The Cavalier

CDS Weekly Current-Affairs Digest | 21–27 September 2026

Welfare (1)

- **WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 — India Tenth**
  Body: The event: 48th WorldSkills Competition, **Shanghai 2026**, held **22-27 September 2026**; competition itself **23-26 September**
  India's result: 10th place, **6 Silver Medals**, **20 Medallions for Excellence**
  Previous edition: WorldSkills Lyon 2024 — India **13th**, with **4 Bronze** and **12 Medallions for Excellence**
  Scale: over **1,400 competitors** from around **70 countries and regions**
  India's contingent: largest ever — **70 competitors** across **63 skills**
  Silver medallists: Smriti Nambiar (Bakery, also **Best of Nation**), Mohammed Salam (Dental Prosthetics), Kovid Ajay Gangrade (Digital Interactive Media Design), Parth Vohra (Industrial Design Technology), Mehrunissa Begum (Logistics and Freight Forwarding), Saniya Joshi (Retail Sales)
  Medal vs Medallion: medals are by **rank** within a skill; a **Medallion for Excellence** recognises meeting a **high absolute standard** against internationally established WorldSkills standards — not a finishing position
  Why the Medallion count matters: it measures the **depth** of the training pipeline rather than the brilliance of its best individual — twelve at Lyon to twenty at Shanghai
  Competitor age: typically under 23 in most skills
  Assessment: each skill has a **Test Project** and detailed marking scheme, judged to industry tolerances
  Eleven new categories entered: Dental Prosthetics, Digital Interactive Media Design, Intelligent Security Technology, Landscape Gardening, Optoelectronic Technology, Retail Sales, Unmanned Aerial Systems, Industrial Mechanics, Software Testing, Heavy Vehicle Technology, Aircraft Maintenance
  People: Jayant Chaudhary, MoS (IC) Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; **Manisha Sensarma**, Official Delegate, WorldSkills India
  Institutional set: MSDE (created 2014), **NSDC** (funding and coordination), **NCVET** (regulation and standards), **Sector Skill Councils** (occupational standards), **ITIs** (craftsman training), **PMKVY** (short-term skilling); **WorldSkills India** under NSDC
  Exam hook: Distinguish by ministry: DDU-GKY — Rural Development, placement-linked, rural poor youth; **PM Vishwakarma** — MSME, artisans; **PMKVY** — MSDE, broad short-term

Polity/Bodies (2)

- **IMEI Tampering, Sanchar Saathi and Device Setu**
  Body: The document: PIB backgrounder, 23 September 2026 — *IMEI Tampering: Threat to Digital Sovereignty*
  Scale: India's active wireless mobile subscriber base reached **1,204.01 million in July 2026**
  IMEI: International Mobile Equipment Identity, a **15-digit** number identifying a **device** (not a subscriber)
  TAC: the first **8 digits** form the **Type Allocation Code**, identifying the device model or type
  Allocation: the **GSMA** allocates TACs to manufacturers and brand owners, who assign unique IMEIs to devices
  Dual-SIM phone: generally has **two** IMEI numbers
  Check your own: dial ***#06#**
  Verify: Sanchar Saathi portal or app, or SMS **KYM <15-digit IMEI>** to **14422**
  Unlawful tampering: intentionally removing, obliterating, changing or altering the number; or using, producing, trafficking in, controlling or possessing hardware or software configured to do so
  Registration portal: Device Setu – Indian Counterfeited Device Restriction (ICDR)
  Manufacturers: register IMEIs before first sale, testing, research or other use
  Importers: register IMEIs before importing applicable equipment
  Resellers and retailers: ensure valid, untampered IMEIs; verify used devices against the central database of tampered and blacklisted devices, against a fee
  Brand owners: register brands on Device Setu–ICDR, linked to the relevant GSMA TAC
  CEIR: Central Equipment Identity Register — the database used to check and block devices
  Blocking sequence: police report → duplicate SIM (SMS restricted for the first 24 hours under TRAI regulations) → register on Sanchar Saathi (CEIR) with police report and ID → receive Request ID → report recovery to police, then unblock with the Request ID
  DoT warns against: SIM boxes and devices with configurable or tampered IMEIs; SIMs obtained by fake documents or impersonation; transferring one's SIM to another person; modifying Calling Line Identity
  Exam hook: Regulator split: TRAI regulates the service (tariffs, quality, commercial communication); DoT administers the network, licensing and device identity

- ### ECI Decisions on SIR — BLO Home Visits

Body: The meeting: Election Commission of India, **26 September 2026**
Core decision: where a notice has been issued during SIR for being **unmapped** or for **logical discrepancies**, **BLOs will visit homes** to collect documents and upload to **ECINet** for the **ERO** to decide; such persons **need not attend the ERO or AERO office**
Hearings: only in exceptional circumstances as the ERO decides, and then **preferably online**; **any adult family member** may be authorised to attend
For the homeless and poor: DEOs to create help desks and hold **special camps** for people in night shelters, labourers, the poor and the homeless
SIR: verification and rebuilding of electoral rolls through house-to-house enumeration, pre-filled forms and verification of earlier data — removing deceased, shifted, duplicate and non-citizen entries while not excluding eligible citizens
Statutory power: Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950
Announced: 27 October 2025 by CEC **Gyanesh Kumar**; all **28 States and 8 UTs** in **three phases**; **Phase III** covers **16 States and 3 UTs**
Scale so far: nearly **59 crore electors** across the first two phases; over **6.3 lakh BLOs** and about **9.2 lakh BLAs**
The officer chain: BLO collects → **ERO** decides (assisted by **AEROs**) → **DEO** coordinates the district → **CEO** heads the State or UT → **ECI** supervises under **Article 324**
BLAs: appointed by **political parties**, not by the Commission
ECINet review: Committee headed by a **Senior Deputy Election Commissioner** with an **independent expert from an IIT or IIIT**, to verify compliance with the Acts and Rules; new IT modules to go through the **Committee of Officers** before approval
Forms: Form 6 new inclusion, **Form 6A** overseas elector, **Form 7** objection or deletion, **Form 8** correction, transposition or EPIC replacement; the **declaration attached to Form 6** for SIR upheld by the **Supreme Court**
Non-SIR period: forms under the **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960** apply
Deadline extensions: Delhi — claims and objections to **30 October 2026**, disposal to **30 November 2026**; **Maharashtra** — claims and objections to **12 October 2026**, disposal to **10 November 2026**
Exam hook: Also decided: agendas circulated in advance and minutes issued for all Commission meetings; **APARs** completed by **31 December** each year

Economy (7)

- ### CSR under Section 135, Companies Act 2013

Body: The statute: Section 135, Companies Act, 2013 — India among the first large economies to make CSR a statutory obligation
Thresholds (preceding financial year, any ONE suffices): net worth Rs 500 crore or more, **or** turnover Rs 1,000 crore or more, **or** net profit Rs 5 crore or more
The spend: at least 2 per cent of average net profits of the three immediately preceding financial years
Loss-making company: no obligation — CSR is a claim on profit, not revenue
CSR Committee: of the Board; not required where the obligation does not exceed Rs 50 lakh
Permitted activities: must fall within Schedule VII
Excluded: activities in the normal course of business; contributions to any political party
Unspent, ongoing project: transfer to Unspent CSR Account within 30 days of financial year end; spend within 3 financial years
Unspent, not an ongoing project: transfer to a Schedule VII fund within 6 months of financial year end
Schedule VII funds include: PM National Relief Fund, PM CARES, Clean Ganga Fund
Regime change: "comply or explain" until the amended provisions took effect on 22 January 2021, then "comply or suffer", with penalties
Coal India: Rs 7,276 crore spent against Rs 5,795 crore statutory requirement, FY 2014-15 to FY 2025-26; annual outlay now near Rs 1,000 crore
CIL before the Act: Community Development Policy, 2005; 8 km radius; Rs 82 crore (FY 2011-12) to Rs 409 crore (FY 2013-14)
CIL policy layer: at least 80 per cent within 25 km of mines, prioritising Project Affected Areas; more than 90 per cent in coal-bearing States
Exam hook: CIL flagships: NIRMAN (1,300+ aspirants), Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (1,000+ transplants), Nanha Sa Dil; 50,000+ school toilets under Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan

- ### Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey, NSO

Body: The release: 23 September 2026, MoSPI — findings of the Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES), report titled 'Domestic Tourism in India'
Conducted by: National Statistics Office (NSO), as part of the **NSS 80th round**, July 2025 to June 2026
Three reference frames: overnight trips in last 365 days (holidaying/leisure; pilgrimage and religious; health and medical; shopping); overnight trips in last 30 days (business; social; education and training; others); same-day trips in last 30 days
Why two windows: rare, memorable trips are recalled accurately over a year; frequent routine trips are not, so they are asked over 30 days
365-day window — trips per 100 tourist households: 127 rural (118 in 2014-15), 132 urban (121 in 2014-15)
Largest share of overnight trips: pilgrimage and religious, **48 per cent**, in both sectors
Second largest: health and medical **38.4 per cent** (rural); holidaying, leisure and recreation **36.4 per cent** (urban)
Highest expenditure category: health and medical — Rs 29,454 rural, Rs 41,649 urban
Average trip size: 2.03 overnight visitors; about 80 per cent stayed five days or less
Peak months for holidaying: May and October
Mode: bus 32 per cent (rural), train 35 per cent (urban)
Stay: hotels and guesthouses 36 per cent (urban); other non-commercial stays 28 per cent (rural)
Destination share (365-day): Uttar Pradesh 15.7 per cent, Tamil Nadu 13.4 per cent, Rajasthan 8.0 per cent
30-day window: 113 rural / 111 urban per 100 tourist households; **social 89 per cent**; average trip size 1.95; about 45 per cent of visitor-trips 2-3 days; bus 48 per cent rural and 44 per cent urban; stays mainly with friends and relatives
Destination share (30-day): Uttar Pradesh 15.5 per cent, Bihar 10.5 per cent, Tamil Nadu 9.6 per cent
Highest average expenditure per trip: business, Rs 5,949; by sector Rs 5,179 rural and Rs 6,934 urban
Same-day trips: social 33 per cent, shopping 26 per cent — shopping had the highest expenditure share in both sectors
Exam hook: Definitions: a visitor travels outside the **usual environment** for less than a year for any purpose other than employment there; a **Tourism Satellite Account** estimates tourism from the demand side

- ### Edible Oil Duty Cut and Tariff Escalation

Body: The decision: 24 September 2026 — Basic Customs Duty reduced on major imported crude edible oils
Crude sunflower oil: 10 per cent → **nil**
Crude soybean oil and crude palm oil: 10 per cent → **5 per cent**
Refined oils: duties also reduced, but the **19.25 per cent crude-refined differential maintained**
Purpose of the cut: moderate domestic prices and contain food-price and general inflation
Purpose of the differential: support domestic refining capacity, discourage refined-oil imports, retain value addition in India
Tariff escalation: a duty structure in which the rate rises with the degree of processing; protects the domestic processing activity rather than the raw material
Effective rate of protection: protection measured on **value added** rather than on the finished good's nominal duty
Import dependence: India met only about **44 per cent** of edible oil demand domestically in recent estimates
Import basket: palm oil roughly **55-60 per cent** of edible oil imports
Sources: palm from **Indonesia and Malaysia**; soybean from **Argentina and Brazil**; sunflower from **Ukraine, Russia and Argentina**
Supply shock precedent: the 2022 Ukraine war disruption to sunflower oil
Structural instruments: National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) and National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds
The three-way conflict: consumers want low prices, oilseed farmers want high prices, refiners want the differential
Pass-through: an advisory was issued to industry to revise **Price to Distributors (PTD)** and **MRP**; pass-through is not automatic because of old stock and asymmetric price adjustment
Exam hook: Division of labour: duties manage prices now; missions change dependence later

- **Make in India at Twelve Years**
  Body: Launched: 25 September 2014; completed **twelve years** on 25 September 2026
  Original scope: 25 priority sectors
  Make in India 2.0: 27 sectors — 15 manufacturing and 12 services
  Guiding phrase: 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'
  Stated objective: raise manufacturing's share of GDP from about **17 per cent to 25 per cent**, originally by **2022**, later deferred; and create **100 million** manufacturing jobs
  Outcome on the headline target: the share has **not risen** — broadly flat in the high-teens or slightly lower than 2013-14, depending on the measure
  Why the ratio did not move: manufacturing must grow **faster than the rest of the economy** to gain share, and services grew quickly; absolute growth is consistent with a falling share
  Premature deindustrialisation: the manufacturing share peaking at a lower level and earlier stage than for earlier industrialisers
  Where composition did change: electronics (phones assembled and exported at scale), defence production and exports, semiconductors from absent to under construction, bulk drugs
  The value-addition question: assembly captures a thin slice of device value; components and semiconductors capture the rest — hence later component-focused schemes
  Supporting machinery: PLI schemes, **NSWS** single window, **PM GatiShakti** (GIS-based master plan), **India Industrial Land Bank**
  How PLI differs from pre-1991 policy: incentive on **incremental sales of goods manufactured in India**, with investment and output thresholds — subsidy follows **output**, not licence; contrast with protection through tariffs and licensing
  Criticisms of PLI: sector selectivity, disbursement lagging approvals, and uncertain **additionality**
  Binding constraints on manufacturing share: land and scale, labour regulation and firm size, logistics cost, power reliability, tariffs on intermediate inputs
  Exam hook: Labour Codes: four codes, in force since November 2025

- **H2 FY 2026-27 Government Borrowing Plan**
  Body: The announcement: 25 September 2026 — Government of India, in consultation with the **RBI**
  H2 FY 2026-27 borrowing: Rs 7,86,000 crore, through **23 weekly auctions**
  Includes: Rs 15,000 crore of **Sovereign Green Bonds**
  Full-year market borrowing through dated securities: expected **Rs 15,99,506 crore** against **Budget Estimates of Rs 17,20,000 crore**
  Tenors: 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 30, 40 and 50 years
  Shares: 3-yr 6.9%, 5-yr 12.1%, 7-yr 9.1%, **10-yr 26.3%**, 15-yr 17.6%, 30-yr 9.2%, 40-yr 8.9%, 50-yr 9.9%
  T-Bills, Q3 FY 2026-27: Rs 23,000 crore per week over **13 auction weeks** — 91-day Rs 8,000 crore, 182-day Rs 8,000 crore, 364-day Rs 7,000 crore
  Dated securities: long-term, pay a **coupon**, repay principal at maturity
  Treasury bills: 91, 182 and 364 days; pay no interest; issued at a **discount** and redeemed at face value
  Fiscal deficit: total expenditure minus total receipts excluding borrowings — the amount that must be borrowed this year
  RBI's role: debt manager — conducts auctions and manages the programme; it does not ordinarily lend the money, since that would be **monetising** the deficit
  Why the 10-year matters: its yield is the **benchmark risk-free rate** for the financial system
  Why borrow long: reduces **rollover risk** by spreading redemptions; the cost is a higher yield
  Who buys ultra-long bonds: insurers and pension funds, matching long-dated liabilities
  Greenshoe option: retain up to **Rs 2,000 crore** additional subscription per security beyond the notified amount
  Switch and buyback: liability management to **smoothen the redemption profile**; they do not reduce total debt
  Ways and Means Advances: RBI facility for **temporary cash mismatches**, repayable within the year — **not** deficit financing; H2 limit **Rs 50,000 crore**
  Crowding out: government borrowing competing with private borrowers for the same savings, potentially raising yields
  Exam hook: Constitutional basis: Article 292 (Union borrowing), **Article 293** (State borrowing); **FRBM Act, 2003**

- **World Tourism Day 2026 and India's Tourism Economy**
  Body: World Tourism Day: observed annually on **27 September**; **2026 theme** — "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism"; official host **El Salvador**
  International body: UN Tourism, formerly the **UNWTO**, a UN specialised agency headquartered at **Madrid**
  India's tourism share of GDP: 5.22 per cent (2023-24)
  Employment supported: 8.46 crore jobs (2023-24)
  Domestic Tourist Visits: 428.55 crore in 2025
  Foreign Tourist Visits: 2.53 crore — a ratio of roughly **170 domestic visits to one foreign visit**
  Foreign exchange earnings from tourism: Rs 2,76,831 crore
  Global: travel and tourism contributed **US$10.9 trillion**, about **10 per cent of global GDP**, in 2024; **357 million jobs**; **US$1.9 trillion** international visitor spending
  India's share is about half the global share — a feature of being a large diversified economy, not necessarily a failure
  Why employment matters most: tourism is labour-intensive, geographically dispersed and accessible at low formal qualification — but correspondingly informal, seasonal and shock-prone
  Foreign exchange earnings are an export of services: they sit in the services account of the balance of payments and feed the **invisibles** surplus; Indians travelling abroad are an import of services
  Digital components: e-Visa (entry facilitation), **Incredible India Digital Platform** (promotion), **NIDHI+** — National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (registration and data)
  Plausible AI applications: demand forecasting, personalisation, translation, crowd management — none of which addresses physical constraints of access, accommodation and sanitation
  Swadesh Darshan 2.0: destination development, restructured from thematic circuits to a **destination-centric** model
  PRASHAD: National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive — pilgrimage sites
  Exam hook: Also named: cruise tourism development and tourism skill development

- **Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool and P&I Clubs**
  Body: BMIP: Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool — India's first domestic maritime insurance pool
  Approved: 18 April 2026; **launched:** 12 May 2026
  Size: Rs 13,906.50 crore (about USD 1.5 billion); **sovereign backing Rs 12,980 crore (about USD 1.4 billion)**
  Cover: Hull & Machinery, **Cargo** (war perils in high-risk areas), **Protection & Indemnity (P&I)**, **War risks**
  Eligibility: Indian-flagged vessels; vessels owned, managed or controlled by Indian entities; cargo vessels destined to or starting from India
  Claims ladder: up to **USD 100 million** from pool reserves; above that, **sovereign guarantees**
  Mechanism: policies issued by domestic insurers, risks collectively reinsured across members per their commitments
  Premium outflow addressed: about **USD 45-60 million a year** in P&I premiums to foreign providers
  Hull & Machinery: insures the **ship**; exposure capped by vessel value
  Cargo: insures the **goods**, held by the cargo owner
  P&I: third-party liability — pollution, wreck removal, collision liability, crew injury and death, cargo claims; liability can far exceed the ship's value
  War Risk: war, piracy, terrorism, seizure — excluded from standard marine policies
  P&I clubs: mutual associations owned by shipowners, not commercial insurers; claims above a threshold shared across clubs in a common pool, with reinsurance above
  International Group of P&I Clubs: insures roughly **90 per cent of the world's ocean-going tonnage**; around a dozen clubs after mergers, concentrated in Western maritime centres
  Why insurance is strategic: an uninsured ship cannot trade — ports refuse entry, charterers refuse cargo, and conventions require certified liability cover; withdrawal of cover achieves what a blockade achieves
  The 2026 trigger: Red Sea conflict and Strait of Hormuz tension led to sharply higher premiums or withdrawal of war-risk cover
  India's maritime scale: 12 Major and 217 Non-Major Ports; **1,668 million metric tonnes** cargo in 2025-26; coastline about **11,098 km**; **EEZ 2.4 million sq km**; inland waterways over **14,500 km**; over **30 million** maritime livelihoods
  Indian-flag fleet: 1,609 ships, **14.33 million GT** mid-2026, about **36 per cent** more tonnage than 2015
  Exam hook: The decisive ratio: 95 per cent of trade by value and **70 per cent by volume** moves by sea

IR/Diplomacy (4)

- **India-New Zealand FTA — Entry into Force**
  Body: Signed: 27 April 2026, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi — Piyush Goyal and Todd McClay
  Enters into force: 20 October 2026 (Vijaya Dashami)
  New Zealand legislation passed: mid-September 2026, by 93 votes to 29
  New Zealand's schedule: 100% of India's tariff lines duty-free from day one; NZ peak tariffs up to 10% eliminated
  India's schedule: 70.03% of tariff lines liberalised, covering about 95% of bilateral trade value; 29.97% kept out
  New Zealand exports entering India duty-free on day one: about 57%
  Excluded by India: dairy, animal meat except sheep, sugar, edible oils, key agricultural commodities
  Calibrated access: tariff rate quotas with minimum import price and seasonal windows for apples, kiwifruit, Manuka honey
  Services: about 118 sectors; MFN across about 139 sub-sectors
  Mobility: 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry visas; 1,000 Work and Holiday visas; post-study work 3 years STEM, 4 years doctoral
  Pharma: New Zealand accepts US FDA, EMA, UK MHRA and Health Canada inspection approvals
  Investment: commitment to facilitate USD 20 billion into India
  Bilateral merchandise trade: about USD 1.1 billion (2025-26); Roadmap to 2030 target NZ$7 billion goods and services
  Exam hook: Strategic Partnership: announced during PM's July 2026 visit, first by an Indian PM in 40 years

- **7th OPEC-India Energy Dialogue**
  Body: The meeting: 7th High-Level Meeting, OPEC-India Energy Dialogue, New Delhi, 22 September 2026
  Co-chairs: Hardeep Singh Puri (Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas) and Haitham Al Ghais (OPEC Secretary General)
  Dialogue launched: New Delhi, 2015 — eleven years old
  Next meeting: 8th High-Level Meeting, at Vienna
  OPEC founded: Baghdad Conference, 10-14 September 1960; formally constituted January 1961
  Five founders: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Venezuela
  Headquarters: Geneva 1960-65, then Vienna
  Membership: 12, after Angola left in January 2024; Qatar left 2019
  OPEC+: OPEC plus non-member producers, Russia foremost
  Instrument: production quotas; weaknesses are individual incentive to overproduce and supply response from non-members
  India's import dependence: roughly 85 per cent or more of crude consumed
  Top suppliers: Russia about 31 per cent, Iraq about 21 per cent, then Saudi Arabia, UAE, United States, Kuwait
  Strategic petroleum reserve: Visakhapatnam, Mangalore, Padur
  Demand-side substitution: Ethanol Blended Petrol, compressed biogas, electrification
  Exam hook: India's net-zero year: 2070

- **East Asia Summit and ASEAN-India Economic Ministers**
  Body: The meetings: 14th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers' Meeting and 23rd ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultation, at **Manila, Philippines**
  India led by: Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce
  ASEAN now has ELEVEN members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, **Timor-Leste**, Vietnam
  Timor-Leste: admitted at the **47th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur, October 2025**; applied in **2011**; first expansion since **Cambodia in 1999**
  ASEAN founded: Bangkok Declaration, **8 August 1967**, by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand; Secretariat at **Jakarta**
  Accessions: Brunei 1984, Vietnam 1995, Laos and Myanmar 1997, Cambodia 1999, Timor-Leste 2025
  East Asia Summit: established **2005**; **United States and Russia joined in 2011**
  EAS partners (8): India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, United States — eighteen participants before Timor-Leste's accession
  ASEAN centrality: the EAS is chaired by ASEAN and meets on the margins of the ASEAN Summit; the same principle underlies the ASEAN Regional Forum and ADMM-Plus
  ERIA: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia — presented a paper on energy security and industrial clusters
  India-ASEAN trade 2025-26: USD 128.38 billion, or **10.55 per cent** of India's total global trade
  AITIGA: ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement, signed **2009**, in force **2010**; review ongoing
  India's three complaints: asymmetric utilisation of concessions; loose **rules of origin** enabling trade deflection; **non-tariff barriers**
  Act East Policy: 2014 reformulation of the **Look East Policy** begun in **1992**
  Connectivity projects behind schedule: India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway; Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project
  Exam hook: RCEP: India withdrew in 2019

- **WHO Pandemic Agreement and PABS**
  Body: The meeting: UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, New York, **25 September 2026**
  India represented by: Union Health Secretary **Punya Salila Srivastava**
  WHO Pandemic Agreement: adopted by the **78th World Health Assembly on 20 May 2025**, after more than three years of negotiation
  Article 12: provides for a **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS)** system, set out in an Annex
  Critical procedural fact: the Agreement **does not open for signature** until the PABS Annex is adopted; it is being negotiated in an **Intergovernmental Working Group**
  India's demand: countries contributing pathogens and biological resources must receive **timely access** to vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics and technologies, respecting **national sovereignty**
  India's procedural point: the political declaration should **not prejudge** the PABS negotiations
  The precedent: Indonesia's withholding of **H5N1** samples in **2007**, and COVID-19 vaccine distribution
  Structural parallel: the **Nagoya Protocol** under the **Convention on Biological Diversity** — prior informed consent, mutually agreed terms, equitable benefit-sharing
  International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005: the existing binding instrument on detection, assessment, notification and response; contains the **PHEIC** mechanism; **amendments adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2024**
  The distinction: IHR govern **notification and response**; the Pandemic Agreement governs **equity and access**
  India's COVID record cited: 300 million vaccine doses to around **100 countries** and two UN entities; medical assistance to over **150 countries**; framing **"One Earth, One Health"**
  Other Indian positions: digital public infrastructure as a **global public good**; preparedness rooted in **domestic financing** with international assistance complementary; **One Health** implemented in accordance with national circumstances
  Others present: WHO Director-General **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**; UN Deputy Secretary-General **Amina Mohammed**
  Exam hook: The structural problem: preparedness is a public good with immediate national costs and diffuse, delayed, international benefits — so funding erodes between crises

Environment (1)

- ### Plastic Waste, EPR and the Single-Use Ban
  Body: The backgrounder: 25 September 2026, PIB — *From Waste to Purpose: Indian Cities Are Rewriting the Plastic Story*; arc of **reduce, reuse, return, recover, recreate**
  Parent rules: Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**
  PWM (Amendment) Rules, 2021: notified **12 August 2021**; prohibited identified single-use plastic items with effect from **1 July 2022**
  Selection criterion for the ban: items of **low utility and high littering potential**
  Banned items include: earbuds with plastic sticks, balloon sticks, plastic flags, candy and ice-cream sticks, polystyrene decoration, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery, straws, trays, wrapping films around sweet boxes and invitation cards, and PVC banners below a specified thickness
  PWM (Amendment) Rules, 2022: introduced **Extended Producer Responsibility guidelines for plastic packaging**, issued by **MoEFCC**
  EPR: producer responsible for environmentally sound management **until end of product life**; obligated entities are **producers, importers and brand owners (PIBOs)**
  Economic logic: packaging waste is a **negative externality**; EPR **internalises** the disposal cost, changing incentives at the design stage
  Compliance: centralised EPR portal, registration and returns, and **EPR certificates** from registered recyclers
  Caveats on EPR: certificate markets depend on verification; EPR covers packaging, not all plastic
  Why segregation at source matters: recycling needs **clean, sorted, single-polymer** material — PET, HDPE, LDPE, PP and PVC differ in melting point and properties; contamination with wet waste degrades the polymer
  Recycling vs downcycling vs recovery: reprocessing into new products; producing lower-value material; extracting energy (co-processing in cement kilns, road construction)
  Plastic waste generation: about **41.26 lakh tonnes (2020-21)**, **39.01 lakh tonnes (2021-22)**, **41.36 lakh tonnes (2022-23)**
  Two cautions on the data: generation has not fallen; and reported generation partly reflects improving measurement
  Swachh Bharat Mission: launched **2 October 2014**
  Exam hook: The informal sector: waste pickers and aggregators perform much of India's plastic recovery; formalisation can integrate or displace them

Sci/Tech (3)

- ### National Formulary of India, 7th Edition, and Biovigilance
  Body: Launched 21 September 2026: 7th edition of the National Formulary of India, by MoS Health Anupriya Patel
  Also launched: Guidance Document for Hospitals on medical device adverse events; ADR-PvPI 2.0 mobile app for iOS
  Occasion: 6th National Pharmacovigilance Week, 17–23 September 2026, organised by IPC
  NFI 2026 contents: 34 chapters, 20 appendices, 653 drugs, including 42 fixed-dose combinations and 30 immunologicals; aligned with NLEM
  NFI editions: 1960, 1966, 1979, 2011, 2016, 2021, 2026 — note the 32-year gap
  IPC given NFI responsibility: MoHFW notification of 8 May 2008
  Pharmacopoeia vs formulary: standards for quality and testing vs guidance on rational selection and use
  PvPI: pharmacovigilance for medicines, initiated July 2010 by CDSCO; NCC now at IPC
  MvPI: materiovigilance for medical devices, approved 6 July 2015
  Biovigilance Programme of India: approved 2026; IPC to lead; adverse events in organ and tissue transplantation, covering donors and recipients
  WHO patient safety database: India from 123rd (2009–2014) to 8th globally
  ADR reporting centres: about 1,150; to be extended to primary healthcare level
  Indian Pharmacopoeia: recognised or accepted by about 25 countries; IPC joined the Pharmacopoeial Discussion Group in 2023
  PCIM&H: under Ministry of AYUSH; publishes pharmacopoeias and formularies for Indian systems; Central Drug Testing-cum-Appellate Laboratory
  Sowa-Rigpa: Himalayan system — Ladakh, Himachal, Sikkim, Arunachal, Darjeeling; statutory recognition via IMCC (Amendment) Act, 2010; National Institute at Leh approved November 2019
  Exam hook: Sowa-Rigpa Working Group: first meeting 18 September 2026 at PCIM&H, Ghaziabad

- ### 11th Ayurveda Day and Ayush Vision 2030
  Body: The day: 11th Ayurveda Day, 23 September 2026; national celebration at Nagpur, Maharashtra
  Theme: "Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow"
  Date change: Gazette Notification of 23 March 2025 fixed the observance to 23 September annually, from 2025
  Previously: observed on Dhanvantari Jayanti (Dhanteras) from 2016 — a variable lunar date in the month of Kartik
  Why 23 September: aligned with the autumnal equinox; a fixed Gregorian date enables international participation
  Launched: "From Traditional Wisdom to Global Leadership: Ayush Vision 2030"; first Report on the Ayush Services Sector (by RIS); Safety Dossiers on Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris*) and Chandrasura (*Lepidium sativum*); Standard Treatment Guidelines on Skin Disorders; Status Report on Ayush-related Inventions; CCRAS–AGNI Assessment Scale Web Portal
  People: Prataprao Jadhav, MoS (IC) Ayush; Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary Ayush; Prof. (Vaidya) Rabinarayan Acharya, DG CCRAS
  Stated base: 43,000+ research publications on the Ayush Research Portal; 200+ BIS standards; Ayush Quality Mark
  Brihat Trayi: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha/Hridaya (Vagbhata)
  Ashtanga Ayurveda (eight branches): Kayachikitsa, Kaumarabhritya, Bhutavidya, Shalakya, Shalya, Agada tantra, Rasayana, Vajikarana
  Tridosha: Vata (movement), Pitta (transformation), Kapha (structure and stability)
  The aim: preserve the health of the healthy, alleviate the disorders of the diseased — prevention stated before cure
  WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre: Jamnagar, Gujarat — announced November 2020, launched on site April 2022
  ITRA Jamnagar: first Institute of National Importance in the AYUSH sector; Act of 2020 in force 15 October 2020
  ICD-11: includes traditional medicine conditions covering Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani
  Exam hook: Ayush Visa: dedicated visa category for foreign nationals seeking Ayush treatment in India

- ### FSSAI Draft Amendment on Paneer Analogues

Body: The proposal: 24 September 2026 — FSSAI draft amendment to the **Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011**
Instrument: proposed **Amendment Regulations, 2026**, inserting a new clause under **Regulation 2.1.1** covering "paneer made of constituents not derived from milk"
Effect: products licensed under the **'Analogue in Dairy Context'** category must discontinue the term *Paneer* in nomenclature, labelling or marketing
Status: a **draft** — objections and suggestions invited, to be considered after **60 days** from the date Gazette copies are made available; addressed to the **CEO, FSSAI**
Legal basis: issued with the **previous approval of the Central Government** under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**
Analogue food: resembles a familiar food in appearance, texture and use but is composed differently — in dairy, typically **vegetable fat** replacing milk fat and milk protein
Why it matters nutritionally: real paneer supplies **milk protein (casein)** and **calcium**; an analogue on vegetable fat and starch does not
The regulatory objection is misleading, not safety: an analogue made from permitted ingredients may be perfectly safe
Standard of identity: a rule that a name may be used only for a product of defined composition, so the name itself carries verified information
Economic rationale: food involves **information asymmetry**; without a standard of identity the cheaper analogue drives out the genuine product — **adverse selection**
Remedy chosen: labelling and nomenclature restriction, not prohibition — the analogue may still be sold, under another name
Delegated legislation: Parliament enacts principles, the regulator makes detailed rules; pre-publication, an objection window and laying before Parliament are the safeguards
The Act: Food Safety and Standards Act, **2006**, consolidating the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, **1954**, and commodity orders
FSSAI: under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**; headed by a **CEO**; sets standards, licenses and regulates
Enforcement: by State **Food Safety Commissioners**, **Designated Officers** and **Food Safety Officers**
Exam hook: Distinguish: BIS sets standards for goods generally (ISI mark, hallmarking); **Codex Alimentarius** is the joint **FAO-WHO** international food standards body

Infra (2)

- ### NHAI Guidelines — Access-Controlled High-Speed Highways

Body: Issued: NHAI, 21 September 2026 — guidelines for planning and design of access-controlled high-speed National Highways **other than expressways**
Applies to: all upcoming 4- and 6-lane greenfield and brownfield high-speed access-controlled NHs
Target: 50,000 km of access-controlled high-speed corridors under Viksit Bharat 2047
Gap filled: expressways have IRC:SP:84 and IRC:SP:99; this intermediate category had no separate standard, producing DPR variation
Access control: IRC:62 distinguishes full control (no direct access from abutting land) from partial control
Conflict points: conventional four-leg at-grade intersection has 32 — 16 crossing, 8 merging, 8 diverging
Widths: up to 15,000 vehicles → 4-lane highway with 4-lane structures, 60 m; 15,000–25,000 → 4-lane with 6-lane structures, 70 m; 25,000–40,000 → 6-lane with 6-lane structures, 70 m
Interchanges: at expressways, NHs, SHs, major arterials, and roads to ports, airports, Multi-Modal Logistics Parks, industrial areas, tourist destinations
Boundary wall: 1 metre high along the outer edge — access control and stray cattle, not crash protection
Signage: advance notification of exits and entries, addressing decision sight distance
Design speed reference: expressway 120 km/h; ordinary 4-lane NH nearer 100 km/h
Exam hook: PCU: passenger car unit; standard car = 1.0; at-grade intersections fail beyond roughly 10,000 PCU per hour

- ### UDAN Challenge Mode and Aerodrome Development

Body: The launch: 22 September 2026, New Delhi — Challenge Mode Portal for Aerodrome Development, plus the Scheme Document for the next phase of UDAN Route Bidding
Signed: 21 MoUs between the Ministry of Civil Aviation, States/UTs and AAI
Minister: Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu; MoS Murlidhar Mohol; Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha; AAI Chairman Vipin Kumar
Implementing agency: Airports Authority of India
UDAN launched: October 2016, under the National Civil Aviation Policy, as the Regional Connectivity Scheme
Core mechanism: Viability Gap Funding against capped fares on a defined share of seats, with route exclusivity for a limited period
Record stated: 687 routes, 95 aerodromes, more than 3.66 lakh flights, about 1.71 crore passengers
Employment: about 3 million (2014) to nearly 7.7 million now; stated potential 25 million by 2040
Named beneficiaries: Tezu (Arunachal Pradesh), Purnea (Bihar)
Modified UDAN: ten years, FY 2026-27 to FY 2035-36, outlay Rs 28,840 crore, fully budgetary
Components: about 100 airports from unserved airstrips over eight years; VGF about Rs 10,043 crore; O&M support for three years to about 441 aerodromes (Rs 3.06 crore per annum per airport, Rs 0.90 crore per heliport or water aerodrome); 200 helipads at about Rs 15 crore each
Four pillars: affordability, sustainability of operations, transparent Challenge Mode, indigenous manufacturing
Stated targets: 120 new destinations and 4 crore additional passengers over ten years
Exam hook: Milestones in 2026: PM inauguration at Jodhpur 4 July; UDAN Workshop 16 July; Challenge Mode 22 September

Culture/Sport (1)

- ### Lalit Kala Akademi — 65th National Exhibition of Art

Body: The announcement: 27 September 2026 — **Lalit Kala Akademi** announced **20 Lalit Kala Akademi Awards** at the **65th National Exhibition of Art (NEA)**
The numbers: 6,175 artworks from **2,495 artists** across **27 States and UTs**; **First-Tier Jury** selected **270** for exhibition; **Second-Tier Jury** selected **20 artworks by 20 artists** for awards
Media represented: painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, mixed media
The three akademis, all autonomous bodies under the Ministry of Culture:
Sangeet Natak Akademi — National Academy of **Music, Dance and Drama**; created **31 May 1952**, inaugurated **28 January 1953** by **Dr Rajendra Prasad** at Parliament House; the **oldest**
Sahitya Akademi — National Academy of **Letters**; **12 March 1954**, New Delhi
Lalit Kala Akademi — National Academy of **Art**; **5 August 1954**
National School of Drama: established **1959**, initially under Sangeet Natak Akademi, later independent
Two-tier jury logic: the first tier decides **inclusion** (against a threshold and the balance of the show); the second decides **distinction** (ranking works against each other) — different judgements needing different comparisons
Peer assessment: where merit cannot be made objective, the **procedure** carries the legitimacy
Award vs Fellowship: an **Award** recognises a specific work or year; a **Fellowship** is the **highest honour**, for a lifetime's contribution, limited in number, carrying elected membership of the akademi. **An award is for a work; a fellowship is for a life.**
Why the state funds art: a **merit good** with **positive externalities**; commercial markets under-supply experimental practice, traditional and folk forms, printmaking and sculpture, and artists outside metropolitan networks
The risk: official taste — rewarding the safe and comfortable; **autonomy** is the design feature meant to prevent funding becoming direction
Exam hook: Modern Indian art lineage: Raja Ravi Varma (European technique, Indian subjects, lithographic reach); **Bengal School** under **Abanindranath Tagore** (rejecting colonial academic realism for an Indian idiom); **Progressive Artists' Group**, Bombay, **1947** — Souza, Husain, Raza and others engaging international modernism