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NOVEMBER WEEK 3

17-11-2025 TO 22-11-2025

**DIGITAL
PERSONAL DATA
PROTECTION
RULES**

**TRADE IMPACTS OF
CLIMATE ACTION**

**DIGITAL NAGARIK
PROGRAMME**

**SIXTEENTH
FINANCE
COMMISSION**

**ISRO TESTS
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❖ 27 lakh MGNREGS workers out of list amid e-KYC rollout

Context: Nearly 27 lakh workers' names were removed from the database of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Centre's rural jobs scheme, between October 10 and November 14, far exceeding the 10.5 lakh additions during the same period.

- The spike in deletions coincides with the **Centre's push to conduct e-KYC — an electronic know your customer process — for all workers, to weed out ineligible beneficiaries.**
- This **“unusual” rate of deletions from the database was flagged by Lib Tech, a consortium of activists and academicians.** Over the last six months, deletions added up to about 15 lakh. But in just one month, they shot up to 27 lakh — nearly double the earlier six-month total.
- In the first six months of the financial year 2025-26, according to the analysis, the scheme recorded net additions of 83.6 lakh workers, as 98.8 lakh workers were added, against 15.2 lakh deletions. By mid-November, however, net additions had fallen to 66.5 lakh, effectively wiping out 17 lakh workers in a single month.
- The analysis also noted that six lakh of these beneficiaries were active workers, defined as those who have worked at least one day in the past three years.
- **States with high e-KYC completion rates are leading the trend in deletions. In Andhra Pradesh, where 78.4% of workers have completed e-KYC, there were 15.92 lakh deletions. Tamil Nadu (67.6%) saw 30,529 deletions, and Chhattisgarh (66.6%) reported 1.04 lakh.**
- Senior officials at the Union Ministry of Rural Development, however, ruled out any correlation between the e-KYC drive and the deletions. A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that verification of the MGNREGS job card is a continuous process and the onus is on State governments and ultimately, the gram panchayats, to carry this out.
- Additionally, every five years, job cards must be renewed. This exercise is currently under way.

e-KYC to prevent 'misuse'

- The e-KYC process requires the mates, or MGNREGS supervisors, to click pictures of each of the workers and upload them on the MGNREGS's digital attendance application, the **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS)**, to match these photographs with their Aadhaar data.
- One of the reasons the government introduced e-KYC as an additional layer of verification was the discovery that the NMMS platform was being “misused”.

- The Ministry had also made the **Aadhaar Based Payment System (ABPS) mandatory from the beginning of 2023**. Using a worker's unique **12-digit Aadhaar number** as her financial address, this system requires a worker's name and other demographic details to match exactly on her Aadhaar, job card, and bank account. This was also introduced to eliminate "ghost and duplicate job cards" but led to the exclusion of many genuine workers as well.

❖ Digital Nagarik programme launched in govt. schools

Context: The initiative aims to raise awareness on safe Internet use, cyber safety rules, online etiquette, digital rights, responsibilities and data privacy among children of classes 6 to 10.

- To create awareness about cybersecurity and digital safety among students, the Karnataka government has begun a Digital Nagarik programme in all government primary and high schools of the State.
- Around 1 lakh teachers and 10 lakh students from classes 6 to 10 will benefit from the programme and will be made aware of safe Internet use, cyber safety rules, online etiquette, digital rights, responsibilities and data privacy.
- The programme is taken up in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Education and the social media giant Meta.
- A successful pilot was conducted in **Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Dakshina Kannada** districts in 2024-25.
- As part of the initiative, the Department of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT) will initially train 1,00,000 teachers using the **DISHA portal, who will subsequently raise awareness among students. The training for teachers commenced on November 15.**
- To create awareness about digital safety, a host of activities, including awareness campaigns, classroom sessions, poster competitions, and student-led drives, have been planned as part of the Digital Nagarik programme. A Digital Nagarik Toolkit will be shared to help schools plan initiatives that promote safe and responsible online behaviour.
- Schools are encouraged to nominate student leaders as Digital Nagrik Ambassadors to lead these activities. Top-performing schools and Digital Nagrik Ambassadors will be recognised and featured for their outstanding contributions.
- The programme comes in the backdrop of increased usage of smartphones and the Internet by children, especially after the pandemic, when classes were also shifted online.
- "In recent years, children have been spending more time online after school. There seems to be no proper monitoring of this. Due to this, cases of digital bullying, phishing, and morphing targeting children have also shot up. In this context, it is imperative to create awareness among children about cybersecurity and digital safety, and the Digital Nagarik programme is an initiative in this direction," said Gopalakrishna H.N., Director, DSERT.

❖ Army sets up three new garrisons near the strategic Siliguri Corridor

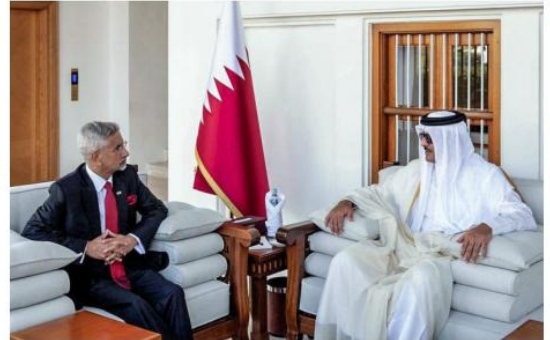
Context: Amid shifting regional dynamics following the change of regime in Bangladesh and concerns over China's growing presence near the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor, the Indian Army has reinforced its eastern frontier by establishing three new garrison locations.

- The new establishments comprise the Lachit Borphukan Military Station in Assam's Dhubri district and forward bases at Kishanganj in Bihar and Chopra in West Bengal, all sited close to the India-Bangladesh border.
- A senior defence official said the move was essential given the evolving security environment. **The Siliguri Corridor, a narrow land link to India's eight northeastern States, is strategically crucial, and the additional garrisons will enhance surveillance in the region,** the official added.
- The newly operational stations are expected to strengthen the Army's operational readiness and improve coordination with the Border Security Force, which guards the Bangladesh frontier.
- Lieutenant-General R. C. Tiwari, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, recently visited the new garrisons, interacting with troops and praising their professionalism and rapid efforts in operationalising the bases. He urged them to remain vigilant and maintain high preparedness levels.
- Wing Commander Himanshu Tiwari, Chief PRO, MoD Kolkata, said Lt.-Gen. Tiwari also laid the foundation stone of the Lachit Borphukan Military Station at Bamunigaon, named after the Ahom commander noted for his leadership.
- The Army acknowledged the Assam government and local administration for their support in enabling the rapid establishment of the station, Mr. Tiwari added.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has repeatedly expressed concern over demographic changes in border districts, which he has attributed to illegal immigration from Bangladesh.
- Rampant development of border infrastructure by China along the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh remains a significant concern. In June, China hosted a trilateral foreign office consultation with Pakistani and Bangladeshi counterparts in Kunming, an event viewed by some observers as an attempt to build regional linkages without India's participation.
- **The Tri-Shakti Corps, charged with guarding Sikkim and the corridor, already fields robust defensive assets, including Rafale jets deployed at Hashimara, BrahMos missiles, and advanced air-defence systems.**
- The establishment of the new garrisons comes as India steps up military activity in the Northeast, including a major Indian Air Force flying display in Assam and the Army exercise Poorvi Prachand Prahar near the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Separately, on November 8, a Pakistan Navy ship visited Chattogram port in Bangladesh, the first such visit since 1971, followed by meetings between Pakistan's Navy chief and Bangladesh's Army chief to discuss defence cooperation.

❖ Jaishankar, Qatar PM discuss bilateral cooperation

Context: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday met Qatar's top leadership in Doha and discussed major aspects of the bilateral relationship, including energy and trade, as well as regional and global issues.

- He held a meeting with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, and also called on Qatar's Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
- "Pleased to meet Qatar's Prime Minister & Foreign Minister @MBA_AlThani_ in Doha," Mr. Jaishankar said in an X post.
- "Reviewed key aspects of our Strategic Partnership, including energy, trade, investment and people-to-people connect. Appreciate the exchange of views on **Middle East/West Asia**, regional and global developments," he said.
- According to the state-run Qatar News Agency, the two counterparts also discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation.



S. Jaishankar meets Qatar's PM and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, in Doha on Sunday. ANI

India-Qatar relations

- Mr. Jaishankar also called on Qatar's Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and "reiterated our commitment to stronger India-Qatar relations", the Minister said in a separate post on X.
- "Value his guidance on expanding collaboration and exploring new opportunities," Mr. Jaishankar said.
- India's bilateral trade with Qatar in 2023-24 was \$14.08 billion, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

To meet Lavrov

- Mr. Jaishankar is also scheduled to meet his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in Moscow on Monday to discuss bilateral ties ahead of President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi next month.
- According to Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Mr. Jaishankar is arriving to lead the Indian delegation at the meeting of the Council of Prime Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on Tuesday.
- Pakistan, also a member of the SCO, will be represented by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. However, according to sources, there is no provision for his bilateral meeting with Mr. Jaishankar.
- According to Kremlin sources, Mr. Putin is scheduled to meet the leaders of the SCO, hosted by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

Context: A new 'country platform' is expected to help India tap Green Climate Fund resources more easily; the fund has faced criticism from developing countries for its complex disbursement procedures and lack of technical support to avail it.

- **India was among the 13 countries and a regional alliance of African countries that announced plans to set up a national platform for “climate and nature finance” at a ministerial event during the COP30 under way in Belem, Brazil. This would be coordinated through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), an institutional mechanism that has been at work since 2015, to fund projects in developing countries to adapt to unfolding climate change and to invest in clean energy.**
- Despite being the world’s largest institutional mechanism for disbursing funds for climate finance, with commitments worth \$19 billion, only a quarter of it has been properly allocated as of 2024. The GCF faces criticism from developing countries that its disbursement mechanisms are often difficult to comply with and there is limited technical support to avail these funds.
- A stated goal of the GCF is to ensure that its funds are evenly split between adaptation and mitigation.
- The **Belem ministerial event, co-hosted by Brazil’s Ministry of Finance and the GCF**, brought together Ministers and other senior government officials as well as international, national, public, and private climate finance leaders.

New ‘country platform’

- While India already engages with the GCF, it is believed that a new “country platform” for “climate and nature finance” would help the country move away from a “fragmented approach” towards accessing funds.
- This is especially significant in a year when calls from developing countries for prioritising adaptation and improving access to climate finance are particularly resonant, especially at the ongoing proceedings of COP30. The Hindu reached out to the Environment Ministry for more clarity on the country platform but did not receive a comment until press time.
- Halfway through negotiations on Saturday, India was leading developing countries’ clamour for a focused discussion and road map on a section of the Paris Agreement called Article 9.1, which mandates that developed countries provide funds for mitigation and adaptation.
- The announcement of such a platform also ties in with expectations that negotiators may finalise a list of indicators that can be used to measure progress towards the so-called **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)**.
- Progress on producing an agreed list of indicators has been difficult, with nearly 90 experts working over two years to narrow down a list of **almost 10,000 potential indicators to a final set of just 100, which is supposed to be adopted at COP30, according to a report** by Molly Lempriere, an analyst for Carbon Brief, an agency that tracks climate negotiations.
- However, with India, among other countries expected to announce National Adaptation Plans, there is greater vocal support and interest in having a concrete outcome on the GGA.

- Announcing their country and regional platforms, representatives from the **African Islands States Climate Commission (AISCC) — Cambodia, Colombia, India, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Mongolia, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Rwanda, the Dominican Republic, Togo, and South Africa** — shared their vision and strategies for leveraging country platforms to accelerate climate action.
- This brings the number of platforms to 16, with the previously established Brazil Country Platform and Caribbean Regional Platform, according to a note from the GCF.

GCF support for India

- As of August 2024, **India has received commitment from the GCF for 11 projects worth \$782 million to mitigate and adapt to climate change in sectors, including water, clean energy, coastal, livelihood, transport, medium and small enterprises and climate start-ups.** A bulk of the financing is in the form of concessional loans.
- India’s Environment Ministry is the primary access point (or the Nodal Designated Authority) for GCF-linked funding.

❖ China Coast Guard ships sail through Japan-administered Senkaku Islands

Context: A China Coast Guard ship formation passed through the waters of the Senkaku Islands on Sunday on a “rights enforcement patrol”, the China Coast Guard said in a statement, as Beijing ramps up tensions with Japan over its Prime Minister’s remarks on Taiwan.

- A diplomatic spat between China and Japan has intensified since Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told Parliament on November 7 that a hypothetical Chinese attack on democratically-ruled Taiwan could trigger a military response from Tokyo.
- The remarks sparked an angry response from Beijing, which has signalled that it expects Ms. Takaichi to retract them in some fashion.
- China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to take control of the island. Taiwan’s government rejects Beijing’s sovereignty claims.
- “China Coast Guard vessel 1307 formation conducted patrols within the territorial waters of the Diaoyu Islands. This was a lawful patrol operation conducted by the China Coast Guard to uphold its rights and interests,” the statement said.
- China and Japan have repeatedly faced off around the Japan-administered islands, which Beijing calls Diaoyu and Tokyo calls the Senkaku.
- The Japanese Embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
- In Taiwan, the Defence Ministry said on Sunday morning it had detected 30 Chinese military aircraft operating around the island and seven navy ships over the past 24 hours. Late on Saturday, the ministry said China had been carrying out another “joint combat patrol”.



China says it patrolled the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands’ territorial waters ‘in a lawful mission’ to defend national sovereignty. AP

❖ What are Digital Personal Data Protection Rules?

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules (DPDP), 2025 were notified this week, kicking off the formation of the Data Protection Board of India (DPBI), and the legal framework for safeguarding the data of Indians online.
- The DPDP Act itself was passed in Parliament in August 2023, and the draft of the Rules that were notified on November 14, 2025 were released for consultation in January.

What do the DPDP Act and Rules do?

- The DPDP Act, 2023 is India's data protection law just as other major countries have their own data protection regimes such as that in Europe (the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) and Singapore (Personal Data Protection Act, 2012).
- Like these regimes, the Act sets out some baselines for how companies ("data fiduciaries") should handle data of their users in India ("data principals"). For instance, there must be access control and encryption, along with security audits for large firms ("significant data fiduciaries").
- Further, data principals are required to take "informed" consent from their users, and anyone whose data they collect, by giving a summary of what data they are collecting, and how they will use it.
- The Act also gives users the right to erase or modify data they provide to firms, or to delete it. After a specified period of inactivity, firms are under an obligation to delete the data they have on users. A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has to be appointed by large firms, who will oversee compliance.
- The Act also restricts targeted advertising and certain data collection from children. The Rules carve out an exemption here for parents tracking their children's location.
- To allow users to exercise rights across a variety of fiduciaries (accounts over several platforms), the Act and Rules set out the framework for a "Consent Manager," a service that will allow users to manage their data across several fiduciaries, similar to the permissions manager settings on a smartphone.
- Data breaches must be reported as soon as possible, the Act says.
- Fines for non-compliance for different parts of the law range from ₹10,000 to ₹250 crore.

Are these requirements in force?

- No. While over two years have gone by since the Act was notified, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has chosen to give firms up to 18 more months to comply. Some requirements, like having a DPO be appointed for large firms, goes into effect one year from now.
- However, some parts of the Act have kicked into action — such as the DPBI's formation. The DPBI will oversee the Act's implementation and will be a subordinate office of the MeitY. The body will have four members.
- Another part of the Act that goes live is the amendment to the Right to Information Act, 2005, which has been furiously resisted by digital rights and transparency groups alike.

Why is the amendment controversial?

- The 2023 Act amended Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information Act, 2005, which allows citizens to request public information from government bodies. That section allowed government bodies to refuse requests for “personal information”, but said that this exemption would not apply if there was a larger public interest in disclosing the information.
- The DPDP Act removed that carve-out, allowing government organisations more discretion in what is and isn’t personal information, and decline it even if doing so would be in the public interest. The 2023 law was not going to be in force — including this amendment — until the Union government notified it. Transparency activists, such as those belonging to the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and the National Campaign for the People’s Right to Information (NCPRI), spent years (since the DPDP Act’s 2022 draft was published) resisting this change.
- But, the government disregarded that pushback, and specifically invoked its power to push the amendment through in the form of a notification. Another amendment, to the Information Technology Act, 2000, is not yet in force.
- Organisations like the MKSS have worked with grassroots movements to get access to ration “muster rolls” and work order logbooks, allowing them to scrutinise public records for signs of graft and misspending.
- By implementing a broader definition to what constitutes as “personal information”, they have argued, citizens may have no room to conduct such social audits.
- The amendment could also be used to shield powerful officials’ misconduct, they have said. Nikhil Dey, an MKSS founding member, vowed that “[w]e the people’ will fight back” after the amendment went into force.



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❖ Trade deficit surges to \$21.8 billion in Oct.

Context: India's trade deficit surged 141% in October 2025 to \$21.8 billion due to surging imports, driven in large part by a festival-related jump in gold imports, and subdued merchandise exports, official data showed.

- India's total exports in October 2025 stood at \$72.9 billion, down marginally from \$73.4 billion in October last year. India's total imports jumped to \$94.7 billion in October this year, compared with \$82.4 billion in October 2024.

Big increase

- As a result, the trade deficit grew to \$21.8 billion in October this year from \$9.05 billion last year.
- Festive surge in gold imports drives trade deficit to \$21.8 billion
- India's total exports in October this year stood at \$72.9 billion, a marginal decline from \$73.4 billion in the same month last year
- India's trade deficit surged 141% in October 2025 to \$21.8 billion due to surging imports, driven in large part by a festival-related jump in gold imports, and subdued merchandise exports, official data showed.
- India's total exports in October 2025 stood at \$72.9 billion, down marginally from \$73.4 billion in October last year.
- India's total imports jumped to \$94.7 billion in October this year, compared with \$82.4 billion in October 2024. As a result, the trade deficit grew to \$21.8 billion in October this year from \$9.05 billion last year.
- "There are two things that have brought this increase in the trade deficit about," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said at a press briefing. "The first is gold and the other is silver. The increase in gold imports has been phenomenal in October despite very high global prices."
- "In silver also, the growth has been phenomenal," he explained. "If you combine these two, these account for the additional trade deficit."
- "An uninterrupted rise in gold prices ahead of the festive season may have led to speculative demand which may not sustain going ahead, possibly leading to some cooling in the import numbers in the ensuing months," Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA said. "Nevertheless, the non-oil, non-gold imports rose by a substantial 12.4% year-on-year, led by fertilisers, machinery, electronic goods, non-ferrous metals, and silver."

Context: The Department of Electronics, IT & BT, Government of Karnataka, in collaboration with KEONICS, on Monday launched KEO, a compact, affordable, AI-ready personal computer.

- The device, designed and developed entirely in Karnataka, will be formally unveiled by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during the inaugural ceremony of the 28th edition of Bengaluru Tech Summit.

Bridging digital divide

- According to a government communique, KEO (Knowledge-driven, Economical, Open-source) has been built on an open-source RISC-V processor with a Linux-based operating system.
- It includes an on-device AI core, enabling AI to run locally without Internet access, and comes pre-loaded with BUDDH, an AI agent trained on the Karnataka DSERT syllabus to assist students even in low-connectivity regions.
- Announcing the launch of KEO, Priyank Kharge, Minister for Electronics, IT & BT, said, “KEO is Karnataka’s practical answer to the digital divide. It is not a luxury device; it is an inclusion device. Affordable mass computing will allow every student, small business, and household to participate fully in the digital economy.”
- According to officials, KEO will be deployed across schools, universities, small businesses, government offices and homes.
- Sharath Bache Gowda, chairman, KEONICS, noted that by adopting an open-source RISC-V stack, KEO strengthens Karnataka’s commitment to accessible, locally adaptable, home-grown computing solutions.



Priyank Kharge, Minister IT & BT, and Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, along with Sharath Bache Gowda, chairman, KEONICS and others during a press meet for the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025 in Bengaluru on Monday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

BTS set to begin

- The 28th edition of the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025 (BTS 2025) will feature dignitaries including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, M.B. Patil — Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Indian and international leaders from various sectors including DeepTech, Biotech & HealthTech, Semiconductors, and Startup Innovation.
- Speaking at the curtain raiser, Mr. Kharge noted that the Government of Karnataka has envisaged and organised The Future Makers Conclave at the BTS, a gathering of around 10,000 founders, investors and innovators.
- This year, BTS features 10 focused conference tracks, including IT & DeepTech, Electro–Semicon, Digi Health & Biotech, India–USA Tech Conclave, and Global Collaboration and Startup Ecosystem, which includes the sub-tracks AI Universe- a run up to the India AI Impact Summit, Defence & SpaceTech, Finverse. Other tracks include the Academia-Industry Collab, Assistech and Women in Leadership.

❖ Speaker delaying disqualification pleas is 'gross contempt': SC

Context: The Supreme Court warned that the Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar was in "gross contempt" for delaying a decision on petitions filed by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leaders seeking the disqualification of 10 of their MLAs who shifted allegiance to the ruling Congress party in the State.

- In July, a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai had allowed the Speaker three months to complete the disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.
- "Either this [disqualification petitions] have to be decided by next week or face contempt. This is gross contempt. We have already said he does not enjoy constitutional immunity while acting as a tribunal under the Tenth Schedule. It is up to him to decide where he wants to spend on the New Year's day," Chief Justice Gavai observed.

Speaker's duty

- In a previous hearing, the court clarified its power, and duty, to ensure that Speakers, acting as a quasi-judicial tribunal under the anti-defection law of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, did not sit over disqualification petitions till they "die a natural death" towards the end of the tenure of the House.
- The court had expressed its resolve to not remain a silent spectator and watch from the gallery as a Speaker waited six months before the end of the tenure of a Legislative Assembly only to say "now there is no time left".
- Justice Gavai had firmly said the court would not allow the Tenth Schedule to be reduced to a mockery. It had observed that political defections, unless addressed and curbed, had the power to disrupt democracy. The apex court is hearing petitions filed by BRS leaders, including K.T. Rama Rao and Padi Kaushik Reddy, seeking timely action by the Telangana Assembly Speaker on disqualification proceedings pending against 10 MLAs.

❖ SC says perennial GRAP is not answer to Delhi air pollution

Context: Air quality degradation has to be dealt through a long-term policy, which does not impact the livelihoods of labourers and daily wagers, the court says; Centre's response sought on the matter.

- The Supreme Court told the Centre that air pollution's choke-hold on the national capital cannot be pried loose by slapping a "perennial GRAP" (Graded Response Action Plan) across Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- The toxicity had to be dealt with gradually, through a long-term policy, which did not impact the livelihoods of migrant labourers and daily wagers, the court said.
- "The solution is not to take a short-term measure effective for one or two months. The government has to bring all the stakeholders on board and consider a solution which would see air pollution diminishing over the years," Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai observed.
- The Chief Justice said "harsh" measures like imposing GRAP throughout the year till the air quality index (AQI) drastically dipped would have other massive repercussions affecting the livelihoods of lakhs of daily labourers and construction workers.

- At one point, even the Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, for the Centre, said “knee-jerk” reactions to air pollution, caused by a heavy cocktail of stubble-burning fumes from neighbouring States such as Punjab and Haryana, vehicular emissions, and construction debris, etc., would only prove counter-productive.
- “Even the Supreme Court would not be able to function with perennial GRAP... There would be no cars allowed,” the CJI said.
- Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, who had suggested GRAP throughout the year, said the court could consider online hearing of cases. Mr. Sankaranarayanan also suggested a heavier road tax for cars.
- Amicus curiae Aparajita Singh, focusing on the issue of stubble-burning, explained that the practice grew after the implementation of the Groundwater Preservation Act of 2009, which shortened the time between harvesting paddy and sowing wheat. “So the best option for farmers was to burn the crop stubble,” Ms. Singh explained.
- Mr. Sankaranarayanan suggested advancing the farmers’ schedule for harvesting paddy. “Paddy should be harvested earlier, when the wind does not come to Delhi,” he said.
- The Centre had allocated over ₹2,000 crore to States, including Punjab and Haryana, to buy machinery for the in-situ removal of stubble from the fields in order to use them as manure or as fuel.
- “The allocation of money or machinery is not the solution... The AQI threshold in India is very high. They allow high levels of pollution before GRAP kicks, unlike in other foreign countries,” Mr. Sankaranarayanan submitted.
- The court asked Ms. Bhati to consult with the government and come back by Wednesday.

❖ Apex court warns Maharashtra govt.on 50% quota limit

Context: The Supreme Court said the Maharashtra government should not “question the powers of the court” and exceed the 50% threshold while reserving seats for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local bodies which are scheduled to go to the polls in December.

- A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi said the court would allow the elections to go ahead only if the OBC quota remained within the bounds of the 50% mark set by a Constitution Bench in K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India.
- Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for Maharashtra, urged the court to allow the election process to go ahead for now. “The Constitution Bench judgment is very clear. The vertical reservation in local bodies cannot go beyond 50%,” Justice Bagchi remarked.
- Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for petitioners, said the State was holding elections as per the 2022 J.K. Banthia Commission report, which had recommended a 27% quota for OBCs. “If this happens, the aggregate reservation would go up to 70%,” he submitted.
- “If the plea [of the State] is that nomination has begun and the court should stay its hand, then we will stay the elections. Do not test the powers of this court,” Justice Kant said, addressing Mr. Mehta.

- On May 6, the top court had allowed the local body elections to be conducted in the State, provided the OBC reservation was maintained as it had existed before the J.K. Banthia Commission report.
- The local body elections in the State have been stuck since 2022 due to litigation over the implementation of the OBC reservation. The order to go ahead with the elections was passed in May 2025 in the spirit of upholding the Constitutional mandate of grassroots democracy.
- The Bench reminded the State government that the question of validity of the Banthia panel report was still sub judice. It then posted the case for further hearing.

❖ Trade impacts of climate action flagged at COP30

Context: Developing countries, including India, demand that the impact of climate action on trade be given more prominence and discussed in future meetings; summit Presidency circulates summary.

- As world leaders begin ministerial consultations in the second and concluding week of COP30, developing countries, including India, have demanded that the impact of climate on trade be given more prominence and discussed in future climate meets.
- The COP30 Presidency, late Sunday, made public a summary of ‘positions’ by various countries (without individually identifying them) to help evolve consensus.
- The summary includes suggestions to have an annual dialogue on “climate change-related trade restrictive unilateral trade measures; discuss the cross-border impacts of climate policies; and hold round tables on the nexus between trade and climate change in 2026 and 2027, with outputs serving as inputs to the Global Stocktake (in 2028), according to a document that was circulated by the United Nations Presidency.
- Divisions over climate policy and trade also threaten collective action on keeping carbon emissions from causing a temperature rise exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius, which scientists say is likely to be breached latest by 2030 given current emission trends and inadequate action by countries to rein in future emissions.

Finance gaps

- Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav is expected to make a ‘national statement’ at the COP, which will articulate India’s latest position on these issues as well as gaps in finance that make adaptation as well as emission cuts challenging.
- COP30 President Andrei Lago presided over the launch of a ‘Forum for Climate and Trade Cooperation. “It is a space for dialogue and solution-building at the intersection of trade and climate change,” he remarked at the opening ceremony.
- Trade and climate cut particularly close to India, with the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) set to come into full effect in January 2026.
- 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.
- In October that Indian exporters of iron and steel to the European Union 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, citing an analysis by European non-profit think-tank Sandberg.

- Through this forum, Brazil hopes to set in place a process whereby the simmering tensions between developed and developing countries concerning climate and trade can be bridged via a three-year process.
- “Closing the distance between climate ambition and trade policy is indispensable to the emergence of a truly inclusive global economy. The Forum offers developing countries a unique platform to shape that convergence and to champion a more sustainable, just, and resilient model of global prosperity,” Daouda Sembene, president and CEO, Africatalyst and Distinguished Nonresident Fellow, Center for Global Development, said.

❖ Centre hikes print ad rates by 26% to offer ‘revenue support’

Context: The Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry has approved a 26% increase in the rates for advertisements in print media to strengthen the media ecosystem.

- “The government has decided to revise the rates of advertisement by 26%. The media rates for print media per sq. cm for one lakh copies of dailies in the black and white advertisement have been enhanced from ₹47.40 to ₹59.68, an increase of 26%.
- The government has also agreed to the recommendations of the Committee relating to premium rates to be offered for colour advertisements, preferential positioning,” the Ministry.
- **The Central Bureau of Communication (CBC) is a nodal media unit under the Ministry for undertaking publicity campaigns on behalf of various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India in various media vehicles, including print media, empanelled with the CBC for this purpose.**
- “The rates for release of advertisements in the print media by the CBC were last revised by the Ministry on the basis of the recommendations of the 8th Rate Structure Committee on January 9, 2019.
- The 9th Rate Structure Committee under the chairmanship of Additional Secretary and Financial Adviser (I&B) was constituted on November 11, 2021, for making recommendations regarding revision in rates for government advertisements in print media,” it said.
- The Committee, during its proceedings between November 2021 and August 2023, considered the representations from various newspaper associations of small, medium, and big category newspapers — Indian Newspaper Society, All India Small Newspapers Association, Small-Medium-Big Newspapers Society, and other stakeholders and submitted its recommendations on September 23, 2023.
- The Ministry said raising advertisement rates for print media would offer crucial revenue support at a time of rising costs and growing competition from other platforms. The revised rates would help sustain operations, uphold quality journalism.

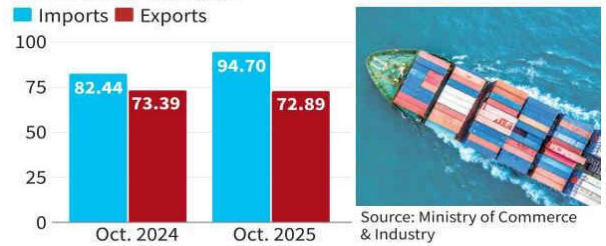
❖ Festive surge in gold imports drives trade deficit to \$21.8 billion

Context: India's total exports in October this year stood at \$72.9 billion, a marginal decline from \$73.4 billion in the same month last year.

- India's trade deficit surged 141% in October 2025 to \$21.8 billion due to surging imports, driven in large part by a festival-related jump in gold imports, and subdued merchandise exports, official data showed.
- India's total exports in October 2025 stood at \$72.9 billion, down marginally from \$73.4 billion in October last year.
- India's total imports jumped to \$94.7 billion in October this year, compared with \$82.4 billion in October 2024. As a result, the trade deficit grew to \$21.8 billion in October this year from \$9.05 billion last year.
- "There are two things that have brought this increase in the trade deficit about," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said at a press briefing. "The first is gold and the other is silver. The increase in gold imports has been phenomenal in October despite very high global prices."
- "In silver also, the growth has been phenomenal," he explained. "If you combine these two, these account for the additional trade deficit."
- "An uninterrupted rise in gold prices ahead of the festive season may have led to speculative demand which may not sustain going ahead, possibly leading to some cooling in the import numbers in the ensuing months," Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA said. "Nevertheless, the non-oil, non-gold imports rose by a substantial 12.4% year-on-year, led by fertilisers, machinery, electronic goods, non-ferrous metals, and silver."

Surge in deficit

The chart shows India's imports and exports during October 2024 and 2025 in \$ billion



❖ 'First tranche of BTA related to reciprocal tariffs to close soon'

Context: In an indication that some of the trade tensions between India and the U.S. might be getting ironed out, a senior government official said that the first tranche of a trade deal between the two countries is "more or less near closure".

- "Yes, we are engaged with the U.S. on the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), but as you are aware, the BTA has two parts in it," a senior official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on the condition of anonymity as the talks are still ongoing.
- "One part of it will take time," the official explained. "The other part is a package that can address reciprocal tariffs. We are working on both aspects, but the package that can address reciprocal tariffs is more or less near closure. We should get closure on that soon."
- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal too said that "hopefully the U.S. deal will get finalised soon".
- Talks on the reciprocal tariffs aspect of the proposed BTA were derailed in August following the levy of a total 50% tariff on imports from India. This included 25% tariffs imposed as a 'penalty' for India's oil imports from Russia.

- In the wake of these tariffs, the sixth round of negotiations on the BTA, which was set to take place in New Delhi in the last week of August, was cancelled. Formal talks did not resume for 1.5 months.
- However, Commerce Secretary and chief negotiator for India on the BTA Rajesh Agrawal travelled to Washington with his team for the sixth round of negotiations between October 15-17, indicating that tensions were easing.

❖ PayU gets RBI nod to operate as payment aggregator

Context: PayU, a diversified fintech platform, said it had received integrated authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a payment aggregator across online, offline (physical) and cross-border transactions, including 'inward and outward', under the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act.

- The approval enables seamless payment acceptance, settlement and cross-border solutions for merchants across channels, PayU said.

❖ Finance panel submits report for 2026-31

Context: The Sixteenth Finance Commission, chaired by economist Arvind Panagariya, has submitted its report to the President of India, the office of the President announced.

- The Sixteenth Finance Commission's recommendations would apply for a period of five years beginning on April 1, 2026.

❖ India oil firms bag first-ever U.S. LPG import deal

Context: India's public-sector oil companies have successfully concluded a one-year deal to import liquified petroleum gas (LPG) from the U.S. Gulf Coast, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said.

- In a post on X, he said India would source about 2.2 million tonne per annum (MTPA) of LPG from the U.S. Gulf Coast for the contract year 2026 — making it the “first structured contract of U.S. LPG for the Indian market”.
- He added the deal would represent 10% of India's annual imports in the sector during 2026.
- “A team of officials from Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum engaged in discussions with major U.S. producers over the last few months, which concluded now,” he stated.
- The move comes against the backdrop of India facing 50% tariffs on exports to the U.S. and many Indian Ministers' stating India would like to import more energy from the U.S.

❖ SC recalls judgment on retrospective green nods

Context: Majority 2-1 verdict upholds review pleas citing public interest; Justice Bhuyan's dissent says court is backtracking for the sake of violators.

- A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, in a majority judgment on Tuesday, recalled its May 16 verdict declaring the Centre's grant of ex post facto or retrospective environmental clearances (ECs) to building projects and constructions a "gross illegality" and an "anathema".
- Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, who is retiring on November 23, said in his separate opinion that the May 16 judgment, if allowed to continue to operate, would have a "devastating effect" and "thousands of crores of Rupees would go to waste".
- Justice K. Vinod Chandran backed his view, forming the majority on the Bench.
- Justice Ujjal Bhuyan recorded a sharp dissent in his 97-page opinion. He termed the review judgment an "innocent expression of opinion" which overlooked the "very fundamentals of environmental jurisprudence".
- The separate individual opinions of the Chief Justice and Justice Bhuyan clashed, with the latter saying he was pained to see the country's highest court "backtracking on sound environmental jurisprudence" for the sake of violators, even as the "deadly Delhi smog reminds us everyday about the hazards of environmental pollution".
- After reading excerpts from his minority opinion in the courtroom, Justice Bhuyan seemed to signal verbally that he would stop. But the Chief Justice said with a smile that he could read on as the judgment would be a public document on its publication later in the day.
- Justice Bhuyan was a member of the two-judge Bench, headed by the now-retired Justice A.S. Oka, which had delivered the May 16 judgment.

❖ State police to launch 'Sanmitra' initiative to combat drug abuse

Context: In a major step towards curbing the growing menace of drug addiction among the youth, the Karnataka State Police Department has rolled out 'Sanmitra' (a good friend), an initiative aimed at providing sustained support, rehabilitation, and monitoring for individuals struggling with substance abuse. The programme seeks to address the issue not just through enforcement, but with empathy, guidance and structured rehabilitation.

- Director-General and Inspector-General of Police, M.A. Saleem, in a circular issued recently, said the initiative is designed to "transform lives" by focusing on root-cause identification, continuous mentorship, and confidential handling of affected individuals and their families.
- Stressing the need for a more comprehensive strategy to tackle drug-related offences, Mr. Saleem said that policing should not end with arresting the accused, seizing contraband, filing chargesheets and moving to the next case.
- He emphasised that a holistic and continuous monitoring system is essential to ensure that accused persons and addicts do not relapse into drug use or return to criminal activity. According to him, dedicated personnel will be deployed at each station to carry out this monitoring, maintain follow-up reports, and initiate further action when necessary.

- Under the initiative, every police station across the State will establish a dedicated Sanmitra helpdesk. Officers have been instructed to identify persons battling substance abuse and assign a trained police staff member as a mentor. Their details will be registered confidentially and shared only with senior officers to ensure complete protection of personal information.
- Police personnel designated under Sanmitra must maintain constant contact with affected individuals, engage with their families, and coordinate with mental health professionals to track monthly progress.
- The social circle of each individual will be examined discreetly, and any friends displaying signs of substance abuse will be reported immediately to the Station House Officer for medical intervention.
- Special emphasis has been placed on supporting students. The police have been advised to avoid uniformed visits or formal interactions on college grounds. Instead, officers will approach students as friends, helping them reintegrate into mainstream education without stigma.
- Station heads must collect progress reports from Sanmitra personnel every two weeks and submit confidential monthly reports to the respective SP or DCP in sealed covers, according to the circular.
- At the next level, SPs and DCPs will compile quarterly assessments for submission to IGPs, DIGs, or Police Commissioners.
- An annual operational report will be submitted every December.

❖ **First-of-its-kind Child Rights Index to be released**

Context: The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) is set to launch a Child Rights Index, a first-of-its-kind document in the country, as claimed by the officials.

- Conceived with the idea of demystifying and simplifying the enforcement of laws and schemes related to child rights, the index has been compiled by gathering data from various departments.
- The document is meant to act as a quick reference for government officials for effective implementation of child-related schemes within their respective departments.
- “The document details the laws and schemes in each department for children, how effective the implementation of the same has been and what changes can be adopted for improving things. It is conceived to ensure the rights, protection and welfare of children,” said Shashidhar S. Kosambe, chairperson, KSCPCR.
- “If you are a government official, the index will help you quickly understand what the available schemes and laws within your department are in this regard,” he further explained.
- The index is expected to be launched later this week.

❖ Speaker to hear responses on disqualification pleas

Context: Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar is all set to hear the arguments on disqualification petitions filed against four Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) legislators who allegedly defected to the ruling Congress.

- The Speaker, chairing the Tribunal constituted under Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, will hear the responses by the advocates of the petitioners and respondents.
- He will take on record the responses of MLAs Tellam Venkat Rao and M. Sanjay Kumar on Wednesday in two separate sessions followed by those from Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Arekapudi Gandhi the next day.
- This marks the final stage of hearing into the petitions filed against eight of the 10 BRS legislators by the main opposition party.
- Two MLAs Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari have not responded to the notices served by the Speaker.
- The development assumes significance in the light of Supreme Court Chief Justice B.R. Gavai setting one-week deadline for the Speaker to complete the hearings and announce his decision. The Chief Justice was angry that the Tribunal did not take action within the October 31 deadline set by him.
- Assembly sources however said the Speaker's office is yet to receive the notice from the Supreme Court so far. But the Speaker had decided to speed up the process.

❖ Nearly 99% electors have received SIR forms, says EC

Context: Two weeks after the second phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls began in nine States and three Union Territories, the Election Commission said more than 50.25 crore of the nearly 51 crore electors had received the enumeration forms.

- The enumeration phase began on November 4 and will continue till December 4. The draft list will be published on December 7 followed by a claims and objections period, and the final list will be released on February 9.
- The commission, in a statement, said 98.54% of the 50.97 crore voters in these 12 States and Union Territories had received the partially filled forms.
- Six crore, or 11.76%, of the forms have been digitised as well. Goa has the most number of digitised forms, while Uttar Pradesh has the least.
- **The SIR exercise is being conducted in Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.**
- Of these, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal will go to the polls in 2026.
- In Assam, where election is also due in 2026, the commission announced a 'special revision' of electoral rolls.

❖ Over 2 crore removed from NFSA list for free grains

Context: The government has pruned about 2.25 crore ineligible beneficiaries of the free monthly ration scheme in the past four or five months as it looks to make the programme more focused to benefit only the rightful, a top Food Ministry official.

- Under the scheme, 5 kg free foodgrains (wheat and rice) per month is provided only to the poor as a means for providing them monthly sustenance.
- However, unintended beneficiaries — those owning four-wheelers, having monthly income above threshold or directorship of companies — had crept into the list under the National Food Security Act.
- Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra told presspersons that the exercise had been made to ensure better targeting of “rightful” beneficiaries.

❖ Centre rolls out initiatives to improve PDS operations; AI platform to get feedback

Context: The Union Food and Public Distribution Ministry on Tuesday launched several digital initiatives aimed at modernising warehousing operations, improving supply chain efficiency, and enhancing transparency across the Public Distribution System (PDS).

- A major initiative is the Anna Sahayata Holistic AI Solution (ASHA), an AI-based platform that allows beneficiaries to share their feedback on ration distribution through AI-enabled calls in their preferred language.
- According to the Ministry, the platform runs at a cost of ₹5 lakh, which is much less than maintaining a call centre to reach out to the PDS beneficiaries.
- Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi launched the schemes at an event in Bharat Mandapam. The government said through the platform, beneficiaries can report whether they received their full entitlement, the quality of foodgrains, and any difficulty faced at Fair Price Shops.
- “The system uses multilingual translation, sentiment analysis, automated grievance categorisation and real-time dashboards for administrators. ASHA reaches 20 lakh beneficiaries monthly across India, developed in partnership with Wadhvani Foundation and backed by India AI mission via Bhashini’s multilingual AI infrastructure,” the government said.

‘Reducing cost, time’

- Mr. Joshi said that such initiatives support the government’s mission of reducing logistics costs and minimising turnover time. He said the PM Gati Shakti programme has synchronised different modes of transportation and laid the foundation for an integrated logistics ecosystem.
- Another transformation is the Central Warehousing Corporation’s new enterprise resource planning platform, ‘Bhandaran 360’. “Implemented ahead of schedule, the system integrates 41 modules covering HR, finance, marketing, warehouse management, contract management, project monitoring and other core functions,” the government said in a release.

- The Minister also launched the ‘Smart EXIM Warehouse System’ for container freight stations and general warehouses. ANNA DARPAN, a new microservices-based platform that replaces the existing Depot Online System, was also launched.
- It allows beneficiaries to share their feedback on ration distribution through AI-enabled calls.

❖ Centre brings in new norms for compensating crop loss

Context: The Union Agriculture Ministry recognised the modalities for covering crop loss due to wild animal attacks and paddy inundation under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

- Farmers’ groups have been demanding that the government compensate for both types of crop loss.
- The Ministry said crop loss due to wild animal attacks would now be recognised as the fifth ‘Add-on Cover’ under the ‘Localised Risk’ category.
- “States will list wild animals causing crop damage and identify vulnerable areas using past data. Farmers must report losses within 72 hours on the Crop Insurance app with geotagged photos,” the government release said.

❖ Separate Section for disabled persons made in DPDP Rules

Context: In the draft rule regarding consent mechanism, persons with disabilities had been clubbed with children; activists hail change but raise concern over lack of clarity on laws of guardianship.

- Following pushback from disability rights activists, the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry has made changes to the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, to separate persons with disabilities from a rule that, in a draft, clubbed them with children over consent from a guardian.
- While activists hailed this change, they said concerns over the provisions remain. The notified rules do not contain illustrations on implementation to cover a range of instances where disabled persons may or may not be able to use the Internet freely. Further, the language of the DPDP Act, 2023, continues to group children and persons with disabilities together.
- The DPDP Act, 2023, and the rules significantly restrict what minors can do online, such as setting up a social media account, without a parent’s consent. In the draft rules, this requirement was spelled out in a section that included persons with disabilities, causing concern among disability rights groups.
- Nipun Malhotra, of the Nipman Foundation, which has been advocating for changes to the Act and rules, said it was a “major victory” to have the Sections governing consent mechanisms for children and persons with disabilities separated.
- “The restrictions relating to behavioural monitoring, tracking, targeted advertising that apply to children do not apply to persons with disabilities any more. These are useful features for persons with disabilities,” he said.
- However, he noted that concerns remain regarding the practicalities of implementing the rules and the language in the principal Act, where children and persons with disabilities are included in the same Section.

- The part of the rules that deals with consent for children’s data includes multiple illustrations of different scenarios under which consent should be obtained, along with a Schedule that exempts and clarifies these requirements.
- While the separation of the Sections has clarified that these restrictions will not be applicable to persons with disabilities, the Section for persons with disabilities does not have any illustrations to capture the nuances of how guardianship operates, a key issue with the draft rules as pointed out in a report by the policy think tank PACTA and the NGO Saksham Disability.
- **Another issue pointed out by activists and civil society organizations was that the draft rules did not clarify which law of guardianship for persons with disabilities — either the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999, or the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 — would be considered for implementation.**
- The Saksham report raised concerns about this, given that under the NT Act, the need for guardianship is partly determined by a person’s “decision-making capacity”, a term that the 1999 law does not clearly define. This, activists say, is not in consonance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, while guardianship under the RPWD Act aligns with it.

❖ Indonesian Defence Minister to visit Delhi for talks on BrahMos Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin

Context: Indonesian Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin is scheduled to visit India in the last week of November for a bilateral meeting with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi.

- The meeting is being viewed as a significant follow-up to the major defence agreement involving the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, marking an important step forward in India’s expanding defence export programme.
- A senior defence official confirmed that the upcoming talks hold considerable importance, coming after a series of meetings and reciprocal visits by senior military officials from both nations. Indonesia has shown strong interest in procuring the BrahMos missile system.
- The development came to light after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently revealed in Lucknow that Indonesia had formally placed a request for the purchase of the BrahMos system being manufactured at the new BrahMos Aerospace facility in the city.
- On October 18, Mr. Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagged off the first batch of BrahMos missiles produced at the Lucknow unit. Officials noted that the Indonesia deal would be a major milestone for India’s defence exports, showcasing the country’s capability to supply combat-proven indigenous weapons.
- Earlier, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan met Minister Sjamsoeddin in Jakarta to discuss expanding bilateral defence cooperation.

'Global confidence'

- Defence experts said BrahMos missiles used during Operation Sindoor to strike Pakistani airbases with full accuracy have enhanced global confidence in India's defence manufacturing.
- The BrahMos missile has a range of over 290 km with a speed of Mach 2.8. It was jointly developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation, and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyenia.

❖ Over 100 Indian universities make it to QS sustainability rankings

Context: The London-based QS Quacquarelli Symonds on Tuesday released its QS World University Rankings for Sustainability 2026, showing that India, with 103 universities, had the fourth-highest number of institutions in the list, behind the United States, China, and the United Kingdom.

- The QS sustainability rankings, established in 2023, assess institutions across environmental and social sustainability categories such as environmental impact, social impact, and governance.
- These include indicators covering environmental research, sustainability, and education, along with equality, employability, knowledge exchange, and health and wellbeing.
- The rankings released on Tuesday showed institutions from the U.K., Canada, Sweden, and the U.S. dominating the top 15, with Lund University in Sweden taking the top position. This year's edition features close to 2,000 institutions from over 100 locations worldwide.
- Of the 103 Indian universities featured, the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi was the best performing, placed at 205. Overall, QS noted that India had 12 universities in the top 500, matching the number for countries such as China and the Netherlands.
- While this is IIT, Delhi's highest position in the sustainability rankings since their inception, it is lower in relative terms compared to its performance last year, when around 1,700 institutions were ranked. Among the top 15 Indian universities in this year's sustainability rankings, nine saw their positions drop from the previous year's. These included Jadavpur University, IIT, Kanpur, IIT, Madras, the Indian Institute of Science, and others.
- Across the 103 Indian institutions ranked, 30 saw their positions decline, 32 improved, and 15 remained unchanged. At the indicator level, IIT, Delhi (93rd) and IIT, Kharagpur (96th) made it to the top 100 globally for Employability and Outcomes. The University of Delhi entered the top 100 for Knowledge Exchange, at 94.
- In a statement, Jessica Turner, CEO of QS, said "Overall, Indian universities excel in knowledge exchange and environmental sustainability."

❖ **India, Russia intensify consultations ahead of Putin's Delhi visit S. Jaishankar and Vladimir Putin in Moscow.**

Context: Ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi, expected by the year-end, India and Russia intensified top-level consultations.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Nikolai Patrushev, the Chairman of the Maritime Board of Russia, and discussed the annual summit to be held with Mr. Putin in December.
- In Moscow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with President Putin on the sidelines of the 24th meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- “The parties discussed various issues of Russia-India cooperation, particularly in the maritime sector. The two sides emphasised their mutual interest in deepening interaction between Russia and India to strengthen their maritime capabilities,” said a statement from the Russian Embassy in New Delhi.
- In his remarks at the SCO meeting, Mr. Jaishankar highlighted the importance of “diversification” in the background of “supply side risk” that has increased globally in the recent months.

❖ **Goyal looks forward to 'fair, equitable, balanced' BTA**

Context: India and the U.S. share an equal commitment towards expanding trade and commerce between the two countries, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said, while adding that there could be “good news” on a trade deal once it becomes “fair, equitable, and balanced”.

- In the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, that the first tranche of a trade deal with the U.S., dealing with the reciprocal tariffs, was nearing completion.
- “Negotiation is a process and India as a nation has to secure its interests, and the interests of its stakeholders, businesses, and balance it with our sensitivities, our farmers, fishermen, and small industries,” Mr. Goyal said while speaking at the 22nd Indo-U.S. Economic Summit organised by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce.
- “And when we find the right balance, you can rest assured, we will get outcomes on this score,” he added.
- The Minister highlighted the signing of a term contract for the import of 2.2 million tonnes per year of LPG from the U.S. as a sign of the “strong bond” between India and the U.S.
- “They see India as a trusted partner,” Mr. Goyal asserted. “We are both equally committed to working to expand trade and commerce between the two countries. When the deal becomes fair, equitable, and balanced, you will hear good news.”

❖ UNSC approves Trump's plan for the future of Gaza

Context: The resolution authorises an international stabilisation force and establishes a transitional authority overseen by U.S. President; it passed with 13 votes in favour as Russia, China abstained.

- Global support: Ambassadors and representatives to the UN meet to vote, at the UN Headquarters in New York City.
- The Trump administration's blueprint to secure and govern Gaza won strong approval at the United Nations on Monday, a crucial step that provides international support for U.S. efforts to move the devastated territory toward peace following two years of war.
- The U.S. resolution that passed the UN Security Council authorises an international stabilisation force to provide security in Gaza, approves a transitional authority to be overseen by President Donald Trump and envisions a possible future path to an independent Palestinian state.
- "This will go down as one of the biggest approvals in the History of the United Nations, will lead to further Peace all over the World, and is a moment of true Historic proportion!" Mr. Trump posted on social media.
- The vote endorses Mr. Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan and builds on the momentum of the ceasefire he helped broker with allies.
- Russia, which had circulated a rival resolution, abstained along with China on the 13-0 vote after fears Moscow might use its veto in the Security Council.
- However, Hamas opposed the resolution, saying that it does not meet the "Palestinian people's political and humanitarian demands and rights".
- U.S. Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz said the resolution "represents another significant step towards a stable Gaza that will be able to prosper".

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Context: The 25% additional tariff by the U.S. came into effect on August 27 while government figures show a reduction in energy imports from Russia in the previous months compared with 2024.

- India is implementing a larger strategy to reduce its dependence on oil imports from Russia, with the higher tariffs imposed by the U.S. coming at a time when India was already cutting its Russian oil imports, according to an analysis of official data. This has been confirmed by government officials.
- India's oil imports from Russia in September 2025 — the first full month during which the U.S.'s 50% tariffs on Indian imports were applicable — were 29% lower in value and 17% lower in volume than in September 2024.
- However, the data show that this is part of a larger strategy rather than a reaction to the tariffs, half of which were imposed as a “penalty” for importing Russian oil.

Bigger strategy

- The additional tariff came into effect on August 27. However, data show that India had cut the value of Russian oil imports in eight of the previous 10 months up to September 2025, compared with the corresponding period of 2024. In five of these months — February, May, June, July, and September — the cuts exceeded 20% each.
- “India has known for a while now that its dependence on Russian oil imports had grown too high and so it was already working on a plan to reduce this,” an official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry told The Hindu on condition of anonymity.
- “The Trump tariffs had come during that time,” the official said. “Yes, they are a factor to be kept in mind, but they are not driving Indian policies.”
- Since the 50% tariffs were imposed, U.S. President Donald Trump has been repeatedly claiming that India will be cutting its imports of Russian oil, something the Indian government has neither confirmed nor denied.
- Separately, formal trade talks between India and the U.S. have resumed after a brief hiatus, with statements again being made about tranche one of a Bilateral Trade Agreement expected to be concluded “soon”.
- Several Indian Ministers have asserted that India will make its energy import decisions as per its needs and best interests, and not under duress.
- The reduction of Russian oil is not just in absolute terms, but also in terms of its share in India's total oil imports. Russian oil accounted for about 41% of India's total oil imports in September 2024, which came down to 31% by September 2025. However, rather than a one-off, the data confirm that this is part of a longer process.
- Russia's share in India's oil imports grew from 1.6% in 2020-21 to 2% in 2021-22, before jumping to 19% in 2022-23, 33.4% in 2023-24, and 35.1% in 2024-25. The first six months of 2025-26 had, however, snapped this four-year increasing trend, with Russia's share falling to 32.3% in the April-September period.

Diversified imports

- Russia's war in Ukraine, the resultant sanctions on it by the U.S. and Europe, and the discounts it provided India resulted in a significant shift in India's oil import basket for a few years after the war started, with an increasing dependence on Russia.

- Some of that is now reversing itself as India has started shifting away from Russian oil. In 2021-22, the U.S. accounted for 9.2% of India's oil imports and the UAE accounted for 12.4%. This was when Russia accounted for only 2% of India's oil imports. By 2024-25, Russia accounted for 35.1% of India's oil, while the shares of the U.S. and the UAE had fallen to 4.6% and 9.7%, respectively.
- In the first six months of 2025-26, the U.S. share has once again increased to 8% and that of the UAE to 11.7%, even as Russia's share has fallen to 32.3%.

❖ Nitish to take oath as Bihar's CM for record 10th time today

Context: Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar was on Wednesday unanimously elected leader of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Legislature Party ahead of the formation of a new government under his leadership in Bihar.

- Mr. Kumar, who will take oath as Bihar Chief Minister for a record 10th time, was elected leader of the JD(U) Legislature Party during the meeting with the new MLAs held at his official residence in Patna.
- Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha were elected leader and deputy leader of the BJP Legislature Party, respectively, during the meeting held at the party's State headquarters. Uttar Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, who had been appointed the central observer for the election of the BJP Legislature Party leader in Bihar proposed the names and the MLAs supported the proposal.
- With this, it is almost certain that Mr. Choudhary and Mr. Sinha will continue as Bihar's Deputy Chief Ministers, as in the previous government.
- Later, at a meeting of the NDA held at the Central Hall in the Assembly premises, Mr. Nitish Kumar was unanimously elected its Legislature Party leader.

❖ SC quashes provisions of Tribunal Reforms Act

Context: The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down provisions of the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021, a law designed to alter the tribunal system and give the Union government a dominant role in appointments and functioning.

- "When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication.
- A law that undermines these foundational values, such as by enabling executive control over appointments, curtailing tenure arbitrarily, or weakening institutional autonomy strikes at the core of the constitutional arrangement," it said.
- The two- Judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, and comprising Justice K. Vinod Chandran directed the Centre to establish the National Tribunal Commission in four months.
- It held that the commission was sorely needed as an "essential structural safeguard" to ensure independence, transparency, and uniformity in the functioning, appointment procedure, and administration of tribunals. The Chief Justice termed the 2021 law a "repackaged version" of the Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance. The law was enacted just days after the ordinance was struck down by the Supreme Court in a July 2021 judgment.

- Justice Chandran separately added that the 2021 Act was “old wine in a new bottle, the wine whets not the judicial palate, but the bottle merely dazzles”. The Bench said that Parliament had “ignored” the defects that the court pointed out in the ordinance, and blithely transferred its provisions in a slightly altered form to the 2021 Act.
- Chief Justice Gavai concluded the Act was nothing but a “legislative override” of the binding Supreme Court judgment of 2021. The CJI dismissed the Centre’s argument, presented by Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, that Parliament had “discretion to ignore the decisions of the Supreme Court”. Noting that judicial review of laws is a basic feature of the Constitution, the CJI said that by bringing the 2021 Act, Parliament and the Centre had brushed aside the supremacy of the Constitution.
- **The Bench quoted B.R. Ambedkar, who said that “if the executive is honest in working the Constitution, it must act in accordance with the judicial decisions given by the Supreme Court”.**

❖ Delimitation of wards in GBA limits notified

Context: The government notified ward delimitation for the five newly established corporations under the GBA Act, 2024, marking a major administrative restructuring of urban governance.

- The Karnataka government on Wednesday notified the ward delimitation for the five newly established city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, marking a major administrative restructuring of urban governance in the State capital.
- The final notification revises the draft proposal, which suggested 368 wards, and raises the number to 369 by adding one more ward to the Bengaluru West City Corporation.
- According to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) sources, the reservation process will begin soon and may take another 25 to 30 days to complete. Once finalised, citizens can finally expect civic polls after a delay of more than four years.
- The government formed the Delimitation Commission on September 2, 2025, when the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike ceased to exist, paving the way for a new administrative structure under the GBA.
- **Five new corporations- North, South, East, West, and Central-** were subsequently established, and to operationalise this restructuring, ward boundaries had to be redrawn, prompting the creation of the commission.
- The final notification follows the government’s acceptance of the recommendations submitted by the Wards Delimitation Commission chaired by M. Maheshwar Rao, Chief Commissioner of the GBA. The commission submitted its draft on September 30, and objections were invited until October 15.
- The draft attracted a total of 4,892 responses, with the West Corporation receiving the highest number, 2,965 suggestions. As part of the exercise, wards within each Assembly constituency were renumbered using the serpentine or boustrophedon system to ensure uniformity and clarity. Some ward names have been modified, and several boundary lines are realigned with identifiable roads to avoid ambiguity.
- The commission submitted its final report to the government on November 10, 2025. After reviewing the recommendations, the government issued the final delimitation notification on Wednesday.

- **The delimitation rules mandated using the 2011 Census, updated with 2023 projections, with each ward representing about 20,000 people and a permissible variation of plus or minus 25%.**
- Wards were required to remain within a single Assembly constituency, maintain contiguity, and balance population and community interests. In hilly or forested areas, factors such as terrain, commuting needs, and public convenience had to be considered, while natural boundaries like roads and drains were to be used without disturbing existing community units.
- Although the final ward list was scheduled to be published on November 1, the ongoing transition of the BBMP into new corporations delayed the other processes, leading to an 18-day delay.

❖ **‘Software Technology Parks of India can kick-start AI revolution’**

Context: Artificial intelligence could offer people economic and social empowerment: Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary, Meity.

- Just as how India’s IT companies became key providers of software products across the world, can the country now also become the artificial intelligence (AI) application use case capital of the world?, asked Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), here on Wednesday.

Software growth

- The Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) has been driving the software growth story of India and the very organisation should be able to kick-start the AI revolution in India, he said, while speaking at a pre-event (of India AI Impact Summit scheduled in February 2026) meeting on the sidelines of the Bengaluru Tech Summit.
- Whether in the United States, Europe, or in the Middle East, more and more investments are happening in building high-end data centers powered by renewable energy with high-end AI compute that can help companies which are training AI models or building AI applications around those AI factories, he observed.
- “The STPI has 65 centres across the country, can they be leveraged to build the AI factories for tomorrow and can we think of India as an AI garage of the world?” he pointed a question to Arvind Kumar, the Director General, STPI, who was also speaking at the event.
- According to Mr. Singh, impact of AI on people primarily relates to how artificial intelligence will impact jobs, how it will impact employment, how it will lead to a need for reskilling and upskilling our tech workforce, our developers and coders so that we are not adversely impacted with the advent of AI.
- Speaking about the broad impact of AI, he said, “We have seen AI-based applications which can help predict floods and any extreme climate events to help people and farmers.”
- AI could offer people economic and social empowerment, argued Mr. Singh. “Farmers can get agri-based advisories in their mother tongue. They can get suggestions with regard to how much input you should use as water, how much fertilizers they should use, what kind of pesticide they should use, where they should sell their product.”

- Similarly, MSMEs can have the optimal product mix, what they should produce, at what cost they should produce, where they should source their raw materials, at what price they should sell, he added.

❖ India, U.S. sign MoU to advance cooperation in critical technologies

Context: India and the United States signed an MoU on Wednesday to advance cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, expanding joint efforts in AI, defence, space, quantum computing, clean energy, and telecommunications.

Talent exchange

- Both nations emphasised the value of talent exchange and scientific collaboration, supported by partnerships between institutions like the Association of American Universities and the IITs.
- The signing was attended by Priyank Kharge, Minister for IT, Biotechnology; Rahul Sharma, Managing Director, USIBC India; and Christopher Hodges, U.S. Consul General, Chennai. Earlier in the day, at the summit, the government also unveiled 50 innovative start-up products and solutions spanning IT/ITeS, AgriTech, MedTech, CleanTech, AI, DeepTech, IoT, Cybersecurity, AVGC, SaaS, and ESDM.
- These products are designed and developed by start-ups incubated at GoK-supported K-tech Innovation Hubs, CoEs, or TBIs. Most of these start-ups are incubated at K-tech Innovation Hubs, Centres of Excellence, and Technology Business Incubators.
- “The showcased solutions reflect Karnataka’s strength in multi-disciplinary innovation and sector-agnostic problem-solving,” said Sharath Kumar Bache Gowda, Chairman, KEONICS.

❖ Govt. to train women who have taken career breaks in semiconductor industry

Context: The Karnataka government will train 90 women in tier 2 and tier 3 cities in the State, who have taken sabbatical for various reasons, in VLSI design and embedded software, skills sought after by the semiconductor industry.

- To take this effort forward, the Electronics Sector Skills Council (ESSCI), a State government outfit, has entered into an MoU with Marvell Marvell.
- Minister for IT and BT Priyank Kharge said this training programme was mostly designed for women who have taken a career break and still want to get back to work after a sabbatical.

Top priority

- “We have always given top priority to skilling programmes to build a future-ready workforce. It is also our endeavour to help women who took career breaks to be industry and technology ready so that they can return to work,” Mr. Kharge said, while addressing a media conference at Bengaluru Technology Summit.
- The initiative supported Karnataka’s mission to boost women’s participation in deep-tech sectors. It also strengthens the State’s semiconductor talent pipeline in alignment with India’s growing chip ecosystem, he said.

- Also, under the **NIPUNA Karnataka**, a **State government initiative to skill over 4,000 youth in collaboration with leading corporate partners, the government has approved skill development training by four skilling aggregators in partnership with potential** employers including Capgemini, Wells Fargo, Standard Chartered, and Sumeru.
- **The NIPUNA was targeted for providing training in high-demand fields, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data science.**

Job opportunities

- Over 2,800 job opportunities were expected as part of this mission, the Minister said.
- According to the Minister, the NIPUNA Karnataka is rapidly gaining national attention as a powerful collaborative model where corporates and skilling aggregators work hand-in-hand to shape the next generation workforce.

❖ **Modi releases ₹100 coin and postal stamps in Puttaparthi**

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a ₹100 commemorative coin and a set of postal stamps at the centenary celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh.

- Addressing a gathering of devotees and students at the Hill View Stadium, the Prime Minister recalled the spiritual leader's decades of humanitarian service and legacy.
- Mr. Modi termed the centenary celebrations a blessing for the nation, stating that Sathya Sai Baba's universal message of love, service, and harmony had influenced millions across the globe.
- Highlighting the charitable projects of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's organisations, Mr. Modi referred to medical services, drinking water projects spanning more than 3,000 km of pipelines, and relief efforts during the Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat in 2001.

❖ **India will become hub of natural farming; science, tradition to lead way: PM**

Context: Prime Minister says natural farming is the need of the 21st century, bats for the restoration of soil health; he banks on traditional knowledge, scientific strength and government support for growth.

- India is poised to transform into a global hub of natural farming, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in Coimbatore on Wednesday, adding that moving on this path, ingrained in the country's traditions, is a necessity.
- The Prime Minister said expansion of natural farming is the need of 21st-century agriculture and pitched for the restoration of soil health that has deteriorated due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- "Our goal must be to make natural farming a fully science-backed movement," he said after inaugurating the South India Natural Farming Summit 2025 conducted by farmers' associations to propagate ideals of late organic farming scientist G. Nammalvar.
- He said that the trend of educated youth taking up agriculture as a vocation and adopting modern techniques was heartening. Mr. Modi said traditional knowledge, scientific strength and government support will enable India to show the way in natural farming to the world.

- **The National Mission on Natural Farming initiated last year has had its effect on lakhs of farmers. About 35,000 hectares of land in Tamil Nadu are now under organic and natural farming.**
- Emphasising on a joint effort, the Prime Minister appealed to the State government to utilise the capabilities of Farmer Producer Organisations to broad-base natural farming, with an emphasis on minor millets.
- The Prime Minister urged farmers to start by bringing one acre under natural farming for a cropping season every year, and to scale up gradually. Agricultural exports have doubled in the past 11 years owing to the policies. Assistance exceeding ₹10 lakh crore has been provided under the Kisan Credit Card scheme for farming and allied activities, including livestock and fisheries, and the reduction in GST on bio-fertilizers has benefited farmers substantially, he said.
- The Prime Minister released the 21st installment of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, transferring ₹18,000 crore to farmers across the country. The beneficiaries include lakhs of farmers in Tamil Nadu. So far, ₹4 lakh crore has been directly transferred to the bank accounts of small farmers under the scheme, he said.
- Mr. Modi advocated multi-crop agriculture over monoculture, citing the practice in the hilly areas of Kerala and Karnataka, where the productivity of a cultivable area was being optimised.
- He appealed to scientists and research institutions to ensure integration of natural farming in curriculum, and to consider farmers' fields as living laboratories.
- Mr. Modi exuded hope that the summit will pave the way for the emergence of new ideas and solutions. He later interacted with a group of agricultural scientists and agriculturists practising natural farming.

❖ SC declines quota for promotee judges in HJS

Context: The Supreme Court refused to grant a quota for promotee judges in the Higher Judicial Service (HJS), saying perceived discontentment and heartburn without something more in the form of a legal claim or even a legitimate expectation cannot result in creating an artificial classification of members within a cadre.

- A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai said fixation in the Selection Grade and Super Time Scale within the HJS is based on merit-cum-seniority within the cadre, and cannot depend on the length of service or performance in the lower rungs of the judiciary.
- The court issued guidelines for the filling up of the district judge posts and said the seniority of officers within the HJS should be determined through an annual four-point roster, filled by officers appointed in the particular year in the repeating sequence of two regular promotees, one promoted through Limited Departmental Competitive Examinations and one direct recruit.

❖ SC advisory today on Presidential Reference on Governors' timelines

Context: The Supreme Court is scheduled on Thursday to pronounce its advisory opinion on a Presidential Reference questioning the top court's authority to "impose" timelines and prescribe the manner of conduct of Governors and the President while dealing with State Bills sent to them for assent or reserved for consideration.

- Reserving the arguments in September, the five-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai had made it clear that the Centre should not expect the top court to "sit idle" and powerless if a constitutional authority failed to discharge his duties.
- The marathon hearings in the Presidential Reference had brought into sharp focus the dividing line between Opposition-ruled States and their Governors over delay in clearing crucial laws.

April 8 judgment

- The Union government had used the platform of the Presidential Reference to criticise the court for encroaching on the domains of the Governors and the President.
- The bone of contention which led to the Presidential Reference was an April 8 judgment of the Supreme Court that imposed a three-month deadline on Governors and the President to deal with Bills placed before them for assent or consideration, respectively.
- The court had, in the judgment, held that Governors cannot stall governance by endlessly sitting on important welfare laws passed by State legislatures.
- The Union government, through Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, had argued that the April 8 judgment had forced a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Mr. Mehta had contended that a uniform time frame for all State Bills would prove "self-destructive".
- "Every Bill has its own context-based issues," he had submitted, adding that the court cannot take over legislative functions by issuing a mandamus to Governors to assent to State Bills.
- Attorney General R. Venkataramani had submitted that Governors must be given the discretion to either assent or withhold Bills after testing their constitutionality.

❖ Climate talks veer away from 'implementation'

Context: Differences over financing and pathways have hurt progress on a decisive deal on climate action; observers say European nations have reached the 'maximum' they can deliver in terms of finance.

- Stop "the blah-blah, down with gas in Asia," chants a group of activists in the hallways of the COP30 venue in Belém, Brazil, while they raise colourful banners and placards condemning oil and gas drilling.
- The walls of this sprawling venue hosting the climate talks — once this harbour-city's airport — are makeshift and porous and these chants bleed through into the more sombre rooms, where teams of delegates from a coalition of countries — nearly all of them Asian — cobble together common ground to stonewall and delay firm action on eschewing fossil fuel use. The countries are collectively called the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC).

- Saudi Arabia is a vocal representative of the LMDC that comprises several oil and gas producing nations and given the criticality of fossil fuel to their economies, have for years resisted a phase-out plan for fossil fuel. The 'Like Mindedness' of these countries is fuzzy.
- The climate talks in Baku, last year, concluded with the rich countries promising to deliver \$300 billion annually by 2035, which was viewed as insufficient to keep the world from heating beyond two degrees Celsius (2C). The push-back against this — a position India has independently articulated multiple times — is that these sums are never available as low-cost loans or grants and available largely as part of commercial transactions.
- “Grants and concessional resources can lower the cost of capital, facilitating a robust pipeline of investments and making these investments more sustainable by lowering the cost of capital,” India said on November 15.

Differing views

- On the other hand, observers as part of European delegations say that several Western European countries have reached the “maximum” they can deliver in terms of such public finance.
- “While it is well understood that (developing) countries have their own limitations and planned pathways regarding their dependence on fossil fuel, the sense is that the maximum funds that can be made available as public finance have already been done so,” said Jen Mattias Clausen, EU Program Director with Concito, a think tank in Denmark and who has been part of COP negotiations for over a decade.
- This fundamental logjam guides attempts by the President of COP negotiations, at present Andre Lago of Brazil, to opt for a process whereby all countries — nearly all of them who are part of about 19 negotiating blocs — feel heard, rather than crafting an ambitious decisive deal that would ratchet climate action. This, when COP30, in the run up to the two-week jamboree was pitched as a “..COP of implementation.”
- As things stand, the Presidency has asked countries to evolve consensus on four of the most pressing climate concerns — finance, trade, transparency and the fact that countries’ emissions-cutting plans — known as nationally determined contributions or NDC, are inadequate to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

❖ ISRO tests bootstrap mode start on CE20 cryogenic engine

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully demonstrated the bootstrap mode start test on the CE20 cryogenic engine which powers the upper stage of the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) rocket.

- The test on the CE20 cryogenic engine, which was successfully conducted under vacuum conditions in the High-Altitude Test (HAT) facility at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, on November 7, for a duration of 10 seconds is an important development towards enhancing the restart capability and mission flexibility of future LVM3 flights.

- Though the CE20 cryogenic engine, powering the LVM3 upper stage, is already qualified for operation at thrust levels ranging from 19 to 22 tonnes in flight with a single start, and also for the Gaganyaan missions, during nominal operation, the engine ignition is initiated under tank head conditions, followed by the start of turbo pumps using a stored gas start-up system.
- “For future missions, multiple in-flight restarts of the CE20 engine will be needed for flexible multi-orbit missions. But with the current set-up, each restart demands an additional start-up gas bottle and associated systems. Hence, achieving bootstrap mode start — where the engine builds up to steady operation without external start-up assistance — is essential,” the ISRO stated.

❖ SC allows CAQM to take ‘proactive’ measures to curb Delhi air pollution

Context: The Supreme Court on Wednesday gave the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) a free hand to take “any proactive measure” to curb air pollution throttling Delhi-NCR after the statutory body proposed to include choice GRAP IV restrictions like work-from-home and 50% office attendance in the ongoing GRAP III stage itself.

- “Any proactive measure of CAQM to reduce air pollution is always welcome,” Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a Bench including Justice K. Vinod Chandran, observed in an order. The court said the CAQM must however consult stakeholders and take everyone on board.
- The court was responding to a note submitted by the CAQM proposing short-term and long-term measures against air pollution choking Delhi-NCR.
- Amicus curiae, senior advocate Aparajita Singh, highlighted a CAQM recommendation to exempt BS-III emission vehicles from the protection of an August 12 top court order, which had barred authorities from taking any steps against the owners of 10-year-old diesel and 15-year-old petrol vehicles.
- The CAQM also proposed including the GRAP III restriction of staggered office timings in GRAP II.

Congestion control

- The Commission recommended differential rates and augmentation of public transport fleet and metro services, more deployment at traffic congestion spots and synchronisation of traffic movements to be put in place as part of the GRAP I stage. The CAQM said NCR States and the Delhi government must expeditiously notify vehicle aggregators’ policies and develop a portal for monitoring them.
- The court directed the CAQM to look into the issue of schools conducting sports events in the months of November and December.
- Ms. Singh said such events virtually amount to putting children in a gas chamber. The court made it clear that the CAQM must pass the necessary directions to the States concerned regarding this issue.
- As long-term measures, the CAQM proposed a review of the electric vehicle policies and imposition of higher environmental protection charges in luxury diesel cars and SUVs of 2000 cc capacity and above. The court scheduled the next hearing for December 10.

❖ NCDC flags study on rising antibiotic resistance in India

Context: The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has refuted claims made in an international study published by The Lancet that over 50% of Indian patients hospitalised for a specific gastrointestinal procedure are colonised with at least one multi-drug-resistant organism (MDRO).

- The study has raised alarm over soaring antimicrobial resistance in India, describing it as a rapidly escalating superbug crisis and a “global threat”.
- In response, the NCDC, which is mandated to prevent, detect, and control diseases of public health importance in India, pointed out that The Lancet dataset only reports colonisation of multi-drug-resistant organisms, not actual infections.
- “Colonisation is a microbiological finding, but not a clinical failure,” it said, adding that the results refer to specific high-risk clinical groups and cannot be generalised for all patients or the general population in India.
- The research paper, published in The Lancet’s journal eClinicalMedicine, is titled ‘Preprocedural screening for multidrug-resistant organisms in endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP): an international, multicentre, cross-sectional observational study’. An ERCP is an endoscopic procedure used to diagnose and treat problems in the gall-bladder, the bile ducts, and the pancreas.

❖ Karnataka signs LoIs worth ₹2,600 crore; to create 3,500 jobs

Context: Drone flight test facility, first such in the country, expected to generate over 500 jobs in drone research, testing, development, manufacturing.

- The Karnataka government has secured six Letters of Intent (LoIs), in the areas of drone technology, semiconductor, EV battery and biotech, for investments totalling ₹2,600 crore.
- Addressing a press conference at the Bengaluru Tech Summit here, Karnataka IT and BT minister Priyank Kharge said these six projects, cumulatively, would create 3,500 new jobs. The agreements were a key highlight of the second day of the Bengaluru Tech Summit.
- The Drone Federation India (DFI), a body that has 550 drone tech firms as its members, has signed an LoI with the State government to set up a drone flight test facility, the country’s first such infrastructure, and this would create over 500 new jobs in drone research, testing, development and manufacturing.

Drone testing facility

- According to Sharath Kumar Bache Gowda, Chairman, KEONICS, the drone federation has committed to invest ₹50-100 crore in the testing facility.
- The government will offer 20 acres of land at Chintamani for the facility.
- The drone testing facility will be established on a PPP model and land is to be contributed by the State government, while DFI will bring in drone firms to utilise the facility.

Holistic ecosystem

- “Testing facility is also expected to trigger the creation of a holistic ecosystem for dronetech in Karnataka with elements such as cutting edge research, development and manufacturing etc., coming up and create new jobs,” DFI’s president Smit Shah.
- An LoI was also signed with Global HDI, a firm that specialises in producing High-Density Interconnect (HDI) printed circuit boards commonly used in consumer electronics, telecom, automotive, and high-speed devices, to open a HDI/multi-layer PCB plant at an outlay of ₹1,500 crore. Other LoIs expected to bring fresh investments and jobs to Bengaluru included: Tsuyo Manufacturing’s ₹250 crore investment to set up Cell Therapy R&D and EV Powertrain; MiniMines Cleantech Solutions ₹350 crore investment to set up a Critical Mineral Refining Giga Complex; ₹250 crore investment by Elleve Solutions, an ESDM firm offering PCB design, prototyping, assembly, calibration, certification and contract manufacturing, to set up a PCB and electronics manufacturing facility; ₹130 crore investment by EyeStem Research, which develops scalable iPSC based cell therapies, starting with Dry AMD, to establish a Cell Therapy R&D and manufacturing facility.

❖ Insurers bet on rural via Bima Gram API

Context: The Bima Gram application programming interface rolled out by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) as a tool to enhance insurance penetration in rural markets has successfully completed the pilot testing phase.

- Five insurers – two life and two general as well as a health insurer – as a part of the pilot project, integrated, tested and verified the functionality of the API (application programming interface). Full industry integration is expected to be completed soon, the Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life) said.
- The Committee said the digital initiative designed to streamline and authenticate insurance coverage data in rural India is set to change the face of insurance penetration in the hinterland.
- Bima Gram ensures policies from rural areas can be digitally validated and accurately mapped with respective gram panchayats. Besides reducing manual documentation, it enhances accuracy, speed and efficiency of rural business reporting.
- The API will enable insurers build comprehensive baseline datasets for future policy planning and resource allocation.

❖ As trade row eases, U.S. approves sale of missiles to India

Context: In a move that further underscores the easing of trade tensions between India and the U.S., the U.S. State Department has approved a possible sale of Javelin missiles and Excalibur projectiles and related equipment to India for an estimated total cost of \$92.8 million, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Thursday. The DSCA said it had delivered the required certification notifying the U.S. Congress as well of the decisions.

- Press releases issued in this connection said the proposed sale would support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the U.S. by bolstering the U.S.-India strategic relationship and improving the security of “a major defence partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions”.
- The deals come three days after India announced the conclusion of the first-ever long-term deal where Indian oil companies would import American LPG into the country.
- “The Government of India has requested to buy up to two hundred sixteen (216) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles,” a release said.
- “The proposed sale will improve India’s capability to meet current and future threats by providing precision capability equipment, which will increase first strike accuracy in its brigades.”
- In a separate release, the DSCA said India had requested to buy 100 FGM-148 Javelin rounds, one Javelin FGM-148 missile and 25 Javelin Lightweight Command Launch Units (LwCLU) or Javelin Block 1 Command Launch Units (CLU).
- The Excalibur deal is for \$47.1 million and the Javelin deal is for \$45.7 million.

❖ Judiciary cannot tie President, Governor to timelines, says SC

Context: ‘Deemed consent’ usurps functions of President and Governor, and is ‘antithetical’ to the Constitution and the doctrine of separation of powers, says court; however, it opines against sitting on State Bills through ‘prolonged and evasive inaction’

Krishnadas Rajagopal New Delhi.

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday answered the 16th Presidential Reference the country has witnessed by opining that the judiciary cannot fetter Governors and the President to “one-size-fits-all” timetables to dispose of State Bills or usurp their functions by assuming “deemed consent” of the proposed laws at the expiry of a court-ordered time frame.
- “Such a usurpation of the gubernatorial function of the Governor, and similarly of the President’s functions, is antithetical not only to the spirit of the Constitution, but also specifically, the doctrine of separation of powers — which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution,” a Bench of Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, Chief Justice-designate Surya Kant, and Justices Vikram Nath, P.S Narasimha and A.S. Chandurkar underscored in their answer.

'Evasive inaction'

- However, the court clarified that the President and Governors cannot resort to “prolonged and evasive inaction” by sitting endlessly on State Bills awaiting their approval.
- **The Reference under Article 143 of the Constitution** came merely a month after a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, in a judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case on April 8, plugged a constitutional silence by fixing a three-month time limit for Governors and the President to dispose of State Bills pending with them.
- Addressing a preliminary objection raised by Tamil Nadu and Kerala that the Presidential Reference was only an “appeal in disguise” against the binding April judgment of the court, the Bench said nothing stopped it from clarifying “general questions of law referred to it by the President”.
- The Bench termed the set of 14 questions posed by the President on May 13 as a unique “functional reference” touching upon the day-to-day functioning of constitutional functionaries and the interplay among State legislatures, Governors, and the President.
- **“It is an institutional responsibility to tender its opinion on this functional reference sought by the highest constitutional functionary of the country.** The court cannot shirk away from its responsibility to iron out constitutional creases,” the Bench said. It clarified that a Governor has actually three options before him under Article 200 — to grant assent to the Bill, reserve it for the consideration of the President, or withhold assent and return the Bill to the State legislature with comments if it is not a Money Bill. A Governor cannot stall a Bill without returning it to the State Assembly along with his reasons for doing so.
- “It would be against the principle of federalism and a derogation of the powers of the State legislatures to permit the Governor to withhold a Bill without following the dialogic process...,” the Reference Bench advised.
- The Bench propounded that the Supreme Court cannot judicially review the merits of the decision taken by the Governor under Article 200. “However, in glaring circumstances of inaction that is prolonged, unexplained, and indefinite, the court can issue a limited mandamus for the Governor to discharge his function within a reasonable time period,” it said.
- But the restricted review of the Governor’s inaction would not entail subjecting him personally to judicial proceedings. The Governor enjoyed absolute personal immunity from court proceedings under Article 361 of the Constitution.
- “Imposing” timelines on the President and Governors to deal with all Bills pending with them for assent through judicial orders would be akin to taking a “one-size-fits-all” approach, especially in the absence of any constitutionally prescribed schedule or manner of exercise of powers by Governors or the President under Articles 200 and 201.
- The court rationalised that some Bills may deal with complex issues and require longer consideration. “Secondly, at the expiry of this one-size-fits-all timeline, it creates a right for judicial redressal, prima facie rendering the act of the Governor or President suspect upon the expiry of such timeline,” the court justified.

- In direct contradiction to the April 8 judgment, the Reference Bench said the President need not consult the Supreme Court on every State Bill referred to her by Governors for consideration. It would be left to the discretion of the President to take the advice of the Supreme Court under Article 143.
- The Bench clarified that the courts had no power to review the merits of Bills. “It is impermissible for the courts to undertake judicial adjudication over the contents of a Bill, in any manner, before it becomes law... The people’s will expressed through the legislative branch is only definitive and conclusive upon receiving the assent of the Governor or the President, as the case may be,” the court noted.

❖ State, VC firms disburse ₹400 cr. to deep-tech start-ups

Context: The State government and multiple Venture Capital (VC) firms together disbursed ₹400 crore to several deep-tech start-ups at the Future Makers’ Conclave held as part of the 28th edition of Bengaluru Technology Summit, a three-day State-organised exposition which concluded.

- About 16 VCs participated in the funding and 25 deep-tech ventures were funded by them while six companies were funded under the State government’s Elevate funding programme, taking the total size of disbursements to ₹400 crore.
- “We will ensure that the progress is accelerated. Together we will build an ecosystem that is unmatched,” Priyank Kharge, Minister for IT-BT, assured the VCs. It was the first time ever, a government and a pack of VCs came together to distribute funds to start-ups, he claimed.
- He also expressed gratitude to the VC community which had come forward to partner with the start-ups and disrupt the way the world looks at India.
- According to the Minister, deep-tech today is making Karnataka the most innovative tech hub in the country.
- Indicating the increasing focus on deep-tech, he said some 11,000 attendees, including founders, entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, and ecosystem leaders participated at the Future Makers Conclave, organised as a simple step taken by the State government to bring the entire ecosystem players under a single roof.
- Some 143 companies were announced as winners of the last round of Elevate. “These are the disruptors, innovators and future makers to inspire the rest of the country to solve real-world problems,” the Minister said. Elevate is Karnataka’s platform to mentor and fund promising companies within the State. So far, under this programme, 1,084 companies were funded.

Pitches to investors

- The three-day tech extravaganza had over 90,000 attendees and 20,680 delegates from 57 countries; some 46,389 were business visitors. As many as 1,015 exhibitors displayed their tech products and solutions.
- The summit also had 146 curated cross pitches from start-ups to 36 investors, with another 162 pitches scheduled to happen next week under the BTS banner. There were a total of 107 mentor and mentee sessions during the summit.

❖ India's annual maximum temperatures have gone up across most States from 0.1°C to 0.5°C during last decade: Report

Context: Central and eastern States such as Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh faced more than 500 heatwave days during the decade, while the North Indian States, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana, were identified as the most affected regions. K. Murali Kumar.

- Over the decade from 2015 to 2024, India has witnessed a pronounced and persistent warming trend, with the annual mean temperature increasing from 25.37° Celsius in 2015 to 25.74° Celsius in 2024. The latter stood out as the hottest year on record in the country since nationwide measurements began in 1901.
- These were the revelations made in the November, 2025, report, 'Breaking the Cycle - Can India escape the heat-power demand trap?' by Climate Trends, a research-based consulting and capacity building initiative, and Climate Compatible Futures, a consulting start-up.
- The authors, Manish Ram, Rahul Kumar, Sachin Pratap, and Ujjwala Sahay, mentioned how India's annual maximum temperatures have increased steadily across most States from 0.1° Celsius to 0.5° Celsius during the last decade. The Indo-Gangetic region witnessed persistent temperature rises, with summer peaks frequently exceeding 45° Celsius and an unprecedented 52.3° Celsius recorded in Mungeshpur (Delhi) in 2024.

Heatwaves

- The report stated that central and eastern States such as Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh faced more than 500 heatwave days during the decade, while the north Indian States, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana, were identified as the most affected regions, exhibiting the sharpest increases in summer temperature surges.
- Traditionally cooler regions such as Uttarakhand (11.2%) and Ladakh (9.1%) also registered the highest percentage increases in annual summer temperatures, while the number of days with temperatures above 40° Celsius rose sharply in the latter half of the decade, with 14 States recording a 15% increase in summer heat intensity in the decade, it said.
- Uttarakhand notably witnessed a spike in heatwave frequency in 2024 - 0 in 2023 to 25 in 2024.

Impact on power demand

- This persistent warming has directly translated into record-breaking electricity demand, reaching around 250 GW during the summer of 2024, largely due to surging cooling needs across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, the report pointed out.
- India's electricity demand rose by 9% during the peak heatwave months of April-June 2024, as compared to April-June 2023.
- According to the report, Uttar Pradesh recorded the strongest linkage between temperature and electricity consumption, with peak demand surging from ~14.2 GW (2015) to ~25.5 GW (2024).

- “Despite substantial progress in renewable energy deployment, India’s electricity system continues to rely heavily on fossil fuels to meet peak demand during heat-intensive months. Over the decade, installed power capacity increased from 285 GW to 461 GW, a 62% increase - driven primarily by rapid additions in solar (from 5.3 GW to nearly 98 GW) and wind (from 24 GW to 48 GW). However, coal remains the foundational base of India’s power system, growing from 170 GW to 219 GW and still accounting for the majority of generation,” it said.

Key recommendations

- Among the key recommendations of the report are integrating climate projections into energy planning, developing district-level demand and vulnerability maps, strengthening rural energy access through decentralised solar microgrids and community cooling centres during heat emergencies, enhancing urban heat preparedness by enforcing cool roof programmes, expanding shaded and green spaces, and establishing solar-powered cooling shelters.
- It also called for reforming Heat Action Plans (HAPs) from short-term emergency tools to integrated energy-climate resilience frameworks, embedding electricity demand forecasting, renewable energy adoption, and equity-based resource allocation, and accelerating energy storage and demand flexibility.
- India’s electricity demand rose by 9% during the peak heatwave months of April-June 2024, as compared to April-June 2023.

❖ State at 10th position in Child Rights Index

Context: Karnataka’s performance in realising child rights and well-being is moderate and the State ranks 10th among 30 States, according to the Child Rights Index in Karnataka-2023.

- The study by S. Madheswaran and B.P. Vani of Institute for Social and Economic Change in collaboration with Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) was released, November 20.
- **The index is calculated considering six dimensions: Right to Life, Right to an Enabling Environment to Live, Right to Nutrition, Right to Protection, Right to Education, and Right to Participation.**
- While there was not much variation among districts in terms of the ‘Right to Life Index’, there was higher variation across districts in terms of indicators such as the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under-5 Mortality and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR).
- “Most districts in the Mysuru division and a small number of districts in the Bengaluru division have realised children’s rights with regard to the Right to Live dimension,” said the report.
- There was little difference across districts in the institutional delivery and immunisation indicators.
- When it came to the prevalence of child labour, criminality under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, and crime against children, compared to other districts, the crime rate against children is over seven to eight times greater in Bengaluru Urban.

- Children are denied access to their rights owing to two more pressing issues, namely child labour and child marriage. “When it comes to children’s Right to Protection, Vijayapura, Belagavi, Gadag, Bengaluru Urban, and Kolar require the greatest attention,” the report said.
- **Yadgir, Gadag, Chitradurga, Davangere, and Chikkaballapura are among those having very low level of realisation with respect to the Right to Education dimension.**
- In terms of Right to Nutrition, the anaemia status in 14 districts is between 60 and 70%, while the incidence of anaemia in the remaining nine districts, primarily from Mysuru and partially from the Bengaluru division, was between 50% and 60%.

❖ ICDS programme at 50: Still a lifeline

Context: Since it was launched as a pilot project at T. Narsipur in Mysuru district in 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services programme has expanded in reach and scope across Karnataka; but the crucial scheme for early childhood development faces several challenges, especially of fund crunch, finds Shilpa Elizabeth.

- 1 of 3 Boosting learning with fun: Children engage in various learning activities at an anganwadi at Shivaji Nagar in Bengaluru.
- At an anganwadi near Baiyappanahalli in Bengaluru, around 20 children, most of whom are between three and six years old, are busy playing, making merry, and having fun.
- At another nearby anganwadi, 5-year-old Oviya approaches sheepishly with her notebook. True to her name, she seems to have an inclination for art. The book is filled with pencil drawings, most of them outlines of her own palm filled in with drawings of flowers and other filigree.
- A million kids, a million hues. Anganwadis, the first step for many Indian children to nutritious meal, education and socialisation, have been operating for 50 years now, catering to all such hues.
- When the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme was inaugurated 50 years ago by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, T. Narsipur in Mysuru was one of the first places in India where the pilot programme was launched.
- The programme has come a long way since and seen remarkable progress in the southern State where anganwadi workers have played key role in shaping generations.
- “Think of a seed that would one day grow into a healthy tree, a beautiful ecosystem in itself nourishing everything around it. But if the seed itself goes bad, then what a huge loss that is. Every child is like a seed, and ICDS is the nourishment that would protect it from decaying,” says S. Varalakshmi, general secretary of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) and general secretary, CITU.

- **ICDS is the world's largest community-based programme for early childhood development. As of June 30, 2021, there were 9,06,16,953 beneficiaries under anganwadi services in India. In FY 2021-22, the BJP-led Union government restructured the programme into Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0.**
- **A first-of-its kind programme combining health, education and nutrition, the scope of ICDS, over the years, expanded to offer a range of services covering supplementary nutrition programme, pre-school education, immunisation of mother and child, health check-ups, referral services, and health and nutrition education.**

Scaling up through decades

- Not vastly different from many other parts of the country then, in Karnataka, the programme was launched against the grim backdrop of prevalent infant mortality, malnutrition, and low literacy rates. The State, however, has been credited for taking proactive steps to scale up the programme rapidly.
- From one project in T. Narsipur in 1975, the number increased to 24 across 20 districts by 1980, and more than quadrupled in the next decade.
- **Today, Karnataka has 69,922 anganwadi centres across 204 projects catering to 40,54,456 beneficiaries. This includes 33,25,035 children between the age of 6 months and 6 years, and 7,29,421 pregnant and lactating mothers.**
- “Karnataka has some of the best anganwadi infrastructure in the country. A significant proportion of our total number of anganwadis are in their own building with their own kitchen, separate toilets, electricity connection and fans, and so on,” points out Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner.
- Dasgupta, who previously served as Principal Secretary in the Department of Women and Child Development, points out how the anganwadis in Karnataka, which remain open for 6.5 hours on weekdays, act as partial daycares, allowing mothers to work and thereby facilitating a socio-economic circle of empowerment. She says Karnataka is also ‘one of the better States’ as far as working conditions of anganwadi workers is concerned, with ‘a lot done over and above the ICDS scheme norms’ for the honorarium of anganwadi workers and helpers.

Changing focus

- Although ICDS was conceived as a holistic programme, given the high rates of malnutrition in the country, the supplementary nutrition programme (SNP) remained the core of the programme and the most accessed service.
- Studies have shown enrolment increasing with regular delivery of SNP, and around 95% of the registered children are availing the supplementary nutrition. This doesn't come as a surprise given how, even today, stunting is recorded among 37% of the children in India.
- While SNP has been the backbone, the programme has been evolving to suit changing needs.
- At an anganwadi in Bengaluru, Malar, who is ‘Malar miss’ for all the 21 children there, shows me the teaching and learning plan for the kids. One topic is covered every week. Last week, the kids seem to have learned about Children's Day. This week is about

‘plants, trees and creepers’, and, in the next week, they will learn about ‘mountains, forests and rivers’.

- With the idea of strengthening the ‘pre-primary education’ in anganwadis, the government has been taking steps to upgrade the teaching system.
- In July 2024, 250 anganwadis in Bengaluru Urban were converted into ‘government montessories’. The pilot project looked at upgrading anganwadi centres into pre-primary education centres for children providing quality education along with nutrition. The programme includes education in both Kannada and English, with each child provided uniform, bag, and activity books.
- “Parents are now looking for not only good nutrition, but also good education. So, we are also changing our focus, giving importance to pre-primary education in anganwadis and linking it with preparedness for schools,” says Shamla Iqbal, Secretary in Department of Women and Child Development.
- The programme, according to officials, has been a hit, with the government now looking at expanding the programme to 5,000 centres.
- Shamla Iqbal is quick to add that the focus on nutrition has not dwindled. “We are weighing the children on a regular basis. Wherever Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) rates are high, we have launched the Chiguru programme in co-ordination with the Health Department, UNICEF and IPE Global.”
- According to official figures, around 1.3 lakh children in the State continue to be malnourished. The Chiguru initiative aims to involve the community and reduce malnutrition through programmes that include community engagement and provision of supplementary nutrition and medical support for severely malnourished children in relevant places, including Ballari, Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Belagavi, Raichur, Chitradurga and Vijayanagara.

Unique features

- A number of initiatives, such as the Chilipili curriculum for pre-primary education and the Mathrupoorna scheme to provide hot meals to pregnant and lactating mothers, introduced to the ICDS programme in Karnataka, are unique to the State, say officials.
- While daycare for children below three years has been a missing component, the 4,000 Koosinamane creches set up in gram panchayats have been helping to fill this gap to an extent. These creches for children of women working in rural areas and under MGNREGA schemes were introduced as a collaborative effort involving multiple government departments, including the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR), Women and Child Development (WCD), and MGNREGA.

Funding cuts

- Despite the impact it has had over the last 50 years, the programme is not without flaws, challenges or critics. One of the largest setbacks came in the form of funding cuts from the Centre.
- The Central-State funding ratio for the scheme was changed from 90:10 to 60:40 by the BJP-led Union government in 2015, soon after it came to power, significantly impacting the components of the programme and leaving State governments to often rely on NGOs, development banks and philanthropies to run programmes.

- “There are no funds currently for training programmes,” says a senior State government official who reveals how training programmes have been affected in several regions due to shortage of funds.
- “The Central government used to fund the training. That has not been coming now. We are trying to secure it as early as possible. Now, we are conducting training with the help of NGOs, but these are not the same as the regular training provided by the department,” the official added.

Inadequate compensation

- Activists and anganwadi workers have long been raising demands to raise the honorarium to minimum wage levels.
- “We receive an honorarium of only ₹11,000 per month, which is not even close to the minimum wage. On top of that, many don’t even get it regularly. Our jobs need to be made permanent, and we need to be treated as government employees with all benefits,” demands Renuka Patil, secretary of the District Anganwadi Workers’ Union in Yadgir.
- While the State’s share in the anganwadi worker’s compensation is ₹8,300, the Centre’s is just ₹2,700. For a helper, this corresponding amounts are ₹4,900 and ₹1,350.
- “It’s been 50 years, and it’s high time this scheme becomes a law,” says Varalakshmi.
- “While the role of ICDS in early childhood care is undeniable and laudable, even after 50 years, it continues to be a welfare scheme. That puts the beneficiaries at the mercy of officials, which shouldn’t be the case. Access to nutrition, health, food and pre-primary education should be a right, not welfare,” she points out, while noting that there has been no increase in the Centre’s share of honorarium in the last seven years.

Better infra needed

- An anganwadi near Domlur, managed by Kavitha, seems to be well-maintained and hygienic, but the children could do with more space. She points to a newly constructed two-storey building about 50 m away.
- “We were supposed to move to that building. Currently, the anganwadi is located in a rented space, and the new one is ‘own building’. It has a kitchen on the first floor and enough space for the children on the ground floor. The work was completed in January, but the building lacks electricity connection. Besides, a few electric wires pass too close to the structure”.
- Activist and founder of Civic Bengaluru, Kathyayni Chamaraj, notes that despite improvements, infrastructure at several centres continue to be inadequate.
- “It is important to upgrade the infrastructure at anganwadis and to also include daycare centres for children below three years. Koosinamanes are located at gram panchayats, which may not be close to all. Whereas anganwadis are more in numbers and distributed closely. It is important to have creches within anganwadis and bring all these under the Department of Women and Child Development,” she says.
- One of the latest points of contention has been the face registration system for beneficiaries. As per reports, the introduction of the system has left out around 2% of the beneficiaries, which comes to around 5,00,000.

An unfinished product

- Amid shortage of funds, the State government is planning to hold a grand celebration on November 28 to honour 50 years of ICDS. On the other hand, several anganwadi workers are planning to hold a strike on December 1 outside the residence of Union Ministers from Karnataka.
- Meanwhile, according to CNNS data, 12.4% of children below five years of age in Karnataka continue to be severely stunted, and 4.6% are severely wasted (extreme malnutrition).
- “Children continue to be affected by malnutrition, but not at the levels seen in 1975. Today, we see that in many cases it is happening not due to extreme poverty, but due to lack of awareness among parents.
- We are continuously engaging parents and working towards solving this,” says Usha S., Deputy Director (ICHS), WCD. “Then, there are also reasons such as child marriages and inter-generational poverty in regions that have been in a disadvantaged position for years. It’s a vicious cycle. We are working on those too, but those changes will take time.”

❖ India, Israel ink terms of reference for FTA talks

Context: India and Israel inked Terms of Reference to formally launch negotiations for a free trade agreement, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said.

- The ToR include market access for goods by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers, investment facilitation, simplification of customs procedures, increasing cooperation for innovation and technology transfer, and easing norms to promote trade in services.
- “We have signed the ToRs today. Now we will soon finalise the dates for starting the negotiations for that,” Mr. Goyal said.
- He is leading a 60-member business delegation to Israel. He will meet leaders and businesses to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and investments.
- The TOR was signed by Mr. Goyal and Israeli Economy and Industry Minister Nir Barkat. Mr. Goyal said that the Israeli side has conveyed that they will not seek market access in sensitive areas such as dairy, rice, wheat and sugar.
- **India is Israel’s second-largest trading partner in Asia.**

❖ Fourteen questions and court’s responses

Context: The Presidential Reference came after the April 8 judgment of the Supreme Court that granted ‘deemed assent’ to 10 Tamil Nadu Bills.

- While it is not appropriate for the judiciary to impose timelines on the President and Governors, in glaring circumstances of indefinite inaction, the court can intervene, the Supreme Court said in its advisory to the Presidential Reference. Here are the 14 questions posed by the President and the court’s responses:

What are the constitutional options before a Governor when a Bill is presented to him under Article 200 of the Constitution?

- To assent, reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President, or withhold assent and return the Bill to the legislature with comments if the Bill is not a Money Bill.

Is the Governor bound by the aid and advice tendered by the Council of Ministers under Article 200?

- The Governor enjoys discretion and is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

Is the exercise of constitutional discretion by the Governor under Article 200 justiciable?

- The discharge of the Governor's function under Article 200, is not justiciable.
- However, in glaring circumstances of indefinite inaction, the court has a limited power to issue a mandamus to the Governor to decide within a reasonable time period.

Is Article 361 an absolute bar to judicial review in relation to the actions of a Governor under Article 200?

- Article 361 is an absolute bar on judicial review in relation to personally subjecting the Governor to judicial proceedings.

Can timelines be imposed under Article 200?

- It is not appropriate as the Constitution is silent.

Is exercise of constitutional discretion by the President under Article 201 justiciable?

- For the same reasoning as held with respect to the Governor, the President's assent too is not justiciable.

Can the President be bound to timelines while exercising power under Article 201?

- For the same reasons as indicated in the context of the Governor, the President, too, cannot be bound by judicially prescribed timelines.

Is the President required to seek advice of the Supreme Court whenever a Governor reserves a Bill for assent?

- The President is not required to seek SC's advice. Subjective satisfaction of the President is sufficient.

Are decisions of the Governor and President under Article 200 and Article 201 justiciable at a stage anterior into the law coming into force?

- The decisions of the Governor and President under Articles 200 and 201 are not justiciable at a stage anterior into the law coming into force.
- It is impermissible for courts to undertake judicial adjudication over the contents of a Bill before it becomes law.

Can the exercise of constitutional powers and the orders of/by the President/Governor be substituted in any manner under Article 142?

- The exercise of constitutional powers and the orders of the President/Governor cannot be substituted in any manner under Article 142 nor does it allow for the concept of 'deemed assent' of Bills.

Is a law made by the State legislature a law in force without the assent of the Governor granted under Article 200 of the Constitution?

- There is no question of a law made by a State legislature coming into force without assent of the Governor under Article 200.

In view of the proviso to Article 145(3), is it not mandatory for any Bench of the court to first decide whether a case involves substantial questions of law and has to be referred to a Bench of minimum five judges?

- Returns unanswered. Irrelevant to this reference.

Do the powers of the Supreme Court under Article 142 of the Constitution limited to matters of procedural law?

- Not possible to answer in a definitive manner. Scope of Article 142 answered as a part of earlier question.

Does the Constitution bar the Supreme Court from resolving Centre-States disputes except by way of a suit under Article 131?

- Irrelevant to the functional nature of the reference. Hence, returned unanswered.

❖ At COP, India seeks 'just transition mechanism'

Context: India says finance to adapt to climate change is an 'essential investment'; Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav emphasises the need for country-specific sustainable development pathways.

- India, in tandem with a group of developing countries, has asked for the establishment of a 'just transition mechanism', a day before talks at the ongoing climate summit are expected to conclude. It has stressed that finance for adapting to climate change was not an "optional add-on" but an "essential investment" and that, currently, it was inadequately funded for the latter.
- Established at COP27 (in 2022) and operationalised at COP28 (in 2023), the so-called Just Transition Work Programme is intended as a dedicated forum to create jobs for those who currently work in fossil fuel-dependent industries towards livelihoods in renewable energy sectors.
- "Just transition necessarily includes strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity, creating employment, protecting livelihoods, eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, and providing social protection. Countries must be able to design and implement their own sustainable development pathways consistent with their national priorities and circumstances," Environment Minister, Bhupender Yadav, said in a statement.
- He said that a future 'Global Goal on Adaptation', envisaged as a system of metrics to define countries' ability buffer against the havoc already wreaked by climate change, should be "country-driven and nationally determined and that countries ought to be given the flexibility to define and measure progress using national systems, capacities, and data realities."

- These statements come even as uncertainty remains on whether the COP Presidency, led by Brazil senior diplomat Andrei Lago, will succeed in getting countries to agree on a broad political statement – called a cover text – that will headline the main consensus points that countries have been debating in Belem.
- Divisions continue to remain, primarily on whether developing countries would agree to language supporting a pathway or a roadmap signalling the end of the use of fossil fuel. On the other hand, developed countries resist language that says they are mandated to provide low-cost finance to developing countries to help them achieve these ends.
- “Many Parties (countries) have highlighted their differing starting points and varied development needs. This reinforces the need for nationally determined, demand-driven transition pathways, rather than any uniform or prescriptive approach... global equity must remain central. Developing countries require sufficient policy space to bridge development gaps, address systemic vulnerabilities, and ensure the well-being of their people according to their stage of development and national conditions,” he added.
- Just Transition Work Programme aims to create livelihoods in renewable energy sectors.

❖ Jaishankar holds talks with Taliban’s Commerce Minister

Context: India reiterated support for the Afghan people and promised enhanced connectivity and trade between the two sides.

- The Indian message was conveyed by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in a meeting with visiting Afghan Minister of Industry and Commerce Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi, who became the second Taliban Minister to be hosted at Hyderabad House in little over a month.
- “Discussed ways to strengthen our trade, connectivity and people-to-people ties. Reiterated India’s support for the development and welfare of the people of Afghanistan,” Mr. Jaishankar said after meeting Mr. Azizi, who arrived here on Wednesday for a five-day visit.
- Mr. Azizi also met Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada, who said the “discussions reflected a shared commitment to strengthening bilateral trade and economic cooperation”.
- Mr. Azizi raised the need for “effective use” of Iran’s Chabahar port, establishing dry ports in Nimruz province in southwest Afghanistan, and facilitating import and export processes in Nhava Sheva port in Mumbai, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan said in a statement.
- The visiting side also called for faster processing of Indian visas for Afghan traders and discussed possibility of setting up industrial parks in Afghanistan.
- Mr. Azizi’s visit is being keenly watched as it commenced days after the Taliban administration in Kabul urged Afghan traders to avoid trade with Pakistan and to stop using the Karachi port for commercial reasons. Mr. Azizi is leading a large Afghan trade delegation.

❖ In a first, Indian-born cheetah Mukhi gives birth to five cubs

Context: In a first since the Cheetah Reintroduction Project in the country, an Indian-born cheetah has given birth to five cubs at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

- Announcing the development on social media, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday said, “This is an unprecedented breakthrough for India’s cheetah reintroduction initiative. Mukhi, the first Indian-born female cheetah at 33 months of age, has now become the first India-born cheetah to reproduce, making it a landmark achievement for Project Cheetah.”
- The new litter has taken the country’s cheetah population to 32, including 21 Indian-born ones now. Of the 32, 29 are at Kuno, while three have been relocated to the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav described it as a “delightful breakthrough” for the cheetah reintroduction initiative.
- “This reinforces optimism about establishing a self-sustaining and genetically diverse cheetah population in India, further advancing the nation’s conservation goals,” the Union Minister said on X.
- Uttam Kumar Sharma, Field Director, Kuno National Park, said the cubs seemed healthy and were with the mother in the wild. Mukhi was born on March 29, 2023, to Namibian cheetah Jwala, but soon after birth, the cub was abandoned by the mother.
- “When reunification with her mother, Jwala, was attempted, she was not accepted. From that moment on, she was raised by the Kuno National Park management team with utmost care, always ensuring that she did not develop human imprinting,” Mr. Sharma said.

❖ IndianOil begins first-ever export of LNG to Nepal: Puri

- IndianOil has commenced the country’s first-ever export of liquified natural gas (LNG) to Nepal, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri informed.
- This is the initial consignment of a five-year deal between IndianOil and Nepal’s Yogya Holding to deliver 1,000 metric tonnes of LNG during the agreed period. The agreement was signed in February.
- The LNG is being sourced from IndianOil’s Dhamra LNG terminal in Odisha, and transported using cryogenic road tankers via the international border at the Raxaul town of Bihar.

❖ Eight core sectors put up worst ever show in 14 months

Context: Flat trajectory in October as growth in steel, cement, fertilisers, refinery products balanced out by contractions in coal, power, natural gas, crude.

- Growth in industrial activity in the eight core sectors of the economy remained flat in October 2025, the worst performance in 14 months, according to official data.
- Growth in the Index of Eight Core Industries stood at 0% in October 2025, down from 3.8% in October of the previous year and 3% in September this year. October’s performance is the worst since August last year, when the index had contracted 1.5%.

- **The eight core industries — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity — together account for 40.27% of the Index for Industrial Production (IIP).**
- The flat trajectory in October was primarily due to growth in the steel, cement, fertilisers and refinery products sectors being balanced out by contractions in the coal, electricity, natural gas, and crude oil sectors.
- The steel sector grew 6.7% in October 2025, which, although the second-highest among the eight core sectors, was a six-month low for the steel sector.

The cement sector grew by 5.3% in October 2025, faster than the 3.1% growth in October last year as well as the 5% growth in September 2025.

- The fertiliser sector grew the fastest among the eight core sectors, at 7.4% in October 2025, the fastest in seven months. The refinery products sector grew 4.6% in October 2025, the sector's best performance in nine months.
- On the other hand, the coal sector contracted 8.5% this October, coming on the back of a period of prolonged monsoons and the onset of cooler weather, which translated to a subdued demand for power and contributed to lower mining activity.
- The natural gas sector also slumped 5%, its worst performance in seven months, whilst production of crude oil declined 1.2%.
- Chief economist at ratings agency ICRA Aditi Nayar said given the deterioration in the performance of the mining and electricity segments, the IIP growth could ease to about 2.5-3.5% in October from the 4% seen in September.

❖ **E-commerce firms declare compliance with dark pattern guidelines**

Context: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) said 26 digital storefronts had declared, through their parent companies, that they had eliminated so-called “dark patterns” from their sites, or that they never had any to begin with.

- The storefronts that submitted such declarations include Flipkart, Meesho, BlinkIt, Zomato, BigBasket, and Reliance Retail.

What are dark patterns

- **Dark patterns are deceptive practices used online and designed to trick users into spending when they otherwise wouldn't, such as by creating “false urgency” or “basket sneaking,” by adding items by default into a user's cart at the time of checkout, according to guidelines published by the Central Consumer Protection Authority, which comes under the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), in 2023.**

Self audit reports

- Earlier this year, the DoCA doubled down on those guidelines, directing e-com platforms to submit self-audit reports on operations' compliance with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023.
- The disclosures made public by the CCPA do not include Amazon India, arguably the country's largest e-commerce platform.

- Other companies the Central Consumer Protection Authority held consultations with whose disclosures weren't sent in or uploaded by the authority include Airbnb, Apple, Ola Electric, Samsung, Indigo, Mastercard, Meta, Rapido, Shiprocket, Snapdeal, Uber, WhatsApp, Google and Paytm.

❖ Zelenskyy receives draft U.S. plan to end war in Ukraine

Context: The plan reportedly requires Ukraine to cede territory and curb the size of its Army; European countries are pushing back, viewing the required concessions as tantamount to capitulation.

- Peace plan: Ukrainian Defence Minister Denys Shmyhal, right, with U.S. Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll in Kyiv on Wednesday. AP

Reuters Kyiv

- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has received a draft of a U.S. plan to end the war in Ukraine and expects to hold talks with U.S. President Donald Trump in coming days, the Ukrainian leader's office
- Two sources said on Wednesday that Washington had signalled to Mr. Zelenskyy that Kyiv must accept the U.S.-drafted framework to end the nearly-four-year-old war, which includes territorial concessions and curbs on Ukraine's armed forces.
- European countries are pushing back against the plan, which sources said would require Kyiv to give up more land and partially disarm, conditions long seen by Ukraine's allies as tantamount to capitulation.
- Mr. Zelenskyy's office did not comment directly on the content of the plan, which has not been published, but said the Ukrainian leader had "outlined the fundamental principles that matter to our people".
- "We are ready now, as before, to work constructively with the American side, as well as with our partners in Europe and around the world, so that the outcome is peace," it said in a statement.
- Moscow played down any new U.S. initiative. "Consultations are not currently under way. There are contacts, of course, but there is no process that could be called consultations," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

❖ Centre notifies four new Labour Codes

Context: They replace 29 fragmented laws, some of them dating back to 1930s; PM terms Codes 'progressive'; trade unions call them 'pro-employer'.

- The Centre notified all four Labour Codes, ushering in major reforms, including extending universal social security coverage for gig workers, promising gender pay parity, expanded rights and safety for women workers, giving statutory backing for minimum wages, and introducing fixed-term employment.
- The Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020), and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code (2020) had been held back due to protests from trade unions, which continue. In a joint statement, 10 Central Trade Unions called the Codes an “anti-worker and pro-employer” reform.
- The Codes, which came into effect on Friday, replace 29 fragmented laws, many of which date back to pre-Independence and early post-Independence eras (1930s-1950s). Prime Minister Narendra Modi described these as “one of the most comprehensive and progressive labour-oriented reforms since Independence”.

❖ KIA becomes India's first airport to achieve Level 3 Accessibility Enhancement Accreditation

Context: The KIA is also among the few globally to employ Persons with Disabilities in frontline customer service roles, says BIAL.

- The Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) has become the first airport in India to be awarded Level 3 in the Accessibility Enhancement Accreditation (AEA) programme by the Airports Council International (ACI).
- The Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), the airport operator, said, “This recognition reflects its steadfast commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and delivering an equitable travel experience for every passenger.”
- “Accessibility and inclusion are integral to the BIAL’s long-term vision of creating a barrier free, dignified, and empathetic travel experience for all. Guided by its Customer First philosophy, the KIA has steadily advanced from Level 1 (December 2024) to Level 3 (November 2025), within less than a year, demonstrating leadership and accountability in driving inclusive transformation,” the BIAL said.
- Under its ‘B-Included’ initiative, the BIAL has introduced a wide range of accessible facilities, digital tools, and inclusive services to ensure that accessibility is woven into every aspect of the airport experience.
- The BIAL said that the KIA was also among the few globally to employ Persons with Disabilities in frontline customer service roles. “Advancing from Level 1 to Level 3 in less than a year speaks about the passion and dedication of our teams,” Hari Marar, Managing Director & CEO, BIAL, said.
- The BIAL said its vision for accessibility has extended beyond physical infrastructure to encompass digital inclusivity and cultural awareness.

❖ Bannerghatta Biological Park sees an increase in animal and bird numbers

Context: The aviary section also saw a vibrant breeding season in 2025 as several bird species produced healthy hatchlings, enriching the park's already diverse avian collection.

- The Bannerghatta Biological Park (BNP) this year has witnessed the births of several animals, which includes two tiger cubs, two jungle cat kittens, four lion cubs, and three gaur calves.
- “From majestic big cats to thriving herbivores and vibrant bird species, each birth reflected the park's strengthened management practices, scientific care, and steady commitment to conservation breeding,” BBP said.
- On February 15, 2025, tigress Arunya gave birth to two cubs. This was followed by the birth of two jungle cat kittens on March 5. On May 30, lioness Savithri gave birth to a cub, and another lioness Sania birthed four cubs on June 11.
- BBP said that the herbivore section also experienced steady growth, with an increase in the park's gaur population after three calves were born on May 28, August 28, and October 6. “These successful births highlighted the effectiveness of enhanced nutrition plans and dedicated veterinary care in maintaining a strong and genetically diverse herd,” BBP said.
- It added that the aviary section also saw a vibrant breeding season in 2025 as several bird species produced healthy hatchlings, enriching the park's already diverse avian collection.
- New arrivals included a painted stork chick on February 13, rose-ringed parakeet chicks on March 31 and April 3, a silver pheasant chick on April 6, sun conure chicks on August 3 and December 5, and rainbow lorikeet chicks on July 27.
- “With continual habitat enhancements, specialised veterinary care, and the commitment of its staff, Bannerghatta Biological Park continues to play a vital role in safeguarding and nurturing India's wildlife for generations to come. With the growing wildlife family, citizens can adopt selected young animals under the animal adoption policy,” BBP added.

❖ PAC questions FSSAI on sale of adulterated food items

Context: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) headed by senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal held a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to discuss a range of issues related to food safety and quality control.

- Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava and FSSAI CEO Rajit Punhani were present at the meeting.
- Members of the committee raised serious concerns over the unchecked sale of adulterated goods, particularly adulterated sweets being sold during the festive season. They pointed out that the practice continues despite repeated public warnings and enforcement drives.
- The panel also drew attention to the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report, which highlighted an acute shortage of manpower within the FSSAI.
- Following the deliberations, the PAC directed both the Health Ministry and the FSSAI to submit detailed replies to the issues raised.

Context: A flashpoint has emerged in the COP with developing countries opposing the inclusion of language that commits countries to a timeline on eliminating fossil fuel from their economies.

- André Corrêa do Lago, COP30 president, speaks during a plenary session at the COP30 UN Climate Summit.
- With the fires at the venue doused, new flashpoints emerged early on Friday — officially, the last day of the climate talks in Brazil’s Belem — after a draft text skipped mention of fossil fuels.
- The Conference of Parties (COP) proceedings usually conclude with a ‘cover text’, or a consensus political statement issued by the COP Presidency, in this case led by Brazilian diplomat André Lago, which lays out the united resolution by Parties (countries signatory to Paris Agreement) to take action on climate change.
- A flashpoint had been emerging over the past 10 days, with developing countries, including some petro-states, insistent on not including language that commits countries to a timeline on eliminating fossil fuel from their economies.
- Developed countries have insisted that specifying such a path is critical to keep the planet from overheating beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius by the century-end, and that the finance necessary for adapting to climate change and transitioning away from fossil fuel use must be mobilised from private and public sources.
- “This is in no way close to the ambition we need on mitigation. We are disappointed with the text currently on the table. We are willing to be ambitious on adaptation, but we would like to make clear that any language on finance should squarely be within the commitment reached last year on the New Collective Quantified Goal,” Wopke Hoekstra, European Commissioner for Climate, said.
- A plenary session discussing the latest cover text is expected later on Friday prior to which nearly 80 countries, pitching for the language on fossil fuel, are expected to voice dissatisfaction with the text. This session is an occasion for countries to publicly voice their support to, or disappointment with, the Presidency. “At COP30, the Global South is not asking for favours, it is asking for the basic foundations needed to deliver a fair and effective global climate response. Climate action must be underpinned by equity, fair rules and reliable support,” Arunabha Ghosh, director-general, Council on Energy Environment and Water, said.
- “The proposed high-level ministerial round-table to reflect on the implementation of the NCQG is a welcome step... While the new dialogues on trade mark a progress, they should ensure that developing economies are protected from climate-linked trade barriers,” he added.

Context: The proposal may apply to all digital content on social media websites and OTT platforms.

- The Union government has proposed guidelines defining “obscenity” and other disallowed content online in the Information Technology Rules, 2021, which govern social media companies and OTT streaming platforms, in a note for filing in the Supreme Court seen.
- The proposal includes language that applies to all digital content — social media platforms, OTT streaming services, and digital news platforms — with broad restrictions incorporated from the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.
- The note was served this week to litigants in an ongoing case by an advocate for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, after the Supreme Court urged the government earlier this year to frame guidelines on online content.
- The IT Rules already contain language requiring social media platforms to disallow content that “is obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, invasive of another’s privacy including bodily privacy, insulting or harassing on the basis of gender, racially or ethnically objectionable, relating or encouraging money laundering or gambling.”
- Now, the amendment proposed by the Union government — if the Supreme Court approves it — would explicitly define “obscene digital content”, and add language to the rules’ Code of Ethics that are based on Section 67 of the IT Act, 2000, the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and its rules, and the Indian Penal Code, the precursor to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Section 67 of the IT Act would also be the “legal basis” for this amendment, the Ministry said.
- “This is exactly the Cable TV Programme Code, copied to the digital medium,” Mishi Choudhary, founder of the digital rights advocacy Software Freedom Law Centre, India (SFLC), said after reviewing the note. “This is the most sweeping regulatory shift India has ever proposed for digital content, which had wide restraints previously.”
- The proposal would only be taken forward after the court comments on it, and following a public consultation.

Cinematograph Act

- For OTT streaming platforms at least, the proposal would require content to be compliant with the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and be fit for “public exhibition”.
- The official said that this particular condition would only be applicable to streaming services and not social media. The proposed amendment does not contain this demarcation.
- The Code of Ethics, which is a part of the IT Rules that has been governing news platforms and “curated” content platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, would have an overarching “Obscenity” heading that would tell online platforms to avoid content that offends “good taste or decency”, presents “criminality as desirable”, shows “indecent, vulgar, suggestive, repulsive or offensive themes”, or has “visuals or words which reflect a slandering, ironical and snobbish attitude in the portrayal of certain ethnic, linguistic and regional groups”. There are seventeen such restrictions.

- Rules 9(1) and 9(3) of the IT Rules, which seek to enforce the existing code of ethics for streaming services and news platforms, have been stayed by the Bombay High Court, in a case that is now being heard in the Delhi High Court, along with other challenges to the IT Rules. The note by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry acknowledges that this judicial stay is still active. Ms. Choudhary said the note sought to “revive” the stayed rules.
- “The Executive has been irregularly using IT Rules to broaden its powers and establishing a de facto system, which, if the courts heard the petitions, would be found unconstitutional,” Ms. Choudhary said. “Just because the courts are not swift in their decision-making does not mean this structure is acceptable.”
- “In order to ascertain whether a content has violated the Code or not, the ‘Community Standard Test’ prescribed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in the case of Ayeek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal may be used,” the proposal says in an explanation, “which states that the content satisfies the test if a person, having contemporary community standards does not believe that the work appeals or pleases to the lustful or voyeuristic interest and this Code shall not be applicable to content which has literary, scientific, artistic or political value in its entirety.”
- In spite of this explanation, Ms. Choudhary said, the note “expands the definition to include everything under the sun, from Rule 6 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act to all that the government disapproves of”.
- The proposal came in a case that followed the controversy around comedian Samay Raina, whose YouTube channel was the subject of intense backlash after a joke featuring an incestuous hypothetical dilemma in a paywalled part of Mr. Raina’s channel, made by the social media influencer Ranveer Allahabadi, went viral.

❖ **RBI, ECB agree to start UPI, TIPS link realisation phase**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and NPCI International Payments Ltd. (NIPL) along with the European Central Bank (ECB) have agreed to start the realisation phase for UPI–TIPS link.
- This is to connect Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with the TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS), the instant payment system operated by the Eurosystem. This would aid cross-border remittances between India and Euro Area and benefit users of both jurisdictions, RBI said.

❖ **Afghan Minister urges expanded use of Chabahar port**

Context: “We request the Indian government to help ensure the trade route from Chabahar Port is functional, so that trade remains competitive,” Afghanistan’s Acting Commerce and Industries Minister Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi said.

- Representing a business delegation at an event of the industry body PHD Chamber of Commerce Industry (PHDCCI), he called upon the Indian private sector to make further investments in the route to ensure the port’s success.
- The use of Chabahar port in Iran is emerging as imperative for the landlocked country to circumvent the use of routes through Pakistan following tensions between the two nations in recent months.

Call to firms

- Mr. Azizi also called upon the Indian private sector to invest in Afghanistan. He mentioned his government was considering to accord a five-year exemption from paying taxes to new industries being set up in Afghanistan. He stated the government in Kabul was already giving preferential treatment in tariffs for raw materials and machinery relevant to their domestic industries.
- Mentioning about Chabahar Port, Mr. Azizi said the Afghan government was open to negotiations with U.S. to ensure continued operationality.

Air freight corridor

- Speaking at the same event, M. Anand Prakash, Joint Secretary (PAI) at India's Ministry of External Affairs informed the air freight corridor between Kabul and Delhi and between Kabul and Amritsar have been "activated" with cargo flights expected to commence "very soon".
- "This will significantly enhance air connectivity and strengthen commercial flights," he said.

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



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