



**DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY
BENGALURU**

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

NOVEMBER WEEK 4

24-11-2025 TO 29-11-2025

NAVY GETS

'SILENT HUNTER'

**80% HOME-
GROWN MAHE**

**NISAR SATELLITE
ENTERS FINAL
SCIENCE PHASE**

**ETHIOPIA'S HAYLI
GUBBI VOLCANO
ERUPTS**

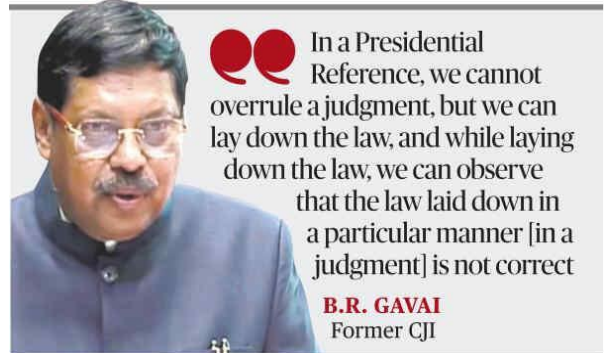
**GRUHA AROGYA
SCHEME**

**KAVERI 2.0
SOFTWARE**

❖ Presidential Reference opinion does not overrule a judgment: former CJI

Context: Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, who retired from the post, said the Presidential Reference opinion against tying Governors to timelines was not intended to shift the burden back on the States to run pillar-to-post to get their recalcitrant Governors to pass pending Bills on time.

- **“If the Constitution does not provide for a timeline, we [judiciary] cannot read something that is not there. It is for the Parliament to do that,”** he said.
- He explained that an opinion given in a Presidential Reference did not overrule a judgment but only clarified the law.
- **“In a Presidential Reference, we cannot overrule a judgment, but we can lay down the law, and while laying down the law, we can observe that the law laid down in a particular manner [in a judgment] is not correct,”** he said.
- **The Presidential Reference was triggered by a judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case on April 8, which broke the silence in the Constitution and held that Bills must be cleared by the Governors and President in three months or they would be “deemed” to have got assent.**
- On November 20, a five-judge Bench, in its advisory opinion, contradicted the April 8 judgment and concluded that **Governors and the President cannot be forced to follow a timeline.** They need to act only within a “reasonable period”. The Bench, however, did not specify the term “reasonable period” in its opinion.
- **“We have only relaxed the timeline. At the same time, we have balanced it by saying the Governor cannot sit on a Bill endlessly.**
- We have also provided for a **limited judicial review** based on the facts and circumstances of each case.
- You cannot have a straitjacket formula that in every Bill, if assent is not granted, it would be deemed to have been passed.
- **In a routine Bill, one month is sufficient for a Governor to clear it. However, in Bills concerning internal or external emergency, a Governor may not be able to take a call in a month. He may take three or four months,”** he said.
- He said he did not believe in the age-old adage that there should be “friction” between the judiciary and the government. **“I do not believe friction is necessary, especially when we have to depend on the Purse for infrastructural development... I do not think continuous friction is necessary,”** he said.
- Justice Gavai said the popular notion was that a judge was independent only if he decided against the government. **“The decision of a judge is not based on whether the litigant is the government or a private person.** You decide as per the papers before you. The government may succeed, or the government may lose in a given case. That is not the correct approach,” he said.



- When asked if he had ever come under pressure from the government, he replied, “No. I know when asked this question everyone in my position would say ‘no’. But in my case, it is really a ‘no’.” He replied to a question about the large number of transfers of **High Court judges during his tenure, saying they were largely made in the interest of administration of justice, but there were also complaints against some judges.**

❖ **No plan to bring Bill on Chandigarh, says Centre**

Context: Govt. had listed Bill that would align Chandigarh with other Union Territories; but following outrage, Home Ministry says proposal to ‘simplify’ law-making process is under ‘consideration’.

- The Union Home Ministry said that the **Centre has no intention of introducing a Constitution Amendment Bill to bring Chandigarh under Article 240 of the Constitution in the upcoming session of Parliament.**
- The clarification came following outrage in Punjab with parties, including the Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal and Aam Aadmi Party, opposing the move which would pave the way for the appointment of an independent administrator in Chandigarh, bringing the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana under the direct control of the Ministry.
- The claim over Chandigarh has been a sensitive political issue ever since the **Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966.**
- The November 21 Lok Sabha Bulletin had listed the Constitution (131 Amendment) Bill, 2025 among 10 Bills proposed to be passed during the Winter Session of Parliament from December 1.
- The description said the Bill is proposed for discussion and passage to align Chandigarh with other Union Territories without legislatures when its Legislative Assembly is dissolved or suspended.
- The Ministry said that the **“proposal to simplify the Central Government’s law-making process for the Union Territory of Chandigarh is still under consideration...”**
- “No final decision has been made on this proposal. The proposal in no way seeks to alter Chandigarh’s governance or administrative structure, nor does it aim to change the traditional arrangements between Chandigarh and the States of Punjab or Haryana,” it said.
- “A suitable decision will be made only after adequate consultations with all stakeholders, keeping in mind the interests of Chandigarh. There is no need for concern regarding this matter. The Central government has no intention of introducing any Bill to this effect in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament,” the Ministry further stated.
- **Currently, the Governor of Punjab is concurrently the Administrator of Chandigarh, and if the Bill is passed, the Union Territory will be governed by a Lieutenant-Governor.**
- Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh said that the Parliament Bulletin had listed for “the introduction of a Constitution Amendment Bill to enable the appointment of a full-time L-G for Chandigarh”.

- “This was immediately and aggressively opposed by the INC and other parties in Punjab whose Governor is also the Administrator of Chandigarh.
- The Union Home Ministry now says that it has no intention to introduce the Bill in the Winter Session. Yet another example of the Modi **Govt’s FAST approach to governance — First Announce, Second Think,**” Mr. Ramesh said.

❖ **UNSC reforms no longer an option but a necessity: Modi at IBSA meet**

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was no longer an option but a necessity, and asserted that the India-Brazil-South Africa troika should send a clear message for changes to institutions of global governance.

- Addressing the **India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) leaders summit** here, Mr. Modi said that at a time when the world appeared fragmented and divided, the IBSA could provide a message of unity, cooperation, and humanity.
- He proposed institutionalising the IBSA NSA-level meeting to strengthen security cooperation among the three countries.
- “In the fight against terrorism, we must move forward in close coordination. There is no place for any double standards on such a serious issue,” Mr. Modi said at the meeting attended by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.
- The Prime Minister said the **IBSA was not just a group of three countries but an important platform connecting three continents, three major democratic nations, and three major economies.**

❖ **Two menhirs believed to be from late megalithic period found**

Context: In recent archaeological explorations conducted by the Adima Kala Trust (R.) of Udupi in Kundapur region, two menhirs were found at Hilkod situated on the Neralekatte-Ajri Road and at Mavinakere in Kenchanur village in Udupi district.

- An archaeologist and founder-trustee of the trust T. Murugeshi said in a release that the two menhirs, also called nilskals or free standing stones, were from the late megalithic period.
- The nilskal of Mavinakere is about 112 cm in height and is slightly leaning towards the north-west direction.
- The Hilkod nilskal is about 135 cm in height. When explorers dug up a small testing trench below the standing stone at Hilkod there were some crushed red and creamy pottery pieces which were thin.
- **Pottery pieces of the late megalithic period were usually thin while pottery pieces of early megalithic period, found by archaeologists during earlier explorations, were usually thick.**
- “Both the nilskals appears to be belonging to the **last phase of the megalithic culture** of Kundapur region,” he said.



The menhir found at Hilkod situated on the Neralekatte-Ajri Road in Udupi district.

- The two menhirs were found at a distance of about 3 to 4 km of each other, Mr. Murugeshi said.
- “Heragal group of menhirs of Nagara region of Hosanagara taluk in Shivamogga district are the oldest known from this region belonging to 800 B.C. The Mavinakere and Hilkod menhirs belong to 300 B.C. to 1st or 2nd century A.D. which is the last quarter of the megalithic period,” he said.

❖ Kerala to move court if Bills are kept pending beyond ‘reasonable time’

Context: The Kerala government will approach courts to get the Bills that are pending with either the President or the Governor passed, after waiting for a “reasonable time” as indicated in a Supreme Court advisory.

- In its recent advisory opinion on a Presidential Reference on the judiciary’s authority to impose timelines for the Governors and the President, the Supreme Court had indicated that only a limited judicial review was possible in case of Bills pending beyond a reasonable time.
- However, the State government may have to get some clarity on when to initiate legal action, as the Supreme Court had not elaborated on the ‘reasonable time’ in the advisory, legal sources pointed out.

Concurrent subjects

- Some of the Bills pending with the President include the University Laws (Amendment) Bill 2025 and the Kerala State Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Bill 2025.
- The State government had sent two Bills, the Wildlife Protection (Kerala Amendment) Bill 2025 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Kerala Amendment) Bill, to the President as State legislation on Concurrent subjects required the President’s approval, according to sources.
- The Bills that await the Governor’s nod include the ones recently passed by the State Assembly, especially the Kerala Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2025, the University Laws Amendment Bills, the Kerala Excess Land in Private Holding (Regularisation) Bill, 2025 and the Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, sources said.
- “The Kerala government will seek legal remedy if the Bills are not cleared after a reasonable time,” said P. Rajeeve, State Minister for Law.
- The State may have to decide on what the reasonable time is for every Bill on a case-by-case basis, he said. The State government has not yet received communication from the Raj Bhavan regarding the decision of the Governor to send the Private Universities Bill to the President. It was from media reports that the government came to know about it, he said.
- Meanwhile, judicial sources indicated that the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court carried much weight as a statement of law made by a Constitution Bench of the court. The question whether the time taken by a Governor is reasonable or not will depend upon the nature of the Bill, the nature of the doubt entertained by the Governor, and the length of time taken by him to take appropriate action.

❖ In a boost to conservation, Centre rejects two quarry proposals in Western Ghats

Context: In a move that augurs well for the conservation of Western Ghats, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has rejected two separate proposals seeking diversion of forestland in Ankola and Karwar taluks for stone quarries.

- The decisions are based on site inspection that highlight concerns over ecological fragility, and the potential for irreversible damage to the Western Ghats ecosystem, which is one of the world's most critical biodiversity hotspots.
- The first proposal sought diversion of 3.55 hectares of forestland in Baleguli village, Ankola, for quarrying and laying an access road.
- In the inspection report, K. Yasodha, Deputy Inspector-General of Forests, of the Bengaluru Regional Office of the MoEF&CC noted that the area, though leased for cashew cultivation, hosts substantial vegetation and undocumented floral diversity.
- The report also noted that the sites were located on steep, erosion-prone slopes with a history of heavy rainfall, increasing its vulnerability to landslips.
- In its recommendation, the regional office declined to support the project due to multiple deficiencies and ecological risks. It noted that allowing quarrying in the area would lead to large-scale destruction of the ecology of Western Ghats.
- The second proposal, for diversion of 0.49 ha in Arav village, Karwar, was rejected with equal emphasis on environmental sensitivity.
- The inspection report noted that the site where the proposed quarry was to be established, fell squarely within the notified Western Ghats Eco-Sensitive Area, classified as tropical moist deciduous forest with dense canopy cover.
- Wild animals reported to be present in both the areas included spotted and leopard, mouse deer, pangolin, sloth bear, sambar, jungle cat, jackal, monitor lizard, and reticulated python, among others. What is significant is that pugmarks of tiger were also located during site inspection in the region.
- The department noted that the area supported rich biodiversity, including Schedule I wildlife species, and is highly prone to erosion and landslips due to intense monsoons and mountainous terrain.

Tree re-enumeration

- A complete tree re-enumeration was also deemed necessary as the forest cover was found to be richer than previously recorded, as per the report.
- Environmental observers see the twin rejections as a strong message on safeguarding the ecologically fragile Western Ghats, where unregulated quarrying has been repeatedly linked to habitat fragmentation, soil destabilisation, flooding, and disruption of wildlife movement.

Significant move

- Wildlife conservationist Giridhar Kulkarni said just a few days ago, a tiger travelled nearly 360 km from the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve to the Karwar Forest Division in Uttara Kannada district.
- In this context, the move was significant for the long-term conservation of Western Ghats ecosystem and protection of tigers, he added.

- Activists aver that the decisions should signal a shift towards tighter scrutiny of extractive activities in eco-sensitive zones and the imperatives to prioritise long-term conservation over short-term commercial gains.

❖ PM calls for global compact on AI to prevent misuse

Context: The pact must be based on certain core principles like effective human oversight, safety-by-design, transparency, and restrictions on AI use in deepfakes, crime, terror activities, says Modi at G-20.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a global compact to prevent misuse of artificial intelligence (AI), and made a strong pitch for critical technologies to be “human-centric”, instead of “finance-centric”.
- Addressing the third session of the G-20 Summit on the topic “A fair and a just future for all — critical minerals; decent work; artificial intelligence”, Mr. Modi said technology applications should be “global” rather than “national” and based on “open source” rather than “exclusive models”.
- Mr. Modi said that this vision had been integrated into India’s technology ecosystem, and it had resulted in significant benefits, be it in space applications, AI or digital payments, where it is a world leader.
- “We must all ensure that AI is used for global good and its misuse is prevented. To do this, we must create a global compact on AI, based on certain core principles, including effective human oversight, safety-by-design, transparency, and strict restrictions on the use of AI in deepfakes, crime, and terror activities,” Mr. Modi said.
- The Prime Minister said AI systems that impact human life, security, or public trust must be “responsible and auditable”. “And most importantly, AI should enhance human capabilities, but the ultimate responsibility for decision-making always remains with humans,” he added.
- He said that in this age of AI, the approach must rapidly shift from “jobs of today” to “capabilities of tomorrow”. “Unlocking talent mobility is essential for rapid innovation. We made progress on this topic at the Delhi G20. We hope that in the next few years, the G-20 will develop a global framework for talent mobility,” he said.
- Mr. Modi said that under the India-AI Mission, accessible high-performance computing capacity was being built with the aim of ensuring that AI benefits reached everyone.
- The Prime Minister said India would be hosting the AI Impact Summit in February 2026 with the theme “Sarvajanam Hitaya, Sarvajanam Sukhaya” [welfare for all, happiness for all]. He articulated India’s message for global well-being, asserting that it stood for development that is sustainable, trade that is trusted, finance that is fair, and progress in which everyone prospers.

❖ PM discusses trade, critical minerals with Ramaphosa

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit here.

- The two leaders discussed cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, mining, critical minerals, AI, and food security.
- “Had an excellent meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa during the G-20 Summit in Johannesburg,” Mr. Modi posted on social media after his meeting.
- “We reviewed the full range of the India-South Africa partnership, especially in boosting linkages of commerce, culture, investment and diversifying cooperation in technology, skilling, AI, critical minerals and more,” he added.
- Mr. Modi congratulated the South African leader on the successful presidency of the G-20 summit this year.
- He appreciated South African efforts to take forward and build on the decisions arrived during the New Delhi G-20 Summit.

❖ **South Africa is hosting the first G-20 Summit being held in Africa.**

Context: Earlier, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, in a post, said, “The leaders discussed initiating exchange of youth delegations for enhancing technology and people-to-people ties.”

- Recalling the historical ties that underpin India-South Africa relations, both leaders reviewed bilateral ties and expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved in various fields of cooperation, including trade and investment, food security, skill development, mining, youth exchange and people-to-people ties, the Ministry said in a statement.
- They discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of AI, Digital Public Infrastructure and critical minerals, it added.
- The leaders agreed to work jointly to amplify the voice of the Global South.
- Mr. Modi appreciated the initiative taken by South Africa to hold the IBSA leaders meeting.

❖ **‘Consensus on most recommendations of Assam Accord panel’**

Context: The Assam government and the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) have reached a consensus on “most recommendations” of a panel to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord of 1985, the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) said.

- Clause 6 of the peace deal, which ended the violent six-year, anti-foreigner Assam Agitation, promised appropriate constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve, and promote the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.
- Representatives of the government and the AASU held the third round of discussions on Clause 6 on Saturday. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma chaired the meeting.

New panel to be formed

- “...Both the Assam government and the AASU reached consensus on most State-level recommendations of the high-level committee, with a new review committee to be formed for timely implementation,” a statement from the CMO read.

- The Union Home Ministry appointed the high-level panel in February 2020. Headed by retired Gauhati High Court judge Biplab Kumar Sarma, it was tasked with suggesting ways to implement the provisions of the touchy Clause 6.

❖ Justice Surya Kant to take oath as Chief Justice today

Context: Justice Surya Kant, who has been part of several landmark verdicts, will on Monday take oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India.

- He will succeed Justice B.R. Gavai.
- Justice Kant was appointed the next Chief Justice on October 30 and will remain in the post for nearly 15 months. He will demit office on February 9, 2027, on attaining the age of 65.
- Born on February 10, 1962, in Hisar district of Haryana to a middle-class family, Justice Kant went from being a small-town lawyer to the country's highest judicial office.
- Justice Kant, who penned several notable judgments in the Punjab and Haryana High Court, was appointed the Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court on October 5, 2018.
- His tenure as a Supreme Court judge is marked by verdicts on the abrogation of Article 370, free speech, and citizenship rights.
- The judge was part of the advisory opinion on the recent Presidential Reference on the powers of the Governor and President in dealing with Bills passed by a Assembly.
- He was part of the Bench that kept the colonial-era sedition law in abeyance. Justice Kant nudged the Election Commission to disclose the details of 65 lakh voters excluded from the draft electoral rolls in Bihar.

❖ Sindh will always be a part of India's civilisational heritage, says Rajnath

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that while Sindh was no longer part of India geographically, it remained an integral part of India's civilisational heritage.

- At a community event, he said, "Today, the land of Sindh may not be a part of India, but civilisationally, Sindh will always be a part of India. And as far as land is concerned, borders can change. Who knows, tomorrow Sindh may return to India again."
- Referring to senior BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani, born in Sindh, Mr. Singh said Mr. Advani had written about how Sindhi Hindus of his generation had never fully accepted the separation of Sindh from India. "Not just in Sindh but throughout India, Hindus considered the Indus river sacred. Many Muslims in Sindh also believed that the water of the Indus was no less sacred than the Aab-e-Zamzam of Mecca," he quoted Mr. Advani's writing.
- Mr. Singh reiterated that people of Sindhi origin would "always remain our own, no matter where they live".

Plight of minorities

- The Defence Minister also spoke about the plight of minorities in neighbouring countries. He said these communities had suffered violence, forced conversions, and displacement, and criticised past “appeasement-seeking governments” for denying them proper rehabilitation in India.
- He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi understood their suffering, which led to the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Bill.
- He noted that the government had permitted persecuted minorities from neighbouring nations to stay “without passports till 2024, enabling them to live with dignity”.
- Mr. Singh criticised the Congress leadership during Partition, saying it ignored the security concerns of Hindus in Sindh and discouraged their migration to India.

❖ COP30 stresses ‘adaptation’ as path to fossil fuel-free world

Context: Countries have called to ‘at least triple’ adaptation finance by 2035 and to hold a systematic dialogue, with existing UN trade forums on ensuring that measures to combat climate change do not impede trade or growth in developing countries.

- The deliberations at COP30, which concluded in Brazil, underlined that while countries agreed upon transitioning away from fossil fuel, more emphasis ought to be laid on adapting to climate change rather than defining road maps to end use of fossil fuels.
- As the text of the consensus, called the Mutirão (coming together) agreement, says, countries have agreed to establish a two-year “work programme” on climate finance; called for efforts to “at least triple” adaptation finance by 2035.
- They have agreed to a systematic dialogue with participation from United Nations’ trade forums — for example, International Trade Centre, the UN Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization — on how measures to combat climate change should not impede trade and growth of developing countries.
- Climate finance refers to money that must be disbursed by developed countries to developing ones.
- The aim of COPs (Conference of Parties) has been on delivering climate finance evenly for mitigation (avoiding fossil fuel projects and funding renewable energy) and adaptation (building infrastructure to better shield against climate change, investing in resilient agriculture, and so on). However, mitigation projects are generally more business-friendly and have garnered more attention.
- “While the adaptation finance decision wasn’t what developing countries wanted, it helps ensure that funding for adaptation will continue to grow... Even though the deadline is a decade away, developed countries can’t be complacent and must immediately get to work, scaling up adaptation support.
- Having this goal within the framework of the NCQG means that developed countries take the lead, with other countries encouraged to contribute voluntarily,” Joe Thwaites, International Climate Finance Director, Natural Resources Defense Council, a global think tank, said in a statement.

- New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) refers to an agreement in COP29, Baku, by developed countries to mobilise \$300 billion annually by 2035 and work towards expanding it to \$1.3 trillion annually from all sources.

Ideological divide

- The deliberations at the COP through the years have often been framed as a contest between two ideological blocs — those that want hard targets and road maps on phasing out of fossil fuels and those that resist them.
- India, for instance, in the final leg of deliberations on Saturday, expressed “satisfaction with major outcomes” of COP30 such as a Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) and for “delivering the space” to discuss Unilateral Trade-restrictive Climate Measures.
- “These issues cannot continue to be brushed under the carpet. The Parties have made a beginning here to reverse this trend,” a statement by a group of largely developing countries noted. The JTM refers to a process whereby labour systems can be made to adapt to a future away from fossil fuel in a way that promotes justice and equity.
- The COP30 Mutirão agreement has no mention of ‘fossil fuels’ or a road map to end their use — meaning they are not part of the consensus agreement.
- COP President André Lago’s commitment to creating two road maps—one on halting and reversing deforestation and another on transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly, and equitable manner, is viewed as a placatory measure towards the European Union and countries demanding an end to use of fossil fuels.

❖ ITBP to set up 10 all-woman border posts along LAC

Context: The Indo-Tibetan Border Police force, which guards the 3,488-km-long India-China LAC, is establishing 10 all-woman border posts along this arduous and icy frontier, the Director-General of the paramilitary said.

- The force, as part of its ambitious “forwardisation” plan, initiated post the 2020 military clash in Ladakh, has also moved its 215 border posts forward along the front on India’s north and eastern flank so far.
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) D-G Praveen Kumar said this during the 64th Raising Day parade of the force held in Jammu on Saturday.
- “We have worked on the forwardisation plan and, as a result, the number of forward-deployed BOPs (border outposts) is now 215 as compared to 180.
- The Centre had sanctioned seven more battalions and a sector office comprising about 9,400 personnel for the ITBP in 2023.
- The ITBP is in the process of establishing two all-women BOPs in Ladakh’s Lukung and Thangi in Himachal Pradesh. Eight more all-women BOPs will be made operational on this front, the D-G said.
- State Forest Departments across India have no record of African grey parrot trade, reveal RTI responses

❖ How can State PSCs be reformed?

Context: How did the Montagu Chelmsford report lead to the establishment of present-day Public Service Commissions? What is the role of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions? Is a periodical review of the examination syllabi necessary?

- A revamp: Applicants of Telangana State Public Service Commission Group 2 exam stage a protest to postpone the exam, in Hyderabad in 2023. NAGARA GOPAL

The story so far:

- The 2025 national conference of chairpersons of the State Public Service Commissions (PSCs) is being hosted by the Telangana State Public Service Commission on December 19 and 20.
- Every year, whenever State PSCs conduct examinations for recruitment, they are mired in one controversy or the other.
- Aspirants often have to seek judicial recourse, due to which the entire process is derailed, leading to a 'trust deficit'.
- This is an outcome of systemic lapses, both structural and procedural, which exist in almost all State PSCs. This conference would be an apt occasion to discuss such issues and more.

What is the history of PSCs?

- The PSCs in India are a product of India's struggle for Independence. The entry of Indians into the civil services on the sole criterion of merit was embedded in the demand for 'self-rule'.
- The Montagu Chelmsford report accepted the demand and proposed a permanent office free from political influence to regulate service matters. The first Public Service Commission for the Union was formed in 1926.
- Later the Government of India Act, 1935 provided for the establishment of one PSC for each province. These provisions were continued by the framers of the Constitution, and so today we have a Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and PSCs in each State to primarily serve the needs of recruitment.

How are these commissions structured?

- The UPSC functions in a relatively politically sterile environment. The members are appointed based on merit and rich prior experience in public affairs.
- Moreover, representation of members from all zones of the country is ensured.
- While the Constitution does not mention minimum age or qualifications, most of the appointed members are at least above the age of 55, and enjoy a reputation of being apolitical.
- On the other hand, State PSCs operate in a politically osmotic environment and the proverbial 'spoils system' is visible in the appointment process.
- The conventional requirements of minimum age, qualifications and public experience are given a short shrift.
- The Union government has vast manpower needs. This is matched by financial resources to meet the retirement obligations of the superannuated and the remunerative needs of fresh entrants. It has also created a dedicated ministry, the

Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions in 1985, to formulate all policies in the field of personnel management. This ensures regular declaration of vacancies by the government enabling the UPSC to notify, conduct and declare the results of the examinations conducted by it with regularity and precision.

- In contrast, the manpower needs of the States are limited and not planned. Often, they lack the financial resources to meet the retirement and recruitment obligations of their employees leading to extension of the superannuation age and postponement of recruitment. Most State governments do not have a dedicated Ministry of Personnel. And therefore, vacancies are not notified regularly by the government which effectively means that State PSCs are not required to conduct the examinations regularly.

How do they work?

- The UPSC undertakes a periodical exercise of establishing committees comprising not only of academicians but also civil servants, social activists etc. to recommend changes in the syllabi and achieve a balance between academics and contemporary developments.
- They are able to tap the best talent from across the country to formulate question papers and also evaluate them. A time tested method of 'inter-se' moderation of scores is followed at different levels of the examination to minimise subjectivity.
- The UPSC ably balances conflicting interests of transparency and confidentiality by being quick to respond to any lapses and making systemic changes so that aspirants do not often have to seek judicial recourse for grievances.
- On the other hand, State PSCs do not appoint committees regularly to redraft the syllabus; are constrained to tap academic resources from within the State; and are not able to achieve satisfactory 'inter-se' moderation in evaluation. They also have the daunting task of making complex calculations to accurately incorporate not only vertical reservations but also horizontal reservations. Meeting the demands of regional quotas in the form of zonal reservations adds to this complexity. All these lead to continuous litigation in one form or the other delaying the recruitment process.
- These are some of the main reasons limiting the efficient functioning of State PSCs and their declining credibility. Often aggrieved students comment that they have lost faith in State Commissions and would like the UPSC to conduct the examinations. Time bound structural and procedural reforms are required to restore faith in State PSCs.

What can be done?

- First, manpower planning should be systematised and a separate ministry should be created for personnel management. This Ministry should clearly layout a five-year road map for recruitment so that State PSCs are able to notify and conduct the examination process.
- Along the lines of the 41st amendment of the Constitution (1976), which raised the maximum age limit of the members of State PSCs from 60 to 62 years in order to attract meritorious and experienced civil servants, there is a need for another amendment. The minimum age for appointment as a member should be fixed at 55 and the maximum age at 65. The stipulation of minimum age will enable

appointment of experienced individuals while increasing the maximum age will enable State PSCs to benefit from the experience of senior civil servants who have retired at 60 for a longer period than under the existing provisions.

- This amendment could also specify the necessary qualifications that members need in order to be appointed. For example, in order to be an 'official' member, experience as Secretary to a State government or a post equivalent to this rank should be stipulated while for 'non-official' members 10 years of practice in a recognised profession like law, medicine, or engineering should be stipulated. A mandatory pre-consultation with the leader of the Opposition before appointment may be considered for non-official members. Thus, a State wide panel of eminent people — those with high standing, integrity, merit and independence — should be constituted and periodically updated.
- Secondly, the syllabus should be revised periodically, keeping in view the changing academic scenario and the syllabi for examinations as stipulated by the UPSC. Every proposal for revision should be placed in the public domain and changes can be made after public consultation. Knowledge on State specific areas like regional history, regional economy and regional geography, in which the availability of faculty is limited, should be tested in the objective type format so that there would be no scope for complaint on the grounds of asymmetry of information and value laden correction. Thus, while the preliminary examination may continue in the objective format, the main examination should be a mixture of objective and subjective papers. The process of translation of the questions from English to the regional language should not only involve technology for secrecy but also the human element so that the right meaning is conveyed. Care should be taken to regularly change the pattern of questions so that the role of AI-chat bots, as a source of information for formulating answers, is effectively countered.
- Finally, the Secretary of the State PSCs should be a senior officer with prior experience as either Commissioner of School Education or Secretary of the Board of Intermediate education to enable effective supervision of the examination branch of the Commission. Transparency and confidentiality should be balanced on the lines of the UPSC.
- If these changes are effected, one would have vibrant Public Service Commissions at the State level on par with the Union Public Service Commission.

❖ Goa tops in digitisation of SIR forms, Kerala lags

Context: Election Commission says enumeration forms of 99.07% voters have been collected and over 47% of them digitised; BLOs race against time to finish exercise, many complain of 'excess workload'.

- With 10 days remaining to complete the enumeration phase of the second round of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Election Commission on Monday said more than 47% of the enumeration forms distributed across 12 States and Union Territories have been digitised.
- **Goa has achieved the highest digitisation at 76.89% followed by Rajasthan at 72.20%, while Kerala and Uttar Pradesh have the lowest at 23% and 26.6% , respectively.**
- The enumeration phase, which began on November 4, will end on December 4. The draft list will be published on December 9 following which the period for claims and objections will begin.
- According to the EC, out of the 51 crore voters being covered in this SIR, enumeration forms of 50,50,24,723, or 99.07%, have been collected and 24,13,75,229 (47.35%) have been digitised. The enumeration phase involves distribution of forms, collection of the filled ones, and uploading the data on the commission's website.
- The whole exercise is being done by booth-level officers (BLOs), making them the most important cog in the wheel. However, the BLOs are racing against time. While some States such as West Bengal have witnessed protests over 'excess workload', there have been some reports of suicides by BLOs over alleged work-related stress.

❖ Karnataka moves to expand disability rights with new quotas.

Context: The State government has released a draft of the Karnataka Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Employment and Education Bill, 2025, proposing 5% reservation for persons with disabilities in all private establishments with 20 or more employees.

- The draft also mandates that educational institutions earmark 10% of seats in every course for students with disabilities, one of the most expansive attempts to overhaul inclusion in employment and in higher education.
- The draft sets out a phased introduction of the 5% job quota across the private sector.
- Companies must distribute these posts across disability categories based on a formula prescribed by the proposed State regulatory authority, file annual compliance reports, and can carry forward unfilled posts for up to three recruitment cycles.
- Exemptions will be granted only when essential job functions cannot be performed even with reasonable accommodation.
- For education, the Bill makes 10% reservation course-specific, not institution-level, preventing colleges from averaging seats across programmes.
- Institutions must provide reasonable accommodation at the admission, classroom and examination stages, including scribes, extra time and alternative formats of question papers.
- They must prepare Accessibility and Inclusion Plans within six months and make their physical and digital infrastructure fully accessible within five years.

- Students with disabilities will receive relaxations such as a five-year upper-age extension and 5% cut-off relaxation, while educational loans must be available at concessional rates with simplified processes and dedicated facilitators. Unfilled seats may be carried forward for three years.
- Beyond quotas, the Bill proposes comprehensive safeguards against discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training and service conditions.
- Employers must provide reasonable accommodation such as assistive devices, flexible work arrangements and workplace modifications. Any denial on grounds of “undue hardship” must be explained in writing and may be reviewed by the State regulatory authority.
- Employers are barred from disclosing disability-related information without informed consent, except where required for safety or legal compliance. Employees who acquire a disability during service cannot be terminated or demoted and must be reassigned or placed in a supernumerary post.
- To enforce the framework, the draft sets up two bodies -- a State Regulatory Authority to oversee compliance, conduct audits and issue guidance, and a State Enforcement Authority to adjudicate complaints and award compensation. All establishments and educational institutions must appoint trained Grievance Redressal Officers and provide multiple accessible complaint channels.

❖ Goa govt. does a U-turn on tiger presence in State

Context: The answer to whether tigers “reside” in Goa, depends on who is asking the question. The Goa government, earlier this year, argued before a Supreme Court-appointed committee that there was “...no permanent presence of tigers” in the State.

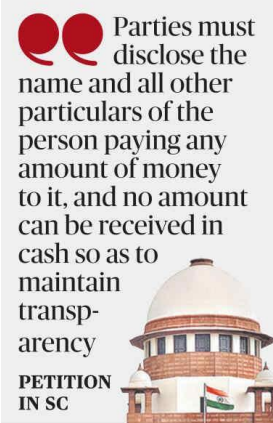
- However, in a separate matter concerning a dispute involving Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra over sharing of water from the Mahadayi river in Goa, it stated the opposite.
- “...The State of Goa states that that there is evidence to show that tigers in Goa are not merely transient animals, but are a resident population, and the forests around Chorla, Mann and Kankumbi comprise a contiguous tiger landscape corridor, to the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka to its south-east and to the Anshi Dandeli Tiger Reserve to its south that has around 35 tigers.”
- The latter appears in a 2018 report of the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal. “Thus, were the flow of Mahadayi river to be impeded,” Goa argued, “it would impact the prey base as well as tiger ecosystem.”

Sanctuary proposal

- The issue of tiger presence (or absence) in Goa has come to the fore following the Goa government challenging a July 2023 order of the Bombay High Court that directed the State to declare the Mhadei sanctuary and other connected regions — as recommended by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA, the nodal Central body tasked with overseeing tiger conservation) — a ‘tiger reserve’ within three months.

Petition in SC

- The Goa government filed a special leave petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court challenging this order.
- The Goa government's core arguments in the SLP are that as per the NTCA guidelines, an area of 800-1,000 square kilometres would have to be declared an inviolate space for a tiger reserve.
- The area already under protection in the State in the form of parks and sanctuaries added up to 745 sq. km. "Therefore, to declare an area larger than the already protected area, an inviolate space, would be an aberration."
- Secondly, the area that would have to be declared a tiger reserve had a "huge population" of about 1,00,000 individuals spread across several villages. Given the paucity of alternative areas to settle them and the 'unwillingness' of this resident population, the move could translate to social unrest, the government said.
- In terms of tiger presence, the government had argued that only three tigers were found through 'camera trapping' during the NTCA's tiger estimation survey of 2018. There was "no evidence" that these tigers were "residents" of the area; there were no cubs or young animals either, it said.
- "The protected area is only a corridor whereby the tigers transit from Maharashtra to Karnataka or vice versa and the area of Mhadei is only a route, which is used by tigers to transit," the State argued in its petition. "Such 'transitory presence' of tigers in Mhadei was due to very few deer (as prey), and thus, declaring Mhadei sanctuary as a reserve.. would not serve any significant purpose," it said.
- The Supreme Court, this September, directed a Central Empowered Committee of the Union Environment Ministry to hear all the "stakeholders" in the matter and submit a report in "six weeks". The Committee has reportedly sought an extension to file this.
- The case traces back to 2011, when the Centre and the NTCA made multiple requests to the State of Goa to notify Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and certain other adjacent areas as a tiger reserve, but this did not happen. In January 2021, four tigers were found poisoned following which the Goa Foundation, a non-profit, filed a petition for the region to be declared a tiger reserve. Doing so puts the onus on the State to improve protection measures for conservation of animals.



❖ SC to hear plea to stop cash donations to political parties

Context: The Supreme Court agreed to examine a petition to stop cash donations of even up to ₹2,000 to parties for the sake of transparency, and to bring every political contribution, no matter what the amount, under the income tax regime.

- A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice on the plea that the Election Commission must not spare parties from disclosing even cash donations up to ₹2,000, and they should be made to divulge complete details of their donors.
- **"Political parties must disclose the name and all other particulars of the person paying any amount of money to it and no amount can be received in cash so as to maintain transparency in the political funding,"** the petition said.

- The petition has arraigned, besides the EC, the Union government, Central Board of Direct Taxes and 13 parties, including the BJP, Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Trinamool Congress, Samajwadi Party, AAP, as respondents.
- The petition, filed by Khem Singh Bhati, challenged the legality of clause (d) of Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Section 13A is a special provision permitting tax exemption to political parties. Clause (d) of the provision allows parties to accept donations worth ₹2,000 in cash.
- “But no amount should be received in cash to maintain transparency in political funding,” the petition said.
- The petitioner argued Section 13A(d) provided a loophole — a well-endowed anonymous contributor could divide a bulk donation to cash amounts up to ₹2,000 each and use multiple fronts to pay a party, especially with digital payments in vogue.
- “Section 13A(d) of the Income Tax Act is violative of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution in as much as receipt of a huge amount of money in cash purportedly below ₹2,000 violates the right to information of the voters about the source of funds of the political parties. The voters have the right to information of all the amounts received by the political parties to enable them to cast their votes with full knowledge of the donors and their antecedents,” it contended.

The Bench agreed to list the case after two or three weeks.

- The petitioner also sought a mandamus to the EC to scrutinise Form 24A contribution reports of recognised national and regional political parties, and require them to deposit the amount received by way of contributions for which the address and/or PAN number were not furnished.

❖ Megalithic excavations in Chamarajanagar district reveal rare burial practices, rock art

Context: Recent excavations at Doddalathur in Chamarajanagar district have revealed new insights into early megalithic burial culture and traditions in southern Karnataka, including unusual layouts and rare engravings on boulders.

- Doddalathur, located in Hanur taluk and five kilometres southwest of Kowdalli, is one of the few surviving megalithic landscapes in the region where a large number of burials remain intact.
- Although over 40 sites in the belt were first recorded in the 1960s by archaeologist C. Krishnamurthi, the present excavation marks are one of the few systematic investigations of such sites undertaken in Karnataka in recent decades.
- The field work and excavations were carried out from October 2024 to February 2025 and led by V. Shobha of the Department of Studies in Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Mysore, in collaboration with the Mythic Society, Bengaluru, which is funding the project.
- According to Dr. Shobha, the excavation exercise – which was co-directed by C.B. Patil, retired officer of Archaeological Survey of India – led to the opening of 13 burials, comprising stone circles and cairn circles, constructed with natural boulders of

varying diameters. Four contained cists, or stone-slab chambers, while the rest were urn burials.

- “In the megalithic burials, the usual burial repertoire includes pottery known as black-and-red ware, black ware and red ware, and iron objects. “These were also found in some of the burials that were excavated at Doddalathur, in addition to skeletal and animal remains and a few beads,” she added.
- These findings formed the core of an exhibition inaugurated on Monday at the University of Mysore as part of World Heritage Week 2025. The most interesting discovery, according to researchers, is that of an iron object, which is circular in shape with two loops on either sides and resembles an iron shield. This was found in association with iron weapons like axe, arrow, and a two-pronged sword while the same burial has human figures engraved on the boulders.
- Underlining its importance, Dr. Shobha said this is significant because rock art is rare in this part of Karnataka. Charcoal samples from both urn and cist contexts were dated through AMS Carbon-14 analysis, placing the burials between the 6th century BCE and the 4th century CE, a timeframe consistent with megalithic occupation phases elsewhere in peninsular India, she added.
- Scholars at the event noted that despite Karnataka’s long archaeological record, large-scale, university-led excavations of megalithic sites remain rare due to funding constraints.
- The Doddalathur project, they said, not only fills a longstanding gap in regional Iron Age studies but also underscores the need for sustained institutional support for excavations and heritage research. The exhibition will be open to the public till November 28.

❖ HC flags serious legal loophole in Kaveri 2.0 software

Context: The High Court of Karnataka has flagged a serious legal loophole in Kaveri 2.0 software while pointing that this system has no provision to enter decrees by the courts as the software “treats the decrees, be it declaratory, preliminary, final, or compromise, etc., of competent civil courts as if they were extra-statutory or non-existent for mutation purposes”.

- Absence of provision in the software to incorporate civil court’s decrees undermines the finality of court decrees and runs counter to the intent of Sections 128 and 135 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964, which mandate that revenue records be amended in conformity with judicial declarations, the High Court pointed out.

Without delay

- The High Court also directed the State government to take steps within six months to introduce a new workflow, in Kaveri 2.0, titled
- “Mutation based on civil court decree” for mutation, based on all types of decree of a civil court, to ensure that names of all shares and their respective extent, as determined by the decree, are entered in the column of owners or remarks of the parent RTC without any delay.

- Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum issued the directions while allowing a petition filed by Gilbert Vas and his four brothers of Naricombu village in Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district.
- The petitioners, based on a compromise decree before a civil court, had applied before tahsildar for change of khata of lands as per the decree. However, the tahsildar asked them to produce pre-mutation sketch for changing khata as Kaveri 2.0 software permits change of khata only with the production of the 11E sketch.

Changes needed

- **The Kaveri 2.0 should have necessary integration with Bhoomi and Mojini-2 software for implementation of decrees and for upload and authentication of civil court decrees; auto-generation of a digital mutation request (J-Slip) to Bhoomi; mapping decree particulars to survey numbers; interface to record proportionate shares in the parent RTC, and provision to attach 11-E sketches when sub-division is sought based on decree,** the court said.
- This vacuum in the software, the High Court said, is resulting in frequent situations where decree-holders, despite having obtained a binding decree from a competent civil court, were unable to secure corresponding entries in the revenue records like record of rights (RTC) as authorities insist production of other documents like modified sketches of the lands, etc.

Serious consequences

- Failure to make entries in the parent RTC based on court's decrees has a serious legal and administrative consequences and unnecessary creation of third party rights as such vacuum confers an unintended and unlawful advantage upon the party who has lost the litigation or others.
- This enables them to create third-party interests or alienate the property under the pretext of existing revenue entries, thereby frustrating the civil court's decrees, the High Court pointed out.

❖ Japanese delegation visits ISRO to review status of Chandrayaan-5/LuPEX mission

Context: A Japanese delegation recently held discussions with the senior leadership of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and visited the facilities of the space agency to review the status of the Chandrayaan-5/LuPEX mission and explore future opportunities.

- The Vice-Chair of Japan's Cabinet Committee on National Space Policy Saku Tsuneta called on ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan on November 21 to discuss the status of the Chandrayaan-5/ LuPEX, which is a Joint Lunar Polar Exploration mission between the ISRO and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).
- The Chandrayaan-5 LuPEX mission is the fifth mission in the Chandrayaan series of lunar missions to study the lunar volatile materials, including lunar water, in the vicinity of a Permanently Shadowed Region in the lunar South pole.
- According to the ISRO, the mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made lunar rover.

- The ISRO is also responsible for developing a few scientific instruments for the mission.
- The LUPEX will be a precursor to the ISRO's lunar sample return mission and for sending the first Indian to the moon by 2040.
- The Japanese delegation also explored potential opportunities to work together in the field of robotic arm for space stations, launching of scientific satellites, and in supporting researchers and private companies from both nations for joint activities.

❖ Justice Surya Kant takes oath as 53rd Chief Justice

Context: All eyes on the SIR case and pendency; he is seen as a judge who leans more towards gently nudging disputes to a resolution over time rather than taking a confrontational approach.

- Justice Surya Kant took oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- President Droupadi Murmu swore in Justice Kant merely days after Justice Kant, as a member of the 16th Presidential Reference Bench, advised her that neither she nor the State Governors, while dealing with State Bills, are bound by timelines “imposed” by the Supreme Court as in the April 8 judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case.

Justice Kant took the oath of office in Hindi.

- Both Chief Justice Kant and his immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, was recently lauded by Solicitor- General Tushar Mehta for bringing “Indianness” in the courts. Mr. Mehta, in his address, highlighted that their judgment did not refer to foreign precedents of law and drew their reasonings from Indian case laws and legal principles in their verdicts.
- Chief Justice Kant was appointed to the Supreme Court on the same day as Justice Gavai, on May 24, 2019.
- After the oath ceremony, in an act of camaraderieship and respect for the office, Justice Gavai reserved the official vehicle designated for the Chief Justice of India for Chief Justice Kant, ensuring that his successor's maiden journey to the Supreme Court as CJI was in the official car itself.
- The Chief Justice is seen as a judge who leans more towards gently nudging disputes to a resolution over time rather than taking a confrontational approach. Justice (as he was then) Kant had resolved the farmers' agitation from the Bench by prodding both sides — the protesting farmers and the Union government — to the negotiating table at a critical point when matters were spiralling with farmers' leaders on an indefinite strike on the borders of Delhi.

Close watch on SIR

- Chief Justice Kant's tenure would be closely watched for his handling of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) case. So far, the judicial interventions of his Bench have made the SIR procedure accessible to citizens. But it is yet to take up the basic issue of whether the exercise itself is constitution
- al or not. Meanwhile, the SIR has expanded from Bihar to its second phase to 12 States and Union Territories and covering 51 crore people.

- Justice Kant has been a part of several impactful decisions of the apex court, including the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution which removed the special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Justice Kant was also part of the Bench which held the electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional. He was a member of the Benches which heard the Pegasus spyware case and suspension of the sedition law.
- The Chief Justice, who has a tenure of little over a year till his retirement on February 2, 2027, has said his topmost priority would be to bring the pendency of over 90,000 cases in the top court to a manageable number.

❖ Navy gets 'silent hunter', 80% home-grown Mahe

Context: Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi launches warship, says 'true strength' of the armed forces lies in 'synergy', adds that Army, Navy and Air Force form 'the trinity of India's strategic strength'.

- INS Mahe, India's first Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft, was commissioned at the Naval Dockyard by General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff.
- With over 80% indigenous components, the ship is another step in the Indian Navy's efforts towards achieving self-reliance, the Navy said. The induction was done after long, rigorous trials for over two years, officials said. Due to its stealth and unyielding readiness, INS Mahe's motto is 'Silent Hunters'.
- This was the first time an Army chief presided over the commissioning of a naval warship. General Dwivedi said that the true strength of the Indian armed forces lay in synergy among the three services.
- "In the age of multi-domain operations, the country's ability to act in concert from the depths of the ocean to the highest frontier will determine the security influence of the Indian Republic," he said, adding that Operation Sindoor showcased the seamless harmony between the services.

Major transformation

- The Army chief noted that the force is undergoing a major transformation, with jointness and integration serving as key pillars.
- "As said by Helen Keller, alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much. So, as a soldier, we are standing among seafarers... The sea, land, and the skies from a single continuum of national security. And together, the Army, Navy and Air Force form the trinity of India's strategic strength," General Dwivedi said.
- INS Mahe, the lead ship of eight vessels in its class, has been designed and built by Cochin Shipyard Limited.
- It will form the first line of coastal defence, integrating seamlessly with larger surface combatants, submarines, and aviation assets to maintain constant vigilance over India's maritime areas of operation.
- "Today's ceremony not only marks the induction of a potent new platform to a maritime order of battle, but also reaffirms our nation's increasing capability to design, construct, and field complex combatants with indigenous technology.

- This commissioning will significantly augment the Indian Navy’s capability to ensure near-sea dominance, strengthen the coastal security grid and safeguard our maritime interests across the vast expanse of our littorals,” General Dwivedi said.
- Listing out the abilities of the warship, a government statement said, “The ship’s combat suite blends multiple systems into a compact yet potent network. She is specially designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal and shallow waters.
- Fitted with advanced weapons, sensors, and communication systems enabling it to detect, track, and neutralise sub-surface threats with precision, the ship can sustain prolonged operations in shallow waters and features technologically advanced machinery and control systems.”

❖ Gavi, UNICEF ink deal to provide easy access to malaria vaccine

Context: Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have announced a new agreement that it said will make the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccines significantly more accessible and affordable, paving the way for protecting more children.

- The deal, executed by UNICEF, is expected to generate up to \$90 million in savings for Gavi and countries, equivalent to more than 30 million additional doses — enabling full vaccination of nearly seven million more children against malaria over the next five years.
- It is financed by Gavi through an advance payment, enabled by the innovative International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) mechanism.
- The lower price of the vaccine — at \$2.99 per dose — is anticipated to take effect in approximately one year.
- Gavi facilitates and finances the procurement, logistics, market shaping and integration of malaria vaccines into national immunisation programmes. To date, over 40 million doses of malaria vaccines have been delivered through the Gavi malaria vaccination programme and are now part of routine immunisation in 24 African countries that together represent more than 70% of the world’s malaria burden.
- UNICEF is the world’s largest buyer of vaccines, delivering nearly three billion doses every year.

Prequalified vaccines

- The WHO has prequalified two malaria vaccines to-date: R21/Matrix-M (co-developed by the University of Oxford and Serum Institute of India, leveraging Novavax’s Matrix-M adjuvant technology) and RTS,S/AS01 (developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), PATH and partners).

❖ India braces for disruption of air travel after Ethiopia’s Hayli Gubbi volcano erupts

Context: India is bracing for potential disruption to air travel with volcanic ash from Sunday’s eruption of Ethiopia’s Hayli Gubbi volcano forecast to drift towards mainland India.

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued advisories urging airlines to strictly steer clear of affected altitudes and regions to ensure flight safety as volcanic ash can harm aircraft engines due to its abrasive, glass-like particles that melt at high temperatures.
- When ash is ingested, it can melt on hot engine components, harden into a glass-like substance, and stick to turbine blades. Airlines have also been advised to report any suspected impact of ash on engine performance or cabin smoke or odour.
- Airports too have been told to inspect runways for contamination and suspend or restrict flight operations, if need be.
- Large plumes of smoke were initially visible over Ethiopia though the volcanic eruption stopped. After travelling over Yemen and Oman, ash clouds entered the Indian subcontinent from western Rajasthan and were moving north-east wards. Over the course of the night, they are expected to sweep across central parts of the country and cross Delhi close to midnight, and travel over parts of Uttar Pradesh, parts of Bihar and in the North East over Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

❖ **Grahaa gets nod for nano satellite launch**

Context: Grahaa Space, a Bengaluru-based spacetechnology startup, obtained authorisation from Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) to launch its maiden nano satellite mission called Solaras S2, as technology demonstration by the end of November.

- The launch will happen from Alcântara Space Center (CEA) in Brazil through the Hanbit-Nano launch vehicle developed by Korea-based Innospace, according to the company.
- “Solaras S2 mission will qualify our nano satellite bus and platform and allow us to assess the performance. It is a focused technical step that confirms our readiness for the next phase,” said Ramesh Kumar V, founder and CEO, Grahaa Space. This progress has been possible with the support of TIIC incubation centre at IIST Trivandrum and IN-SPACe.
- “The upcoming missions scheduled for early 2026 with Skyroot will qualify the communications module, gather geo spatial data from the optical payload and establish inter-satellite links.”

❖ **Canada plans citizenship rejig; Indian-origin families to benefit from new rules**

Context: Canada has moved closer toward modernising citizenship-by-descent law, after a Bill to amend the act received royal assent, in a move that is likely to affect thousands of Indian-origin families.

- Bill C-3, an Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2025), has received royal assent.
- This represents an important milestone in making the Citizenship Act more inclusive, while maintaining the value of Canadian citizenship, said a news release issued by the Canadian government.
- “Once the new law comes into force, Canadian citizenship will be provided to people born before the Bill comes into force, who would have been citizens if not for the first-generation limit or other outdated rules of past legislation”, the news release said.

- The first-generation limit to Canadian citizenship by descent was introduced in 2009. It means that a child born or adopted outside Canada is not a Canadian citizen by descent if their Canadian parent was also born or adopted outside Canada.
- This limit caused problems for many Indian-origin Canadians whose children were born out of the country, people who know the matter say.
- The new law will also allow a Canadian parent born or adopted abroad to pass citizenship on to their child born or adopted outside Canada on or after the date the Bill comes into force, provided they have a substantial connection to Canada, the release said.
- “Bill C-3 will fix long-standing issues in our citizenship laws and bring fairness to families with children born or adopted abroad. It will provide citizenship to people who were excluded by previous laws, and it will set clear rules for the future that reflect how modern families live. These changes will strengthen and protect Canadian citizenship,” Canada’s Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Lena Metlege Diab said.

‘Unconstitutional’

- On December 19, 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice declared that key parts of the Citizenship Act relating to the first-generation limit to citizenship by descent were unconstitutional.
- The Government of Canada did not appeal the ruling, as it agreed the law had unacceptable outcomes for children of Canadians who were born outside the country.
- “By updating the Citizenship Act to reflect the global mobility of modern Canadian families, the federal government has made access to citizenship more fair and reasonable,” said Don Chapman, Founder of the Lost Canadians.

❖ What does the SC’s advisory opinion imply?

Context: The Supreme Court has provided its opinion on a Presidential reference made under Article 143. In its opinion, it has largely negated the decision of a two-judge Bench that was delivered in April 2025.

What was the Presidential reference?

- The current reference is the result of a two-judge Bench judgment in State of Tamil Nadu versus Governor of Tamil Nadu in April 2025, that had specified a timeline of three months for Governors and the President to act on Bills passed by State legislatures.
- The court held that decisions by Governors and the President on such Bills are subject to judicial review. It had exercised its extraordinary power under Article 142 and granted ‘deemed assent’ to Bills passed by Tamil Nadu assembly that were not assented to by the Governor.
- The present reference had raised 14 questions, primarily surrounding the interpretation of Articles 200 and 201, for the court’s opinion. These questions deal with the authority of the courts to prescribe timelines when they are not specified in the Constitution.
- The government had questioned whether the actions of Governors and the President can be made justiciable at a stage prior to the enactment of a Bill into a law. The

reference also sought an opinion on the extent of powers that can be exercised by the Supreme Court under Article 142.

What is the current opinion?

- A five-judge Bench of the top Court delivered its opinion on the questions raised. It stated that this reference was a 'functional reference', that strikes at the root of day-to-day functioning of constitutional functionaries and the interplay between State legislature, Governor and the President. Key points of the opinion are summarised below.
- **First**, the Governor has three constitutional options under Article 200 when a Bill passed by State legislature is presented for his/her assent, namely to assent, or reserve the Bill for consideration of the President, or withhold assent and return the Bill to legislature with comments.
- **Second**, the Governor enjoys discretion in choosing from these three options and is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- **Third**, the discharge of functions by the Governor under Article 200 is not justiciable but in case of glaring circumstances of prolonged and unexplained inaction, the court can issue a limited mandamus for the Governor to discharge his/her function on Bills presented.
- **Fourth**, in the absence of constitutionally prescribed time limits, the court cannot judicially prescribe timelines for action by the President or Governor. Fifth, the decisions of the President and Governor under Articles 201 and 200 respectively are not justiciable before a Bill is enacted into a law.
- **Finally**, the powers of the Supreme Court under Article 142 cannot substitute the powers vested on the President/Governor under the Constitution. Hence, there is no allowance for the concept of 'deemed assent' of Bills.

What are the issues?

- The Sarkaria Commission (1987), had opined that it is only the reservation of Bills for consideration of the President, that too under rare cases of patent unconstitutionality, that can be implied as a discretionary power of the Governor.
- The Supreme Court in various cases including in Shamsher Singh (1974) and Nabam Rebia (2016), had held that the Governors should act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- However, in the present opinion, the court has interpreted these cases to conclude that actions under Article 200, with respect to a Bill presented for assent, fall under the discretionary powers of the Governor.
- This has the potential to derail the legislative intent of popularly elected State governments.
- With respect to time limits, the Punchhi Commission (2010), had recommended that the Governor should take a decision with respect to a Bill presented for his/her assent within a period of six months.
- The court in its own judgment in the K. M. Singh case (2020), had stipulated a time limit of three months for Speakers to decide on disqualification petitions though no time limit has been prescribed in the Constitution.

- The verdict of the division bench in the State of Tamil Nadu case to provide time limits to Governors and the President was a purposive and progressive interpretation of the Constitution. The current opinion has negated this position.

What can be the way forward?

- The underlying disease that has plagued our federal set up has been the politicisation of the gubernatorial post.
- The Governor acts as an appointee of the Centre for maintaining unity and integrity of the nation.
- However, federalism is also a basic feature of our Constitution. This opinion should not become an alibi for the Governor's office to thwart the policies of popularly elected houses in the States.
- The Governors should display responsible urgency in providing assent to Bills passed by State legislatures.



UPSC Integrated Course

ADMISSIONS OPEN

**MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES**

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

**Exclusive
Opportunity!
Limited Seats**



❖ Assam proposes jail term, heavy fines for polygamy

Context: Bill, tabled in Assembly, seeks to ‘protect women, streamline society’; it covers residents entering such marriages outside State, but doesn’t apply to Scheduled Tribes and Sixth Schedule areas.

- An anti-polygamy Bill tabled by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in the State Assembly prescribes imprisonment and heavy fines for people entering into, or hiding, a second marriage while the first continues to be valid.
- The **Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, makes polygamy a criminal offence, punishable with up to seven years in jail and a fine, and up to 10 years in jail if a person enters into a marriage while concealing an existing one.**
- The **punishment will be doubled for repeat offenders**, it says.

Barring the Sixth Schedule areas, the draft law will be applicable across the State and will not cover members of the Scheduled Tribes under Article 342 of the Constitution. Customary laws of some tribes in Assam allow multiple marriages.

- According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the Bill seeks to “prohibit and eliminate practices of polygamy”, protect women from hardship and “streamline the society”.

Other offenders

- **It brings village heads, qazis (Muslim clerics who solemnise marriages), parents, and legal guardians of people indulging in polygamy under its scope.** Anyone who “wilfully hides, neglects or unreasonably delays” information to the police about such marriages may be punished as the main offenders and jailed for up to two years and fined up to ₹1 lakh.
- The fine may extend to ₹1.5 lakh for any priest or qazi who solemnises a marriage contrary to the provisions of the law knowingly and willingly. Penalties have been prescribed for other abettors, too.
- A provision of the anti-polygamy Bill expands the scope of its jurisdiction beyond residents of the State.
- It covers any resident of Assam who willingly and knowingly enters into a polygamous marriage outside the State, as well as people who live outside Assam but own immovable property in the State or receive State-funded benefits, subsidies, or welfare support.
- The Bill seeks to make people convicted under the anti-polygamy law ineligible for government-funded or aided jobs and benefits under any government scheme, and bar them from contesting any election in the State.
- The draft law also provides a mechanism for compensation to women affected by polygamous marriages. A designated authority will be notified to process applications and disburse compensation, it says.
- The Bill specifies that polygamous marriages contracted before it comes into force will not be affected, as long as they follow existing personal or customary laws and have

Banning polygamy

Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** on Tuesday tabled the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 in the State Assembly. It prescribes imprisonment and heavy fines for people entering into or hiding a second marriage while the first continues to be valid

Here is a timeline of the new Bill:

- **August 21:** Assam government seeks public opinion by August 30, through email or by post, on a law to end polygamy in the State
- **November 9:** The Assam Cabinet approves a new legislation to outlaw polygamy
- **November 25:** The Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, is tabled in the 126-member Assembly



valid proof. It also gives police officers the power to intervene before a prohibited marriage takes place.

- The Opposition parties had earlier criticised the decision to table the anti-polygamy Bill as a move by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Assam government to target Muslims ahead of the 2026 Assembly election. The Bill was introduced in the absence of the MLAs of the Congress, the CPI(M), and the Rajior Dal, who staged a walkout after a discussion on the death of singer Zubeen Garg.

❖ Harriers arrive to shrinking grasslands

Context: About a week back, in mid-November, researchers at Bengaluru-based ATREE were alerted to data transmitted from a small 9.5 gm transmitter connected to the back of a bird. The Pallid Harrier, geo-tagged by them, has reached its roosting ground in Tirunelveli, all the way from Kazakhstan.

- Harriers, winged migrants from Central Asia, have started visiting India, flying about 5,000 km in search of grasslands.
- The Harrier Watch Project, a long-term project founded by researchers T. Ganesh and Prashanth M.B., has been monitoring the six harrier species that arrive in India in winter, with the aim of monitoring the raptors and their grassland habitats and assessing the impact of loss of grasslands on the species.
- “Did you know Madiwala lake was a roosting site for Western Marsh Harriers?” asks Arjun Kannan, a PhD student who works with the project, citing a study published in 2010 by Ashok Verma.
- Among the winter visitors to India are Western Marsh Harriers, Montagu’s Harrier, Pallid Harrier, Hen Harrier, Pied Harrier, and Eastern Marsh Harriers. Unlike many other birds, they roost on the ground among tall grasses and therefore make grasslands their habitats.
- Starting in 2016, the ATREE team has so far tagged about 20 harriers- eight Pallid Harriers and 12 Montagu’s Harriers- from roosting sites in Tal Chhapar in Rajasthan, Nannaj in Maharashtra, and Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu.



A file photo of a Pallid Harrier. Harriers, winged migrants from Central Asia, have started visiting India, flying about 5,000 km in search of grasslands.

Around the Himalayas

- The birds, which breed in Central Asia, come to the Indian sub-continent in winter. Owing to physiological reasons, they don’t cross over the Himalayas, but fly around it.
- This detour migration which takes about 25 days means an additional flight path of 1,500 km approximately, compared to crossing over the Himalayas. By March, they start flying to Central Asia again, crossing Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to reach Kazakhstan.
- “Interestingly, the birds, en route to India, stop over for a few days at the Thar desert bordering India and Pakistan. They don’t do the same while flying back to Kazakhstan. We think it is because when they fly to India, it is just after the

monsoon, and therefore, there'll be a lot of lush green grass available. It could also be that the birds are fatigued more as they are flying post-breeding," said Mr. Kannan.

Declining numbers

- The project data shows that the number of harriers has been consistently declining in the roosting sites, while some of the roosting sites have simply ceased to exist, thanks to the change in land use patterns.
- "Madiwala used to be a roosting site. Hesaraghatta is another important one. In comparison to the 80 to 90 harriers that once used to be spotted there, we saw only eight there the other day. In the place where the roosts were, a lot of trees have been planted in the last few years. Given that there is only a small patch remaining for grazing, there is also the problem of over-grazing. Most of the grass is very short now," said Mr. Kannan.
- During the project, the researchers also observed that the loss of grassland cover was affecting the home range sizes of the harriers, forcing them to move around more in search of prey and suitable habitat.

❖ Govt. announces cash prizes for members of national blind women's cricket team

Context: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a cash prize of ₹10 lakh each and government jobs for the members hailing from Karnataka who were part of the Indian team that won the Blind Women's T20 Cricket World Cup.

- He made the announcement after felicitating the members of the victorious Indian team at his official residence in Bengaluru.
- The Chief Minister also announced a cash reward of ₹2 lakh each for the players of the national team from other States.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah hailed the captaincy of Deepika, who is from Sira in Karnataka.
- The victorious team has three players from Karnataka, including the captain. Cricket Association for the Blind in India's chairperson Mahantesh G.K. also hails from



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with the World Cup-winning Indian blind women's cricket team at his Kaveri residence in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Karnataka.

Context: India dismisses China's response to detention of an Indian citizen at the Shanghai airport, says Chinese authorities have still not been able to explain their actions, which are in violation of several conventions governing international air travel.

- A day after an Indian citizen from Arunachal Pradesh was detained at the Shanghai international airport as Chinese officials refused to recognise her Indian passport, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India had taken up the case with Chinese authorities “strongly” and reiterated that Arunachal Pradesh is an “inalienable” part of India.
- “Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India, and this is a self-evident fact. No amount of denial by the Chinese side is going to change this indisputable reality,” said Mr. Jaiswal after the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the individual concerned — Prema Wangjom Thongdok — was treated as per Chinese laws.
- Ms. Thongdok, a principal regulatory consultant working in financial services and based in London, had said on social media that she was detained at the airport.
- “I was held at Shanghai airport for over 18 hrs on 21st Nov, 2025 on claims by China immigration & @chinaeasternair. They called my Indian passport invalid as my birthplace is Arunachal Pradesh which, they claimed, is Chinese territory,” she wrote.
- Significantly, China Eastern Airlines started its Shanghai-Delhi service on November 9 reviving air connectivity after a gap of five years. Officials got into action as Ms. Thongdok's ordeal came to light and that a “strong demarche” had been issued by the Government of India to the Chinese side. She was transiting through the airport to Japan when the reported incident took place.
- “The detention issue has been taken up strongly with the Chinese side. Chinese authorities have still not been able to explain their actions, which are in violation of several conventions governing international air travel. The actions by the Chinese authorities also violate their own regulations that allow visa-free transit up to 24 hours for nationals of all countries,” Mr. Jaiswal said.

Arunachal CM's plea

- Earlier, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu called for urgent intervention by the Centre over the incident. Mr. Khandu said the woman was subjected to appalling “humiliation and racial mockery”, despite holding a valid Indian passport.
- China has refuted the allegations that the Indian woman was harassed at Shanghai airport, saying that the actions taken by the Chinese immigration officials were as per laws and regulations.
- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning claimed that the woman was not subjected to any compulsory measures, detainment or harassment as alleged by her. The airline also provided food, drink, and a place to rest for the person concerned, Ms. Mao said.
- “We learnt that China's border inspection authorities have gone through the whole process according to the laws and regulations and fully protected the lawful rights and interests of the person concerned,” Ms. Mao said.

- She also reiterated China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan or South Tibet.

❖ Custodial torture: SC raps govt. over CCTV compliance

Context: The court is re-examining level of compliance shown by States and Centre to a 2020 judgment, making CCTV cameras mandatory at police stations and offices of law enforcement agencies.

- The Centre's lack of response to a judicial direction to install CCTV cameras in the offices of agencies like the CBI, ED, and the NIA to prevent custodial torture prompted the Supreme Court on Tuesday to ask if it was taking the top court "very lightly".
- It has been five years since a Supreme Court judgment made it mandatory for the police and Central probe agencies to fix and maintain CCTV cameras at police stations and offices of Central law enforcement agencies with powers of "interrogation".
- The court was shocked to discover that custodial cruelty had far from faded, with reports of 11 custodial deaths in eight months in Rajasthan.
- A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta chose to suo motu re-examine the level of compliance shown by States, Union Territories, and the Centre to the 2020 judgment of the court.
- However, the Bench found that the response to its concern from the States and Union Territories was at best lukewarm, with only 11 of them condescending to even file compliance reports. The Centre did not file one.
- "The Union of India is taking the court very lightly. Why?" Justice Nath asked.
- Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, vehemently denied, saying "not at all... The Union is not taking the court lightly, 'very' or any other way. We will file an affidavit".
- Justice Mehta corrected him, saying "not an affidavit, but compliance". Justice Mehta referred to the custodial death statistics from Rajasthan, saying "nobody will tolerate that now".
- Mr. Mehta agreed, but submitted that CCTVs outside police stations could also prove counter-productive. He seemed to be presenting the security point of view. Justice Mehta said police stations were live-streamed in the United States. The Solicitor-General replied that there were also "private resort-type jails in America".

Sarcastic comment

- "Mr. Mehta is being sarcastic," Justice Nath noted. The court pointed to more open correction centres or jails to shrink over-crowding and reduce the financial burden of running prisons.
- The top law officer said he would consult the American system. Justice Mehta responded that the ideas already enumerated in India were quite sufficient. The Solicitor-General was given further time to file a response.
- The court ordered that the Directors of the three Central agencies and Principal Home Secretaries of the remaining States and Union Territories would have to personally respond if compliance is not filed before the next hearing on December 19.

- In 2020, a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman (now retired), in *Paramvir Singh Saini versus Baljit Singh*, had directed the Centre to compulsorily install CCTV cameras and recording equipment in police stations as a deterrent against custodial torture.
- The court had ordered similar surveillance in the offices of central agencies which conducts any kind of interrogations.
- The CCTVs and recording equipment, the court had reasoned in 202, would be used as a safeguard to protect the fundamental right to dignity and life.

❖ Toxic air is a year-round blight in nearly 60% of Indian districts: study

Context: People in 60% of India's districts are exposed to polluted air all through the year, not just in winter, according to an analysis by a research body published on Tuesday. This means that 447 of 749 districts recorded concentrations of particulate matter (PM2.5) — toxic chemical and organic particles — that exceed the annual safe values prescribed by the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).

- Not a single district in the country reported concentrations within the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline of 5 microgram per cubic metre, which is about eight times more stringent than India's standards (40 microgram per cubic metre), according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air analysis.
- The study underlines the fact that exposure to significant air pollution is not restricted to winter alone as is commonly believed.
- The maximum number of polluted districts are concentrated in a few States. Delhi (11 districts) and Assam (11 districts) alone accounted for nearly half of the top 50 most polluted districts, followed by Bihar and Haryana with seven each. Other States with significant numbers include Uttar Pradesh (four), Tripura (three), Rajasthan (two), and West Bengal (two).

Cleaner States

- On the other hand, the majority of districts in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Sikkim, Goa, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have population-exposure numbers within the NAAQS-prescribed limits.
- "These patterns highlight the continued dominance of northern and eastern States in India's PM2.5 pollution hotspots, while southern and coastal regions remain relatively cleaner," the authors Manojkumar N. and Monish Raj say in their analysis, which is not a peer-reviewed paper. Population-exposure numbers can differ from ambient concentration numbers.
- The winter months of December, January, and February are still the most polluted. About 82% (616 of 749 districts) of districts recorded values breaching the national standard during this season, as emissions increase and stagnant weather traps pollutants near the surface.
- The monsoon season (June-September) brings significant improvement, with 90% of districts (675 of 749) reporting concentrations within safe limits.

❖ **Rajnath seeks global collaboration for boosting maritime capabilities**

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh urged international partners to collaborate with India in developing next-generation maritime capabilities, highlighting the country's advancing shipbuilding ecosystem.

- Delivering the keynote address at Samudra Utkarsh, a seminar organised by the Department of Defence Production in Delhi, he asked global stakeholders to tap into India's potential in co-building sustainable technologies and resilient supply chains for an innovative, inclusive and secure maritime future.
- The Minister said India was ready to help shape the "maritime century" by "building not only ships, but trust; not only platforms, but partnerships".
- He highlighted India's integrated end-to-end shipbuilding ecosystem, where every stage — from concept design and modular construction to outfitting, repairs and full lifecycle support — is indigenously developed and executed.
- This ecosystem, he noted, was powered by public and private shipyards supported by thousands of MSMEs that form a strong value chain.
- Mr. Singh pointed to India's world-class platforms — such as the first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, Kalvari-class submarines, and a variety of stealth frigates and destroyers — as evidence of the nation's growing technological maturity, design capability and systems integration expertise.
- The Minister commended the private sector for emerging as a force multiplier by building green-fuel vessels, LNG carriers, Ro-Ro ships, and energy-efficient commercial platforms for domestic and international clients.
- This comprehensive capability, he said, positioned India to become a major global hub for shipbuilding, ship repair, and maritime innovation in the coming decade.
- He emphasised that every ship currently under construction for the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard was being built at Indian shipyards, reaffirming the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Mr. Singh said the Navy had 262 indigenous design and development projects under progress, with some shipyards nearing 100% indigenous content, ensuring minimal supply-chain disruptions. He expressed confidence that India's commercial fleet too would soon be fully built domestically.

❖ **'Rupee is Asia's worst performing currency'**

Context: The domestic currency may slide to 90 against the USD if the trade deal with the U.S. does not happen in the near future, caution analysts.

- At a sharp depreciation of 4.3% against the U.S. Dollar (USD) in this calendar year (January-December 2025), the Indian Rupee (INR) has become the worst performing currency in Asia, forex analysts said. It may further slide to 90 against the USD if the trade deal with the U.S. does not happen in near future, they cautioned.
- Stating that the INR's performance has been weaker compared with peers like the Chinese Yuan and the Indonesian Rupiah, Akshat Garg, AVP, Choice Wealth said, "It is still faring better than structurally weak currencies like the Japanese Yen and Korean Won, which continue to battle domestic policy challenges."

- “Overall, the rupee’s trajectory now hinges on global dollar strength more than domestic fundamentals,” he added.
- According to Tanay Dalal, Senior V-P, Business & Economic Research, Axis Bank, the INR has been facing depreciation pressure for many months, not so much because of the current account which has been benign, but because of capital outflows.
- **“INR has weakened against Asia FX [foreign Exchange], but mostly against current account surplus countries. The INR has weakened 4% CYTD [Calendar Year-to-Date], as against 2.9% in IDR [Indonesian Rupiah] and 1.3% in PHP [Philippine Peso],”** Mr. Dalal said.
- **Apart from this, the rest of the Asian currency complex has appreciated, largely driven by the CNY [Chinese Yuan] where the PBOC/SAFE [Currency Exchange policy of China’s central bank] have been driving this through repeated intervention and signalling,** he added.
- The INR touched a new low vs the USD on November 21, 2025, as it went past the 88.8 levels (that the RBI had been defending in recent weeks) and touched 89.66 levels in the spot market. Since then, it has recouped some of its losses and was on Tuesday trading at 89.22 levels against the USD.
- Sankar Chakraborti, MD & CEO, Acuité Ratings and Research said, “The 3.6% appreciation of the USD over the last two months has put pressure on most currencies, including the INR. India is facing twin external shocks: U.S. tariffs and high precious metal prices. The combination of adverse geo-economic and geopolitical environments is weighing upon India’s merchandise trade deficit.”

Trump tariff impact

- “The sharp depreciation of the INR is the consequence of the cumulative impact of several factors.
- **First and foremost,** the Trump administration imposed 50% tariff on India hurting her exports. This led to a record \$41.7 billion trade deficit in October triggering a rupee slide,” said V.K. Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd.
- **“Secondly,** the sharp spike in gold price this year has triggered huge investment in gold and Gold ETFs leading to 200% increase in demand for gold in October causing the gold import bill to spike to \$14.72 billion in October,” Mr. Vijayakumar added.

❖ Net FDI negative for second straight month in September

Context: More investment left the country than entered it for the second month in a row in September, with latest data from the Reserve Bank of India showing net foreign direct investment (FDI) stood at -\$2.4 billion.

- In other words, the sum of money repatriated out of the country by foreign companies here, and invested abroad by Indian companies, was \$2.4 billion more than the foreign investment entering India in September 2025, an analysis of the data.
- The data show that gross FDI coming into

Wide exit

Gross FDI coming into India stood at \$6.6 billion in September 2025, about 4.3% higher than in September last

■ This amount was **9.1% higher** than it was in August

■ Strong inflows were outpaced by the outflows, particularly when it came to foreign investments done by Indian companies



India stood at \$6.6 billion in September 2025, about 4.3% higher than in September last year. In fact, this amount was 9.1% higher than it was in August.

- However, these relatively strong inflows were outpaced by the outflows, particularly when it came to foreign investments done by Indian companies.
- So, while the repatriation of profits by foreign companies doing business in India shrank by 0.2% in September 2025 to \$5.2 billion, the amount invested abroad by Indian companies grew 64.4% to \$3.8 billion during the same period.
- Taken together, this meant that a total of \$9 billion of direct investment left the country in September 2025, compared with the \$6.6 billion that entered it that month. The difference between these two figures, the net FDI amount, therefore stood at a negative \$2.4 billion. The net FDI figure was negative in August 2025 as well, at -\$0.6 billion. It is important to note that these figures refer to direct investment, which constitutes investment into assets, rather than portfolio investment, which has to do with shares in a company.
- However, the analysis also shows that the FDI picture looks better when looked at over a longer period. For example, gross FDI was 15.4% higher in the July-September 2025 quarter than in the same quarter of the previous year.

❖ 'GST cut, monsoon, better reservoir levels to boost farm gear demand'

Context: The overall market outlook for farm equipment and agriculture machinery in the second part of FY26 seems very positive, said Antony Cherukara, CEO, VST Tillers Tractors Ltd.

- "A favourable monsoon, improved reservoir levels, and the recent GST reduction on farm machinery are expected to significantly increase rural consumption of farm equipment and boost mechanisation in the country's agriculture sector,"
- He said the farm segment was doing well this year, helped by supportive policies and enhanced affordability of farm machinery for small and marginal farmers. The growth momentum was continuing in November as well, he said.

Demand trigger

- "We expect the second half of the fiscal to perform better than H1. Plus, the reduction of GST on farm machinery from 12% to 5% has already begun to trigger demand and will have a sustained positive impact, especially in the second half of the year."
- "The GST cut directly supports the smaller farmer," he said, adding the benefit would be felt most in smaller horsepower categories such as 20 HP and below tractors, power tillers and power weeders.
- "The overall tractor industry grew by more than 14% in October year-on-year. Power tiller sales have shown even stronger momentum. We sold 4,077 power tillers in October compared with 1,700 in the same month a year ago."
- VST Tillers, which closed last year selling 37,000 power tillers, expects an offtake of more than 45,000 power tillers by the end of the year.
- Tractor sales, too, are expected to climb 10% domestically this year, touching more than 6,000 units compared with more than 5,000 last year.

❖ Why did Hayli Gubbi erupt now?

Answer: Hayli Gubbi is a shield volcano in Afar, Ethiopia, and a member of the Erta Ale Range. It's located at the edge of the East African Rift where the African and Arabian plates are slowly pulling apart.

- **A shield volcano is a broad, gently sloping volcano that consists of many thin, fluid lava flows. Its eruptions are typically less explosive so the lava spreads out wide like a warrior's shield — and so the name.**
- Geological studies have shown that Hayli Gubbi is built mainly from dark basaltic lavas but also contains more silica-rich rocks like trachytes and rhyolites. These lighter magmas can trap more dissolved gases, so when they rise, they're more likely to erupt explosively and throw ash high into the atmosphere. That's what happened on November 23.



But why did it erupt now after at least 12,000 years of quiet?

- While it's early days, scientists believe the answer lies deep under the rift. As the tectonic plates move apart, hot mantle rock rises and partially melts, feeding magma into shallow chambers beneath the volcano. Over millennia, this magma can slowly build up and pressurise the rocks above it.
- At some point, faulting or cracking of the crust will open a path to the surface, allowing the pressurised, gas-rich magma to rise quickly and the dissolved gases to expand into bubbles.
- Because the volcano is remote and poorly monitored, scientists are still analysing satellite images and ash samples, so their explanations are provisional and may change as new data becomes available.

❖ What does the draft Seeds Bill entail?

Context: The Union Agriculture Ministry released the draft Seeds Bill on November 12, and has invited public comments on it till December 11. The Seeds Bill, seen as a regulatory step to ensure quality of seeds sold and distributed to farmers, promotes “ease of doing business” and reduces compliance burden, while maintaining strong provisions to penalise serious violations, as per the government. The government has been open about its intention to amend the Seeds Act of 1966 and the Seeds (Control) Order of 1983.

What has been the history?

- According to the Union Agriculture Ministry, in 2023-24, the country had an overall requirement of 462.31 lakh quintals of seeds for various crops with availability being 508.60 lakh quintals, which then led to a surplus of 46.29 lakh quintals of seeds.
- The seed industry has been demanding that the 1966 Act should be amended to accommodate technological and scientific advancements in the sphere of seeds and to address the changes in trade and commerce over the last six decades.

- In their initial response, the Federation of Seed Industry of India Chairman Ajai Rana said the release of the draft is a timely and much-needed step toward modernising India's seed regulatory framework.
- However, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of farmers, said they will continue to oppose moves to bring amendments in the Bill that are “anti-farmer”.

What are the new provisions?

- The Bill provides a regulatory mechanism in the area of import, production and supply of quality seeds. The Bill does not restrict the right of the farmer to grow, sow, re-sow, save, use, exchange, share or sell his farm seeds, except when he sells such seed or planting material under a brand name.
- The Bill defines farmer, dealer, distributor and producer as separate entities that deal with the production, distribution, trade and use of seeds. It also provides for the establishment of 27-member Central and 15-member State seed committees.
- The Central seed committee can recommend the minimum limits of germination, genetic and physical purity, traits, seed health and additional standards of seeds to the Union Government. The State Seed Committee can advise the State Government on registration of seed producers, seed processing units, seed dealers, distributors and plant nurseries.
- Under the Bill, it is mandatory that all seed processing units must be registered with the State governments based on the provisions in the proposed legislation. The Bill, however, adds that to promote ease of doing business, the Union government may establish a merit based and transparent Central Accreditation System for companies operating in multiple States.
- The Bill suggests the creation of the office of Registrar to keep a National Register on seed varieties under the Central seed committee. The procedure for conducting field trials to assess the Value for Cultivation and Use of any kind or variety is also detailed in the draft Bill.
- The Bill also has provisions for the establishment of Central and State seed testing laboratories, where analysis of seed of any kind or variety shall be carried out in the prescribed manner.
- The Bill also explains the role and powers of seed inspectors, an officer with powers under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to search or seize. The Bill details the punishment for trivial, minor and major offences for flouting provisions under the Bill. The punishment ranges from a fine of ₹50,000 to ₹30 lakh and up to three years of imprisonment.

What are changes from 2019 draft?

- One of the major changes is in the section of offences and punishments. In the previous draft, the offences were covered under consumer protection laws and the penalty ranged between ₹25,000 and ₹5 lakh and an imprisonment up to one year. There are substantial changes with respect to this section in the new draft.
- On farmers' rights, the new draft links the matter with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act. On quality norms, the standards have been tightened. The new Bill looks at the import of seeds in a more liberal way.

What are the concerns of farmers?

- The All India Kisan Sabha, a constituent of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, said the Bill is poised to increase cost of cultivation by allowing corporates to indulge in the predatory pricing of seeds.
- They doubt the Bill is part of a larger political project of the RSS-BJP to dispossess small farmers and surrender the country's seed sovereignty to a handful of multinational and domestic monopolies.
- They demanded that the new draft must complement, not conflict with, the progressive legal safeguards already established under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Right Act of 2001, and India's international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
- The Kisan Sabha pointed out that the draft Seeds Bill introduces a heavily centralised and corporatised regulatory system that risks weakening farmer-centered protection and diluting India's legal architecture for biodiversity conservation and farmers' rights.



DR. RAJKUMAR
ACADEMY

Dr. RAJKUMAR IAS/KAS ACADEMY

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

KPSC SADHANA PSI

Specially designed for PSI, ESI, KSISF, RSI, Wireless PSI

NEW BATCH COMMENCES ON

DECEMBER 29th 2025

Special
Offer

KAS Prelims + PSI Paper 1

22,999 /-

~~Rs. 26,000~~

OUR RECENT PSI TOPPERS



CHETHAN KUMAR



ESHWARA L



PRAJWAL S D



LAKSHMI D R



CHANDAN GOWDA



SUBRAMANYAM C M



RAGINI



GANESH PRASAD



JAYANTHA T J



AKASH BABU M



SACHIN J



SATISHA V



WALK-IN FOR FREE COUNSELING OR DEMO CLASS TODAY!



Contact Us

9108448444 / 9444

Visit Our Website

www.dr.raj कुमारacademy.com



❖ Tech start-up funding sees 40% drop: Report

Context: Tech startups in Karnataka raised a total of \$2.7 billion in the first nine months of calendar year 2025 (9M 2025), a 40% drop compared to the corresponding period in 2024, as per the Karnataka Tech Ecosystem Report for 9M 2025.

- According to the report, the period witnessed a noticeable slowdown in large-ticket rounds, impacting overall capital flow; Bengaluru-based tech firms contributed nearly all of the funding raised by such companies across State.
- Tech startups in Karnataka raised a total of \$2.7 billion in the first nine months of calendar year 2025 (9M 2025), a 40% drop compared to the corresponding period in 2024, as per the **Karnataka Tech Ecosystem Report for 9M 2025 released by market research firm Tracxn.**
- According to the report, the period witnessed a noticeable slowdown in large-ticket rounds, impacting overall capital flow into the ecosystem. Bengaluru-based tech firms contributed nearly all of the funding raised by tech companies across Karnataka.
- The funding figures also saw a 23% decline compared to the corresponding period in 2023. While the numbers stood at \$4.5 billion in 9M 2024, \$3.5B was raised in 9M 2023.
- Seed-stage funding stood at \$287 million, representing a 22% decline from \$366 million in 9M 2024 and a 21% decrease from \$361 million in 9M 2023.

Positive note

- On a more positive note, early-stage investment showed strong progress, reaching \$1.1 billion, a 20% increase compared to \$914 million in 9M 2024, and a 26% rise from \$871 million in 9M 2023. According to the report, this highlighted growing investor confidence in emerging companies.
- Towards the mature end of the market, however, signs of more selective participation were seen. Late-stage funding totaled \$1.3 billion, a 59% decrease from \$3.2 billion in 9M 2024 and a 41% decline compared to \$2.2 billion in 9M 2023.
- FinTech, Enterprise Applications, and Retail were the top-performing sectors in Karnataka during the period.
- The FinTech sector recorded \$841 million in funding, an increase of 38% compared to \$608 million in 9M 2024, but a decrease of 21% compared to \$1.1 billion in 9M 2023.
- The Enterprise Applications sector saw \$830 million in 9M 2025, representing a 19% decrease from \$1.0 billion in 9M 2024, and a 26% decline compared to \$1.1 billion in 9M 2023.
- The Retail sector recorded \$730 million in 9M 2025, a 43% drop from \$1.3 billion in 9M 2024, but a 10% increase compared to \$663 million raised in 9M 2023.

IPOs and unicorns

- The period registered two funding rounds above \$100 million - \$202 million by Groww in a series F round and \$120 million by Jumbotail in a series D round - compared to eight such rounds in 9M 2024 and seven in 9M 2023.
- Ather Energy and BlueStone went public during the period. However, two IPOs that the State's tech ecosystem saw marked a 67% drop from six in 9M 2024. Three new

unicorns emerged during the period, representing a 40% drop from five in 9M 2024, and a 200% rise compared to one in 9M 2023.

- Tech companies in Karnataka saw 35 acquisitions in 9M 2025. The highest-valued acquisition was Groww acquiring Fisdom for \$150 million, followed by ICRA acquiring Fintellix for \$26 million.

❖ No problem in Kerala SIR, 99% forms given: EC to SC

Context: EC says it is coordinating with State poll panel, denies human resources crunch; Kerala govt. had moved SC saying simultaneous conduct of exercise, local body polls will be a 'near impossibility'.

- The Election Commission (EC) expressed confidence that it can conduct the special intensive revision (SIR) of poll rolls in Kerala in the midst of local body elections, telling the Supreme Court that there is “no problem” whatsoever, and noting that enumeration forms have been distributed to 99% of voters in the State.

Obstacle course

The Kerala government and political parties have filed separate petitions in the SC submitting that the “cumbersome” SIR process would create an “administrative impasse” during civic polls



Close check: A Booth Level Officer collecting SIR forms in Kerala. THULASI KAKKAT

- The Kerala State Election Commission has decided to **conduct polls** to the local self-government institutions (LSGIs) on Dec. 9 and 11

- Kerala has **1,200 LSGIs** made up of 941 gram panchayats, 152 block panchayats, 14 district panchayats, 87 municipalities and six corporations. There are 23,612 wards in total

History revisited

1993: Collegium system of judicial appointments **came into existence** by virtue of a Constitution Bench judgment

2014: The National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014 and the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 came into existence **to substitute** the Collegium system

2015: A Bench declared the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act and the NJAC Act unconstitutional, **reviving the Collegium system**



- “EC and the Kerala State Election Commission are collaborating, coordinating and have held meetings with officials and District Collectors in Kerala.
- There is no problem. The State Election Commission has said its work is not hampered.
- In any case it is almost over, 99% voters have been distributed [enumeration forms], more than 50% have been digitised,” said the EC, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.
- The SIR process began in Kerala on November 4 and will go on till December 4. The Kerala State Election Commission had decided to conduct the local body elections on December 9 and 11.
- The State government, in a petition filed through advocate C.K. Sasi, had said that the simultaneous conduct of the SIR and the local body elections would be a “near impossibility”.
- “SIR is a huge exercise requiring deployment of 1,76,000 personnel from government and quasi-governmental services for election-related duties, and further 68,000 police and other security personnel. SIR is also a comprehensive process with a cumbersome procedure,” it had submitted.
- The EC denied the Kerala government’s version of a human resources crunch, saying “different people have been allotted Booth Level Officer duties from those deployed in the local self government institutions elections”.

- The EC said a small section of people have been doing BLO duties successfully, and if need be, the State Election Commission would be allocated more from the EC's own staff.
- The Communist Party of India (CPI), a partner in the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala, had separately moved the top court, seeking not only the deferment of the SIR but also a judicial direction to quash the revision process, which had spread to 12 States and Union Territories after Bihar.
- Tamil Nadu argued that the EC had given “unrealistic timelines” to complete the SIR process in the State, noting that the forecast of a cyclone could also hinder the exercise.
- One of the petitioners submitted that the EC had only digitised 50% enumeration forms in the past 22 days in Tamil Nadu, with the remaining forms to be completed in the eight days left before the end of enumeration stage on December 4.
- Mr. Dwivedi assuaged fears by noting that once the enumerations were signed and submitted by citizens, it would be processed on time by the EC machinery.
- Senior advocate Kapil Sibal — leading the petitioner side which includes political parties, leaders, and State governments from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala — said what was happening on the ground was very different from what was presented in court.
- He said the EC allows booth level agents (BLAs) of political parties to upload 50 enumeration forms every day till December 4. However, they have been restricted to 10 forms daily after December 4, following the publication of the draft list. Mr. Sibal urged the court to remove the restriction.

❖ **CJI to consider plea to revive NJAC, end Collegium system**

Context: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday orally said the court would consider a plea seeking to revive the National Judicial Appointments Commission and bring an end to the Collegium system of judicial appointments to the constitutional courts.

- The plea, which arraigns the Chief Justice of India and even the Supreme Court Collegium as respondents along with the Union Government and a clutch of parties, submitted that the striking down of the NJAC by the court was a “great wrong because it meant **substitution of the will of the people by the opinion of the four judges**”.
- The oral mentioning of the application was made by advocate Mathews J. Nedumpara, who has sought permission to argue the case in-person.
- **The NJAC, which briefly gave the Centre an equal role along with the judiciary in the appointment of judges to constitutional courts, was struck down as unconstitutional in 2015.**
- The plea urged the 2015 judgment to be rendered void ab initio as it revived the Collegium system which was a “synonym for nepotism and favouritism”.
- “Since the Collegium came into existence, appointments to higher judiciary have been a ‘riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma’ to borrow an expression from Winston Churchill.

- There has been no transparency whatsoever, at all. Even within the judiciary there has been lamentation.
- **The Parliament which represents the will of the people, in exercise of its constituent power, had enacted 99th Constitutional Amendment Act and the NJAC Act.**
- However, the enactments were “quashed and set aside” by this court, reducing the Parliament to an inferior tribunal,” it said.

❖ Over 40 lakh people screened for cancers under Gruha Arogya scheme

Context: Since the State Health Department extended its Gruha Arogya scheme across Karnataka in August, over 40 lakh people in rural areas have been screened for oral, breast, and cervical cancers.

- According to Health Department data, between August 1 and October 31, as many as 16,277 people were suspected to have cancer symptoms and referred to higher facilities for further evaluation. Of them, 552 have been diagnosed with these cancers.
- The initiative, aimed at early detection and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among the rural population aged above 30 years, targets 1.67 crore people.
- While the *Gruha Arogya scheme was formally launched by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in October last year, it was initially piloted in Kolar district, where dedicated health teams conducted door-to-door screening for major NCDs. Following its success, the scheme was scaled up to cover all districts.*

Door-to-door screening

- **During the pilot phase, screening was carried out for diabetes, hypertension, and three common cancers — oral, breast, and cervical — in individuals aged 30 and above.**
- Raghunandan, State Deputy Director (NCD), said over 36,000 rural ASHAs are now conducting door-to-door visits to raise awareness and encourage health checks at Ayushman Health and Wellness Centres.
- Community Health Officers (CHOs) are screening for 14 NCDs and recording the data on the NCD portal. Between August and October, 23.23 lakh people were screened for oral cancer, with 7,958 suspected cases and 164 confirmed diagnoses.
- For breast cancer, 9.49 lakh women were screened, 4,331 suspected, and 132 confirmed. In the case of cervical cancer, 7.32 lakh women were screened, 3,988 suspected, and 256 diagnosed.

Regular follow-ups

- Dr. Raghunandan said those diagnosed are being referred to **Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust (SAST)-empanelled tertiary care centres** for further investigations and treatment. “Free medication and regular follow-up care are being provided at the nearest Ayushman Health and Wellness Centres,” he said.

The Gruha Arogya scheme also covers other major NCDs such as diabetic foot, mental health disorders, neurological disorders, obstructive sleep apnea,

diabetic retinopathy, chronic kidney disease (CKD), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), and anaemia among individuals aged 19 to 29 years.

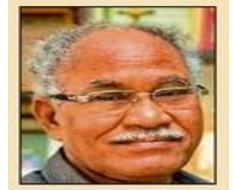
Cancer burden

- According to the **National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research–Indian Council of Medical Research (NCDIR–ICMR) estimates published in JAMA 2025, India recorded an estimated 15.62 lakh new cancer cases and 8.74 lakh deaths in 2024, with breast, cervical, oral, and lung cancers being the leading types.**
- **In Karnataka**, an estimated 87,855 new cancer cases and 26,516 deaths were reported in 2024. Of these, 25% (21,898 cases) were tobacco-related. Among men, 37% of the 39,170 cases were linked to tobacco use, while women accounted for 48,685 cases, of which 15% were tobacco-related, according to data from the Population Based Cancer Registry maintained at the State-run Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology (KMIO).
- **In Bengaluru city**, the estimated cancer incidence for 2024 stood at 15,153 cases, with 3,826 deaths. Tobacco-related cancers made up 24.1% of all cases, with a higher proportion among men (36.6%) compared to women (15.2%).
- At Kidwai Institute, as many as 21,881 new cancer cases were registered in 2024, of which 12,930 were histologically or cytologically confirmed. Notably, 3,939 (30.5%) of these were tobacco-related, underscoring the continued impact of tobacco use on the State's cancer burden.

❖ Konkani writer Mahabaleshwar Sail chosen for Kuvempu national award

Context: Mahabaleshwar Sail, Konkani writer based in Goa, has been chosen for the Kuvempu National Award 2025, instituted by the Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Trust at Kuppali in Shivamogga district.

- The award selection committee, headed by B.L. Shankar, president of the trust, met in Bengaluru on November 20 and selected Mr. Sail for the honour.
- The selection committee included eminent Konkani writer and translator S.M. Krishnaraya, former secretary of Sahitya Akademi Agrahara Krishnamurthy, and chairman of Kannada Development Authority Purushottama Bilimale.
- Mr. Sail served in the Indian Army and participated in the Indo-Pak War in 1965. He also served in the **United Nations Peacekeeping Force on the Israel-Egypt border in 1964-65**. After his military service, he worked in the postal department.
- Mr. Sail's first novel, Kaali Ganga, was published in 1996 and it was based on the lives of farmers along Kali river in Karwar. Some of his well-known works include Hawthian, Paltadcho Munis, Yug Sanvar and Vikhar Vilkho.
- Many of his novels and short stories have been translated into English and Hindi.
- The award carries a purse of ₹5 lakh and a silver medal. The award will be presented at Kuppali, on December 29, Kuvempu's birth anniversary.



❖ Wipro partners with IISc to advance innovation in frontier technologies

Context: Wipro Ltd., an AI-powered technology services and consulting company, announced a strategic alliance with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Foundation for Science Innovation and Development (FSID) to collaborate on cutting-edge research and innovation across frontier technologies.

- These organisations are aiming to accelerate breakthroughs in areas like agentic AI, embodied AI, quantum AI, and quantum safe solutions, to help enterprises build more secure, adaptive, and autonomous digital operations, said Wipro in a statement.
- Under the agreement, Wipro and IISc will establish a joint research programme focused on quantum computing, advanced AI models, secure digital infrastructure, and new approaches to autonomous networks.
- The programme would bring together senior faculty, researchers, and scientists from IISc with Wipro's engineers, architects, and technologists.
- The collaboration would also enhance Wipro's ability to deliver next-generation AI-powered capabilities across sectors such as telecom, manufacturing, financial services, and healthcare.
- Sandhya Arun, chief technology officer, Wipro Ltd., said, "By combining the strengths of IISc in advanced technical research with Wipro's experience in applied innovation and industry solutions, we aim to address some of the most complex challenges and high-impact opportunities, that global enterprises face in an increasingly fast-evolving technology landscape."

'Partnership critical'

- "Academia-industry collaboration is critical for solving complex scientific challenges and ensuring they create real-world value," said Rajesh Sundaresan, dean, Division of Electrical, Electronics and Computer Sciences (EECS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc).
- According to Wipro, the partnership will help the company develop industry-ready platforms, scalable models, and new IP, which will be made available to clients on Wipro's WINGS and WEGA delivery platforms, industry-specific solutions, and innovation offerings as part of Wipro Intelligence.
- For IISc, the partnership supports an expanded research capacity, deeper industry validation, and opportunities for technology transfer and commercialisation.

❖ 'Declare Bengaluru-Hyd as defence, aerospace corridor'

Context: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare Bengaluru-Hyderabad as a defence and aerospace corridor to contribute to the Viksit Bharat objectives.

- Speaking at the opening of French firm Safran's maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) for LEAP engines and ground breaking for M88 military engines maintenance facility in Hyderabad, in which Mr. Modi participated virtually, he pointed how ***Hyderabad has emerged as one of the leading MRO and aero engine hubs in India.***

- “We have more than 25 major global companies and over 1,500 MSMEs. Our world-class infrastructure and dedicated aerospace parks and SEZs have attracted several mega investments from leading global companies.
- We are now the top choice for highly complex precision engineering projects. **Hyderabad is chosen by the likes of Safran, Boeing, Airbus, Tata, Bharat Forge and others for manufacturing and research and development projects,”** Mr. Reddy said, adding how the State’s progressive industrial as well as MSME policies are ranked amongst the best in the country.
- **Telangana’s exports in aerospace and defence doubled last year, reaching ₹30,742 crore in nine months and in the process went past pharma exports for the first time,** he said.
- The Chief Minister invited the Prime Minister and leadership of the company to Telangana Rising 2047 Global Summit scheduled at the proposed Bharat Future City on December 8 and 9.

❖ **3.5 billion-year-old crater on Mars to be christened after geologist M.S. Krishnan**

Context: A 3.5 billion-year-old crater on Mars will henceforth be known after M.S. Krishnan, the pioneering Indian geologist. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has approved it and several other names for Martian landforms proposed by two Kerala-based researchers.

- **Apart from ‘Krishnan,’ the IAU has also accepted several Kerala-based names for smaller landforms associated with the crater.**
- **These are ‘Valiamala,’ ‘Thumba,’ ‘Bekal,’ ‘Varkala’ and ‘Periyar’ for smaller craters and a vallis (valley). Which means, these places in Kerala now have counterparts on Mars.**



Smaller craters and vallis in Mars are set to get names — ‘Valiamala,’ ‘Thumba,’ ‘Bekal,’ ‘Varkala’ and ‘Periyar’. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

- The naming proposal was jointly submitted by Asif Iqbal Kakkassery, formerly research scholar at the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) here and who is now Assistant Professor in Geology at Government College, Kasaragod, and Rajesh V.J. of the Department of Earth and Space Sciences, IIST.
- Born in Thanjavur in what was then Madras Presidency in 1898, Dr. Krishnan was the first Indian to be director of the Geological Society of India. As for the other names, it is the first time that place names from Kerala are being adopted for Martian features, the team said.
- “The plain inside Krishnan Crater has been officially named Krishnan Palus, and a channel cutting across it has been named Periyar Vallis,” Dr. Rajesh said.
- The findings have been published in the journal Meteoritics & Planetary Science.

❖ SC asks if a 'foreigner' can be allowed to use Aadhaar to gain entry into poll roll

Context: The Supreme Court on Wednesday tested the role of Aadhaar in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, asking whether a foreigner, who has already managed to use the document to access welfare benefits such as subsidised ration, should be further allowed to exploit it to gain automatic entry into the electoral roll.

- The question was posed despite the court having ordered Aadhaar to be included as a **"12th document"** during the Bihar SIR hearings.
- **"Aadhaar is the creation of a statute. Nobody can dispute the use of Aadhaar card to avail welfare benefits. But suppose a person comes from a neighbouring country to India, works as a labourer or a rickshaw puller, he accesses Aadhaar to provide subsidised ration for his children — that is our constitutional ethos and morality, but does it mean that since he has got Aadhaar, he should be made a voter also?"** Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioners.
- The query from the Bench came shortly after Mr. Sibal opened arguments challenging the very constitutionality of the SIR exercise undertaken by the Election Commission (EC).
- Mr. Sibal said the view, if necessary, might be true in the case of some border States, but it could not be true for States like Kerala and Bihar. After Bihar, the second phase of SIR covers 51 crore people in 12 States and Union Territories, including Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry.

EC jurisdiction

- Justice Joymalya Bagchi, the Associate Judge on the Bench, observed that **EC has an inherent jurisdiction to verify and vet entries in electoral rolls which are of "doubtful integrity"**. Enumeration forms are part of that enquiry by the EC to check voters' credibility.
- "Any exclusionary step or attempt taken by the EC is against the constitutional scheme. Asking the elector to fill up and submit an enumeration form is an exclusionary measure.
- Don't you think there are millions of illiterate women in this country? Will they not be excluded from the voter list? Any exclusion of a name from the electoral roll must follow a reasonable process. These are the real issues that Your Lordships need to decide..." Mr. Sibal argued.
- He questioned the power given to booth level officers (BLOs) under the SIR notification to decide whether a person was a citizen or not. The petitioners have argued that SIR was only a thinly-veiled "citizenship screening" in which the burden of verification has been shifted from the EC to an already registered elector.
- Justice Bagchi observed that the inherent jurisdiction of the EC to "examine, vet, verify" documents submitted to it was traceable to Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act and Article 326, which required a voter to be a citizen.
- Mr. Sibal said he was not challenging the jurisdiction of the EC, but the "hasty, unreasonable and exclusionary" process adopted by the poll body.

- “I accept the EC has the power. Revisions have been done before. I am saying the process of the SIR is unreasonable, both procedurally and substantively. There is no earthly reason to have to complete the process in two months,” he clarified.
- However, Chief Justice Kant asked whether the court could stop the SIR because of doubts that the exercise cannot be completed within the specified period.

❖ **CJI calls for national judicial policy to reduce divergence**

Context: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant pushed for a uniform and national judicial policy to reinforce predictability in judicial approach among the Supreme Court and the State High Courts.

- “It is high time we minimise unpredictability and avoidable divergence that may arise simply because there are 25 High Courts or multiple Benches of the Supreme Court. Justice cannot resemble a set of instruments producing harmonious notes in isolation but discordant sounds when played together.
- Instead, we must strive for a judicial symphony — one rhythm, expressed in many voices and languages, but guided by a common constitutional score,” Chief Justice Kant said in his Constitution Day address at the Supreme Court.
- **The CJI said a uniform judicial policy would encourage coherence across jurisdictions and bring more clarity and consistency in the decisions of the various constitutional courts on seminal questions of law.**
- Chief Justice Kant said a close look at the functioning of the justice delivery system still showed a “disquieting gap” between the constitutional vision and the experiences of the multitude, particularly the marginalised sections of society, for whom access to justice remains elusive due to exorbitant cost, language, distance, and delay.
- “These barriers weaken the very overarching goal we seek to protect and, in doing so, magnify existing inequalities... First step to access to justice: the first step in that direction must be through the augmentation of judicial infrastructure in aid of effective justice delivery,” the CJI said.
- The CJI highlighted the modern dispute resolution process of mediation as a cost-effective, participatory, and deeply humane alternative.

❖ **‘India-Canada uranium deal possible because of 2008 pact with U.S.’**

Context: Responding to reports that India and Canada were close to finalising a deal involving the supply of uranium, the Congress asserted that such a development was possible because of the 2008 Indo-U.S. civil nuclear agreement under the leadership of the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh despite the opposition from the BJP.

- “This deal has been made possible entirely because of the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement of 2008 masterminded by Dr. Manmohan Singh in the face of opposition by the BJP,” Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X, underscoring the agreement’s strategic legacy.
- Mr. Ramesh’s remarks came amid fresh momentum in India-Canada ties following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart, Mark Carney, in Johannesburg on Sunday on the sidelines of G20 summit.

\$2.8-billion pact

- The Congress leader also shared the online link of media reports, indicating that India and Canada were close to sealing a \$2.8-billion pact for long-term uranium supplies over the next decade.
- According to the External Affairs Ministry, the two leaders discussed expanding cooperation in defence and space, and agreed to accelerate engagement in trade, investment, technology, and energy.

❖ SC panel suggests creation of a Goa tiger reserve in phases

Context: Panel proposes that 468.6 sq. km area, which contains 102 households, be notified as 'core' and buffer areas of the reserve in the first phase; another 208 sq. km, with 612 households, can be considered later.

- A Supreme Court-appointed committee has recommended the creation of a tiger reserve in Goa, but in a phased manner, so as to first incorporate areas with a lower human presence.
- The top court is expected to consider the report of its Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in the next hearing of the case that involves the Goa government and the Goa Foundation, a non-government organisation.
- The CEC came into the picture after the Goa government challenged a Bombay High Court order of July 2023, which directed the State to notify five protected areas — the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhagwan Mahavir National Park, Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary, and Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary, collectively referred to as the “Mhadei WLS and Other Areas” — as a tiger reserve, within a period of three months.
- **The Goa government was reluctant to have the areas be declared as a tiger reserve on the grounds that nearly “one lakh people” would be affected, though it later conceded in its own affidavit that there were only about 1,274 households in the 33 villages within the five protected areas, translating to approximately 5,000 to 6,000 individuals.**
- It also claimed that there were no “resident” tigers in Goa, arguing that the handful that pass through Goan forests were a “transient” population. The Goa government had adopted contradictory positions regarding the “resident” status of tigers in the State.
- The committee recommended that Goan parks and sanctuaries “directly contiguous” to the Kali Tiger Reserve in adjoining Karnataka, which is known to host a permanent tiger presence, form the “core” part of the Goa reserve.
- Those areas adjoining the buffer zone of the Kali Tiger Reserve can be considered for designation as the “buffer zone” of the proposed Goa reserve, it added.
- “Such a phased approach is likely to minimise disturbance to local communities, while ensuring that the most ecologically sensitive and least inhabited areas are brought under enhanced protection at the earliest stage,” it said.
- This means that the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary (50 households) and Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary (41 households), adding up to a 296.7 sq. km. area, will be incorporated into the core zone of the proposed Goa Tiger Reserve in the first phase.

- Protected areas contiguous with the Kali Tiger Reserve's buffer zone, which have minimal human habitation, namely, the northern part of the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary (nine households) and Bhagwan Mahavir National Park (two households), adding another 171 sq. km., will be considered as the buffer of the proposed Goa Tiger Reserve in the first phase.
- "The total area proposed for notification as the Goa Tiger Reserve is 468.60 sq. km. This area is fully contiguous with the 1,345 sq. km core and buffer of the Kali Tiger Reserve, and together they form an integrated protected landscape of approximately 1,814 sq. km," the report noted.
- The Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, spanning 208 sq. km and containing 612 households, shares only a "limited stretch of boundary" with the buffer of the Kali Tiger Reserve. "These areas may, therefore, be considered, if necessary, at a later stage, after adequate consultation," it said.

❖ Govt. justifies move to impose ban on online money games

Context: Online money gaming entities have no right to trade or profession at the cost of human lives, as money sourced through these activities are laundered or used as funding for terror besides being a reason for increasing addiction and fatalities among young users, the Centre has told the Supreme Court

- The government was justifying the introduction of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act to curb the rapid spread of online money games, creating "serious risks for individuals, families and the nation".
- Companies and online platforms, represented by senior advocate C.A. Sundaram and advocate Rohini Musa, have urged the top court to stay the law.
- The government, in an affidavit, argued that an estimated 45 crore people had been negatively affected by online money games and faced a loss of more than ₹2,000 crore.
- "There can be no right to profession or trade at the cost of human lives, which online money gaming is known to take, month after month, across the country," the Centre submitted. Right to trade and profession is a fundamental freedom under Article 19 of the Constitution.
- The government said "systemic legal violations" linked to online money gaming (OMG) platforms include large-scale tax evasion, money laundering, cross border illicit fund flows and "vulnerabilities" relating to potential terror financing and other economic offences.
- It said "money mule accounts" had been identified by banks in which customer identities were found linked to OMG websites. "OMG displayed an increased popularity after COVID and it coincides with an uptick in fraud cases involving online gaming, gambling and illegal loan apps," the government pointed out.
- Gaming-related suspicious transactions overlap with cybercrime and fraud, the affidavit said. It said identity theft and personal data compromise was a real danger on many OMG platforms. "Interactions with unknown players further expose users to intruders, predators, spyware, viruses and worms," it said.

❖ Cabinet approves ₹7,280 cr. scheme for rare earth magnets

Context: The first-of-its-kind initiative aims to establish 6,000 MTPA of integrated rare earth permanent magnet manufacturing in India, govt. says.

- In yet another push to secure India's supplies of rare earth magnets, the Union Cabinet approved a new "first-of-its-kind" scheme, with a financial outlay of ₹7,280 crore, to manufacture **Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) in India.**
- The approval of this scheme, named the 'Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets', comes two days after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal specifically noted that one of the areas in which India and Canada have "tremendous potential" to cooperate on was in critical minerals.
- This was in the context of the two countries restarting talks on a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.**
- **"This first-of-its-kind initiative aims to establish 6,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) of integrated Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) manufacturing in India, thereby enhancing self-reliance and positioning India as a key player in the global REPM market,"** the government said in a release.
- **REPMs are vital components that have applications in EVs, renewable energy, electronics, aerospace, and defence sectors. According to the government, the scheme will support the creation of integrated REPM manufacturing facilities, involving the conversion of rare earth oxides to metals, metals to alloys, and alloys to finished REPMs.**
- **The total financial outlay of the scheme of ₹7,280 crore,** will comprise a sales-linked incentives of ₹6,450 crore on REPMs for five years and a capital subsidy of ₹750 crore for the setting up of an aggregate of 6,000 MTPA of REPM manufacturing facilities.
- The plan is to allocate the total capacity of 6,000 MTPA to five beneficiaries through a global competitive bidding process with each beneficiary being allotted up to 1,200 MTPA.
- **The total duration of the scheme is to be seven years** from the date of award, including a 2-year gestation period for setting up an integrated REPM manufacturing facility, and 5 years for incentive disbursement on the sale of REPM.
- The auto industry, in particular, has welcomed the decision, saying it is a pivotal step towards self reliance.
- "This initiative is a significant step toward building a resilient and stable supply chain, particularly for components and sub-assemblies essential for the production of electrified vehicles," Shailesh Chandra, President of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said.
- "This initiative will not only reduce import dependence but also provide long-term resilience to the automotive supply chain, encourage investments in advanced materials, and position India strongly in global value chains for EVs and clean energy," Vikrampati Singhania, President of the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) said.

❖ PM Modi opens Safran's MRO for LEAP engines in Hyderabad

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday virtually inaugurated the largest maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility, France's Safran has established globally for LEAP engines in Hyderabad.

- Mr. Modi urged the firm to explore possibilities of aircraft engine and component design in India. A LEAP engine is a modern, fuel-efficient engine that powers several narrow-body aircraft.
- Stating that the country is keen on promoting **'Design in India'** on a large scale across every sector, the Prime Minister said India's vast Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) network and its young talent pool will provide significant support for such efforts.
- Safran Aerospace, which works extensively in aerospace propulsion systems, should also leverage India's talent and opportunities for propulsion design and manufacturing, he said, participating through video conferencing in the function, which was attended by Telangana's Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Union Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu, and the top leadership of Safran among others.
- India is "dreaming big, doing bigger and delivering best" on the back of some of the biggest reforms the country has undertaken since independence to attract global investment and industries, Mr. Modi said.
- **"Today in most sectors, 100% foreign direct investment is possible through automatic routes. Even in sectors like defence, where earlier the private sector had no space, 74% FDI has now been opened through automatic routes. [Likewise] A major approach has also been adopted in the space sector,"** Mr. Modi said, adding such steps have sent a clear message to the world that India welcomes investments and innovation.
- **The government's production linked incentive (PLI) schemes have attracted global manufacturers towards 'Make in India',** he added.
- With the opening of the 45,000 sq.m Safran facility, set up with an initial investment ₹1,300 crore, at the GMR Aerospace and Industrial Park in Hyderabad, India's aviation sector is taking a new flight.

❖ Gaza's economy collapsed in 2024: UNCTAD

Context: Gaza's economy suffered an unprecedented collapse, shrinking by 83% in 2024 and pushing every one of its 2.3 million residents into poverty, according to a new assessment by the Trade and Development agency (UNCTAD).

- Gaza's GDP fell to just \$362 million in 2024, with cumulative losses across 2023 and 2024 reaching 87%. GDP per capita has plunged to \$161 among the lowest worldwide dropping to just 6.4% of its 2005 peak.
- The inflation enclave soared to 238%, while unemployment reached 80%. "All 2.3 million people are now below the poverty line," the report notes.
- By April 2025, roughly 70% of all structures in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed, including factories, homes, hospitals, schools, banks, and key infrastructure for energy, water, telecommunications, and agriculture. Satellite analysis shows night-time luminosity across Gaza, an indicator of economic activity, fell 73% between October 2023 and May 2025.

- The devastation extends across the occupied Palestinian Territory. The West Bank is experiencing its sharpest economic downturn on record, driven by movement restrictions, insecurity, and loss of productive capacity. By the end of 2024, Palestinian GDP had fallen to 70% of its 2022 level, sliding back to 2010 levels.
- GDP per capita has regressed to 2003 levels. The national Human Development Index is projected to fall from 0.716 to 0.643, erasing nearly 25 years of progress.
- Fiscal pressures have intensified. Between 2019 and April 2025, Israel withheld or deducted \$1.76 billion in fiscal transfers—equivalent to 12.8% of Palestinian GDP in 2024. Public debt and arrears rose to around \$4.2 billion.
- UNCTAD estimates that rebuilding Gaza will require more than \$70 billion and calls for a durable ceasefire, urgent humanitarian access and sustained international financing.

❖ IMF gives 'C' grade for India's national accounts statistics

Context: The International Monetary Fund's annual review has given India's national accounts statistics — including Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA) — a grade of 'C', the second-lowest rating.

- According to the IMF, this grade means the data available “have some shortcomings that somewhat hamper surveillance”. This is of particular significance as the government will release the national accounts data for Q2 of this financial year.

Bone of contention

IMF estimated that the tariff hit will reduce India's GDP growth rate by 0.4% in 2025-26 and by 0.3% next year

- Indian authorities generally concurred with IMF staff's assessment of the outlook and risks
- The govt. and RBI officials, however, did not agree with staff's tariff assumption, IMF's report says



Weaknesses cited

- “National accounts data are available at adequate frequency and timeliness and provide broadly adequate granularity,” the IMF noted in its annual Article IV assessment of India's economic framework.
- “However, some methodological weaknesses somewhat hamper surveillance and warrant an overall sectoral rating for the national accounts of C.” Overall, across all data categories, India has received grade ‘B’. There are four grades in total: A, B, C and D.
- **For example, it highlighted an outdated base year of 2011-12** on which the data is based, and the use of wholesale price indices as data sources for deflators due to the lack of producer prices indices.
- It further pointed out periodic “sizeable discrepancies” between the production and expenditure approaches of measuring GDP, “that may indicate the need to enhance the coverage of the expenditure approach data and the informal sector”.
- **The Indian government has, from the beginning, used the income approach to measure GDP by measuring the incomes of the government, people, and companies. However, it also provides an estimate based on the expenditure approach, which attempts to quantify GDP through the spending done by these entities.**
- Often, due to the differing data sources and their coverage, the two estimates of GDP differ, which has attracted criticism from some economists.

- **Finally, the IMF also highlighted the lack of seasonally adjusted data and “room for improvement of other statistical techniques” used in the quarterly national accounts data.**
- **Regarding India’s main inflation measure, the Consumer Price Index, the IMF graded India a ‘B’, which means the data provided “have some shortcomings but are broadly adequate for surveillance”.**
- It said that while the CPI data scores well on its frequency and timeliness, coming as it does once a month and with only a month’s lag, the rating of ‘B’ reflects the outdated CPI base year, items basket, and weights (set in 2011-12), “implying that the CPI basket likely fails to accurately represent current spending habits”.

❖ SC asks govt. to regulate user content on Internet

Context: Court suggests ‘impartial and autonomous authority’ to vet content; it says that like free speech, rights of victims of online abuse have to be protected, and wants ‘preventive mechanisms’ in place.

- The Supreme Court asked the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to work on guidelines for user-generated content to protect innocents from becoming victims of obscene, even perverse, “anti-national” or personally damaging online content.
- The top court considered the idea of an **“impartial and autonomous authority”**, neither bound to private broadcasters nor the government, to vet “prima facie permissible” content.
- A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said user-generated content, potentially disastrous to reputations or even having “adult content”, go viral even before social media intermediaries could take them down.

Suggestion on Aadhaar

- At one point, referring to the easy access to uncurated material online, the court said a few seconds of ‘adult content’ warning was not enough. It suggested further checks such as sharing Aadhaar details to verify the age of users.
- The Chief Justice found it “very strange” the phenomenon that users could create their own online channels and still be not accountable to anyone. “Is there no sense of responsibility?” he asked.
- The court clarified that it did not intend to have the proposed guidelines for user-generated content “tinker” with free speech. Though the **right was subject to reasonable regulation under Article 19(2) of the Constitution, it was nevertheless to be respected and protected.** However, misuse of online speech has exposed millions of innocent people to abuse. They too have a right to be protected, it reasoned.

‘Millions victimised’

- **“Dissent is part of democracy.** Every day people write against the government. But the problem arises when you suddenly put something on YouTube and there are millions and millions who are victimised. They do not have a voice. They do not have a platform, and by the time they rush to court, the damage is done,” Chief Justice Kant said.

- Advocate Prashant Bhushan said any guidelines restraining free speech mandated prior and extensive public consultations, to be initiated by the Centre. He cautioned that the term 'anti-national' was both over-broad and ambiguous.
- The Chief Justice said there were enough laws to turn to after the damage was done. But there was nothing to protect them before the post went online.
- "A takedown takes at least 24 hours. By the time it is effectuated, the harm is already done... This preventive exercise is not to throttle anyone but to have a certain degree of stick. **Technology with AI makes you (social media intermediaries) enormously powerful, to curate your material, assess its impact. Platforms are monetising content,**" Justice Bagchi observed. The judge termed prosecution of the creator of the offending social media post a "post-occurrence penalty", saying "we must have preventive mechanisms to ensure there is no spread of misinformation, loss of property as well as sometimes lives".
- Senior advocate Amit Sibal, for Indian Broadcast and Digital Foundation, expressed reservations about the court using the term 'preventive' to describe the proposed guidelines. 'Preventive' could be read as 'pre-censorship', he said. He suggested changing the prefix to 'effective'.
- "The difficulty we are facing is the response time. By the time intermediaries respond to such content, it has already gone viral... How do you plug that gap? That is the question," Justice Bagchi emphasised.

❖ **Northeast monsoon deficient in Bengaluru, but city likely to get rains**

Context: Districts in north-interior Karnataka has had the biggest negative departures, with Bagalkot recording the highest deficiency of 53% followed by Haveri with 50%.

- **Bengaluru Urban has recorded a 47% deficiency in the northeast monsoon** during the period between October 1 and November 27. This is in stark contrast with the 6% deficiency in rainfall during this period in Karnataka, and the third-highest deficiency overall in the State.
- **Districts in north interior Karnataka had the biggest negative departures.** Bagalkot recorded the highest deficiency, with 53%, followed by Haveri with 50%. Vijayapura and Kalaburagi followed Bengaluru Urban with -46% and -45% departures.
- On the other hand, **many districts also saw a large excess in rainfall.** Bidar recorded the highest excess of 67% rainfall, followed by Kolar with 60%, and Hassan with 50%, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Bengaluru.

Deep depression

- However, C.S. Patil from IMD Bengaluru said the **deep depression over Sri Lanka has turned into a cyclonic storm**, and rain is expected for the next few days over parts of South Interior Karnataka.
- **Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru South, Tumakuru, Kolar, and Chickballapur are expected to receive heavy rain.**

- **Cyclonic storm Ditwah over southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining Sri Lanka coast and the depression (remnant of cyclonic storm “Senyar”) over the Strait of Malacca are expected to bring rains.**

- About cyclonic storm Ditwah over southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining Sri Lanka coast, the IMD bulletin said, “The deep depression over southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining Sri Lanka coast moved north-northwestwards, intensified into the cyclonic storm Ditwah and lay centered at 11.30 hrs IST of November 27 over the same region close east of Pottuvil (Sri Lanka), about 90 km south-southeast of Batticaloa (Sri Lanka), 120 km northeast of **Hambantota** (Sri Lanka), 200 km south-southeast of Trincomalee (Sri Lanka), 610 km south-southeast of Puducherry (India) and 700 km south-southeast of Chennai (India).”
- “It is very likely to continue to move north-northwestwards across southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining Sri Lanka coast and reach over southwest Bay of Bengal off North Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and adjoining south Andhra Pradesh coasts by early morning of November 30,” it said.
- **“The deep depression (remnant of cyclonic storm “Senyar”) over the Strait of Malacca** moved nearly eastwards, weakened into a depression and lay centred at 11.30 hours of November 27 over the same region about 200 km south of George town (Malaysia), 380 km east-southeast of Kuta Makmur (Indonesia), 880 km east-southeast of Nancowry (Nicobar Islands) and 1020 km southeast of Car Nicobar (Nicobar Islands). “It is very likely to move nearly eastwards and weaken further into a well marked low pressure area during next 12 hours,” the bulletin added.
- Rain is expected over parts of South Interior Karnataka from November 28, and Coastal and North Interior Karnataka from November 29 and continue till December 3.

❖ Guidelines issued for improving safety of gig workers and public

Context: Some of the key elements of the framework include police verification, GPS tracking, and in-app SOS buttons.

- In a move aimed at improving safety of gig workers and the general public, the Bengaluru City Police have issued a detailed set of guidelines to all app-based service aggregators. The list includes food delivery, ride-hailing, and hyperlocal logistics platforms.
- The directive comes amid growing concerns over crimes involving gig workers (by and against them), and loopholes in safety mechanisms.
- Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said the instructions were designed to ensure that companies deploying thousands of gig workers across the city adopt stronger monitoring systems, verification procedures, and emergency-response mechanisms.
- Mr. Singh said gig platforms must conduct thorough police verification and background checks of every delivery partner and driver before they start the work. Aggregators are required to maintain updated personnel records and make them available to law enforcement agencies whenever required.
- A document detailing the directives, emphasised that **physical and digital address verification, employment checks, driving licence validation, and verification of**

vehicle documents are now mandatory. Companies may also rely on third-party agencies to carry out these checks.

Safety of gig workers

- A senior police official said there have been instances in which habitual offenders have committed crimes while posing as delivery partners, including cases such as drug transportation. Additionally, since many gig workers do not use their own vehicles, it often becomes difficult to trace the individual involved during emergencies.
- To address these concerns, aggregators have been instructed to ensure gig workers carry and display company-issued ID cards at all times. Companies must also provide uniforms or easily identifiable attire so workers can be recognised in public spaces.
- **A key element of the new safety framework is the requirement for in-app SOS buttons. Every gig worker's app must include an emergency alert feature directly linked to the company's control room and the local police. Platforms must also run a 24/7 helpline to support workers in distress. This measure is already under implementation.**
- The police have directed companies to use GPS tracking for all tasks to monitor worker safety in real time. Location data related to deliveries and rides must be stored for at least 30 days to allow access during investigations of accidents, crimes, or complaints.
- Recognising the increased risks during late hours, aggregators must adopt special safety measures for workers operating between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. These include access to emergency contacts, identification of safe zones, and advising workers to avoid isolated or poorly lit routes whenever possible.
- The gig workers will now be required to attend sensitisation sessions on appropriate conduct while interacting with customers, especially women, senior citizens, and children. Any worker accused of misconduct will be immediately suspended pending investigation.
- The aggregators must cooperate promptly with police investigations and share verified data on demand. The police have also asked platforms to hold regular safety workshops on traffic rules, safe riding practices, cyber-security awareness, and procedures for reporting suspicious behaviour.
- Workers are expected to participate in these sessions whenever they are offered, including those conducted by the traffic police. Companies must report any accident, theft, assault, or crime involving their workers to the police immediately. The police said that this would improve response times and creates transparency in incidents involving gig personnel.

Nodal officers

- Now nodal officers appointed by each gig company will be held directly responsible for enforcing the fresh guidelines. The police have warned that failure to comply may result in legal action under relevant provisions of law.

❖ Special package of ₹1,033.60 cr. for flood-hit farmers launched

Context: The State government launched a special package of ₹1,033.60 crore as additional subsidy to compensate farmers for crop loss due to heavy rainfall and flooding this monsoon. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah formally launched the scheme.

- As per the SDRF norms, input subsidy of ₹1,218.03 crore had already been provided to farmers that would take the total to ₹2,251.63 crore. Crops on about 14.58 lakh hectares had been damaged and the total loss had been estimated to be around ₹10,748 crore.
- The Centre has set up inter-departmental team, which is expected to visit the State shortly.
- A note from the Chief Minister's Office said that the additional subsidy had been launched to mitigate farmers' woes by increasing compensation from ₹8,500 per hectare to ₹17,000 per hectare in rain-fed area and in irrigated land from ₹17,000 per hectare to ₹25,000 per hectare.
- For area under annual multiple crop, compensation has been increased from ₹22,500 per hectare to ₹31,000 per hectare. The compensation is capped for two hectares.

❖ State government approves policy for iron ore exports from non-major ports in Karnataka

Context: To clear the export of iron ore from minor ports in Karnataka, the State government on Thursday approved Karnataka Non-major Ports Iron Ore Handling Policy, 2025, for handling of iron ore through non-major ports under the Karnataka Maritime Board.

- Amid large-scale violation of rules in extraction of iron ore and large quantities of iron ore export illegally, the State government had banned export of iron ore from 10 non-major ports in 2010 under the **Karnataka Ports (Landing and Shipping Fees) Act, 1961**.
- However, in 2022, the Supreme Court allowed export of iron ore from these ports strictly under the policy of Indian government. It permitted export of iron ore through ports in Karnataka as is being done in the rest of the country.
- "The policy is a standard operating procedure for the export of iron ore from these ports. The policy will come into effect prospectively. Since a number of cases are pending in courts and the Lokayukta report, it cannot be implemented with retrospective effect," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil explained in the post-Cabinet briefing.

The 2010 order

- **The 2010 order had banned export of iron ore from ports in Karwar, Tadadi, Bhatkal, Malpe, Old Managlore, Belekeri, Honnavar, Kundapura, Hangarkatta and Padubidri. In all, Karnataka has 13 non-major ports.**
- Incidentally, Belekeri port hit headlines during the peak of illegal transportation and export of iron ore as several lakh tonnes of confiscated iron ore was reported

“missing”, which figured in the Lokayukta report too. It was believed that with the connivance of officials, the iron ore had, in fact, been exported.

Revenue generation

- According to the Cabinet note, the policy would result in revenue earning to the government through registration fees, license fees (for allotment of land for handling iron ore), wharfage charges, minimum guarantee deposits, security deposits, penalties for non-compliance, or shortfalls and a recurring pollution mitigation, safety and supervision fee of ₹13 per tonne.

❖ Union Law Ministry defends simultaneous polls proposal

Context: Curtailing tenure not against basic structure of Constitution and synchronisation of elections through amendment is permissible, Ministry tells the Parliamentary panel that is examining Bills.

- The Union Law Ministry, in a written submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the Bills on simultaneous elections, said that the proposed framework does **not violate the Constitution’s basic structure, nor does it infringe upon the federal structure of the Constitution.**
- The JPC, headed by senior BJP leader P.P. Chaudhary will be meeting representatives from the 23rd Law Commission and the Election Commission on December 4. The Law Ministry, which has already submitted replies to the questions posed by the panel, will be appearing at a later meeting. The Law Commission has already submitted its report.
- Responding to queries on whether curtailing the tenure of a government undermines the voter’s right to elect a government for five years, the Ministry said **Articles 83(2) and 172(1) of the Constitution explicitly provide that the term of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies shall be five years “unless sooner dissolved.” This phrase, the Ministry argued, was deliberately incorporated by the framers to allow for premature dissolution under certain circumstances.**
- **“The five-year tenure is neither sacrosanct nor part of the basic structure,”** the Ministry noted, citing historical precedent.
- It pointed out that the 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976) made during the 19-month Emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi government **extended the tenure of legislatures to six years, which was later restored to five years through the 44th Amendment.**
- **“If the tenure could be extended by Constitutional Amendment, a one-time curtailment to synchronise elections cannot be said to violate the basic structure,”** the Ministry said.
- On concerns that the proposed legislation may run afoul of the Supreme Court’s landmark **Kesavananda Bharati judgment** which spoke of the basic structure doctrine, the Ministry maintained that the Bills do not erode the principle of separation of powers or federalism. **The basic structure doctrine demands that certain fundamental features of the Constitution — such as separation of powers between the organs of the State, namely, legislature, the executive and the judiciary — are a part of the basic structure of the constitution and cannot be amended.**

- “Mid-term elections do not limit the plenary power of the electorate to elect representatives. **The right to vote and contest elections, while secured under Article 326, are not fundamental rights,**” it clarified.
- On the question of whether the Election Commission would wield excessive powers under the new framework, the Ministry said the **Commission already enjoys autonomy under Article 324 and has the authority to schedule elections under Sections 14 and 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.**
- The Ministry underscored that simultaneous elections aim at reducing the frequency of polls and associated expenditure without compromising constitutional principles.

❖ Assam Bill to ban polygamy cleared; CM promises to bring in UCC next

Context: The Assam Assembly on Thursday passed the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, aimed at penalising those who enter into a second marriage without legally dissolving the first. The proposed legislation was tabled in the 126-member House.

- “We will reserve the Bill for the assent of President Droupadi Murmu. I do not think the Bill will be denied approval, as the President is a woman,” Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, pointing out that the Bill intends to protect women and compensate victims of polygamy.
- During the discussion, he said the widespread belief **that Islam inherently promotes polygamy was factually incorrect. Citing religious accounts, he said that Prophet Muhammad regulated the practice of multiple marriages and limited it to a man keeping four wives under strict conditions. “His line of thinking was not to promote polygamy but to curb excesses,”** he said.
- “Minus the consent, a **second marriage is not legally valid in Islam,**” he told the House.
- He added that the next step would be to introduce a Bill to implement the Uni-form Civil Code in Assam. “If you cannot stop me from becoming the Chief Minister again, I will bring in the Uniform Civil Code,” he said.
- The Bill prescribes punishment of up to 10 years and heavy fines for individuals who conceal a previous marriage before marrying for the second time. Repeat offenders will face double the punishment.
- It proposes up to two years in jail and a fine of up to ₹1 lakh for those who hide information about polygamous marriages from the police. Clerics or Qazis who solemnise such marriages may also face up to two years in prison and a fine of up to ₹1.5 lakh.

❖ 68% SIR forms digitised; Goa leads, U.P. lags, says poll body

Context: A total of 34,86,60,338 enumeration forms, which is more than 68% of total existing electors, have been digitised till now in the second phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls being carried out in nine States and three Union Territories, the Election Commission.

- The EC said in a statement that 50,63,50,569, or 99.33%, enumeration forms have been distributed. The total number of electors being covered in this phase are 50,97,44,423.

- The two States that have lagged behind in digitisation work are Uttar Pradesh, where 47.59% of forms have been digitised, and Kerala, which has achieved a target of 55% till now.
- Lakshadweep (99.9%) and Goa (89.77%) are among the States that have digitised the largest number of forms. Other States that have raced ahead are Rajasthan (86.03%) and Madhya Pradesh (82.69%).
- The enumeration phase began on November 4 and is scheduled to end on December 4.

❖ How can teacher-BLOs decide citizenship, petitioners ask SC

Context: Petitioners describe Election Commission's decision as 'dangerous and unreasonable'; counsel says EC devised SIR on the assumption that there's huge influx of illegal immigrants into India and adds Aadhaar is enough to prove voter eligibility.

- Petitioners in the Supreme Court flagged the Election Commission (EC)'s "dangerous and unreasonable" move to have schoolteachers, deployed as booth-level officers (BLOs) in the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, determine the citizenship of voters.
- Appearing before a Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi said the court had spent the past months of SIR hearings giving the "healing touch", while in the process relegating to the background the law that intensive revisions ought to be limited to a constituency or a small group, and not done en masse, State after State, across the country.
- Mr. Sibal submitted that the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950, required a person to be 18 years of age and be ordinarily resident in a constituency to be eligible for registration in the electoral roll. He said Aadhaar could very well be used to verify both these details.
- The senior lawyer said a BLO had no authority to determine citizenship. "Whether a person is an Indian citizen or not is decided by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Whether a person is of unsound mind is decided by the competent court. Laws like Prevention of Corruption Act and the Representation of the People Act would form the statutory basis for disqualifying a person from the electoral roll. You cannot ask the BLO to ascertain all this," Mr. Sibal said.
- He accused the Election Commission (EC) of supplanting the entire procedure for the revision of electoral rolls.
- "Introduction of enumeration forms and shifting of burden of proof of citizenship... It is like the burden of proof placed on a foreigner. The conditions exclusionary which were existing before Independence is now existing after Independence," Mr. Sibal submitted.

'Beyond its domain'

- Mr. Singhvi called the SIR an en masse exercise devised by the EC imagining there was a "huge, marauding influx" of illegal immigrants into India.
- He said in the bargain, "crores and crores of people, State after State, are being asked to prove their citizenship. Where is the EC's jurisdiction to do this? Article 324 [power of the EC to conduct elections] cannot be used to plug holes in the EC's jurisdiction..."

Is the EC saying that an elector's presence in the 2024 and 2025 rolls is as a presumptive guest?" he asked.

- The senior counsel pointed out that the power of EC under Section 21(3) of RPA to "direct a special revision of the electoral roll for any constituency or part of a constituency in such manner as it may think fit" cannot be interpreted as an en masse exercise.
- He argued that, even if the poll commission had to assess citizenship for the purpose of voting, it could only be done if someone raised an objection. Otherwise, there were two laws, the Foreigners Act and the Citizenship Act, which governed illegal immigrants.

❖ India and Indonesia make progress on BrahMos deal at Defence Ministers' Dialogue

Context: India and Indonesia strengthened their defence partnership as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Indonesian Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin co-chaired the third India-Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi. Both sides also made notable progress on the proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal.

- A senior defence official said the discussions reflected a "progressive approach" from both nations, adding that the agreement "might get locked at the earliest".
- The Ministers recalled Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's visit to India as the Chief Guest for Republic Day this year and noted that his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi had bolstered the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**. The participation of 352 personnel from the Indonesian Armed Forces in the parade was highlighted as a symbol of defence cooperation.
- According to the Defence Ministry, while reiterating their commitment to a free, open, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific, the two sides emphasised adherence to international law and respect for sovereignty.
- They noted strong **alignment between the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, agreeing to intensify collaboration through multilateral platforms such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, where India currently holds the chair.**
- Both countries were committed to enhancing cooperation in maritime domain awareness, cyberresilience, and joint operational readiness. Indonesia welcomed India's proposal to form a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee aimed at advancing technology transfer, and joint research and development.

❖ Court has no magic wand; experts must find solution to air pollution: SC

Context: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant struck a cautious note, saying the Supreme Court does not have a "magic wand" to make the smog choking Delhi-NCR disappear.

- But the Chief Justice assured the court would now go beyond the "ceremonial listing" of the air pollution case every year before Deepavali and proceed to hear the issue on a continuous basis.
- The Bench headed by the Chief Justice, accompanied by Justice Joymalya Bagchi, listed the case on December 1 on an urgent basis.

- The remarks from the Chief Justice were triggered by an oral mentioning made by amicus curiae, senior advocate Aparajita Singh, seeking an early hearing and urgent judicial orders as air pollution in Delhi-NCR had become a public health emergency.
- Chief Justice Kant indicated his stance that pollution cannot be blamed on one source. The CJI said there would be multiple reasons for the health crisis. Previous hearings before a Bench headed by Chief Justice Kant's immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, had largely focused on stubble-burning by farmers, particularly in Punjab.
- "There is no such one reason for pollution. Be very clear about that. People are under a bona fide misconception that it is due to a particular reason. There are multiple sources. Neither us nor you are experts. We are also like any other resident facing hardship, but neither we nor you are experts in this issue. Domain experts and scientists have to bring up the solutions to this problem," Chief Justice Kant drew the boundaries for future hearings.
- Ms. Singh pointed out that the court had been monitoring pollution cases for a quarter of a century, passing orders for a comprehensive action plan, the ongoing Graded Response Action Plan, an emergency air pollution control mechanism for the Delhi-NCR region, and so on.
- "Yes, this is an issue which not only concerns the Delhi-NCR but also other parts of the country. The problem is what magic wand do we have. Can you suggest something that can be passed as an order and by that time there is clean air?" Chief Justice Kant emphasised the limitations of judicial review in the case.
- Chief Justice Kant said the problem of air pollution required long-term plans crafted by domain experts. Ms. Singh said solutions were galore on paper, but their implementation had translated into zero. "We will take up this case on a continuous basis now. This case has a ceremonial listing. It will come up before Deepavali and disappear after winter," Chief Justice Kant said.

❖ Centre rejects IMF's notion that 50% tariffs will be 'indefinite'

Context: Union government says the international funding body's assessment of the U.S.'s tariff impact on India's GDP growth is 'on the high side'.

- The Centre has objected to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) baseline assumption that the U.S.'s 50% tariffs would continue, saying they would not remain in place "indefinitely".
- The government added that the IMF's assessment of the growth impact of the tariffs was "on the high side". The IMF has estimated that the tariff hit would reduce India's GDP growth rate by 0.4% in 2025-26 and by 0.3% next year.
- The IMF's comments and the government's response are encapsulated in the latest Article IV consultation report by the IMF, which comprises its staff's assessment of India's financial and economic system based on its calculations and consultations with officials in the Ministry of Finance and RBI.
- "The authorities [government and RBI officials] generally concurred with staff's assessment of the outlook and risks, though they did not agree with staff's tariff assumption," the report said.

- The government agreed that the overall economic impact of the tariff shock should be “manageable” in the near term, although it did concede that a few industries would be “heavily affected”.
- “That said, the authorities disagreed with staff’s baseline assumption that the 50% U.S. tariffs would remain in place indefinitely and considered staff’s estimated growth impact to be on the high side given frontloading and the potential for developing other export markets,” the report added.
- According to the IMF report, the Indian government recognised the risks of elevated global uncertainty and potential further external shocks, but emphasised the positive potential from newly concluded and forthcoming free trade agreements.

❖ Govt. announces scheme to promote research in textiles

Context: The Centre has approved a ‘Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up (Tex-RAMPS) Scheme’ with an outlay of ₹305 crore to strengthen research, innovation, and competitiveness in the textiles sector.

- According to a press release, the scheme will be effective from 2025-2026 to 2030-2031. Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh said the scheme will bring together research, data, and innovation to empower India’s textile sector and position the nation as a global leader in sustainability, technology, and competitiveness
- **Tex-RAMPS is designed to address critical gaps in research, data systems, innovation support and capacity development.**
- **The scheme also aims to create robust data systems including employment assessments, supply chain mapping, and the India-size study to facilitate evidence-based policymaking.**
- **It will strengthen State-level planning, and aid in dissemination of best practices, capacity-building workshops, and organisation of sectoral events. Incubators, hackathons, and academia-industry collaborations will be supported to nurture high-value textile start-ups and entrepreneurship.**
- Confederation of Indian Textile Industry chairman Ashwin Chandran said that once operational, the TEX-RAMPS will contribute significantly to raising the global competitiveness of the Indian textile and apparel sector by strengthening the innovation ecosystem, promoting the rise of more promising startups, and making the quality culture take deeper roots in the sector.

❖ Indian citizens top non-EU migration to and from the U.K., says Statistics Office

Context: Indian citizens represented the largest group of non-EU long-term migrants entering and exiting the U.K. in the year ending June 2025, as per official data released by the U.K. Office of National Statistics.

- **Of the Indian citizens who arrived in the U.K.** over the period, 90,000 arrived for study-related reasons, 46,000 came for work-related reasons, and 9,000 for other reasons. Indians were followed by Chinese, Pakistani, Nigerian and Nepalese citizens in terms of long-term migration from non-EU countries.
- **Of the Indians leaving the U.K. in the same year**, 45,000 were on study-related, 22,000 on work-related visas, visas and 7,000 were in the U.K. for other reasons.

- Across nationalities, net international migration (inflow less outflow) to the U.K. fell significantly, by more than two-thirds, to 204,000 in the year ending June 2025, down from 649,000 in the previous year. Emigration out of the U.K. also increased to a provisional 693,000 in the year ending June 2025, up from 650,000 the previous year.
- **While non-EU+ nationals contributed most to the provisional net migration figures**, these numbers have been going down since 2022. The decline has coincided with a tightening of immigration rules under successive governments as per the latest data. Non-EU migrants mostly come to the U.K. for study and work as per the data.
- **Apart from student and worker numbers declining over the period**, there were precipitous falls in the number of dependents who accompanied these workers (-65%) and students (-85%) to the U.K. compared to the previous year (year ending June 2024). A policy of former U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative government banning foreign care workers and students from bringing dependents with them took effect in early 2024. Mr. Sunak's government had also increased salary thresholds for skilled workers.

❖ India's food colouring woes and steps being taken to combat recurring issue

Context: India continues to face recurring episodes of chemical adulteration in food, particularly through the use of non-permitted synthetic dyes. One of the most persistent among them is auramine O, a bright yellow industrial dye banned under Indian food safety regulations.

- Recent inspections by State food safety departments, academic studies and even everyday observations have again uncovered its presence in food items.

What is auramine?

- Auramine O is a synthetic yellow dye extensively used in industry, including textile and leather processing, printing inks, paper manufacturing, and certain microbiological staining procedures.
- It has a vivid colour and is inexpensive, but is not approved for use as a food colour in India.
- Toxicological research has linked its ingestion to a range of health risks, including liver and kidney damage, enlargement of the spleen, mutagenic effects that can alter genetic material, and potential carcinogenic outcomes.
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies auramine as a substance that is possibly carcinogenic to humans.
- Despite longstanding prohibitions, auramine continues to enter the food chain largely due to its easy availability and low cost.
- Industrial-grade colours are sold informally in local markets, and small-scale sweet makers or vendors often rely on these unlabelled powders because they provide a bright, appealing yellow that mimics saffron, turmeric, or permitted synthetic colours.
- In many cases, producers remain unaware of regulatory restrictions or view enforcement as avoidable.
- While the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, provides stringent provisions against adulteration, enforcement remains uneven due to variations in laboratory capacity, staffing, and surveillance systems across States.

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) periodically intensifies sampling, surveillance, and enforcement efforts, particularly during festive seasons when colour adulteration peaks. Several States have launched targeted drives against illegal colourants, leading to seizures of unlabelled dye packets and prosecution of violating units. Alongside enforcement, awareness programmes for small food manufacturers and street vendors are being expanded to encourage safer manufacturing practices. There is also a push to strengthen laboratory infrastructure and develop rapid testing kits that can detect industrial dyes at the point of sale.
- Eliminating auramine O from the food chain will require a multilayered approach. This includes tighter regulation of chemical markets selling industrial dyes, sustained community-level education for small manufacturers, broader deployment of easy-to-use testing tools, and stronger penalties for chronic violators. Consumer education will also be crucial.

❖ Why India struggles to clear its air

Context: India confronts a recurring pollution crisis shaped by quick fixes such as cloud seeding, smog towers and odd-even rules; fragmented air-quality governance, scattered accountability and short-term political incentives keep long-term progress out of reach.

- Each winter, as Delhi slips back into its familiar grey haze, India reaches for the same set of quick fixes, treating the pollution crisis as if it were temporary.
- Cloud seeding, smog towers, water sprinkling, odd-even rules, and festival crackdowns reappear in a predictable cycle.
- These are all high-visibility steps that promise urgency, but they change little on the ground (or in the air).
- Public debate breaks down just as quickly: scientists are blamed for weak solutions, politicians for weak will, and administrators for blindly importing Western ideas.
- There is some truth in each charge, but none explains the full picture by itself. Over the last couple of weeks in Delhi, the public response has also included small public protests.
- In the November 24 edition, 50-60 protesters gathered near India Gate under heavy security presence; the police eventually detained five people, even though the protests were peaceful.

Slices of control

- The repeat pattern of short-term interventions points to a structural flaw: the country's air-quality institutions — scientists, governments, regulators, cities, and communities — operate largely on their own. With no clear ownership or shared authority, lasting progress remains elusive.
- This disconnect is no accident; instead, it is the product of how India's air-quality governance has taken shape. Unlike countries such as the U.S., the U.K., Japan, or China, where strong national laws and empowered regulators drove decades of steady progress, India's system has been fragmented from the start.
- The responsibility for clean air is scattered across a long list of bodies: the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change; the Central Pollution Control Board; the

State Pollution Control Boards; the Commission for Air Quality Management; the Delhi Pollution Control Committee; municipal bodies such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council; and various State departments overseeing agriculture, transport, industry and energy. Sectoral agencies such as the National Highway Authority of India, the Public Works Department, the power distribution companies, and planning authorities add yet more layers.

- Each agency oversees a slice of the problem, and no single institution holds full authority or full accountability for air-quality outcomes.
- The result is uneven enforcement across States, weak inter-state coordination in the National Capital Region, and frequent contradictions between court orders, Union government directives, and local decisions.
- Policymakers also face real constraints. The environmental powers are constitutionally shared, budgets and staffing are uneven, and judicial pressure often pushes immediate action over long-term planning.
- In a system where many actors are involved but none is empowered to lead, progress becomes slow, inconsistent, and easily overtaken by short-term, high-visibility measures that step in to fill the governance vacuum.
- The dominance of short-term measures is not simply the result of weak institutions: it reflects the incentives that drive Indian governance. Quick fixes allow governments to show visible action within a single news cycle, avoid confronting powerful sectors such as construction, transport, and agriculture, and postpone politically risky reforms. They also fit comfortably within annual budgets, unlike long-term investments in clean fuel, waste systems, or industrial upgrades.
- This is why cloud seeding, smog towers, water sprinkling, and odd-even schemes return each winter: they are inexpensive to announce, easy to deploy, and rarely provoke resistance (notwithstanding the recent protests). Tools such as anti-smog guns and festival crackdowns help officials demonstrate responsiveness, even if they do little for public health. In effect, these interventions serve the politics of pollution more than the science of it, masking structural failures with momentary action, while public exposure to harmful air remains largely unchanged.

Two traps

- Another reason India's pollution response struggles is what can be called the intellectual trap: the belief that solutions conceived within elite institutions, think-tanks, multilateral agencies, or top scientific organisations will automatically translate into effective action on the ground. Much of India's clean-air discourse is shaped by people who are analytically rigorous but often removed from the day-to-day realities of municipal administration, enforcement bottlenecks, informal economies, and political constraints. Their proposals may be technically sound, but they frequently underestimate the complexity of implementation in cities that lack staff, budgets, regulatory continuity, or even basic record-keeping. As a result, many "expert-designed" strategies rarely move beyond pilot stages or are adopted without the institutional scaffolding they need to succeed.
- This disconnect becomes clearer when these ideas encounter the lived systems that actually produce pollution: scattered governance, informal construction practices, diesel-dependent freight, fragmented land markets, and the economic pressures faced by farmers, transporters, and small industries. Elite policy frameworks tend to

assume a level of administrative capacity and social compliance that simply does not exist uniformly across Indian cities. They focus on what should work in theory rather than what can work in practice. In doing so, they risk producing policies that are ambitious on paper but unmanageable for the institutions expected to implement them.

- **The second distortion** is the Western trap: the tendency to import global “best practices” without redesigning them for Indian realities. Many of these models come from cities with abundant resources, stable public finance, strong regulatory credibility, and high institutional trust. When adopted wholesale, these approaches often carry assumptions that do not hold in India: consistent enforcement, reliable public transport, low informal activity, or predictable administrative coordination.
- Technologies and regulations that function smoothly in European or East Asian settings encounter vastly different constraints in India’s dense neighbourhoods, politically negotiated spaces and overstretched agencies. The issue is not the foreign origin of ideas but the lack of adaptation.
- Together, the intellectual trap and Western trap shape a policy environment where strategies acquire their legitimacy by sounding sophisticated or globally aligned rather than by being grounded in how Indian institutions actually work. They produce initiatives that attract attention, secure funding, and generate impressive documents, yet struggle to scale or endure. Many fade quietly after a few months when confronted with routine bureaucratic churn, unclear mandates or resistance from stakeholders whose behaviour the policy sought to change. In the process, India’s clean-air agenda becomes heavy on conceptual ambition but light on operational traction — a landscape of ideas that travel well but land poorly.

Indian constraints

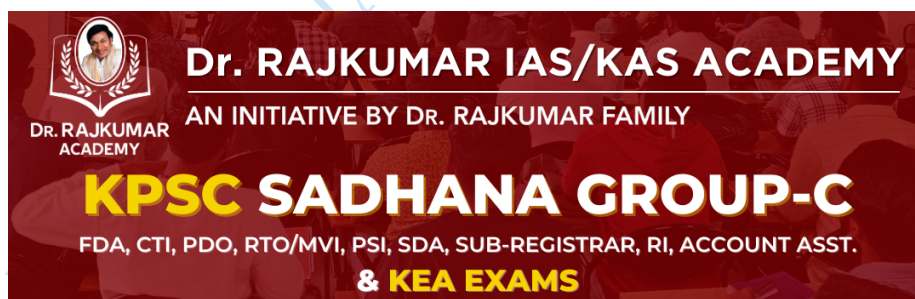
- Escaping the intellectual and Western traps means learning from global and expert ideas as well as accepting that even strong solutions must be redesigned for India’s administrative and social realities. That requires institutions capable of planning beyond election cycles, coordinating across sectors, and staying focused even when political priorities shift.
- For this, India needs clearer rules about who leads on air quality, who is accountable, and how decisions move between national, State, and municipal levels. A modern clean-air law with explicit mandates could create this basic clarity. The goal is not another powerful regulator but a coordinating body that can be trusted enough to align policies, resolve routine jurisdictional overlaps, and make sure implementation remains steady. Public access to compliance data and visible enforcement would make environmental rules credible while stable multi-year funding would allow agencies to build staff, maintain monitoring systems, and sustain long-term programmes instead of reacting to crises.
- Effective institutions also need the right expertise. India needs a professional layer of science managers, i.e. people who understand science, governance, and political constraints, and can convert knowledge into workable, context-specific decisions. Their role is not to generate more studies but to adapt existing insights to local capacity, guide ministries through complex transitions, and keep reforms coherent despite bureaucratic turnover. Without this bridging function, India’s scientific

strengths, including its models, sensors, and analytical tools, remain disconnected from day-to-day decision-making.

- What India lacks, ultimately, is not ideas but alignment: between ambition and capacity, between what experts recommend and what institutions can actually enforce. Imported frameworks and elite prescriptions often fail because they assume levels of staffing, coordination, and public compliance that vary widely across States and cities. Indian solutions must therefore begin with Indian constraints: uneven municipal capacity, informal labour markets, competing development pressures, and diverse regional priorities. Policies must be designed to be implementable, not just elegant, which means they must be built around what agencies can realistically enforce, what communities will accept, and what local budgets can support. Without this grounding, well-intentioned initiatives will continue to stall once they leave conference rooms and meet real-world conditions.

What India needs

- Clean air is not a seasonal aspiration: it is essential to public health, economic productivity and basic functioning of cities.
- India can learn from global experience and from its own scientific advances, but lasting progress depends on institutions and policies shaped for Indian conditions.
- Technology may offer moments of relief but only governance built for India's complexity can deliver durable change. The tools exist and the demand for cleaner air is unmistakable.
- Thus, what India needs now is the confidence to design solutions that reflect its own realities and the commitment to sustain them long enough to make the air genuinely breathable.



Dr. RAJKUMAR IAS/KAS ACADEMY
AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

KPSC SADHANA GROUP-C
FDA, CTI, PDO, RTO/MVI, PSI, SDA, SUB-REGISTRAR, RI, ACCOUNT ASST.
& **KEA EXAMS**

NEW BATCH COMMENCES ON
DECEMBER 29th 2025

**KAS Prelims + PSI Paper 1 +
Communication Paper**

Rs. 30,000

24,999 /-

Special
Offer

OUR RECENT GROUP-C TOPPERS



CHETAN P



SUMANASHETTY C S



NAGARAJ M



ANUPAMA M



BASAVARAJAPPA S



SUREKHA



Call Us On

9108448444 / 9444

Visit Our Website

www.drrajkumaracademy.com



❖ Panel formed to implement SEP recommendations

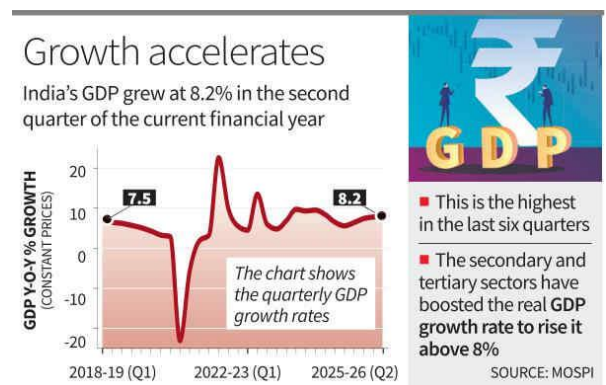
Context: The government has appointed a five-member expert committee to examine and implement recommendations related to higher education in the SEP.

- The State government has appointed a five-member expert committee headed by the Principal Secretary of the Higher Education Department to examine and implement the recommendations related to higher education in the State Education Policy (SEP) final report, submitted to the government by the SEP Commission.
- The vice-president of the Karnataka State Higher Education Council, the Commissioner of the Department of Collegiate and Technical Education and the Director of the Department of Technical Education are members of the committee, and the Special Officer of the Higher Education Department is the member-secretary.
- The committee has been given two weeks' time to submit its report to the government.
- However, educationists have objected to the fact that no expert committee has been formed to implement the recommendations related to school education. "It is doubtful that the SEP will be implemented comprehensively," an educationist said.
- **The SEP Commission, headed by educationist Sukhdeo Thorat, submitted the final report of the State Education Policy consisting of 2,197 pages to the government on August 9, 2025. The report made a total of 26 major recommendations related to primary education, 52 to higher education, and 20 recommendations to professional education.**
- "As per the interim report submitted to the government by the SEP Commission, an order has been issued with appropriate guidelines regarding the duration and syllabus of degree programmes in universities and colleges under the jurisdiction of the Higher Education Department from the year 2024-25," the order said.
- The commission has made 26 major recommendations related to school education, including the two-language policy, Kannada/mother tongue medium of instruction up to class 5 in all board schools and others. The educationists have objected to the government move of not making any proposals regarding the implementation of the recommendations for school education.
- Niranjanaradhya. V.P., development educationist, said, "Nearly 30 task force committees had worked hard for nearly two and half years to evolve a holistic State Education Policy. The policy report should be implemented in letter and spirit instead of implementing it in bits and pieces. The policy recommendations part could have been placed in the Cabinet for approval to discuss the policy document in the forthcoming legislative session. Then it would've been the State official policy document irrespective of political parties. We need a clear roadmap to implement the policy in toto."
- V. Rashmi Mahesh, Principal Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, said, "Many aspects of the SEP have already been adopted in school education system. Regarding the implementation of the remaining recommendations, a decision will be taken soon after discussing with the Minister of School Education."

❖ India posts 8.2% Q2 GDP growth, tops six quarters

Context: Manufacturing and services sectors record strong performance; GDP growth in first half of FY26 stands at 8%; Cong. questions the data, noting irony after the IMF again gave Indian statistics a 'C'.

- India's GDP grew at a six-quarter high of 8.2% in the second quarter (July-September) of the financial year 2025-26, buoyed by a relatively strong performance of the manufacturing and services sectors, official data showed.
- Data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation showed that the last time India's GDP grew faster was in the quarter ending March 2024, the final quarter of 2023-24.
- The growth in Q2 of 2025-26 was significantly faster than the 5.6% growth recorded in the corresponding quarter last year, and even faster than the 7.8% in Q1 of this year. Taken together, growth in the first half of this financial year stands at 8%.



PM's praise

- “The 8.2% GDP growth in Q2 of 2025-26 is very encouraging,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X. It reflects the impact of pro-growth policies and reforms, and the hard work of people, he said.
- However, economists say that while the real GDP growth rate — which removes the inflation effect — has been higher than expected, the relatively low nominal growth rate of 8.7% shows economic activity is still subdued.
- “The sharply higher than expected 2QFY26 GDP was broad based but comes on the back of a very low deflator,” Upasna Bhardwaj, chief economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank, said. “The single digit nominal GDP growth continues to signal tepid underlying activity.”
- According to Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis, this lower nominal GDP growth would make it more difficult for the government to achieve its fiscal deficit target of 4.4%, which had been pegged to a nominal growth of 10.1%.
- The Congress hit out, pointing out the irony of the data being released days after the IMF gave India's national accounts the second-lowest rating of 'C'. The IMF had kept the grade unchanged from the previous year.
- Speaking at a press briefing, chief economic adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran said that the economic performance in Q2 has induced the government to revise upwards its full-year growth estimate to “7% or higher”.
- “The confluence of stable inflation, sustained public capex, and reform momentum positions the economy to navigate risks, as reflected in upward revisions to FY26 growth projections by various agencies,” Mr. Nageswaran said.
- The manufacturing sector grew at a six-quarter high of 9.1% in Q2 of 2025-26, up from 7.7% in Q1. While some of this was genuine growth, the sector's performance was also bolstered by a low base effect. “Manufacturing growth of 9.1% can be corroborated by double-digit growth witnessed in corporate performance in this

quarter,” Mr. Sabnavis said. “A low base effect of 2.1% has also helped to push up the number.”

- The aggregate services sector, too, grew at a relatively robust 9.2% in Q2 of this financial year, which came on a high base of 7.2% in Q2 last year. Looking deeper, the “financial services, real estate and professional services” sub-sector grew at a nine-quarter high of 10.2%. This was followed by the “public administration, defence and other services” sub-sector, which grew at 9.7%.
- The 9.7% surge in the public administration, defence and other services segment in Q2 FY2026 was quite surprising given that the Government of India’s (GoI’s) non-interest revenue expenditure had contracted by a sharp 11.2% Year-over-Year (YoY) in the quarter, as against the 6.9% uptick seen in Q1 FY2026. The agriculture sector grew at 3.5% in Q2 of 2025-26, down from the 4.1% seen in Q2 of last year, and the 3.7% in Q1 of this year.

Opposition criticism

- “It is ironic that the quarterly GDP numbers have been released very soon after an IMF report gave the second-lowest grade of C to India’s national accounts statistics in its annual assessment of the Indian economy,” Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh posed on X.
- Mr. Ramesh added that the GDP figures are disappointing, especially due to the performance of capital investment and the usage of a low GDP deflator. “There has been no upswing in Gross Fixed Capital Formation,” Mr. Ramesh said. “High GDP growth rates are simply not sustainable in the absence of any renewed momentum in private investment. That is clearly not in evidence.”
- “The unrealistically low GDP deflator — which implies an inflation rate of only 0.5% — is at complete variance with the experiences of crores of households burdened by crushing price rise in their items of daily consumption,” he added.

❖ Nearly 100 killed as Cyclone Ditwah batters Sri Lanka

Context: Nearly 100 people have been reported dead and dozens are missing in Sri Lanka, as of Friday evening, amid incessant rain and strong winds, as Cyclone Ditwah appears to be moving north and northwest towards the coast of Tamil Nadu.

- The island has been experiencing torrential downpour over the last couple of days. According to the Department of Meteorology and the Disaster Management Centre, 20 out of Sri Lanka’s 25 districts are badly hit, with over 60,000 families and 2,00,000 people directly affected amid an island-wide “red alert”.
- Reports indicate that the impact of the extreme weather conditions is especially severe along the east coast — in Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee — as well as in the Central Province. Several areas remain heavily flooded, while roads remain inundated and inaccessible in the hill country.
- President Anura Kumara Dissanayake urged MPs from both the government and the Opposition to visit their districts and help with relief distribution while urgently ensuring public safety.
- Compensation of LKR 1 million (roughly ₹2,90,000) from the President’s Fund will be paid to the families of those who lost their lives. Further, President Dissanayake

directed tourism authorities to ensure essential services are available for foreign tourists affected by the severe weather. Aviation authorities said some flight schedules have been disrupted.

- Harrowing accounts of cars veering off roads and falling into waterways, families stuck on roads overnight, or climbing onto rooftops to survive the night amid rapidly rising water levels are being shared on social media, as authorities struggle to respond to what appears to be Sri Lanka's worst rains in recent years. As rivers overflow and water levels in reservoirs increase, authorities have also issued flood warnings in the island's southern districts.
- Schools have been ordered to remain closed, while authorities declared a holiday for government offices, barring essential services.

❖ T.N., A.P. coasts brace for impact of cyclone; IMD issues rain alert

Context: The India Meteorological Department issued red and orange alerts for various districts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh as Cyclone Ditwah continued to move over coastal Sri Lanka and the adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal.

- The cyclone is very likely to reach over southwest Bay of Bengal near north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and adjoining south Andhra Pradesh coasts, said a bulletin issued by the Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, at 6 p.m. on Friday. The RMC's projection indicates that the cyclone is likely to move parallel to the Tamil Nadu coast and is likely to lose intensity as deep depression.
- Heavy to very heavy rainfall may lash 14 districts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, on Saturday. For Sunday, Chennai and the surrounding districts are under an orange alert, with red alert for Tiruvallur and Ranipet.
- The IMD has issued an orange alert, with heavy to very heavy rainfall at one or two places, for Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore, Chittoor and Tirupati districts of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. A red alert has been issued with the possible occurrence of extremely heavy rainfall at one or two places over SPSR Nellore, Chittoor, Tirupati and Annamayya districts.

❖ Putin to visit India for annual summit next week

Context: Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a two-day visit to India from December 4 to hold annual summit talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the External Affairs Ministry announced.

- Mr. Putin will lead the Russian delegation in the 23rd India-Russia annual summit, the Ministry said. "The forthcoming state visit will provide an opportunity for the leadership of India and Russia to review progress in bilateral relations, set the vision for strengthening the 'special and privileged strategic partnership' and exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," it added.
- Mr. Putin will also meet President Droupadi Murmu, who will host a state banquet in his honour. He earlier visited India in 2021, for the 21st India-Russia annual summit.
- Russia launched the "Special Military Operation" against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, which attracted tough western sanctions on Russia, prompting a reorientation of India-Russia trade ties where energy became a major component for the first time.

- Russian energy import to India has been a major issue in India-U.S. relations since President Donald Trump imposed punitive sanctions on India in August for purchasing Russian crude oil.
- India has been calling for an end to the Ukrainian conflict, with Mr. Modi saying, “this is not the time for war”.

Trade deficit

- During Mr. Putin’s visit, New Delhi is expected to press for addressing the increasing trade deficit caused by India’s procurement of large volumes of Russian crude oil.
- The two sides are also likely to focus on deepening cooperation in areas of civil nuclear energy.
- The Kremlin said Mr. Putin’s visit carried “significant importance” as it offered an opportunity to review the entire spectrum of the special and privileged strategic partnership — from politics, trade and the economy to science, technology, and cultural and humanitarian ties.
- “The current international and regional issues will also feature prominently in the talks with the Indian delegation led by Prime Minister Modi,” it said.

❖ ‘ICDS helping more than 40 lakh women and children’

Context: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a visionary scheme to eliminate mother-child mortality and malnutrition, was benefiting more than 40 lakh women and children through 69,922 anganwadis in the State.

- He was speaking at an event to celebrate the golden jubilee of the scheme in Karnataka, organised by the Department of Women and Child Development, Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens.

‘Highest honorarium’

- “The first anganwadi in Karnataka was started at Hosahalli village in T. Narasipur taluk and operated in 33 taluks. Currently, 69,922 centres are functioning across the State,” he said.
- Terming the service of anganwadi workers and helpers ‘a noble work’, the Chief Minister pointed out that the Karnataka government provides them the highest honorarium in the country. “Although the ICDS is a Central government programme, the State government provides more funds. If ₹2,700 comes from the Centre, the State government provides ₹8,500,” he said.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah also added that the implementation of the Shakti and Gruhalakshmi schemes had led to increased women’s participation in work. He said Karnataka is among the States that have effectively implemented the ICDS programme.
- Noting that more than ₹1,04,00 crore has been spent on the guarantee schemes, he refuted the oft-repeated claim that there was any shortage of funds for development schemes. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar praised the Grihalakshmi Multipurpose Cooperative Society and the Akka Pade scheme introduced by the Women and Child Development Department, terming it a continuation of the legacy of

the Congress government which introduced legislations to ban child marriage and dowry.

- “Prime Minister Narendra Modi criticised that the guarantee schemes cannot be implemented. Today, we are directly depositing money into the accounts of 1.26 crore women. Under the leadership of Mr. Siddaramaiah, three of the five guarantee schemes have directly benefitted women,” he said.

❖ Bengaluru’s air cleanest among Indian metros, but still not ‘safe’

Context: An analysis of the Air Quality Index (AQI) across major Indian cities from 2015 to November 2025 has revealed that Bengaluru has the cleanest air among metros. However, the findings said that though Bengaluru shows the best air quality, it is still not “safe.”

- According to Climate Trends AQI data across major Indian cities from 2015 to November 2025, none of the top urban centres in India can be considered “safe” in terms of air quality.
- Climate Trends is a research-based consulting and capacity building initiative.
- “AQI remains between 65 and 90 most years, although comparatively cleaner, these values still exceed the ‘Good’ category, and rapid urbanisation and vehicle growth prevent the city from falling into safe range,” states the key finding for Bengaluru.

Delhi most polluted

- It added that Delhi remains the most polluted city throughout the study period, maintaining persistently high AQI values from peaks above 250 (2016) to levels still near 180 in 2025.
- “While there is minor year-to-year fluctuation, the city never approaches safe thresholds and continues to experience chronic poor air quality driven by vehicular emissions, industrial activity, seasonal crop burning, and geographic factors,” it added.
- It further said that while a few cities demonstrate gradual improvement over time, the overall pollution load remains high, with northern cities like Delhi, Lucknow, and Varanasi experiencing the most severe and persistent levels.
- “Southern and western cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Pune perform comparatively better but still fail to achieve truly healthy air-quality ranges. These findings highlight the continued impact of traffic emissions, industrial activity, seasonal factors, and rapid urbanisation across the country,” it said.
- Palak Balyan, research lead, Climate Trends, said, “Moving to another city for cleaner air isn’t a real solution, and most people can’t afford to do it anyway. What India needs is sustained, long-term, science-based policy reform backed by genuine political will to take tough decisions”.
- He added that air pollution affects everyone, but not equally: people who spend more time outdoors are impacted the most.

❖ Kerala Governor cannot sit on report on V-C postings: SC

Context: State tells top court that Arlekar didn't act on a list of names shortlisted by a former SC judge-led panel and forwarded by CM; SC says Governor cannot treat report as an 'ordinary piece of paper'.

- The Supreme Court took serious note of a Kerala government submission on Friday that Governor Rajendra Arlekar is “not looking” into a retired Supreme Court judge’s report on long-pending appointment of regular Vice-Chancellors to two State-run universities, forwarded to him by the Chief Minister.
- The Kerala Governor is the Chancellor of the two universities.
- A Bench led by Justice J.B. Pardiwala said the report from a former judge of the court cannot be treated by the Governor as an “ordinary piece of paper”.
- Justice Pardiwala is the author of the August 8 judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case. That verdict fixed timelines for Governors to deal with pending State Bills waiting for assent. The judgment had led to a Presidential Reference in which the Supreme Court clarified that Governors cannot be tied to time frames. The turn of events has led to public debates about gubernatorial offices weaponising delay and the consequent impact on federalism.
- The present case dealt with the prolonged impasse between the State and the Governor over the appointment of Vice-Chancellors to the APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University and the Digital Sciences University.
- The Supreme Court intervened on August 18 to appoint Justice (retired) Sudhanshu Dhulia to head a selection committee to recommend names for appointment as Vice-Chancellors of the two varsities. The court had ordered the shortlisted names to be placed before the Chief Minister for his consideration. The court had entitled the Chief Minister to recommend to the Governor the shortlisted names in order of preference.
- “It is expected of the Chancellor to look into the report of the Justice Dhulia committee and proceed further,” the court said. The Bench posted the case for hearing next week.

❖ NISAR satellite enters final science phase

Context: The NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite, launched in July, has entered the science phase, the ISRO announced.

- The earth observation satellite provides all-weather, day-and-night data, which have a wide range of applications. It is the first satellite jointly developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the U.S.’s National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).
- The NISAR mission is broadly classified into different phases – launch, deployment, commissioning and science phases. The final science operations phase begins at the end of commissioning and extends till the end of NISAR’s five-year mission life.
- “During this phase, the science orbit will be maintained via regular manoeuvres, scheduled to avoid or minimise conflicts with science observations. Extensive calibration and validation activities will take place,” the ISRO had said earlier.

- Following the successful launch of the satellite on July 30 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, the 12-metre diameter antenna reflector was successfully deployed.
- The 12-meter diameter antenna reflector plays a key role for both ISRO's S-Band and NASA's L-Band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) Payload.
- The antenna was launched in a stowed condition on a 9m-long boom, which was tucked close to the satellite. The antenna and the 9m boom was developed by NASA.

❖ Local body elections in Maharashtra, stalled since 2022, get SC green light

Context: Bench led by Chief Justice passes the order as an interim measure following a dispute over OBC representation in local bodies; SC says grassroots institutions must be revived, but directs that reservation in such bodies must not exceed 50%.

- The Supreme Court on Friday gave the green signal for holding Maharashtra local bodies elections, stalled since 2022, in a move to revive grassroots democracy in the State and transfer the running of panchayati raj institutions from bureaucrats to elected representatives.
- A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi passed the order as an interim measure in a prolonged dispute over the political representation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in local bodies.
- The court was hearing petitions claiming that the State's decision to allow 27% reservation to OBCs, on the basis of the J.K. Banthia Commission report, had led to the aggregate quota in several poll-bound local bodies crossing the 50% cut off mark.
- The Maharashtra State Election Commission, represented by senior advocate Balbir Singh, informed the court that reservation exceeded 50% in 40 out of the 246 municipal councils and 17 of the 42 nagar panchayats due for polls on December 2.
- The Bench ordered that elections to these bodies should go ahead according to the notified election schedule. However, the court clarified that the results in the 40 municipal councils and 17 nagar panchayats, where reservation breached the 50% limit, would be subject to the final outcome of the current proceedings.

Next hearing in January

- The court directed that the case be placed before a three-judge Bench on the next date of hearing on January 21, 2026. The Bench had previously remarked that it would look into whether the "grey areas" around the 50% cut off on reservation in local bodies elections ought to be referred to a Constitution Bench. The court had also asked whether "service jurisprudence" ought to be applied to elections.
- The Maharashtra State Election Commission further informed the court that the election process to 29 municipal corporations, 32 zilla panchayats and 336 panchayat samitis in the State had not yet commenced.
- The court directed that the Maharashtra State Election Commission and the State government could initiate the election process in these three categories of local bodies. However, the reservation in them must not exceed 50%.
- As far as municipal corporations were concerned, the court was apprised that only two of the 29 municipal corporations exceeded the 50% ceiling in reservation. Taking

note of the submission, the court ordered that elections to these bodies be notified without any delay and polls be held. It said the results of the two municipal corporations, where reservation exceeded 50%, would be subject to the outcome of the top court proceedings.

- “Lastly, in respect of the 32 zilla parishads and 336 panchayat samitis, it is directed that wherever the reservation does not exceed the 50% mark, let the elections be held in accordance with our previous orders,” the court ordered.
- “Institutions at the grassroots level have to be revived. People are not getting their representatives in the local bodies. All of them are being run by bureaucrats. We will allow the elections to be held,” Chief Justice Kant had clarified in an earlier hearing in November.

❖ HC quashes Lokpal proceedings against Defence Secretary

Context: The Delhi High Court on Friday quashed the proceedings initiated by the Lokpal of India against Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in a case related to alleged irregularities in promotions at the National Productivity Council (NPC).

- A Division Bench passed the orders on a plea filed by Mr. Singh and others who were accused in this case.
- The complainant had alleged irregularities in promotions conducted by the NPC on March 28, 2023 on which the Lokpal has issued inquiry orders. Mr. Singh, in his plea, had contended that the promotions in question were done before he assumed the office of Secretary of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on April 21, 2023.
- Mr. Singh stated that Lokpal’s actions were beyond its jurisdiction since the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, mandates that complaints must involve allegations of corruption or offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.
- Mr. Singh, an IAS officer of the 1989 Kerala cadre, later took charge as India’s 40th Defence Secretary on November 1, 2024.

❖ India, Russia Defence Ministers to meet, S-500 acquisition on agenda

Context: The Defence Ministers of India and Russia are set to meet on December 4 in New Delhi on the sidelines of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s state visit to India.

- A senior official confirmed that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold talks with his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov to review ongoing defence cooperation and explore new avenues of partnership.

Acquiring S-500

- According to the official, the agenda includes discussions on the timely delivery of remaining S-400 air defence systems. India is also likely to examine the possibility of acquiring additional S-400 units as well as Russia’s next-generation S-500 system — capable of intercepting ballistic missiles at ranges up to 600 km and airborne targets up to 400 km.
- The meeting is also expected to take up cooperation in shipbuilding and jointly developed weapons systems, an area both sides are looking to strengthen further.

- In June this year, Mr. Singh and Mr. Belousov met in Qingdao, China, where Moscow reaffirmed its commitment to timely S-400 deliveries. India had placed an initial order for five S-400 units, of which three have been delivered. The remaining two are scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027.
- The S-400 system has proved its strategic significance in recent Indian operations, including Operation Sindoor, and has been officially designated ‘Sudarshan Chakra’ in Indian service — after the mythological weapon of Lord Vishnu.
- The Ministry of Defence has also identified an Indian firm to set up a Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility for the S-400 system in the country.
- Addressing a public gathering in Karnataka on Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi elaborated on the vision of Mission Sudarshan Chakra, stating that it aims to build an impenetrable protective wall around key national, industrial and public sector assets. “If the enemy dares to show audacity, India’s Sudarshan Chakra will destroy them,” the Prime Minister said.
- Earlier, during his Independence Day address, Mr. Modi had announced the ambitious ‘Sudarshan Chakra Mission’, a decade-long initiative to bolster India’s national security architecture.

❖ India launches ‘Operation Sagar Bandhu’ to provide relief supplies to Sri Lanka

Context: India delivered essential relief supplies to cyclone-battered Sri Lanka with Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveying to the island nation that New Delhi stands ready provide more aid to it to deal with the situation.

- New Delhi launched “Operation Sagar Bandhu” to assist Sri Lanka in its hour of crisis and the first tranche of relief materials were handed after the consignments were transported by Indian Navy’s aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and frontline ship INS Udaygiri.



Navy officers handing over humanitarian aid from India to Sri Lanka as part of ‘Operation Sagar Bandhu’ in Colombo. PTI

- “My heartfelt condolences to the people of Sri Lanka who have lost their loved ones due to Cyclone Ditwah. I pray for the safety, comfort and swift recovery of all affected families,” Mr. Modi said on social media. “Guided by India’s Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR, India continues to stand firmly with Sri Lanka in its hour of need,” he added.
- Mr. Modi announced the MAHASAGAR (Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision for India’s engagement with the Global South during his visit to Mauritius in March.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that Operation Sagar Bandhu had commenced and further steps were under way.
- **India’s first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, and latest indigenous stealth frigate INS Udaygiri are in Sri Lanka to participate at a three-day International Fleet Review (IFR) that began.**
- Sri Lankan defence officials said INS Vikrant was formally requested for use of its aircraft for relief operations.

❖ Delay in getting syntactic foam hits Samudrayaan

Context: India plans to send a manned submersible 6,000 metres into the ocean, a mission that is crucial to future explorations; a syntactic foam cladding will give the submersible buoyancy, help it float.

- A crucial set of tests on the Samudrayaan, India's first manned-submersible dive into the ocean, is likely only mid-next year following a delay in the procurement of syntactic foam cladding from France.
- The Samudrayaan consists of a sphere capable of plunging to a depth of 6,000 metres into the ocean. Only a handful of countries have dived to comparable depths. A crew of three will man this submersible, which will descend to the ocean floor, scour it, and collect soil and rock samples. The mission is deemed as pivotal to India's future exploration plans to mine precious metals from the high seas.
- As a prelude to this, scientists from the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, who are leading the project, have built a steel replica of the submersible that is to be used as a simulator for all the tests required prior to the final mission. Though simulations have been conducted on this sphere to depths of 100 metres, a final set of trials — that involves sending the submersible down to 500 metres — is on the anvil. It was originally scheduled for December 2024.
- “Before the 500-metre dive, the (steel) submersible has to be fitted with syntactic foam, which is what gives the submersible buoyancy and allows it to float. This is developed in France and being tested in Norway and after that will be fitted onto our submersible,” M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, told The Hindu. The Ministry is the parent body of NIOT. “Hopefully, it should be delivered by the end of the year.”
- Once these tests are done, the final titanium hull — that will be the one to make the final 6,000-metre dive — will be sent to Russia where it will be tested, in a laboratory, for its ability to withstand the pressure of the ocean at 6,000 metres. “We have already accounted for this but this test is required,” he added. The same syntactic foam will be fitted onto the titanium sphere.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation is making two titanium hulls for NIOT. “Once these tests are done, we hope to conduct the 500-metre dive by April next year,” Mr. Ravichandran added.



A prototype of the MATSYA 6000, a submersible made by the National Institute of Ocean Technology in Chennai. The final version is expected to undertake a journey to a depth of 6,000 metres. R. RAVICHANDRAN

❖ Rajnath says India emerging as a global voice of responsibility

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that India's economic growth, technological progress, and principled foreign policy had positioned it as a “voice of balance and responsibility” amid global flux.

- Speaking at the Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2025 in New Delhi, held on the theme “Reform to Transform – Sashakt, Surakshit, aur Viksit Bharat”, the Minister said nations across the Indo-Pacific and the Global South saw India as a reliable and trusted partner.

- He underlined that India was shaping global conversations with “responsibility, strategic autonomy and confidence” rooted in civilisational values. The trust earned internationally, he said, stemmed from path-breaking reforms, India’s consistent stand for sovereignty, and commitment to a rules-based order.

Reforms key

- Mr. Singh cautioned that an era marked by terrorism, cross-border extremism, attempts to alter the status quo, maritime pressures, and information warfare demanded constant vigilance and clarity of purpose.
- In this environment, reforms were no longer optional but a strategic necessity, strengthening institutions, increasing force agility, and enabling India to shape its own destiny.
- Listing the government’s key initiatives, he said India was modernising its armed forces, reforming procurement to ensure “speed, transparency and accountability”, and building a robust defence industrial ecosystem through Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Investments in start-ups, deep-tech and research and development were under way to prepare for future battlefields, alongside efforts to expand border and maritime infrastructure and ensure the welfare of soldiers, veterans, and their families.

❖ Navy to hold International Fleet Review in Visakhapatnam in Feb.

Context: The Indian Navy will organise the International Fleet Review (IFR) in February 2026 in Visakhapatnam. The exercise seeks to reinforce the themes of being “United through Oceans” and strengthening “Bridges of Friendship”.

- Commander Sreehari S., posted at INS Agrani in Coimbatore, said India last conducted an IFR in 2001 to mark 50 years of the Republic. The 2026 edition coincides with the 75th anniversary.
- said the maritime domain had become central to India’s foreign policy and strategic outreach. With threats such as piracy, climate change, illegal fishing, and economic inequality growing, multilateralism had emerged as indispensable to collective security and sustainable growth.
- Maritime challenges transcend borders, making collaboration essential. Hence, India had positioned the Navy as a key architect of multilateral engagement, he said.
- New Delhi’s efforts to strengthen regional maritime capacities include gifting platforms such as a corvette to Vietnam, fast interceptor craft to Mozambique, and commissioning a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka. India’s reputation as a dependable partner is shaped by its Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief responses across the Indo-Pacific.
- In October, while addressing senior military leaders of UN Troop Contributing Countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reiterated India’s commitment to a rules-based international order and called for reforming outdated multilateral structures. Naval diplomacy, he said, remained a vital component of India’s strategic toolkit. The India-China dynamic in the Indian Ocean Region, marked by intense competition without naval confrontation, reflected the importance of calibrated maritime engagement.

- Today, the Navy participates in nearly 20 bilateral exercises, including SIMBEX, Varuna and CORPAT, and several multilateral engagements such as QUAD, MILAN, Malabar and Konkan. Institutions such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, launched in 2008, have evolved into platforms for dialogue, coordination and cooperative security planning.

❖ WHO calls on countries to make fertility care safer and affordable

Context: The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on countries to make fertility care safer, fairer, and more affordable for all in its first-ever global guideline for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infertility.

- The guideline includes 40 recommendations that seek to strengthen the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infertility. It promotes cost-effective options at every stage, while advocating for the integration of fertility care into national health strategies, services, and financing.
- stresses the need to tackle leading risk factors for infertility, including untreated sexually transmitted infections and tobacco use. Lifestyle interventions, such as healthy diet, physical activity, and tobacco cessation, are recommended for individuals and couples planning or attempting pregnancy. Informing people about fertility and infertility early can assist them in making reproductive plans.

Limited access

- The WHO notes that while demand for services is rising worldwide, access to care remains severely limited. “In many countries, tests and treatments for infertility are largely funded out-of-pocket — often resulting in catastrophic financial expenditures. In some settings, even a single round of in vitro fertilization (IVF) can cost double the average annual household income,” said a release issued by the organization.
- The guidelines also provide guidance on steps for effective clinical management of infertility and call for increased investment in prevention measures, including dissemination of information on fertility and infertility in schools, primary healthcare, and reproductive health facilities.
- The guidelines suggest how to progressively advance treatment options from simpler management strategies to more complex treatment courses such as intrauterine insemination or IVF. Recognising the emotional toll of infertility, which can lead to depression and anxiety, the guidelines emphasise the need to ensure ongoing access to psychosocial support for all those affected.
- The WHO is encouraging countries to adapt the recommendations to their local contexts and to monitor progress.

❖ Reserve Bank issues 244 consolidated master directions

Context: The directions consolidate all regulatory instructions issued to the REs over several decades and replace 9,446 circulars that are being repealed.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday issued 244 consolidated Master Directions (MD) after undertaking a review of approximately 3,500 directions, circulars, and guidelines issued over the years, in order to reduce compliance burden on the Regulated Entities (REs).

- “These 244 MDs consolidate all the regulatory instructions issued to the REs over several decades and are currently administered by the Department of Regulation,” said Deputy Governor Shirish Chandra Murmu. Instructions had been issued separately for 11 types of regulated entities and cohesively organised across various regulatory areas.
- The 11 regulated entities include commercial banks, small finance banks, payments banks, local area banks, regional rural banks, urban cooperative banks, rural cooperative banks, all India financial institutions, non-banking financial companies, asset reconstruction companies, and credit information companies.
- Mr. Murmu said 9,446 circulars are being repealed or withdrawn following the issue of these consolidated MDs.
- The consolidated master directions have been drafted in a continuous flow approach, wherein the major elements of master directions had been included in the main body.
- Regulatory instructions have been organised into separate master directions for each type of regulated entity on each regulatory area or function.
- In addition, residual regulatory instructions have been consolidated in a separate miscellaneous master directions for each regulated entity, he said.
- Instructions pertaining to the responsibilities of the boards have been segregated at a single place in each master direction. Advisory elements have been included as part of the main text using appropriate language, conveying the advisory nature of the instructions.

❖ **RBI issues final norms for digital banking channels**

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday issued final guidelines for digital banking channels, making it mandatory for banks to obtain explicit consent from the customer for providing digital banking services which may be duly recorded/documentated.

- As per the guidelines, banks cannot make it mandatory for customers to opt for any digital banking channel to avail facilities like debt cards.
- “While it may be more convenient for the customer to opt for some services together (for example, virtual access to card controls), the choice to apply for digital banking facilities shall lie solely with the customer. However, it is clarified banks can continue to obtain and record mobile numbers of customers to send transaction alerts and other purposes in line with KYC requirements at the time of opening the accounts,” the RBI said.

Risk mitigation

- Banks will need to put in place appropriate risk mitigation measures in accordance with policies like transaction limit (per transaction, daily, weekly, monthly), transaction velocity limit, fraud checks, etc. depending on their risk perception.
- “It is clarified wherever specific requirements have been prescribed by the Reserve Bank or payment system operators (for example, NPCI, card networks like VISA, Mastercard, etc.), the stricter requirements of the two shall be applicable. Banks shall ensure continuous compliance with instructions issued by DPSS under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 in this regard as updated from time to time,” the RBI said.

- Banks offering mobile banking service (other than via mobile applications) must ensure customers across mobile network operators can avail of the service, i.e., the service must be network independent.
- Banks are required put in place risk-based transaction monitoring and surveillance mechanism.
- “Study of customer transaction behaviour pattern and monitoring unusual transactions or obtaining prior confirmation from customers for outlier transactions may be incorporated in the systems in accordance with the Fraud Risk Management Policy of the bank.”
- Third-party products and services, including those of promoter groups or bank group entities (subsidiaries/joint ventures/associates), cannot be displayed on banks’ digital banking channels except as specifically permitted by the Reserve Bank from time to time.
- Banks have to clearly communicate SMS/email alerts will be sent to the mobile number/email of the customer registered with the bank.

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

Why choose Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy?

