



# DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY BENGALURU

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## WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

**OCTOBER WEEK 3**

13-10-2025 TO 18-10-2025

**IMF FORECASTS  
INDIA TO GROW  
6.6%**

**PM SURYA GHAR  
YOJANA (PMSGY)**

**PRE-COP  
MEETING IN  
BRASÍLIA**

**MANE MANEGE  
POLICE**

❖ **Ready for talks with Pak., but options open: Muttaqi**

**Context: Taliban say 58 Pakistani soldiers killed in operations by Afghan forces across Durand Line; Foreign Minister says women journalists left out of Friday's press meet in Delhi due to a 'technical error'.**

- Afghanistan is open to dialogue and diplomacy for a peaceful resolution of its conflict with Pakistan, but if the efforts do not succeed, it has “other means”, the acting Foreign Minister of the Taliban administration, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said here in response to the border clashes between the two countries.
- “There are some special groups in Pakistan that are trying to disturb our relation. After they initiated hostile activities last week, we responded to defend our territory, and after that, **our friends Saudi Arabia and Qatar intervened**. Our doors are open for dialogue, but if Pakistan does not take this opportunity, then we have other means,” he said.
- Pakistan carried out airstrikes against targets in Kabul and in response, the Afghan Defence Forces conducted operations across the Durand Line in which 58 Pakistani soldiers were killed, said Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the Taliban administration.
- Mr. Mujahid accused Pakistan of sheltering IS fighters from multiple countries in West Asia, and said Pakistan-based IS elements were behind the attacks in Russia and Iran.
- Pakistan had claimed that Thursday's airstrikes in Kabul eliminated leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Mufti Noor Wali Mehsood, a claim that was denied by sources in the TTP.
- Pakistan has been claiming that TTP is drawing support from the Afghan Taliban administration and is using Afghan territory to launch attacks against it. Responding to the accusations, Mr. Muttaqi said the real problem is Pakistan's inability in maintaining law and order along the Durand Line and the forced expulsion of the Afghan refugees from Pakistan.
- “There are no terror groups inside Afghanistan. We have removed them all over the last four years. Pakistan, which carried out attacks deep inside Afghanistan, is unable to stop attacks that are taking place deep inside its own territory. They should look into their internal failures,” said Mr. Muttaqi, urging Pakistan to control the law and order situation along the Durand Line.
- Faced with multiple questions on the condition of women in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, Mr. Muttaqi said, “Afghanistan has Islamic rule. In Islam, everyone's rights are protected, be it men or women. Everyone has rights.”

## ❖ 'Mane Manege Police'

**Context: Enumerators of the Social and Educational Survey and the police are visiting houses in Bengaluru these days, for different purposes.**

- While enumerators are conducting the survey, asking multiple questions, the **police have launched a unique initiative called 'Mane Manege Police' (police to every home) in an attempt to build stronger ties with communities and make policing more approachable.**
- The police have been collecting information about the **number of people residing in the house, their names, and their phone numbers.**
- The exercise is aimed at building trust between the police and the community within all police station limits.



## ❖ State to appoint three Information Commissioners soon

**Context: The State government has reportedly finalised the names of three candidates for filling vacancies in the Karnataka Information Commission.**

- A meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is said to have **finalised the names of former IAS officer Richard Vincent D'Souza, journalist Venkat Singh, and former journalist and currently officer on special duty to Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, Mahesh Valvekar.**
- State government is expected to issue a notification on the appointment of the three information commissioners.
- Chief Information Commissioner Ashit Mohan Prasad is expected to retire on October 31.

## ❖ India sends Minister to Egypt for Gaza summit

**Context: India will send Minister of State for External Affairs Kirtivardhan Singh to represent the country at the Peace Summit on Gaza in Sharm el-Sheikh to be co-hosted by Egypt and the United States.**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among more than 20 world leaders invited over the weekend to attend the summit, which will be co-hosted by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and U.S. President Donald Trump, to discuss the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, brokered mainly by negotiators from the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar.

### Egypt's FM to visit Delhi

- Mr. Singh left for Cairo and will travel to Sharm el-Sheikh, the officials said. Mr. Modi is, however, expected to meet Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty later this week, who is travelling to Delhi to hold the India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue.
- According to sources, Mr. Abdelatty's visit is part of the Sisi-Modi Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in January 2023, and this is his first visit to India since taking over in 2024.
- Mr. Abdelatty is also expected to brief the government on the plans for the reconstruction of Gaza.

- Although **Egypt is not a member of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, it has been keen to discuss alternative route alignments through Sharm el-Sheikh with India, given the security issues with Israel's Haifa port, where the current alignment lies.

### **Finalise truce deal**

- “The summit seeks to help restore regional stability and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza, in line with U.S. President Donald Trump’s vision for peace in the region,” it added.
- Mr. Modi had welcomed the Gaza ceasefire agreement last week.

### **❖ Email accounts of 12 lakh Central govt. employees now run on Zoho’s platform**

**Context: Over the past one year, all 12 lakh email addresses of Union government employees, including those of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), have migrated from a National Informatics Centre-based system to a platform developed by Zoho,. Zoho is a multinational firm based in Tamil Nadu.**

- A senior official said Zoho’s suite had also been activated to ensure that government employees did not use open source applications to create text files, spreadsheets and presentations.
- Though the suite was available earlier, not many employees were using it.
- “It was found that many government employees were using open source tools, which could compromise security of files, and it was decided to make them aware of, and display, the suite’s features prominently on the internal mail platform,” the official said. On October 3, the Union Education Ministry issued an order to its officials to use the Zoho suite “in alignment with the Government of India’s broader vision of transforming the nation from a service economy into a product nation, and in pursuit of building a self-reliant ecosystem in technology, hardware, and software solutions”.
- It said the Zoho Office Suite was already incorporated in the NIC mail system and “by embracing Zoho’s indigenous office productivity tools, we take a bold step in the Swadeshi movement, empowering India to lead with home-grown innovation, strengthen digital sovereignty, and secure our data for a self-reliant future.”
- Another official added that the domain name of the emails remained the same — nic.in or gov.in — but the host storing and processing the data has changed from NIC to Zoho. The private firm was awarded the contract in 2023 for seven years, the official added.

**• The NIC, established in 1976 under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, is the technology partner of the Union government and provides technology-driven solutions to it and the State governments.**

## ❖ Environment Minister heads to Brazil for key pre-COP talks

**Context: Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav will attend the pre-COP meeting in Brasilia on October 13 and 14 as India steps up preparations for the UN climate summit COP30, which will be held in Belém, Brazil, in November.**

- The two-day pre-COP brings together environment ministers, senior negotiators and observers to narrow differences on politically sensitive topics and try to build ministerial consensus ahead of the UN climate conference.
- India plans to submit two important documents ahead of or at COP30: an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) extending commitments to 2035 and India's first national adaptation plan (NAP).

## ❖ Natural farming gains traction in Himachal

**Context: The hill State's flagship Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana and MSPs have helped farmers to steadily shift away from chemical-based agriculture toward sustainable, non-chemical practices.**

- Amid a national push for natural farming, farmers in Himachal Pradesh are gradually adopting chemical-free agricultural practices. Supported by State policies aligned with sustainable farming, the hill State is witnessing a quiet transformation that seeks to balance farmer welfare with environmental conservation.
- Sunil Kumar, 42, a farmer from Balakrupi village in Kangra district, expressed satisfaction after receiving a payment of ₹2.25 lakh for 25 quintals of turmeric this year. "Earlier, I used to sell naturally grown raw turmeric at ₹60 a kilogram locally. This time, the State government procured it at ₹90 a kg," he said.
- **"Natural farming has not only improved soil and plant health on my farm, but has also helped me reap better yields and profits than chemical-based farming,"** he added. Mr. Kumar shifted to non-chemical natural farming three years ago after receiving training under the **State government's flagship Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana (PK3Y).**



**Organic produce:** Rishu Kumari is seen engaged in natural farming at her field in her village in Himachal Pradesh. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

- Launched seven years ago, **PK3Y promotes non-chemical farming practices. So far, 3.06 lakh farmers have been trained under the scheme, and 2.22 lakh farmers are practising it partially or fully on 38,437 hectares across the State. Over two lakh farmers are certified under CETARA-NF (Certified Evaluation Tool for Agriculture Resource Analysis), a self-assessment tool devised under PK3Y to certify natural farming practitioners.**

- Rishu Kumari, 37, a master trainer and natural farmer from Jamanabad village in Kangra district, said she sold 10 quintals of naturally grown wheat to a government agency at ₹60 a kg compared with ₹22 a kg in the local market earlier. Ms. Kumari and other women farmers now plan to increase the area under wheat cultivation.
- "The farmers are far more independent now with natural farming, as it has reduced our dependence on the market. We can produce all inputs on our farms," she said.

- The State government has been promoting natural farming by introducing a minimum support price (MSP) for naturally grown crops such as maize (₹40 a kg), wheat (₹60 a kg), and raw turmeric (₹90 a kg) under PK3Y.
- “With the government now supporting us through MSP, it will build up a market for such crops. Until now, natural and chemically grown produce were treated alike for pricing in local mandis,” said Ramesh Chand, a farmer from Mandi district.
- Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said, “We want people to take up natural farming as it is sustainable. It is not only healthy for farmers, who often fell ill due to chemical sprays, but also environmentally friendly and yields chemical-free, nutrition-rich crops.”

❖ **Diane Keaton, Oscar winner, star of Annie Hall, Godfather, dead**

**Context: Actress Diane Keaton, known for her Oscar-winning performance in 1977's Annie Hall and her role in The Godfather films, has died at age 79.**

- Keaton was a frequent collaborator of director Woody Allen, portraying the titular character in Annie Hall, the charming girlfriend of Allen's comic Alvy Singer.
- The film also garnered Oscars for best picture, best director and best original screenplay, cementing Keaton's place as one of the industry's top actresses and an offbeat style icon as well.
- The actress made her mark co-starring in eight Allen movies, from Play It Again, Sam (1972) to Manhattan (1979) and Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993).
- In The Godfather films, she played Kay Adams, the girlfriend and eventual wife of Al Pacino's Michael Corleone.



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## ❖ Gaza declaration inked as Hamas sets hostages free

**Context: Trump, leaders of Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye sign document meant to cement the ceasefire; Hamas releases last of the 20 surviving hostages and Israel hands over 1,968 mostly Palestinian prisoners.**

- U.S. President Donald Trump hailed a “tremendous day for the Middle East [West Asia]” as he and regional leaders signed a declaration on Monday meant to cement a ceasefire in Gaza, hours after Israel and Hamas exchanged hostages and prisoners.
- Mr. Trump sat down at a resort in Sharm el-Sheikh with more than two dozen world leaders to discuss the deal. The U.S. President along with leaders of Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye signed the declaration as guarantors to the Gaza deal.
- “The document is going to spell out rules and regulations and lots of other things,” Mr. Trump said before signing, repeating twice that “it’s going to hold up.”
- As part of Mr. Trump’s plan to end the Gaza war, Hamas freed the last 20 surviving hostages it held after two years of captivity in Gaza. In exchange, Israel released 1,968 mostly Palestinian prisoners held in its jails.
- **Under the ceasefire agreement**, Hamas is also due to return the bodies of 27 hostages who died or were killed in captivity, as well as the remains of a soldier killed in 2014 during a previous Gaza conflict.

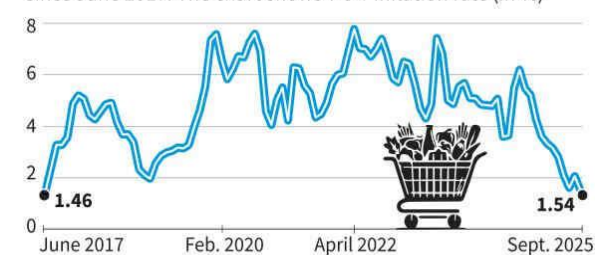
## ❖ Retail inflation eases to 8-year low of 1.54%

**Context: Retail inflation fell to a more than eight-year-low of 1.54% in September on falling food and fuel prices, official data showed. This is once again below the Reserve Bank of India’s lower comfort bound of 2%.**

- Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, was last lower in June 2017, when it stood at 1.46%.
- Inflation had fallen below the RBI’s lower comfort limit in July 2025, before rising marginally to 2.1% in August.
- The food and beverages grouping saw a contraction of 1.4% in September, compared with a growth of 0.05% in August and 8.4% inflation in September last year. “Looking ahead, food inflation is likely to stay benign supported by a favourable base and good monsoon,” Rajani Sinha, chief economist at CareEdge Ratings, said.
- “That said, risks remain from the late withdrawal of the monsoon and heavy rain in certain regions, which could risk crop damage.”
- In addition, Ms. Sinha said that persistently high double-digit inflation in edible oils warrants close monitoring, given weak sowing trends, import dependence, and elevated global edible oil prices.
- Inflation in the oil and fats category stood at 18.3% in September, the 11th consecutive month of double-digit inflation in the sub-grouping.

### Historic low

India’s retail inflation slipped to 1.54% this month, the lowest since June 2017. The chart shows Y-o-Y inflation rate (in %)



SOURCE: MOSPI

- Inflation in the fuel and light category came in at 1.98% in September, down from 2.3% in August. Save for one month, inflation in this category has been easing since April.
- “The moderation in food and fuel prices has provided much-needed relief to households and improved purchasing power,” Rajeev Juneja, president of the PHDCCI, said.
- Inflation in the clothing and footwear category was 2.28% in September, marginally lower than the 2.33% seen in August 2025 and the 2.7% in September last year. This is the fifth consecutive month of slowing inflation in this category.
- Inflation in the pan, tobacco and other intoxicants category, however, quickened to 2.7% in September from 2.5% in August. Similarly, the housing sector also saw inflation quickening to 4% in September from 3.1% in the previous month.
- Economists say that the low inflation figures, with the RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee revising downwards its inflation forecast for the year for the fourth time in a row, raises hopes of a rate cut again in December.

### ❖ ‘India’s rare earth elements strategy should align with global shifts’

**Context: India’s rare earth elements strategy should align with global supply chain shifts and geopolitical pressures, aiming to reduce dependency on dominant players like China, said Abhishek Bhatia, Managing Director & Partner at Boston Consulting Group (BGC).**

#### Steady growth

- The country’s rare earth elements market is set to grow steadily, driven mainly by the rising demand for magnets used in green technologies, he said, while elaborating on a topic ‘Critical minerals – Global Scenario and Strategy for India’, at the Critical Mineral Summit organised by Foundation of Science Innovation and Development at Indian Institute of Science.
- The rare earth elements market is expected to grow at over 6% CAGR until 2040, with magnet applications growing even faster at 8 to 9% CAGR.
- According to him, magnets account for just 35% of rare earth element volume but generate over 80% of total industry value, highlighting their economic importance. “This growth is fuelled by demand from electric vehicles, offshore wind power, robotics, and consumer electronics, all relying on permanent magnets,”.

### ❖ India invites Carney for AI summit, both sides agree to restart trade talks

**Context: India and Canada agree to restore ties against the backdrop of talks held between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Canadian counterpart Anita Anand; the two countries also begin discussions on SMR nuclear-powered reactors.**

- India and Canada agreed on a series of measures to restore relations, including relaunching the energy dialogue, after talks between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand.

- Sources said the delegations discussed an invitation for Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to visit India in February next year for the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit. While Mr. Carney has not yet accepted the invitation, a senior official from the Canadian Prime Minister's Office was present during the meetings, indicating the visit to India was being considered seriously.

### **Areas of interest**

- Among the major announcements, both sides agreed to begin at the earliest, their ministerial-level discussions on bilateral trade and investments, besides re-establishing the Canada-India Ministerial Energy Dialogue for cooperation on renewables and critical minerals, relaunching the Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee, and encouraging Canadian AI companies and researchers to participate in India's AI Impact Summit from February 19 to 20, 2026.
- India and Canada have also begun preliminary talks on SMR (Small Modular Technology) nuclear-powered reactors and other cooperation in civil nuclear energy.
- The focus on a number of issues that have been put on the back-burner since 2023, when Canada accused Indian "government agents" of being involved in the killing of a Khalistani activist in Canada, was an attempt, said officials on both sides, to not allow the security issues between the two countries to overshadow all other areas of cooperation.

### **On repair mode**

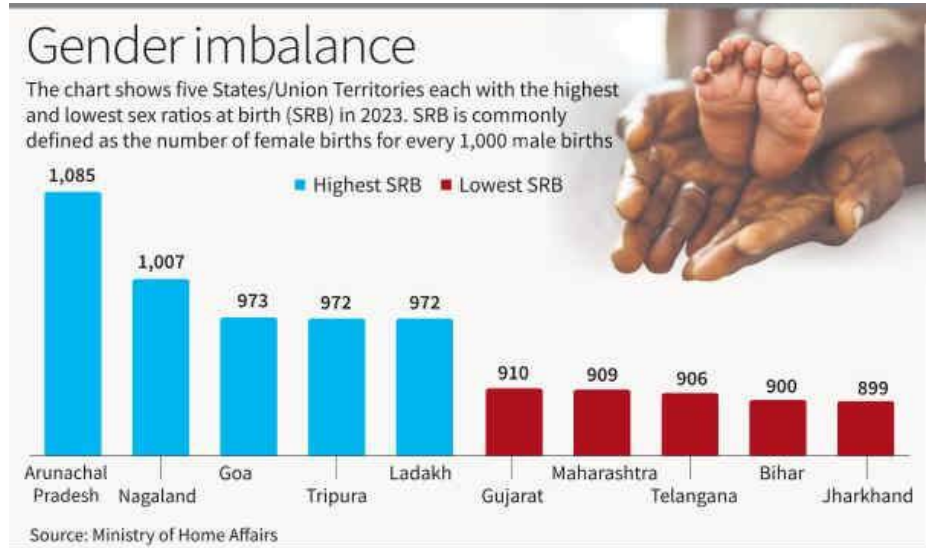
- Since Mr. Carney and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in June this year, Delhi and Ottawa have intensified talks on repairing relations, and held security level talks separately when Canadian National Security and Intelligence Advisor Catherine Drouin met with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in Delhi in September.
- "Building on the momentum of Prime Minister Carney's meeting with PM Modi this summer at the G7 Summit, Canada and India are elevating the relationship between our countries, while maintaining our law enforcement and security dialogue and expanding our economic relationship," Ms. Anand said in a statement.
- The officials said that although Mr. Carney and Mr. Modi had agreed during their meeting to restart trade talks for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), they may now abandon the previous effort, and start from scratch.
- "Our discussions focused on exploring areas of cooperation in the field of energy, technology, and food security. Also, reiterated India's readiness to reinvigorate mutually beneficial trade, investment, and economic ties based on trust and respect," Mr. Goyal posted, without speaking specifically about the CEPA.

## ❖ Number of births declines; deaths rise slightly: report

**Context: The Vital Statistics of India, based on the Civil Registration System report for 2023, shows 86.6 lakh deaths were registered that year, recording a marginal increase from the 86.5 lakh in 2022.**

- India registered 2.52 crore births in 2023, around 2.32 lakh fewer than in 2022, the Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System (CRS) report for the year 2023 shows.

- The report, compiled by the Registrar-General of India (RGI) and released on Monday, stated that 86.6 lakh deaths were registered in 2023, a marginal increase from 86.5 lakh deaths in 2022.



- The report shows that there was no major spike in deaths in 2022 and 2023, despite the COVID-19 dashboard maintained by the Health Ministry showing that the total number of pandemic-induced deaths stood at 5,33,665 as on May 5.
- However, there was a significant rise in deaths in 2021, the second-year of COVID-19 lockdown, which recorded an excess of 21 lakh deaths from the 2020 count.
- There were 81.2 lakh deaths in 2020 and 102.2 lakh in 2021.
- The report also said that Jharkhand recorded the lowest sex ratio at birth at 899, followed by Bihar at 900, Telangana at 906, Maharashtra at 909, Gujarat at 910, Haryana at 911 and Mizoram at 911. Since 2020, Bihar has been recording the lowest sex ratio, which is defined as the number of females born per 1,000 males.

### **Sex ratio count**

- The highest sex ratio was reported by Arunachal Pradesh at 1,085, followed by Nagaland at 1,007, Goa at 973, Ladakh and Tripura at 972, and Kerala at 967.
- The share of institutional births in total registered births is 74.7 % in 2023. However, the report did not include information from Sikkim. Overall registration of births for the year 2023 stood at 98.4%.

### **Statewise data**

- The report said that 11 States/Union Territories achieved more than 90% registration of births within the prescribed time limit of 21 days.
- These States are Gujarat, Puducherry, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Goa and Punjab. Five States — Odisha, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh — reported 80-90% registration, while in 14 States — Assam, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Telangana, Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh — the registration stood at 50-80%.

## ❖ Hike in PF pension under consideration of Cabinet: Minister

**Context: Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya told a meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) here that the Cabinet was actively considering increasing the minimum PF pension.**

- Though the issue was not on the agenda, trade union members in the CBT said during the discussions that the minimum PF pension should be revised from the present ₹1,000 a month. “The Minister did not rule it out and said the Cabinet is actively considering the proposal,” a CBT member after the meeting.
- The meeting also discussed the issue of delay in distributing higher pension as per the Supreme Court order. Some CBT members argued that the EPFO must withdraw the guidelines framed on the matter, and said that new guidelines should be implemented in tune with the top court order. “The response was not positive,” another member said.
- The Labour Ministry, in a release, said the meeting took a number of path-breaking decisions, including simplification and liberalisation of the EPF partial withdrawal provisions.
- “To enhance ease of living of EPF members, CBT decided to simplify the partial withdrawal provisions of EPF Scheme by merging 13 complex provisions into a single, streamlined rule categorised into three types namely, Essential Needs (illness, education, marriage), Housing Needs, and Special Circumstances. Now, members will be able to withdraw up to 100% of the eligible balance in the Provident Fund, including employee and employer share,” the Ministry said.
- Withdrawal limits have been liberalised — education withdrawals will be allowed up to 10 times and marriage up to five times (from existing limit of a total of three partial withdrawals for marriage and education in all). “Requirement of minimum service has been uniformly reduced to only 12 months for all partial withdrawals,” it added.

## ❖ Uttarakhand eases UCC rules for people from Nepal, Bhutan

- The Uttarakhand government on Monday approved a crucial amendment to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), bringing relief to citizens of Nepali and Bhutanese origin who are living in the State and do not have an Aadhaar card as identity proof to register their marriage.
- Sources stated that the State has allowed people from Nepal, Bhutan and even Tibet to register their marriage using a certificate from the Foreign Registration Officer. The official added that the aim was to give respite to people of Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, who share historic and cultural ties with the State.

## ❖ Achieving Centre’s rooftop solar targets to remain a challenge: study

**Context: Despite a near four-fold increase in applications between March 2024 and July 2025, only 13.1% of the targeted 1 crore solar rooftop installations, under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana (PMSGY), has been achieved, and just 14.1% of the allocated ₹65,700 crore in subsidies released till July 2025, a report said.**

- “In this scenario, the FY2027 target [of 1 crore installations] continues to be viewed as a considerable challenge,” said the report on the performance of the scheme, jointly published by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) and JMK Research and Analytics.

- Reasons included tardy approval processes, which could stretch anywhere from 45 to 120 days, stemming largely from “meter shortages, lack of coordination between consumers, installers, and DISCOMs, and procedural inefficiencies at the utility level,” it noted.

**• The PMSGY is a Centre-led endeavour to encourage more homes to install rooftop solar connections. The government provides capital upfront via loans.**

- As of July 2025, the period until which the report tracked progress, the PMSGY had received 57.9 lakh applications for residential rooftop solar installations. The scheme has facilitated the installation of 4,946 MW of rooftop solar capacity till July 2025 across various States and Union Territories, indicating “robust on-ground execution”, the report said.
- Subsidy disbursements have crossed ₹9,281 crore (\$1.05 billion), benefiting over 16 lakh households. As of July 2025, the 4.9 GW of installations added under the PMSGY accounted for approximately 44.5% of the country’s total residential rooftop capacity.
- The **PM solar scheme only incentivises solar installations, whose component parts are entirely manufactured in India. Called “DCR-compliant modules”, they are on average costlier by ₹12/watt over imported variants.** “These higher prices are making larger residential installations less economically attractive,” the report said.
- “Establishing clear, time-bound rooftop solar capacity targets at the State level is essential for creating a coherent vision,” said Vibhuti Garg, Director, IEEFA-South Asia, and a contributing author, in a statement.

**❖ Mokyr, Aghion and Howitt win Nobel economics prize**

**Context: Winners are professors in U.S., French and British universities; prize worth \$1.2 mn highlights work on innovation-driven economic growth.**

- Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt won the 2025 Nobel economics prize for “having explained innovation-driven economic growth”, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.
- The prestigious award, formally known as the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, is the final prize to be given out this year and is worth 11 million Swedish Kronor (\$1.2 million).
- “The laureates have taught us that sustained growth cannot be taken for granted,” the prize-awarding body said in a statement. Economic stagnation, not growth, has been the norm for most of human history. Their work shows that we must be aware of, and counteract, threats to continued growth.”
- Mr. Mokyr is a professor at Northwestern University, in Evanston in the United States, while Mr. Aghion is professor at the College de France and INSEAD, in Paris, and at the London School of Economics and Political Science, in Britain. Mr. Howitt is a



professor at Brown University, in Providence in the United States. Mr. Mokyr was awarded half the prize with the other half being shared between Aghion and Howitt.

- “Joel Mokyr used historical observations to identify the factors necessary for sustained growth based on technological innovations,” John Hassler, member of the Nobel Committee, said.

### **Creative destruction**

- “Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt produced a mathematical model of creative destruction, an endless process in which new and better products replace the old.”
- The awards for medicine, physics, chemistry, peace and literature were announced last week.
- Those prizes were established in the will of Swedish dynamite inventor and businessman Alfred Nobel and have been handed out since 1901, with a few interruptions mostly due to the world wars.
- The economics prize was established much later, being given out first in 1969 when it was won by Norway’s Ragnar Frisch and Jan Tinbergen from the Netherlands for work in dynamic economic modelling. Tinbergen’s brother Nikolaas also won a prize, taking home Medicine in 1973.
- While few economists are household names, relatively well-known winners include former U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke, and Paul Krugman and Milton Friedman. Last year’s economics award went to U.S.-based academics Simon Johnson, James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu for research that explored the relationship between colonisation and the establishment of public institutions to explain why some countries have been mired in poverty for decades.

### **❖ Snow leopards are the world’s least genetically diverse big cat**

**Context: A new Stanford-based study explains the implications of this phenomenon for the future of the elusive feline; researchers used whole-genome sequencing data for 37 snow leopards and concluded that the low genetic diversity is likely due to a persistently small population size.**

- The snow leopard, the agile “ghost of the mountains” that inhabits the rugged ranges of 12 Asian countries, including India, has the lowest genetic diversity of any big cat species in the world, even lower than that of the dwindling cheetah.
- A new study led by researchers at Stanford University, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) on October 7, explained the implications of this phenomenon.
- The researchers used whole-genome sequencing data for 37 snow leopards and concluded that the low genetic diversity is, however, “likely due to a persistently small population size throughout their evolutionary history rather than recent inbreeding.”



The snow leopard is distinguished by an unusually long tail that it uses like a rudder to stay balanced as it traverses rough terrain. PUBLIC DOMAIN

### **'Purging' of mutations**

- This means that “mutations that could potentially cause health issues in snow leopards have been removed from the population over many generations,” lead author Katie Solari, a research scientist in biology at Stanford, told The Hindu.
- The PNAS paper added, “We found snow leopards to have the lowest heterozygosity of any big cat species, with heterozygosity for every snow leopard sample included in this study falling lower than that observed in any other big cat.” This included cheetahs, “which have long been considered the archetype of low heterozygosity in big cats.”
- The good news is that snow leopards, compared to several Panthera species, have a significantly lower highly deleterious homozygous load — genes inherited from the mother and father that have fewer instances of duplicated copies of potentially harmful mutations that are connected with health issues.
- This, the authors said, suggests effective “purging” of bad mutations during their evolutionary history at small population sizes.
- “If a negative trait surfaced, those individuals died before reproducing, or their progeny were less successful. This purging, facilitated by historic inbreeding, allowed the snow leopard population to remain relatively healthy even at their small numbers,” an article in the Stanford Report read.
- In fact, “the inbreeding coefficient of snow leopards is significantly higher than other big cats and was even significantly lower than the Asian leopard and puma, indicating that the lower genetic diversity observed in snow leopards is not explained by higher inbreeding,” per the research paper.
- The very low genetic diversity and small population sizes mean they may not be able to adapt well to future anthropogenic challenges.

### **Critical to Asia's mountains**

- The wild feline indeed faces a long list of threats today: climate change, habitat loss, decreased availability of primary prey (mountain ungulates such as the Siberian ibex), retaliatory killings for livestock predation, and poaching for their skin. All this while climate change in Asia's high mountains threatens their future. Despite this, snow leopards, which were first listed as ‘endangered,’ were controversially downlisted to ‘vulnerable’ in 2017, as they did not meet certain criteria for population size.
- There are no more than 4,500 to 7,500 individuals, each critical to the Asian mountain ecosystem “that offers immense ecosystem services — acting as an important source of carbon storage and providing water to almost two billion people.”
- Hearteningly, however, the international community has worked for decades to establish a sustainable zoo population: in 2008, there were 445 snow leopards across 205 institutions globally, the paper read.
- The snow leopard, distinguished by an unusually long tail, which acts as a rudder to help it keep its balance as it traverses its rough terrain, happens to be the least genetically studied of all big cat species. There is, however, evidence of continuous habitat connectivity across at least 75 km in Pakistan and around 1,000 km in Mongolia, and the animal is known to cross long distances between mountain ranges, according to the study.

### **'Very poorly studied'**

- As for India, a pioneering survey last year estimated that 718 snow leopards exist in the wild: 477 in Ladakh, 124 in Uttarakhand, 51 in Himachal Pradesh, 36 in Arunachal Pradesh, 21 in Sikkim, and nine in Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian snow leopard accounts for 10-15 percent of the global population.
- “Of the 12 countries with wild snow leopards, India has the highest numbers after China and Mongolia. That makes India one of the most important countries for the conservation of this species,” Kulbhushansingh Suryawanshi, with the India programme of the Snow Leopard Trust at the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Mysore.
- He added that the genetic diversity of leopards in India “is very poorly studied ... We need to sample across the high mountains to understand the genetic diversity of snow leopards in India.”
- “India’s Project Snow Leopard, dedicated to the conservation of snow leopards, and NGOs such as the NCF, have been working on snow leopard conservation for 27 years. Local community members from snow leopard habitats such as Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal are key partners in the conservation of snow leopards,” said Dr. Suryawanshi.
- But the snow leopard in India is threatened by land use change and climate change, he said.
- “Almost the entire snow leopard habitat in India is within 50-100 km of the international border. Large-scale infrastructure is changing the face of this region. Climate change-induced warming and floods are impacting the wildlife of this landscape, including the snow leopards, to a large extent.”

### **Maintaining integrity**

- Dr. Suryawanshi, who is a co-author of the paper, said the main challenge of studying snow leopards is in “getting the samples.” Bureaucratic hurdles in getting permissions to study snow leopards generally slow down research, he said.
- “In addition, the timelines of funding and permissions often do not match. The Stanford study collaborated with researchers around the world, and only then were they able to put together enough samples to make an assessment of the genetic diversity of snow leopards. We need to collect a similar number of samples from within India to understand the genetic diversity of snow leopards in the country.”
- On the future fate of snow leopards of the fragile high-elevation landscape of the Himalayas, “we need to treat these landscapes and the people that live here with respect,” said Dr. Suryawanshi. “The effects of rampant large infrastructure projects are clearly visible in the scale of destruction in the recurrent floods that occur every monsoon.”
- Maintaining the integrity of the snow leopard’s habitat is crucial for the long-term conservation of this charismatic species of the Himalaya, Dr. Suryawanshi added.

**Context: Arctic seals and birds are coming under increasing threat, mainly due to climate change and human activity, according to an updated list of endangered species released by the world's top conservation body.**

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said habitat loss driven by logging and agricultural expansion is a threat to birds. At the same time, seals were at risk mostly due to global warming and human activities, including maritime traffic.
- The IUCN said it was changing the status of the hooded seal from vulnerable to endangered while bearded and harp seals are now classified as near threatened.
- “This timely global update highlights the ever increasing impact human activity is having on nature and the climate and the devastating effects this has,” its director general Grethel Aguilar told reporters at its World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.
- The IUCN red list now includes “172,620 species of which 48,646 are threatened with extinction,” it said in a statement.
- Global warming is destroying the natural habitat of animals including seals that live in the cold parts of the world. Maritime traffic, mining and oil extraction, industrial fishing and hunting are among other risks to the species.
- “Global warming is occurring four times faster in the Arctic than in other regions, which is drastically reducing the extent and duration of sea ice cover,” the IUCN said.
- “Ice-dependent seals are a key food source for other animals,” it added.
- They “play a central role in the food web, consuming fish and invertebrates and recycling nutrients” and are one of the “keystone species” of their ecosystem.
- Kit Kovacs, a scientist at the Norwegian Polar Institute, raised the alarm about the Svalbard archipelago, halfway between Norway and the North Pole.
- “When I lived on the archipelago, just a couple of decades ago, we had five months of sea ice cover in areas that are now winter ice-free. It is really hard to express just how rapidly the Arctic is changing,” she said.
- The IUCN said its red list of birds is the fruit of nine years of work by “thousands of experts”.
- “Overall, 61% of bird species have declining populations — an estimate that has increased from 44 percent in 2016,” the IUCN said.
- It studied thousands of bird species worldwide and found that “1,256 (or 11.5%) of the 11,185 species assessed are globally threatened”.
- This year’s update focused on regions where the destruction of tropical forest poses a growing threat to birds. In Madagascar, 14 species were newly classified as near threatened and three others were labelled vulnerable. In West Africa, five more bird species were found to be near threatened in addition to one more in Central America.
- The report also mentioned a positive development. The green turtle is no longer endangered, it said, citing “decades of sustained conservation action” that saw its population recover by 28% since the 1970s.
- Nicolas Pilcher, the Executive Director of the Marine Research Foundation, said this success should spur action not complacency.
- “Just because we have reached this great step in conservation isn’t a reason to sit back and then become complacent,” he said.



The IUCN World Congress will drive action on nature-based recovery, climate change, and biodiversity. AFP

*Arctic seals, birds in new 'red list' of endangered species: IUCN*

## ❖ Dashboard to keep track of govt. litigation launched

**Context: The Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, inaugurated the “Live Cases” dashboard under the Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS), designed to provide real-time data visualisation of court cases and offer an overview of upcoming hearings.**

- Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal inaugurated the dashboard, describing it as “a significant step towards enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in government litigation management.”
- According to official data, the portal currently tracks 7,23,123 live cases from 53 ministries and departments.

## ❖ India to train border security force of Mongolia, says Modi

**Context: India will start a new programme to help in capacity building for the border security force of Mongolia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.**

- Welcoming visiting Mongolian President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, Mr. Modi highlighted common Buddhist bonds between Mongolia and India. He announced that holy relics of two of Lord Buddha’s leading disciples would travel to Mongolia next year. He also said that India would start issuing free e-visas for Mongolian citizens.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mongolia President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa at a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

- “Our defence and security cooperation is also steadily strengthening. We have launched several new initiatives, from training programmes to the appointment of a Defence Attaché at the Embassy. India will also launch a new capacity-building programme for Mongolia’s border security forces,” Mr. Modi said.
- Explaining the announcement, senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs said India and Mongolia already had joint defence exercises, saying, “They are interested and they see a lot of benefits of training with us.”
- Mr. Modi highlighted common Buddhist links between India and Mongolia and said, “I am happy to announce that next year, the holy relics of two great disciples of Lord Buddha — Sariputra and Maudgalyayana — will be sent from India to Mongolia.”
- The two sides signed 10 MoUs covering areas such as immigration, cooperation, humanitarian aid, geology and mineral resources, and yoga.

## ❖ Get advertisements pre-certified, EC tells parties ahead of polls

**Context: Ahead of the Bihar Assembly election, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday directed political parties to get advertisements pre-certified, and asked candidates to inform it about their “authentic” social media accounts while filing nominations.**

- The election will be held in two phases on November 6 and 11, followed by counting of votes on November 14.
- In a statement, the EC said it had issued orders on October 9, requiring every registered, national and state political party, and every candidate to apply to the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee for pre-certification of all political advertisements on electronic media, including social media, before publication.
- The statement said such committees had been constituted at the district and State levels for pre-certification of political advertisements under the prescribed guidelines and no political advertisements were to be released to any Internet-based media or websites, including social media websites, by political parties or candidates without pre-certification by the respective committee.
- These panels shall keep a strict vigilance on suspected cases of paid news in the media and take suitable action.
- The poll panel said that bulk SMS and audio messages during the 48-hour “silence period”, which starts before the conclusion of voting, is prohibited.
- “Further, given the penetration of social media in the electoral landscape, candidates have also been instructed to share the details of their authentic social media accounts at the time of filing nomination,” it said.
- Political parties should also submit a statement of expenditure incurred on campaigning through Internet, including social media websites, to the EC within 75 days of the completion of the election.

## ❖ India calls for swift action on climate measures at Pre-COP

**Context: Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav emphasised the need to “implement” climate measures, in a series of meetings in Brasilia, Brazil, on Monday in the build-up to the 30th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) in the city of Belem, beginning November 10.**

- “We must now focus on implementing ambitious climate measures and, above all, addressing the most pressing challenge: the urgent lack of resources for developing countries to deliver adaptation and mitigation,” he said. The Minister stressed that the time for continuous reviews without action has passed. “Dialogue is important, but action is imperative.”
- These meetings called ‘Pre-COP’ meetings are an annual feature ahead of the main meeting and usually involve participation by a small group of senior delegates representing their countries, to iron out differences, find common bridging points to improve the chances of a successful outcome at the COP meeting.
- Mr. Yadav acknowledged the successful conclusion of the first Global Stock Take (GST), a five-yearly process established by the Paris Agreement to assess the world’s collective progress on climate action.

- He said that the GST is designed to strengthen ambition by performing three essential roles — enabling Parties (member countries) to evaluate collective progress, identify remaining gaps, and guide enhanced actions both domestically and globally.
- The Minister also met Mr. Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

### ❖ WHO issues product alert on three contaminated oral liquid medicines

**Context: The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a medical product alert on three liquid medicines identified in India as contaminated and reported to it on October 8.**

- They have been identified to be of specific batches of Coldrif, Respifresh TR and ReLife, manufactured by Sresan Pharmaceutical, Rednex Pharmaceuticals, and Shape Pharma, respectively.
- The UN agency said Indian regulatory authorities had been advised to consider targeted market surveillance, with particular attention to informal and unregulated supply chains where products might circulate undetected.
- They should carefully evaluate the risks associated with any oral liquid medicines originating from the same manufacturing sites — particularly those produced since December 2024.
- “The CDSCO [Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation] has informed WHO that none of the contaminated medicines have been exported from India and there is currently no evidence of illegal export,” it said adding that the affected products contained active ingredients commonly used to relieve symptoms of the common cold, flu, or cough.

#### Substandard product

- The WHO said the products were considered substandard as they failed to meet quality standards and specifications. On October 8, the CDSCO reported presence of diethylene glycol in at least three oral liquid medicines. Diethylene glycol is toxic to humans when consumed and can prove fatal.
- “WHO continues to collaborate closely with Indian health authorities to monitor the situation, identify the source of the contamination and mitigate any potential public health risks,” it said.
- The agency warned that the contaminated products posed significant risks to patients and could cause life-threatening illness.

## ❖ Defence Minister calls for reformed multilateralism upholding global order

**Context: Some nations are violating or undermining global rules while others seek to impose their own, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, asserting that India stands firm in upholding the international rules-based order even as it pushes for reform of outdated multilateral structures to meet contemporary challenges.**

- Addressing senior military leaders of the United Nations Troop Contributing Countries (UNTCC) at the inaugural session of the Chiefs' Conclave under way at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi from October 14 to 16, and being hosted by India for the first time, the Defence Minister highlighted a "4C formula" — consultation, cooperation, coordination, and capacity-building — as a guiding principle for UN peacekeeping. The approach was essential to tackle emerging challenges, and ensuring sustainable global peace, he said.
- Urging technologically advanced and financially capable nations to enhance their contributions through troops, logistics, technology, and specialised capacities, the Minister said innovations such as secure communications, surveillance systems, and unmanned platforms could make missions safer and more effective.
- "Meeting the emerging challenges demands more than bravery; it requires adaptability and innovation on the part of troop-contributing countries," Mr. Singh said.
- Mr. Singh leader reaffirmed India's steadfast support to UN peacekeeping, noting that nearly 2,90,000 Indian personnel had served in over 50 missions across the world, from the Congo and Korea to South Sudan and Lebanon. "India is ready to contribute troops, share expertise, and support reforms that make peacekeeping more effective and accountable," he said.
- In his welcome address, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi highlighted India's long-standing contributions to UN peacekeeping.

## ❖ Google to invest \$15 billion in AI data centre at Vizag

**Context: This would be the tech giant's largest AI hub ever outside the United States; Bharti Airtel, AdaniConneX to help build the 'gigawatt-scale' compute capacity data centre.**

- In a yet another boost to Andhra Pradesh's digital ambitions, tech giant Google announced Tuesday that it would be investing approximately \$15 billion over the next five years to develop a 'gigawatt-scale' compute capacity data centre focussed on artificial intelligence (AI) in Vishakhapatnam.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Union IT and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh, and Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian, and senior officials. Mr. Kurian informed this would be the largest AI hub the California-based tech company would be building outside the U.S.
- The tech giant would be partnering with telecom services provider Bharti Airtel and data centre services provider AdaniConneX to help build the data centre. The AI hub would look to provide high-performance and low-latency services that businesses require to scale their AI-powered suites.

- Additionally, Google's AI hub investment would also look to create a connectivity hub in Vishakhapatnam seeking to bring multiple international sea cables to land in the Port City. This would be further connected with the tech-giant's two million miles of existing terrestrial and subsea cables, thus, enhancing connectivity. "We see this hub not just serving India but from India serving Asia and other parts of the world," Mr. Kurian stated.
- Welcoming the announcement as "historic", Mr. Naidu emphasised in a larger context, "AI is key to addressing some of our most pressing challenges, from agriculture and manufacturing to healthcare and finance. It will transform critical sectors, bring far-reaching benefits to our people, enhance governance, empower businesses and improve lives."
- Ms. Sitharaman hailed the collaboration as a milestone in India's digital evolution. "The establishment of an AI Data Centre and subsea cable landing station in Visakhapatnam is a major stride toward our national growth vision," she said.

### 'Explore Andamans'

- Mr. Vaishnav suggested that Google explore the Andaman region to lay their undersea subsea cables. "It is a very strategic location, and Singapore today is all choked. Why can't we make Andaman as the next global hub for data transfer," he said, assuring the Union Government's support. He emphasised the region could help reach Southeast Asia, Australia and a "large part of the world which is today looking at totally new capacity".
- He sought to know if the facility could be used for developing employment potential and talent to cater to AI services which were emerging as a "major new category of the digital economy".

### ❖ IMF forecasts India to grow 6.6% in 2025, cuts projection for next year

**Context: The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its October outlook, increased India's growth projections by 20 basis points to 6.6% for 2025 whilst projecting a decline of the same intensity to 6.2% in 2026.**

- The Washington-headquartered financial institution predicted that global growth would edge upwards by 20 basis points to 3.2% this year, with the outlook for 2026 unchanged at 3.1%.
- Elaborating the rationale for the upward revision for India, IMF attributed it to a carry-over effect from a "strong" first quarter, which helped New Delhi "more than offset" the impact of U.S. President Donald Trump-induced tariff regime since July.
- India's GDP in June-end had peaked to a five-quarter high of 7.8%, driven primarily by sectors such as manufacturing, services and construction.
- The downward revision for 2026, thus, considers a fading of the momentum from the first quarter.
- IMF attributed the slowdown in global growth to headwinds from "uncertainty and protectionism".
- The IMF, however, stated that the impact of the tariff was "smaller than originally announced [anticipated]".

**Context: A high-level Saudi Arabia delegation led by Vice-Minister for Industry and Mineral Resources Khalil ibn Salamah met Union Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao in New Delhi to advance bilateral cooperation in the textile sector.**

- India was the second-largest supplier (\$517.5 million) to Saudi's textile and apparel sector in 2024 capturing 11.2% share of textile and apparel imports.
- At the meeting, there was mutual recognition of Saudi's strength in petrochemical-based industries and India's expanding capabilities in Man-Made Fibre and technical textiles.

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## ❖ Trade deficit widens 93% in Sept. as services slump

**Context: month. However, the data shows that for the first half of the financial year — April to September 2025, the trade deficit shrank by 2.3%.**

- Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday showed that India's total exports stood at \$67.2 billion in September 2025, up 0.8% over September 2024.
- Total imports, on the other hand, grew 11.3% to \$83.8 billion over the same period.
- As a result, the trade deficit in September nearly doubled to \$16.6 billion, compared to \$8.6 billion in September 2024.

### Goods exports grow

- Notably, the relatively poor performance of the export sector was due to lower exports of services and not goods. India's goods exports grew 6.7% to \$36.4 billion in September 2025 despite that being the first full month of 50% tariffs imposed by the U.S. on imports from India.
- Services, which have so far bolstered India's export performance, saw exports shrinking 5.5% in September 2025 to \$30.8 billion.
- However, while the data shows that India's exports to the U.S. are indeed 13.4% higher in the cumulative April-September 2025 period than in the same period last year, they have been declining steadily over the last few months. That is, where India's exports to the U.S. stood at \$8.8 billion in May 2025, they were valued at \$5.5 billion in September 2025.
- "It is heartening to know that in this turbulence, our merchandise exports have kept up," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said in a press briefing. "That means our industry has been resilient and they have been able to withstand the turbulence by retaining their supply chains and business. They might be taking on some of the costs on themselves," Mr. Agrawal added.
- He also sought to downplay the increase in the trade deficit in September, saying that international trade does not always follow the same pattern from year to year.
- "On a cumulative basis, we are still doing better than last year," Mr. Agrawal said. "That means the part of the exports that are not facing tariffs are growing well, but also the part of the exports that do face the tariffs are also growing. The exports have not come down."
- Looking at the first half of the financial year, the data shows that total exports grew 4.45% in the April-September 2025 period to \$413.3 billion. Total imports grew at a relatively slower 3.55% to \$472.8 billion over the same period. As a result, the trade deficit during the first half of the financial year shrank by 2.3%.

## ❖ Night light data from 2013 and 2023 reveals limited urban growth in Bihar

**Context: A comparison of night light data from 2013 and 2023 shows that most Assembly constituencies in Bihar continue to remain predominantly rural. Only a few constituencies have shown significant growth in nighttime luminosity, primarily in Patna, which was already among the more urbanised parts of the State.**

- Nighttime illumination can serve as a useful proxy for gauging human activity and electricity usage in an area. A higher concentration of night lights often reflects not just street or vehicular lighting, but also ongoing economic activities such as construction or roadwork. Together, these patterns of brightness offer a visual measure of urban growth and development.
- This method is used to classify constituencies in a State as rural, semi-rural, semi-urban, or urban. This approach is adopted due to the absence of up-to-date official data on the subject, and as administrative boundaries vary from political boundaries.

## ❖ Delhi HC seeks response on vacancies in National Commission for Minorities

**Context: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Union government on long-pending vacancies in the National Commission for Minorities (NCM).**

- A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, while hearing a PIL plea filed by Mujahid Nafees, who claimed to be the convener of the Minority Coordination Committee working on the welfare of minorities across India, pointed out that the commission cannot remain headless for so long.
- Granting time to the Central government's counsel to obtain instructions in the matter, the court said the petition was raising a very important issue.
- "Do not wait for the next date of hearing. Please ensure that things start moving," the court said. The petition stated that the posts of chairperson, vice-chairperson and members of the NCM have been vacant since April, the month Iqbal Singh Lalpura completed his term as chairman.

**• The National Commission for Minorities which works under the Ministry of Minority Affairs and has quasi-judicial powers, should have seven members, including the Chairperson, and the Vice-Chairperson.**

**• The National Commission of Minorities Act, 1992 mandates the appointment of one member from each of the six minority communities — Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, and Jain.**

- "There is a complete and systematic incapacitation of the National Commission for Minorities due to the Centre's failure to appoint its head and members," the plea states.
- The petition added that the government's inaction is further aggravated by the fact that it is in direct contravention of the spirit and letter of a prior order from the High Court where it had expressed its dissatisfaction with such delays.

## ❖ China files WTO complaint on India's EV, battery subsidies

**Context: China has filed a complaint against India in the World Trade Organization (WTO) over New Delhi's subsidies for electric vehicles (EVs) and batteries.**

- Commerce Secretary said that the Ministry will look into the detailed submissions made by China.

### Similar applications

- Confirming the move, an official said that China had also filed similar applications against Turkiye, Canada and the EU.n“They have sought consultations with India,” the official said.
- **Seeking consultation is the first step of the dispute settlement process as per WTO rules.**
- **If the consultations requested with India do not result in a satisfactory solution, the EU can request the WTO set up a panel in the case to rule on the issue raised.**
- **China is the second-largest trading partner of India. In the last fiscal, India's exports to China contracted 14.5% to \$14.25 billion against \$16.66 billion in 2023-24.**
- **The imports, however, rose by 11.52% in 2024-25 to \$113.45 billion against \$101.73 billion in 2023-24.**
- **India's trade deficit with China had widened to \$99.2 billion during the year 2024-25.**

## ❖ Russia backs AMCA, offers to make Su-57 jets in India

**Context: Russia reaffirmed its commitment to deepen defence cooperation with India with its Ambassador Denis Alipov expressing his country's readiness to support India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme through “local production” of the Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jet.**

- The move underscores the long-standing strategic partnership between the two nations, which has evolved far beyond a traditional buyer-seller relationship into one of joint development, co-production, and full technology sharing. He also said that both sides are exploring collaborations in next-generation technologies.
- The announcement comes amid growing speculation about the future of the India-Russia oil trade, following U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that India would soon halt such purchases.
- However, the Ambassador said that “Russian energy remains the most cost-effective option on the global market”.
- On the defence ties with India, he said: “For over six decades, Russia has been a trusted defence partner and a key contributor to India's military modernisation, with nearly 70% of India's defence equipment of Russian origin, and a testament to its effectiveness has (been) demonstrated by Operation Sindoor. **The partnership has produced several landmark achievements, most notably the joint production of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, which is now being upgraded to a hypersonic version.**”

- Mr. Alipov said that both sides are exploring collaborations in next-generation technologies, including anti-drone systems, advanced radar solutions, and precision strike capabilities.

### ❖ Trump and MEA at odds over Russian oil imports

**Context: Trump claims Modi gave commitment to stop buying oil from Russia 'soon'; Ministry denies the leaders discussed the issue, but says govt. is 'broad-basing' and 'diversifying' its energy sources.**

- India and the United States continued to differ publicly over Russian oil as U.S. President Donald Trump said he had been assured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India will stop buying oil from Russia, while the Ministry of External Affairs maintained the two leaders had not spoken about the issue.
- However, the MEA said that India was “broad-basing” and “diversifying” its sources of energy according to market needs, and did not specifically deny the claim that it was reducing its intake.

Bone of contention

- The subject of Russian oil, which has led to the U.S. imposing penalty tariffs on India, is also believed to be holding up trade talks between the two countries. While the government has consistently denied it would bow to pressure, data analysed by The Hindu showed that oil public sector undertakings have dropped their Russian imports by as much as 45% between June and September this year, even though Russia remains India's biggest supplier overall.
- “I am not aware of any conversation yesterday between the two leaders,” MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters here on Thursday, also clarifying that a call between Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump last Thursday had only dealt with the Gaza peace plan and India-U.S. trade issues.
- Mr. Trump had said he was confident that India would end its oil imports “soon” but not “immediately”.

### ❖ Farmers of rain-fed areas to get input subsidy of ₹17,000 per ha

**Context: As farmers incurred crop loss on 12.82 lakh hectares on account of excess rainfall during the south-west monsoon in the State, the Karnataka Cabinet has fixed the input subsidy to farmers of rain-fed area crops at ₹17,000 per hectare, ₹25,500 per hectare for crops in irrigated land, and ₹31,000 per hectare for perennial crops.**

- The input subsidy would be given for a maximum of up to two hectares. The input subsidy fixed by the government was higher than the amount fixed under NDRF norms.
- A sum of ₹1,090 crore would be additional burden to the government, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister after a Cabinet meeting.
- He said the Cabinet cancelled the necessity of securing occupancy certificates (OC) by owners of residential houses constructed on 1,200 sqft in municipalities. However, the owners must construct houses as per the plan approved by the authorities.

## Cricket stadium

- It has cleared a ₹2,350 crore for construction of a cricket stadium at Suryanagara of Anekal taluk of Bengaluru Rural district. However, the final clearance would be given after obtaining detailed project report, he said. The stadium would be developed on 75 acres.
- A sum of ₹54.92 crore was approved for purchase of necessary equipment for commencement of a super-speciality 100-bed hospital in Vijayapura. It also approved ₹100 crore each for developing NIMHANS-like hospitals in Kalaburagi and Mysuru medical colleges.
- The Cabinet approved ₹650 crore for treating sewage in Vrishabhavati River Valley and treated water would be used for filling tanks in Bengaluru Urban and Rural and Chickballapur districts.
- The Cabinet decided to cancel the necessity of passing the Kannada language test by probationary officers after the recruitment. Since candidates have to pass a 150-mark Kannada language test during the recruitment, it was decided to scrap the test after the recruitment.

## ❖ FSSAI says only WHO-approved products can be labelled as ORS

**Context: A Hyderabad-based paediatrician's long-standing fight against sugar-rich beverages falsely marketed as oral rehydration solutions (ORS) has resulted in a major regulatory change. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an order stating that no food brand may use the term 'Oral Rehydration Salts' or 'ORS' on its products unless the formulation adheres strictly to the standards recommended by the World Health Organisation.**

- The directive, issued mandates the immediate withdrawal of all previous permissions granted to food business operators for using 'ORS' in conjunction with their brand names.
- Specifically, it rescinds two earlier orders, dated July 14, 2022, and February 2, 2024, that had allowed the use of 'ORS' as part of a trademark with a prefix or suffix, provided the label included a disclaimer stating, "The product is not an ORS formula as recommended by WHO."

**FSSAI issued a detailed clarification reaffirming that the use of 'ORS' in any food product's name, whether fruit-based, non-carbonated, or ready-to-drink, violates the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and related regulations. The regulator stated that such labelling 'misleads consumers by way of false, deceptive, ambiguous, and erroneous names or label declarations,' and therefore contravenes multiple provisions under the Act.**

- This regulatory intervention stems from a persistent legal campaign by paediatrician Sivaranjani Santosh, who began questioning deceptive marketing practices nearly a decade ago.

## ❖ 'Studying space weather must be a major activity for humans'

**Context: The PUNCH Space Mission, launched by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) earlier this year to observe the 'young solar wind,' is "making the invisible, visible," Craig Edward DeForest, Principal Investigator of the mission, has said.**

- "We are making the solar wind visible," Dr. DeForest said on Wednesday evening, while giving a public lecture on 'Imaging Almost Nothing At All...With the PUNCH Space Mission of NASA' in Thiruvananthapuram. The lecture was jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), the Christ University Nodal Office and the local chapter of the Breakthrough Science Society.

**PUNCH, short for 'Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere,' is attempting to understand the corona (the Sun's outermost atmosphere) and the solar wind as "a single system," according to Dr. DeForest, who is also Director of the Department of Solar and Heliospheric Physics, Southwest Research Institute, Boulder, Colorado.**

- Studying and forecasting space weather should be important activities for humans, Dr. DeForest said. He points out that they provide a way to "protect ourselves." Solar events such as the solar wind and coronal mass ejections can have impacts across the solar system.

### **Solar maximum**

- The sun is now in a time of solar maximum, a period of high activity. In five years or so it will be much quieter, he said. "We cannot predict when an ejection will happen, but we can predict that ejections will happen over an interval of time," he said.

## ❖ Google's new AI finds promising approach for cancer treatment

**Context: Opening a portal to a new approach to drug discovery, Google unveiled a family of artificial intelligence tools that proposed a drug combination for detecting cancer that human experts did not know about, which seemed effective in laboratory conditions.**

- This is a rare instance of AI being used in the process of scientific discovery to design practical drug candidates.
- The Cell2Sentence-Scale 27B (C2S-Scale) is a 27-billion-parameter foundation model designed to understand the language of individual cells. "This announcement marks a milestone for AI in science," Shekoofeh Azizi and Brian Perozzi, staff scientists at Google DeepMind and Google Research, respectively, said in a blogpost, adding, "C2S-Scale generated a novel hypothesis about cancer cellular behaviour and we have since confirmed its prediction with experimental validation in living cells. This discovery reveals a promising new pathway for developing therapies to fight cancer."
- Their research paper, with the scientific details, was made available for public scrutiny at bioRxiv, a repository of pre-prints.

- The problem that researchers set out to solve was how to detect an emerging tumour when the immune system itself was unaware of it. A strategy was to force such nascent tumours to display immune-triggering signals through a process called antigen presentation.
- The C2S-Scale 27B model was given a task: find a drug that boosts immune signals only if low levels of interferon are present. Interferons are proteins produced by the body and act as frontline defenders against infections and tumours.
- This is a situation that exists when a tumour is likely secretly growing while avoiding the body's natural threat detection system. Small AI, or Large Language Models were unable to learn this. By exposing the 27-billion parameter model to two large data sets — real-world patient samples with tumour-immune interactions plus low-level interferon signalling and cell-line data with no immune context — the scientists trod upon insight.
- They first simulated the effect of over 4,000 drugs and noted how many of them worked in situations where interferon levels were low even as the tumours grew. Out of the many drug candidates highlighted by the model, a fraction (10%-30%) of drug hits are already known in prior literature, while the remaining drugs were “surprising hits with no prior known link”. The model zeroed in on a chemical drug called silmitasertib that only seemed to boost the immune system when it suspected a tumour.
- “With more pre-clinical and clinical tests, this discovery may reveal a promising new pathway for developing therapies to fight cancer,” Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google and Alphabet, posted on X on Thursday.

### ❖ Indian iron and steel exporters face the highest CBAM levy

**Context: Indian exporters of iron and steel to EU may have to pay about €301 million (approximately ₹3,000 crore) in Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) fees, the highest among all countries exporting similar products to the EU, an analysis by European non-profit think-tank Sandberg has found.**

- ***CBAM is a levy that European importers must pay if they buy products from countries whose production emits more carbon dioxide per tonne than equivalent goods manufactured within the EU.***
- An online calculator developed by Sandberg, made public, estimates that Russia will face the next highest CBAM charges (€240 million), followed by Ukraine (€198 million) and China (€194 million).
- The analysis further indicates that India's total CBAM liability, covering exports of aluminium and cement in addition to iron and steel, stands at about €330 million, or roughly 1.05% of the value of all traded goods. However, the study also suggests that Indian exporters could earn higher revenues, estimated at €510 million, if they shift to cleaner technologies, resulting in a net cost reduction of around €180 million.
- **India has consistently opposed the CBAM, with industry bodies describing it as a “non-tariff barrier”.**
- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said in July that if the EU implemented the CBAM, India would “retaliate with taxes of its own.”

## ❖ India in active talks for trade pact with U.S., EU, Oman: Goyal

**Context: India has implemented a number of free trade agreements with developed nations and is in active dialogue for such pacts with nations including the U.S., Oman, and the EU, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.**

- India has implemented trade pacts with Australia, the UAE and EFTA bloc. It has also signed an agreement with the U.K.
- “We have done free trade agreements (FTAs) with many developed countries in the last three years... We are in active dialogue with the U.S., EU, Chile, Peru, New Zealand, and Oman,” the Minister told reporters here.
- “It clearly shows that India is the favoured and preferred destination both for investment and for bilateral trade,” he added.

### Pact with Brazil

- Mr. Goyal also said with Brazil also, he has discussed expanding preferential trade agreement from its current level so that “we can” in the future penetrate the South American market in a bigger way.
- The Indian official team is in Washington now to hold trade talks with U.S. counterparts. The team will be there till October 17. In February, leaders of India and the U.S. asked officials to negotiate a Bilateral Trade Agreement. They fixed a deadline to conclude the first tranche of the pact by the fall (October-November) of 2025.

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## ❖ AI-based facial recognition tech to record staff attendance at govt. schools, colleges

**Context: FRA has already been implemented as a pilot project for three months in schools and PU colleges in Mandya, Haveri, and Bengaluru South districts**

- The State government has decided to implement the Artificial Intelligence Powered Facial Recognition Attendance (FRA) system **to record the accurate attendance of teachers, lecturers, and other staff in government, aided schools and Pre-university colleges in the State.**
- FRA has already been implemented as a pilot project for three months in schools and PU Colleges in Mandya, Haveri, and Bengaluru South Districts, after which steps have been taken to extend it to teachers, lecturers, and staff of all schools and colleges across the State.
- The government has already developed a separate app to record the attendance of government and aided school children, and has decided to use the same app for the attendance of teachers and lecturers, and other staffs.
- Through FRA, teachers, lecturers, and staff must check-in and check-out twice a day, once when school starts and after school ends.
- “The attendance of teachers and lecturers is important for the future of students and quality education. In this context, steps have been taken to implement the ‘AI-Powered Facial Recognition Attendance’ system,” said V. Rashmi Mahesh, Principal Secretary of DSEL.
- There was a discrepancy between the number of students in the **Student Achievement Tracking System (SATS) and the number of students attending classes.**
- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had **announced the implementation of the FRA in the State Budget for 2025-26.**
- Initially, a pilot project was conducted in the Uttara Kannada district, and after its success, steps have been taken to implement the FRA in all schools across the State.
- Absenteeism of teachers and lecturers is also common in most government schools and PU colleges. There have also been allegations that many teachers and lecturers used to sign the attendance register and then engage in their personal work. Sources said that, this affected the results of SSLC and II PUC students.
- The School Development and Monitoring State Committee (SDMC) had urged for the FRA for teachers in all government and aided schools.
- “The mobile app developed by the government for FRA can be easily installed on any smartphone. Steps have already been taken to include the information of all teachers, lecturers and staff in this app. Instead of individual photos of each staff member, photos of all teachers, lecturers and staff of the respective schools and colleges will be taken simultaneously and uploaded through the app.

**Context: In Delhi for the first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue, Abdelatty urges India to join the Egyptian Suez Canal Economic Zone; meets Jaishankar, calls on PM Modi; IMEC project, unveiled at the G-20 Summit in 2023, stalled soon after due to Gaza war.**

- Plans for the India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor (IMEC) cannot proceed without some progress on the Palestinian question, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said on Friday, adding that Egypt would be interested to join all such connectivity projects once the situation is "conducive".
- Mr. Abdelatty told a group of presspersons that he had discussed the IMEC project with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during the first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue on Friday, and also proposed that India join the Egyptian Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), where Russia, China, and a few other countries already have separate industrial complexes.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who praised Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi for the Gaza Peace Plan signed with U.S. President Donald Trump this week.

### **Derailed by attacks**

- **The IMEC was launched during the G-20 in New Delhi in September 2023 by a number of countries including India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and the European Union, and is meant to be routed via Israel's Haifa port.**
- The project floundered within a month, however, after the October 7 terror attacks in Israel and the Israeli bombardment of Gaza.
- While welcoming all connectivity projects "between the east and west", Mr. Abdelatty said that the aspirations of the Palestinian people for their own State was necessary for peace and security in the region, and it would not be possible to run a cross-regional connectivity project like the IMEC without it.
- "If we are serious about having final peace and security, a comprehensive deal and the security for Israel and the whole region, the only solution is to respond positively to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to have their own statehood, to have their own independent state," Mr. Abdelatty said in response to a question from The Hindu.

### **Indian industrial zone**

- Turning to bilateral matters, Mr. Abdelatty said that India and Egypt have committed to doubling bilateral trade from the present level of \$5 billion, with particular potential in the areas of chemicals, minerals, pharmaceuticals, phosphates, digital technology, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy.
- "We have a special industrial zone for China and for Russia in the SCZONE and we are encouraging an Indian industrial zone where we would provide all facilitation and incentives to Indian companies," he said, adding that India would be able to export goods beyond Egypt, with its population of 120 million, to a market of more than "two billion inhabitants" across Africa, South America, Europe, and Arab countries that are connected to Egyptian ports through free trade agreements.

**Context: Rajnath Singh flags off the first light combat aircraft Mk1A produced at the facility; Minister opens the third production line for the fighter and the second of Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 aircraft.**

- The production lines of the light combat aircraft Tejas Mk1A and the training aircraft HTT-40 are proof of the synergy among government, industry and academia, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Friday, asserting that no challenge was too big if faced together.
- He was speaking after inaugurating the third production line of Tejas Mk1A and the second of the Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 at the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. facility.
- The Defence Minister flagged off the first LCA Mk1A aircraft produced at the facility, describing it as a symbol of India's growing self-reliance in defence.
- Highlighting the transformation of India's defence sector in the past decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Mr. Singh said the country, which once imported 65-70% of its military hardware, now manufactured nearly 65% of it domestically. "Our goal is to increase this to 100% in the near future," he said.
- He recalled that when the government under Mr. Modi came to power in 2014, it faced numerous challenges such as limited defence preparedness, import dependence, and a lack of private sector participation.
- "Earlier, defence production was largely confined to government enterprises. There was insufficient focus on planning, advanced technology, and innovation, which made us dependent on other nations and created strategic vulnerabilities," he said. "These challenges pushed us to adopt new thinking and reforms. Today, we are manufacturing domestically what we used to import — fighter jets, missiles, engines, and electronic warfare systems."
- Mr. Singh reaffirmed the government's commitment to inducting indigenous technologies into the armed forces and hailed HAL as the backbone of India's defence manufacturing ecosystem. He commended HAL for supporting the recently decommissioned MiG-21 fleet and its pivotal role during Operation Sindoor.
- "In our security history, few instances have tested our system as much as Operation Sindoor. HAL provided round-the-clock support to the Indian Air Force, ensuring operational readiness. The Nashik team carried out crucial integration of the BrahMos missile on Su-30 aircraft, which destroyed terrorist hideouts during the operation," he said.
- "This proved that India can design, produce, and deploy its own systems effectively," he added.

### **HAL plans**

- The first two production lines of the LCA and the first production line of the HTT-40 are in Bengaluru. The company initiated establishment of the third production line to fast-track delivery of Tejas to the IAF. The production line in Nashik has a capacity of eight aircraft a year.
- The company said that with the third production line, HAL would achieve a total production capacity of 24 aircraft per year for LCA Mk1A.

- The third Line had resulted in creation of approximately 1,000 jobs, and development of more than 40 industry partners in and around Nashik, including in cities of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.
- In two years, the company plans to expand capacity in Nashik up to 10 aircraft a year by way of establishing an additional Assembly Jig Line, Tooling and Pre-installation Check facilities for Line Replaceable Units.

### ❖ Rotavirus vaccine effective against gastroenteritis in children: study

**Context: A recent study on the impact of the indigenous rotavirus vaccine in India found marked reductions in rotavirus-based gastroenteritis in sites across the country.**

- Published in the recent edition of The Nature Medicine, the study 'Impact of the indigenous rotavirus vaccine Rotavac in the Universal Immunization Program in India during 2016–2020', is an observational, multi-centre analysis by Nayana P. Nair and Samarasimha N. Reddy, on behalf of the collaborators of the rotavirus vaccine effectiveness and impact assessment network.
- The study looked at 31 hospitals in nine States between 2016 and 2020, to compare proportions and trends before and after the introduction of Rotavac in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).
- In 2016, India introduced Rotavac, an indigenous oral rotavirus vaccine, administered at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age, in its UIP. When a vaccine is introduced in the UIP, it is provided free to all eligible beneficiaries.
- The authors said, "Evaluating its effectiveness under routine programmatic conditions is critical, given the variable performance of rotavirus vaccines in low- and middle-income countries."
- They noted, "The effectiveness of the routine use of indigenous Rotavac vaccine in the national immunisation program was 54%. This was reassuringly similar to the efficacy of 54%, reported during the phase 3 vaccine trial." Further, the effectiveness was sustained in the first two years of life, when the burden of rotavirus is at its greatest.
- They found that the proportion of paediatric rotavirus hospitalisations also declined substantially.
- Rotavac was developed as part of a public-private partnership with the Department of Biotechnology, Bharat Biotech, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Stanford University, and PATH, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.
- Gagandeep Kang, Indian virologist and microbiologist who played a key role in Rotavac's development, stressed the importance of the study in a post on social media. "Rotavirus vaccine effectiveness is similar to efficacy in India! In other words, vaccines work in the real world and not in just controlled clinical trials. [This is] The first data from India from one of the largest- ever rotavirus vaccine effectiveness studies, contributed by collaborators across many States and organisations. It took a really long time to generate the data and publish it, but it was important to conduct this study for the first indigenous oral rotavirus vaccine."

❖ 'For India, Agentic AI is huge opportunity, potential liability'

**Context: For India, where digital public infrastructure and AI-driven innovation are becoming central to economic growth, agentic AI is a massive opportunity as well as a potential liability, said Saugat Sindhu, global head, advisory services, cybersecurity & risk services, Wipro Ltd.**

- However, he added, "Security, privacy, and ethical oversight must evolve as fast as AI itself."
- The future of AI in India would be defined by the intelligence of its systems, their strength and responsibility the country takes to deploy and secure them.
- According to Mr. Sindhu, agentic AI technologies are reshaping productivity, governance, and national security in an era where machines no longer just assist but act.
- Listing out some of the most critical cyber risks of agentic AI, he said India's digital economy was booming — from UPI payments to Aadhaar-enabled services. But as AI evolves from passive large language models (LLMs) into autonomous, decision-making agents, the cyber threat landscape is shifting dramatically.

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