exploitation of his persona.
- With the advent of AI, courts have had to grapple with novel threats to identity. In 2023, the Delhi High Court granted actor Anil Kapoor wide-ranging protection over his personality rights, restraining 16 online entities from exploiting his name, image, voice, likeness, or his catchphrase "jhakaas," which he popularised in films. Justice Prathiba Singh clarified that free speech extends to "genuine write-ups, parody, satires and criticism" but cannot be stretched to justify commercial exploitation. She cautioned that when such use "crosses the line and results in tarnishing, blackening or jeopardising the individual's personality and elements associated with them, it would be illegal." Referring to morphed images of the actor with other actresses, she said this was "not merely offensive" to him but also to third parties, adding that the court "can't turn a blind eye to such misuse," particularly where dilution and tarnishment are actionable torts. Similarly, in May 2024, the Delhi High Court protected the personality and publicity rights of actor Jackie Shroff, restraining e-commerce platforms and AI chatbots from misusing his name, image, voice, and likeness without consent. The court observed that the "unauthorised use of these characteristics for commercial purposes not only infringes upon these rights but also dilutes the brand equity painstakingly built by the plaintiff over the years."
- A few months later, the Bombay High Court delivered a significant ruling in favour of singer Arijit Singh, who alleged that Codible Ventures LLP had used AI tools to create artificial recordings of his voice, a practice known as voice cloning. The court reiterated that the singer's "name, voice, image, likeness, persona and other traits" are protected under his personality rights. Expressing concern over the risks of generative AI, Justice R.I. Chagla observed, "What shocks the conscience of this court is the manner in which celebrities, particularly performers such as the present Plaintiff, are vulnerable to being targeted by unauthorised generative AI content."

To what extent can such rights curtail free expression?

- Critics argue that the expansive protection of personality rights could stifle free expression.
- **Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to freedom of speech, which includes the creative freedom to criticise, parody, or satirise public figures. However, Indian courts have repeatedly affirmed that this right is not absolute and must be balanced against an individual's dignity and autonomy.**

- In DM Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. versus Baby Gift House (2010), the Delhi High Court dealt with a petition filed by a company to which singer Daler Mehndi had assigned his personality rights. The company had alleged that gift shops were selling dolls that were “cheap imitations of, and identical to the likeness” of Mr. Mehndi, amounting to the unauthorised commercial exploitation of his persona. While granting an injunction, Justice S. Ravindra Bhat cautioned that caricatures, lampooning, and parodies would not ordinarily infringe publicity rights. He warned that an “overemphasis on a famous person’s publicity rights” could chill free speech and deprive the public of an entire genre of expression.
- This principle was reaffirmed more than a decade later in Digital Collectibles PTE Ltd. versus Galactus Funware Technology Pvt. Ltd. (2023), which involved the unauthorised use of sports stars’ likenesses despite exclusive licences held by the plaintiff.
- The Delhi High Court refused to broaden publicity rights at the expense of free expression, noting that material already in the public domain could not reasonably mislead the public into believing there was an endorsement. Justice Amit Bansal clarified that the use of celebrity names or images for “lampooning, satire, parodies, art, scholarship, music, academics, news and other similar uses” is a legitimate exercise of Article 19(1)(a) and does not amount to infringement of publicity rights.

What are the concerns?

- Jwalika Balaji, research fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, that a comprehensive legislative framework is the need of the hour to ensure that the enforcement of such rights is not reliant on piecemeal judicial precedents. “In the absence of a regulatory regime, responses remain fragmented and ad hoc. More importantly, there is a fine line between artistic creation and a breach of personality rights. Exceptions must be clearly identified and firmly respected, especially in times when concerns over censorship loom large,” she said.
- She further pointed out that personality rights are not the exclusive privilege of celebrities, since all individuals enjoy the right to privacy. “Ordinary citizens, especially women, are increasingly targeted through deepfakes and revenge pornography. Laws must be tailor-made to address this disproportionate impact on women,” she said. She noted that in such cases, courts often direct the government to block URLs impersonating an individual or misusing their images without consent. However, she cautioned that tracking every such breach and acting on it remains a herculean task.

❖ Centre cancels FCRA licence of activist’s outfit

Context: The Union Home Ministry cancelled the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of an organisation founded by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, citing alleged violations.

- The CBI is also conducting an inquiry involving another non-profit organisation established by Mr. Wangchuk regarding similar allegations.
- Day after Leh violence, Home Ministry cancels SECMOL’s FCRA nod; activist calls charges baseless; allegations include accepting foreign funds to study ‘national sovereignty’ and poor accounting.

- The development comes a day after violence erupted in Leh city of Ladakh, during an ongoing protest demanding Statehood”.
- In 2021-22, SECMOL received ₹4.93 lakh from a Swedish organisation, Framtidsjorden, for “awareness on youth migration, food security, and sovereignty”. The government held that accepting foreign funds for studies involving “national sovereignty” violated FCRA rules.

❖ Amendments to be brought to Karnataka Rent Act to rationalise offences, penalties

Context: Aligning with a Central law, the State Cabinet has decided to amend the Karnataka Rent Act, 1999, mainly to decriminalise or rationalise certain offences and penalties.

- Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said the proposed amendments to the Act are intended to ease giving buildings on rent and it would be a “win-win situation” for both the owner and the tenant, particularly in industrial sheds.
- Amendments will be made to Sections 24, 25, 53, 54, and 55 of the Act, he said, to ensure compliance on rent payments as well as penalties.
- The decision comes as Karnataka’s rental market, particularly in Bengaluru, expands rapidly, accompanied by an increase in disputes between landlords and tenants.
- Among other decisions, the Cabinet has approved ₹16.3 crore for the construction of Karnataka Bhavan-II building at Chanakyapuri in New Delhi.
- It has approved the Male Mahadeshwara Hill Authority Bill, 2025, for inclusion of a list of persons in the authority to govern M.M. Hills and the temple. A sum of ₹128.74 crore was approved for drainage work in Channapatna in Bengaluru South (formerly Ramanagara) district and ₹95.6 crore for upgradation of the government hospital at Virajpet in Kodagu from 60 beds to 250.
- To ensure necessary skills during promotions of directors, deputy directors, and secretaries in government departments, it has approved the Karnataka Civil Service Rules, 2025. The new rules make the consideration of necessary skills mandatory during promotions, Mr. Patil said.

❖ Cabinet approves skill development policy; ₹4,432.5 crore needed for seven-year period

Context: The State Cabinet approved the Karnataka State Skill Development Policy 2025-32 with requirement of a whopping ₹4,432.5 crore, during the seven-year period.

- Its **vision is to position Karnataka as a premier hub for skilled workforce and a \$1 trillion economy by 2032.**
- The policy envisions “transforming the State into a hub for skill development, fostering an inclusive and future-ready workforce that meets the demands of a rapidly evolving economy.”
- Its mission is focused on empowering youth and marginalised communities through access to industry-aligned skills, promoting continuous learning, and enhancing collaboration between industry and educational institutions.

- The comprehensive approach is aligned with the **Skill India Mission** aimed at bridging regional disparities and supporting sustainable economic growth.
- The **policy objectives are to focus on lifelong learning, reskilling, and upskilling to keep pace with changing technologies and industry needs, and integration of vocational education within schools, higher educational institutions, and universities through credit-based programmes.**
- It laid a strong emphasis on industry collaboration, including apprenticeships, industry-led training, and ITI adoption.
- It aims to leverage digital technologies and AI-driven tools for training, assessment, and career guidance through a unified digital portal.

Funding need

- The funding needed for implementing the policy is ₹4,432.5 crore, including ₹1,386 crore from the Asian Development Bank.
- It has been decided that ₹410 crore would be raised from projects in the PPP model and ₹904 crore from projects already announced in previous State Budgets (ongoing projects with Budget from State or organisations like KKRDB, KMERC, NABARD); ₹807 crore from continuing schemes under the department, funded irrespective of policy provisions; ₹38.5 crore from the Department of Electronics, IT, BT and S&T, and ₹887 crore from the Department of Skill Development.

What CAG report said

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India report tabled in the Monsoon Session of the legislature said that only 18% of the trained candidates under the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation secured placements post-training, falling short of the mandated 70%.
- The Skill Mission was unrealistic in its target during 2017-23, and only 1,15,822 individuals were trained against the target of five lakh youth per year during 2017-2023, the report added.

❖ Defence Ministry, HAL ink ₹62,370-cr. deal for 97 light combat aircraft for IAF

Context: The Defence Ministry signed a contract to buy 97 light combat aircraft, of the Tejas Mark-1A variant, for the Indian Air Force from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd., in a ₹62,370-crore deal.

- The order is for 68 fighter jets and 29 twin-seaters, along with associated equipment. Deliveries will begin in 2027-28 and be completed over six years.
- “The supply of these aircraft by HAL would enhance operational capability of the Indian Air Force to continue their unhindered operations and strengthen defence preparedness of the country,” Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in a post on X.
- “This contract reflects the trust and confidence of the Government and the Armed Forces in the indigenously developed aircraft ‘Tejas’, which will be the mainstay of the IAF in the years to come,” he added.
- **With more than 64% indigenous content and 67 new items in comparison to the 2021 contract, this Tejas Mk-1A will feature advanced systems such as the UTTAM AESA Radar, Swayam Raksha Kavach, and indigenous control surface**

actuators, reinforcing the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative to move towards a self-reliant India.

- The programme is backed by a supply chain of around 105 Indian companies and is expected to generate nearly 11,750 direct and indirect jobs annually during the production period, according to the Ministry
- **under the ‘Buy (India-IDDMM)’ category of the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020, the Tejas Mk-1A is the most advanced variant of the indigenously designed fighter jet and will serve as a powerful platform to meet the IAF’s operational needs,** the Ministry added.

❖ **Rajnath’s Morocco visit marks new chapter in India-Africa defence ties**

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s maiden visit to Morocco to inaugurate India’s first overseas defence manufacturing facility has marked the beginning of a new chapter in the long-standing friendship between India and Morocco.

- Mr. Singh and Morocco’s Defence Minister Abdelatif Loudyi jointly inaugurated Tata Advanced Systems Limited’s (TASL) state-of-the-art defence manufacturing facility in Berrechid. The plant will produce India’s indigenously developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP), making it a significant milestone in India’s growing global defence footprint.
- Morocco as a gateway to Africa and a potential market for Indian defence equipment. “There is a strong demand in Africa for small arms, bulletproof jackets, armoured vehicles, tanks, and helicopters. This is the right time for India to strengthen its presence in the African defence market by also establishing Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities. Russia has traditionally been the major supplier to the continent, but the Ukraine conflict and subsequent sanctions disrupted its supply chains. Since India has long experience with Russian defence equipment as a major importer, it has a better understanding of maintaining these systems,” the official noted.
- On India’s defence outreach to African nations, Professor Harsh V. Pant, Vice-President – Studies and Foreign Policy at Observer Research Foundation, said, “India is expanding its defence outreach, particularly focusing on enhancing defence exports. Africa presents good opportunities due to historical links and strategic comfort levels with India.
- India straddles a unique position in global politics by not being part of either the U.S.-China or Russia-West binaries... Sanctions against Russia may create opportunities for India in the African market due to its neutral stance.”

❖ **DRDO conducts rail-based launch of Agni-Prime missile**

Context: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) successfully test-fired the Intermediate Range Agni-Prime missile from a rail-based mobile launcher, under full operational conditions.

- The Defence Ministry said the next-generation missile, designed for a range of up to 2,000 km, incorporates advanced features and marks the first launch from a

specially developed rail-based system capable of rapid, low-visibility deployment with cross-country mobility.

- The missile's trajectory was tracked by multiple ground stations, with the test meeting all mission objectives.

❖ **India, Russia discuss BRICS grain exchange plan to boost agriculture trade ties**

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev and discussed plans of creating a common agricultural food exchange that will help in boosting agriculture trade among the BRICS member-countries.

- Mr. Modi conveyed his greetings to President Vladimir Putin saying he is looking forward to welcoming him for the 23rd India-Russia annual summit to be hosted here later this year.
- "Happy to meet Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev at the World Food India 2025. We discussed ways to strengthen our win-win cooperation in agriculture, fertilizers and food processing," said Mr. Modi after the meeting.
- The Russian Embassy said the two sides discussed the ongoing work on a Free Trade Agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union. "Additionally, the topic of creating a BRICS Grain Exchange was raised — a move that will help boost mutual agricultural trade," said the Embassy.
- "Russia highly values its special and privileged partnership with India. India is one of Russia's key allies in the international arena. Every year, Russian-Indian economic cooperation reaches impressive levels. In 2024, the trade turnover between our two countries reached a historic high," said Mr. Patrushev.

❖ **Outward remittances under LRS dips 11% in July to \$2,452.93 mn**

Context: Outward remittances by resident individuals under the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) were almost 11% lower year on year in July at \$2,452.93 million on the back of a decline towards travel as well as studies abroad.

- In the year earlier period, the outward remittances were \$2,754.05 million.
- For 2024-25, the remittances totalled \$29,563.12 million.
- LRS details for July 2025 released on Thursday by RBI showed that of the total \$2,452.93 million, the remittance towards travel stood at \$1,445.34 million as against \$1,662.13 million, while for studies abroad it was \$229.25 million (\$272.16 million) and under the head gift \$223.53 million (\$275.26 million).
- However, during the month the remittance was higher towards purchase of immovable property at \$39.48 million (\$24.54 million); investment in equity/debt \$156.19 million (\$120.86 million); and deposit \$46.24 million (\$41.68 million).
- The RBI data showed the monthly outward remittances under LRS for May stood at \$2,313.16 million and for June at \$2,127.39 million.
- The Liberalised Remittance Scheme was introduced on February 4, 2004, with a limit of \$25,000, which the RBI revised to the present limit of \$2,50,000 in phases consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions.

❖ **RBI makes authentication tougher for digital transactions**

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to further secure digital payments transactions, has mandated introduction of additional risk-based checks beyond the minimum two-factor authentication by leveraging upon technological advancements.

- “It shall be ensured that for digital payment transactions, other than card present transactions, at least one of the factors of authentication is dynamically created or proven, i.e., the proof of possession of the factor, being sent as part of the transaction, is unique to that transaction,” the RBI said.
- The factor of authentication will be such that compromise of one factor would not affect reliability of the other.

❖ **There can be no justice if Palestine is not freed, says Abbas at UNGA**

Context: The Palestinian Authority President reaffirms his commitment to a two-state solution, says Hamas will have no role in governing Gaza once the war is over; at least 17 people were killed in Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, including nine children

- Speaking over video after the United States revoked his visa, the Palestinian leader told world leaders that his people reject the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and pledged that the militant group would have no role in governing the Gaza Strip after war ends and must hand over its weapons to his administration. Mahmoud Abbas said to his people: “The dawn of freedom will emerge.”
- Mr. Abbas told the UN General Assembly that Palestinians in Gaza “have been facing a war of genocide, destruction, starvation and displacement” by Israel. His speech came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads to New York to give his own address in person.
- In a short but resolute speech, Mr. Abbas lay out his continued vision for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel.
- That two-state solution has gained traction after a string of countries – including top U.S. allies — announced recognition of a Palestinian state this past week. But it also appears further than ever from realities on the ground. Mr. Netanyahu’s government has rejected the creation of a Palestinian state.
- Israeli troops control most of the Gaza Strip. Mr. Netanyahu says Israel will maintain security control over the territory after Hamas is defeated, and he has rejected giving Mr. Abbas’s Palestinian Authority any role in there. Some Ministers in Mr. Netanyahu’s government have pushed for annexing the occupied West Bank, where Mr. Abbas’s authority currently administers small pockets of territory.
- “There can be no justice if Palestine is not freed,” Mr. Abbas said. He said the Palestinian Authority is “ready to bear full responsibility for governance and security” in Gaza.
- Meanwhile, at least 17 people were killed in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, according to local health officials. Nine children were among the victims, according to the hospital.

❖ Trump slaps tariffs on drugs, trucks, furniture

Context: The new tariffs, including 100% duties on branded drugs and 25% on heavy-duty trucks, take effect Oct. 1; Trump justifies move as response to large-scale 'flooding' of such goods into U.S.

- U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a new round of punishing tariffs on a broad range of imported goods in U.S., including 100% duties on branded drugs and 25% tariffs on heavy-duty trucks, set to take effect next week.
- The announcements, made on Truth Social, did not include details about whether the new levies would apply on top of national tariffs or whether economies with trade deals such as the EU and Japan would be exempted.
- Mr. Trump also said he would start charging a 50% tariff on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities and a 30% tariff on upholstered furniture, with all the new duties to take effect from October 1.
- "The reason for this is the large scale "FLOODING" of these products into the U.S. by other outside Countries," Mr. Trump said on Truth Social.
- The new actions are seen as part of the Trump administration's shift to better-established legal authorities for its tariff actions, given the risks associated with a case before the Supreme Court on the legality of his sweeping global tariffs.

Tariff on all imports

- The new 100% tariff on any branded pharmaceutical product will apply to all imports unless the company has already broken ground on building a manufacturing plant in the U.S., Mr. Trump said.
- The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, an industry group, said companies "continue to announce hundreds of billions in new U.S. investments. Tariffs risk those plans."
- The Trump administration has opened a dozen probes into the national security ramifications of imports of wind turbines, airplanes, semiconductors, polysilicon, copper, timber and lumber and critical minerals to form the basis of new tariffs.
- Mr. Trump this week announced new probes into personal protective equipment, medical items, robotics and industrial machinery.
- Mr. Trump has made the levies a key foreign policy tool, using them to renegotiate trade deals, extract concessions and exert political pressure on other countries. His administration has touted tariffs as a significant revenue source, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent saying Washington could collect \$300 billion by the end of the year.
- Mr. Trump said the new heavy-duty truck tariffs were to protect manufacturers from "unfair outside competition" and said the move would benefit companies such as Paccar-owned Peterbilt and Kenworth and Daimler Truck-owned Freightliner.

❖ Study says astronauts with diabetes can undertake space missions

Context: In a study conducted during the recent Axiom-4 (Ax-4) mission, of which Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla was a part, it has been revealed that astronauts with diabetes can undertake space missions.

- Axiom Space, along with Burjeel Holdings, released the preliminary results of the 'Suite Ride' research conducted during the Ax-4 mission.
- "The research concluded that everyday diabetes tools used by millions on Earth can be used comprehensively to provide end-to-end diabetes monitoring from space to the ground and back to space — a breakthrough in opening the door to future astronauts with diabetes and providing new solutions in remote healthcare," Axiom Space said.
- Burjeel Holdings is a healthcare services provider in the UAE, and building on these findings, it also announced its ambition of working towards sending the first astronaut with diabetes to space. Axiom Space and Burjeel Holdings had joined hands to conduct the research during the Ax-4 mission at International Space Station.
- "Sending up a suite of remote care capabilities, the Suite Ride initiative explored how to manage diabetes in space, marking a meaningful step towards making spaceflight accessible for those with historically disqualifying conditions," Axiom Space said.
- It further said the research results found that continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) and insulin pens can operate reliably in the extreme conditions of space.

Inspiring people

- "Early results suggest that CGM devices can perform with accuracy comparable to Earth-based readings, enabling real-time glucose monitoring of astronauts in microgravity and can communicate readings to the ground.
- Insulin pens flown on the space station are now undergoing post-flight testing to evaluate the integrity of the formulation," it said.

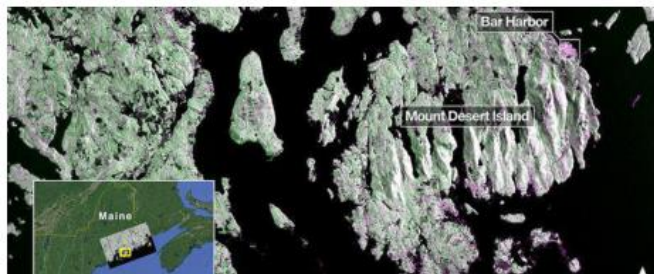
Inspiring people

- "This is about inspiring people everywhere. A diagnosis shouldn't end your dream of space exploration. Together, we're advancing the potential to fly the first astronaut with diabetes and to unlock innovation in healthcare," said Gavin D'Elia, global head of pharma at Axiom Space.
- **The Ax-4 mission was launched on June 25, and during the 20-day mission, the crew comprising Group Captain Shukla and three others completed 320 orbits around the Earth,, covering 8.4 million miles of spaceflight, Axiom Space said. They also performed over 60 research activities and 23 outreach events.**

❖ NISAR sends first radar images of Earth's surface

Context: The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Earth-observing radar satellite has sent the first images of Earth's surface as the joint mission between NASA and ISRO approaches full science operations later this year.

- NASA said that the images from the spacecraft, which was launched by ISRO on July 30, display the level of detail with which **NISAR scans Earth to provide unique, actionable information to decision-makers in a diverse range of areas, including disaster response, infrastructure monitoring, and agricultural management.**



Captured on August 21, this image from NISAR's L-band radar shows Maine's Mount Desert Island. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

- “By understanding how our home planet works, we can produce models and analysis of how other planets in our solar system and beyond work as we prepare to send humanity on an epic journey back to the Moon and onward to Mars,” said NASA Associate Administrator Amit Kshatriya.
- He added that the successful capture of these **first images from NISAR is a remarkable example of how partnership and collaboration between two nations, on opposite sides of the world, can achieve great things together for the benefit of all.**
- NASA said that on August 21, the satellite’s L-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) system, which was provided by NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California, captured Mount Desert Island on the Maine coast.
- **“Dark areas represent water, while green areas are forest, and magenta areas are hard or regular surfaces, such as bare ground and buildings. The L-band radar system can resolve objects as small as 15 feet (five metres), enabling the image to display narrow waterways cutting across the island, as well as the islets dotting the waters around it,” NASA said.**
- It added that on August 23, the L-band SAR captured data of a portion of northeastern North Dakota straddling Grand Forks and Walsh counties.
- The U.S. space agency further said that the images demonstrate how the L-band SAR can discern what type of land cover — low-lying vegetation, trees, and human structures — is present in each area.
- “This capability is vital both for monitoring the gain and loss of forest and wetland ecosystems, as well as for tracking the progress of crops through growing seasons around the world,” it said.

❖ ISRO invites proposals from nation’s scientists

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) issued an Announcement of Opportunity (AO) inviting scientists within India to analyse archival data from past Venus missions.

- India’s maiden mission to Venus, Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM) was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2024.

Sun-Venus interaction

- The mission will involve a spacecraft orbiting Venus to study its surface, atmosphere, and the Sun-Venus interaction.
- “In order to promote, strengthen and to increase the scientific user community for the VOM, ISRO invites researchers through the AO call for promoting the analysis and modelling of archival data available for the planet Venus,” ISRO said.
- The space agency said that proposals could be submitted by individuals or a group of scientists and academicians belonging to national institutions, universities, colleges, planetaria and government organisations of India. “Only those having a minimum remaining service of four years before superannuation are eligible to lead the project as Principal Investigators (PI),” the space agency said.

Research areas

- The research proposals are invited in the following research areas: venusian morphology, topography and sub-surface studies, geological mapping, mineralogy and surface composition of Venus, venusian atmosphere structure, dynamics and composition, venusian Ionosphere and solar wind interaction and modelling of venusian atmospheres and Ionospheres.
- The space agency said that it expects the project to be completed within three years.
- On October 1, 2024, ISRO revealed the targeted launch window for the mission.
- According to the targeted launch window for the VOM, the **Earth departure date is scheduled on March 29, 2028, and the arrival date on Venus is July 19, 2028.**
- The **space agency had said that the VOM will be launched by the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3).**

❖ State records highest maternal mortality in 2023; experts call for urgent action

Context: With Karnataka recording the highest maternal mortality ratio (MMR) among southern States during 2021–2023, public health experts and policymakers have called for urgent measures to address the gap.

- According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) 2023, released this month, **Karnataka’s MMR has shot up to 68 deaths per one lakh live births in 2021-23 from 58 in 2020-22, while Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu report figures largely in 30s. Telangana’s MMR is 59.**
- The issue was the focus of a day-long conference on “Reducing Maternal Mortality in Karnataka,” organised by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Karnataka Regional Branch, in partnership with R.V. University’s Centre for Global Health and Development, in Bengaluru.
- Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, in his keynote address, said the State Cabinet had approved a mission to guarantee round-the-clock maternal health services at taluk hospitals and major community health centres. “In this year’s Budget, our Chief Minister has announced a ₹320-crore mission to bring preventable maternal deaths to zero.
- Our immediate target is to bring MMR down from 68 to 40 within two-and-a-half years, and eventually to 20 to meet global benchmarks,” he said.

- Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Sharan Prakash R. Patil stressed the need to integrate maternal health priorities into medical training and workforce planning.
- Calling preventable maternal deaths a “silent crisis,” Ranjini C. Raghavendra, Director of the Centre for Global Health and Development, R.V. University, observed that Karnataka’s achievements were inadequate compared to neighbouring States. “For a State of our intellect and resources, failing to keep pace with our neighbours is a harsh truth. The ₹320-crore mission must be more than an allocation — it must be a guarantee,” she said.
- B. L. Sujatha Rathod, Director of Medical Education, underlined the need for **continuous upgrading of skills to handle high-risk pregnancies**.
- The conference concluded with a call for a State-level maternal mortality acceleration plan, combining immediate lifesaving interventions with long-term investments in infrastructure, workforce and community engagement.

❖ In 2019, three Ministries gave nod to Ladakh’s tribal status

Context: Ministries of Home, Tribal Affairs, and Law, and NCST concurred on Sixth Schedule; but in 2022, Centre said the UT administration was ensuring the ‘development’ that tribal status would bring.

- Weeks after the Union Territory of Ladakh was created in August 2019, three Ministries of the Union government gave a green light to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) to recommend Ladakh’s inclusion as a tribal area under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, according to minutes of an NCST meeting held on September 11, 2019.**
- Six years ago, the NCST had taken suo motu cognisance of the demand for the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule. In a meeting on September 11, 2019, it had recommended “after careful consideration” that the “UT of Ladakh be brought under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution”.

‘No objection’

- As per the minutes of this 119th meeting of the Commission, the panel had consulted the Ministries of Home, Tribal Affairs, and Law and Justice in a meeting on September 4, 2019, to discuss the issue. In this meeting, the Commission said that after deliberations, the **“Ministries were of the opinion that they have no objection in case the Commission recommends for granting Tribal area status to the UT of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.”**
- Accordingly, the Commission had recommended the UT’s inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, also noting that before the creation of Ladakh as a UT, the locals had certain agrarian rights and rights over land that restricted people from outside the region from purchasing or acquiring land in Ladakh.
- **In its recommendation, the committee said it felt that Ladakh’s inclusion in the Sixth Schedule would protect these agrarian rights, including rights on land.**
- While the Ministry of Tribal Affairs issued a statement on this recommendation of the Commission at the time, this statement had left out the opinion of the Ministries.

- The Home Ministry told Parliament in December 2019 that **the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act, 1997**, already provided for the creation of autonomous hill development councils in the Ladakh region, the powers for which are “more or less in line with the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India”.

BJP’s poll promise

- However, the following year, when the Hill Council of Leh went to polls in 2020, the Bharatiya Janata Party had promised constitutional safeguards for the region under the Sixth Schedule in its manifesto.
- Yet, in December 2022, responding to a Parliamentary panel’s suggestion to explore the possibility of Sixth Schedule status to Ladakh, the Home Ministry had said: “The main objective for inclusion of tribal population under Fifth/Sixth Schedule is to ensure their overall socio-economic development, which, the UT Administration has already been taking care of since its creation. Sufficient funds are being provided to Ladakh to meet its overall developmental requirements.”

❖ Modi unveils scheme for women in Bihar, criticises RJD’s reign

Context: 75 lakh women get ₹10,000 each to start business; PM says women bore the brunt of lawlessness and corruption under previous RJD regim.

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, a State-funded assistance scheme for women in Bihar.**
- He rolled out the **self-employment scheme through videoconferencing from Delhi, and directly transferred ₹10,000 each into the bank accounts of 75 lakh women in the poll-bound State.**
- Chief Minister and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar as well as Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary of the BJP joined the event from Patna.
- **The scheme is meant to help women start their own business. Based on their performance, the government will provide an additional ₹2 lakh after six months. The assistance can be utilised in areas of their choice, including agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, tailoring, weaving, and other small-scale enterprises.**

❖ AFSPA extended in parts of Manipur, Arunachal, and Nagaland for six months

Context: The Union Home Ministry extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in parts of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland for six months.

- **In Manipur, the AFSPA has been extended in the whole State, except in jurisdictions of 13 police stations in five valley districts.**
- The excluded police station limits are Imphal, Lamphel, City, Singjamei, Patsoi, Wangoi, Porompat, Heingang, Irilbung, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Nambol, and Kakching.
- **In Nagaland, the AFSPA was extended for six months in nine districts — Dimapur, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek, Peren and Meluri — and 21 police station limits of five districts (Kohima, Mokokchung, Longleng, Wokha and Zunheboto), another notification said.**

- Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh, and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district, bordering Assam, were declared “disturbed areas” for six months.
- The 1958 law gives power to the Army and the Central Armed Police Forces deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant, and protection from prosecution and legal suits without the Union government’s sanction.

❖ MiG-21 jets fly into history after 6 decades of service

Context: Defence Minister calls aircraft symbol of India-Russia ties, says its legacy must serve as lesson for upcoming indigenous platforms; highlights its role in 1971 war, Kargil conflict, Operation Sindoor

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday described the MiG-21 as not just an aircraft or a machine but a testament to the deep ties between India and Russia, as the Indian Air Force formally decommissioned the iconic fighter jet at the Chandigarh Air Force Station.
- “We bid farewell to the Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21 from its operational journey. I believe we are closing a chapter that will be written in golden letters not only in the history of the Indian Air Force, but in the history of our entire military aviation,” Mr. Singh said.
- The last of the MiG-21 jets, belonging to No. 23 Squadron, nicknamed Panthers, were given a grand send-off.
- Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh led the final sortie of the MiG-21 Bison with the call sign Badal 3, demonstrating what the Defence Minister called “the credibility of this machine and the respect it holds in the hearts of air warriors”.
- A ceremonial switch-off of six MiG-21 aircraft in front of the dignitaries marked the culmination of the aircraft’s operational service. The aircraft document Form-700 was handed over to the Chief of the Air Staff by officers and airmen of No. 23 and Commanding Officer of 28 Squadron.
- The event was attended by former IAF chiefs A.Y. Tipnis, S.P. Tyagi, and B.S. Dhanoa, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and scores of veterans, many of whom had flown the aircraft. Pilots, engineers, technicians, and ground staff who had worked with the MiG-21 also joined the farewell.
- The Surya Kiran aerobatic team, along with Tejas and Jaguar fighters, performed breathtaking manoeuvres during the ceremony.
- Mr. Singh highlighted role of MiG-21 in the 1971 war, the Kargil conflict, the Balakot air strike, and Operation Sindoor.
- On the future of India’s air power, the Defence Minister said the MiG-21’s legacy must serve as “a lesson and a DNA” for upcoming indigenous platforms. “We must consider the success of the LCA-Tejas as the beginning of our next mission, and instil confidence in our upcoming fighter aircraft, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA),” he said.
- The decommissioning of the last squadrons has brought down the Air Force’s jet squadron strength to a mere 29 for all practical purposes, the lowest since the 1960s when MiG-21s were inducted.

Context: The Kodava community appears to be in a dilemma over how to record their identity in the ongoing Social and Educational Survey being conducted by the government of Karnataka.

- At the heart of the debate is whether Kodavas should be registered as followers of the Hindu religion or as adherents of a separate 'Kodava' faith.
- A section of community leaders have been urging Kodavas to declare 'Kodava' in the caste, language, and religion columns, while another section has been appealing to people to continue identifying themselves as 'Hindu' in religion column.
- Paradanda Subramani Kaverappa, president of the Akhila Kodava Samaja, maintained that the community should be recorded as 'Kodava' across all three categories.
- **"Before the 1941 census, Kodavas were classified as a rare and distinct tribal group. Kodavas do not follow caste divisions, sects, or a formalised religion,"** he argued.
- **The small population of Kodavas, which has been shrinking in recent decades, risks losing its unique cultural essence if subsumed within larger communities,** he added.
- Mr. Kaverappa acknowledged that there are differing viewpoints within the community. A recent meeting convened by the Samaja failed to arrive at a consensus.
- He said that the choice ultimately rests with individuals.
- "There is no compulsion. Each family can decide for themselves. This survey is only meant to reflect the current social and economic situation of communities to the government," Mr. Kaverappa said.
- He clarified that documenting Kodavas under a separate religion would not alter existing practices. "Even if people mention Kodava as their religion, traditional rituals, temple worship, and the influence of Hindu practices will continue as they always have. Our customs have drawn inspiration from Hinduism for generations," he explained.
- Mr Kaverappa highlighted concerns among Kodava youth regarding shrinking opportunities. He said recognising Kodava as a distinct category could eventually open doors to benefits, such as reservations.
- "This survey could also help establish a record for the future, especially when the Central Government carries out its census. We are encouraging people to document their identity as Kodava, but it is entirely voluntary," he added.

Debate over identity

- On the other side of the debate, several leaders from the community have been appealing to Kodavas to continue identifying with Hinduism.
- "Our culture reflects Hindu traditions, be it the worship of Naga and Aiyappa deities in our homes and villages, or the celebration of festivals like Tula Sankramana and Puthari, which follow Hindu customs," said A. Manu Muthappa, former president of the Napoklu Kodava Samaja.
- Some Kodava families have been holding discussions in their ainmane (ancestral homes) on how the religion column should be filled in during the survey.

- Mohan Devaiah, a resident of Ponnampet, said, “I have come across several videos from different clans where meetings were convened, and decisions were taken to either mark Hindu or Kodava under the religion category.”

Recognition of Kodavas

- **The Codava National Council (CNC) has launched a campaign urging Kodavas to declare their identity solely as ‘Kodava’ in all three columns.**
- CNC president Nandineravanda U. Nachappa said, “This is about cultural survival and legal recognition. Only when the government documents us as Kodava across all categories can we preserve our uniqueness.”
- Karnataka Backward Classes Commission Chairperson Madhusudan Naik has said that there is not much significance for the religion column in the enumeration in the current survey since religion does not come under the purview of the commission. “We will not be evaluating on the basis of religion, and information is being sought under a broader category,” he had said.

❖ ‘Give location of usage of Aadhaar to police to trace missing person’

Context: Though the High Court of Karnataka found no fault with the action of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) in rejecting the plea of a man for providing Aadhaar data to the police to trace his elder son, missing since 2019, the court directed the authority to issue details of location of use of his Aadhaar from the time of filing of the missing complaint till date to the Hubballi-Dharwad police to probe the case.

- Justice Suraj Govindaraj issued the direction for sharing only location of use of Aadhaar by the petitioner’s missing son to the police after noticing that certain data of **Aadhaar could be disclosed only on the direction given by a High Court as per Section 33(1) of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.**
- The court passed the order on the petition filed by Krishnamurthy, a resident of Hubballi whose son, Vijay K.S, went missing in December 2019 during apprenticeship in a technological servicing company.
- Making it clear that apart from the location of usage of Aadhaar of the petitioner’s son no other details shall be furnished, the court said the police should not share such details/information with anyone else, apart from that required for the purposes of investigation.

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

