THE CAVALIER

SSB Weekly

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Week of 28 September – 4 October 2026 · Current affairs for your SSB board

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Quick-fire facts · Lecturette: **Quantum Technology and National Security** · GD: **Clean power vs wildlife**

THE WEEK

Five stories the board may ask about

1 DEFENCE · NAVY

Navy commanders meet with Hormuz escorts still at sea

The Navy's **Commanders' Conference**, its twice-yearly apex forum, met in New Delhi (29 Sep–1 Oct). It met in the sixth month of **Operation Urja Suraksha**, launched on 25 March to escort Indian-flagged oil and gas tankers through the **Strait of Hormuz** with over five frontline warships. The agenda paired logistics and readiness with AI, uncrewed systems and cyber.

WHY IT MATTERS

About 60% of India's oil and gas imports pass through Hormuz. Keeping one warship on station takes about three in the cycle, so six months strains the fleet.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Protecting shipping is the Navy's most constant real-world job. Hulls, spares and crews for today must not lose out to tomorrow's gadgets.

IO MAY ASK

Is escorting tankers through Hormuz worth tying up so much of the fleet?

Source: Cavalier daily, 28 Sep

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2 DEFENCE · JOINTNESS

HQ IDS at 25: the reform Kargil started

Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff turned 25 on 1 Oct, now Tri-Service Day. It was set up in 2001 after the **Kargil Review Committee**, to serve a Chief of Defence Staff, a post created only in 2019. It has built joint doctrine and training, and leads on cyber, space and AI. India still has only two tri-service commands: **Andaman and Nicobar** and Strategic Forces.

WHY IT MATTERS

Modern wars are fought on land, at sea, in the air, in space and in cyberspace at once. Planning in three separate silos wastes time and money.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

The software of jointness is in place. The hard part, one commander per theatre, needs each service to give up some turf.

IO MAY ASK

The three services already exercise together. What more does 'jointness' really demand?

Source: Cavalier daily, 1 Oct

3 NEIGHBOURHOOD · LADAKH

28 places in Ladakh get official names on the map

On 2 Oct the Home Ministry gave **28 peaks, passes, glaciers and other features** in Ladakh standard names on the **Survey of India** map. Several honour masters who carried Buddhism from India to Tibet (Atisha Giri, Milarepa Kangri); others honour Kanishka and the Dogra general **Zorawar Singh**. The list includes Gogra and Hot Spring, friction points in the 2020–21 standoff.

WHY IT MATTERS

A map records who governs a place. China has issued its own names for places in Arunachal Pradesh, which India rejects as having no effect on the ground.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Names do not defend a border; roads, villages and soldiers do. But recording our own heritage on our own map is sensible statecraft.

IO MAY ASK

Does naming remote peaks really strengthen India's hold over them?

Source: MHA, 2 Oct

4 NATIONAL · GOVERNANCE

UPSC at 100: from a London-only exam to 86 centres

India's first **Public Service Commission** was set up on 1 Oct 1926, so the **UPSC** turned 100. In 1919 only 78 of 1,255 ICS officers were Indian: the exam was held only in London, with Greek and Latin papers. Today it runs **86 centres** in Eighth Schedule languages, and 299 of 958 recommended in the 2025 Civil Services exam were women.

WHY IT MATTERS

It also sets the written exams for the defence academies. Articles 315–323 protect its independence: a member can be removed only after a Supreme Court inquiry.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Open competition is India's fairest gate. But money and schooling still decide who reaches it, and an exam alone cannot fix that.

IO MAY ASK

Is a written exam plus an interview really the best way to choose leaders?

Source: PIB backgrounder, 30 Sep

5 SPORT · ASIAN GAMES

Three first-ever golds in one day at the Asian Games

On 3 Oct India won three **first-ever Asian Games golds**: Aman Sehrawat (57 kg freestyle wrestling), Pranavi Sharath Urs (women's

golf) and Kumkum Anil Mohod (women's recurve archery, in a one-arrow shoot-off). The men's **hockey** team retained its title; for the first time both men's and women's teams won gold at one Games, with direct **Olympic qualification**.

WHY IT MATTERS

A first gold shows a whole system at work: coaching, tough domestic competition and sports science. Recurve, unlike compound, is an Olympic event.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Talent reaches finals; systems win them. The real test is whether a new name wins the same events four years from now.

IO MAY ASK

Why does a country as large as India still win so few Olympic medals?

Source: Cavalier daily, 3 Oct

QUICK-FIRE

Know these cold

Tarang Shakti 2026	IAF multinational air exercise · Jodhpur · 26 Sep–12 Oct · 7 nations fly in, incl. F-35s · "Power in Partnership"
Operation Drishti	AFMS eye camps in Kashmir · 364 surgeries · first-ever camp at the LoC (Tangdhar) · ended Srinagar, 30 Sep
India–Fiji	2nd defence Joint Working Group · New Delhi, 28 Sep · Fijian team toured Southern Naval Command, Kochi
Quantum link	India's first free-space QKD link · 5.56 km, BISAG-N to IIT Gandhinagar · QNu Labs · trial run at night

Supercomputing	National Supercomputing Mission: 40 machines, 68 petaflops · lineage from PARAM 8000 (1991)
Seabed minerals	Auction opened 1 Oct for 2 Andaman Sea blocks (1,632 sq km) · cobalt, nickel, rare earths
Literacy	'Full literacy' = 95% · 10 States/UTs declared fully literate, Ladakh first · PLFS 2025: 81.1%
Who's who	CDS Gen NS Raja Subramani · CNS Adm Krishna Swaminathan · CISC Air Marshal Tejinder Singh
Dates	1 Oct Tri-Service Day · 2 Oct Gandhi Jayanti · 4 Oct Shyamji Krishna Varma's birth anniversary (India House, London)

TALKING POINT

Tankers in Hormuz, names on a Ladakh map, a 25-year-old joint staff: this week showed that **national security** runs on energy, institutions and records, not on soldiers alone.

PRACTICE

Speak it

LECTURETTE OF THE WEEK

Quantum Technology and National Security

Why now: This week QNu Labs, BISAG-N and IIT Gandhinagar sent quantum keys 5.56 km through open air, and the Supercomputing Mission reported 40 machines with 68 petaflops.

OPEN · 30S

“In the next war, whoever reads the other side's messages may win before a shot is fired.” Today I will speak on quantum technology and national security.

POINT 1 · 40S

What it is. Quantum key distribution (QKD) shares secret keys using single particles of light. Anyone who eavesdrops disturbs them and is caught. Future quantum computers may break today's codes.

POINT 2 · 40S

India's progress. India's first free-space QKD link ran 5.56 km in Gujarat, at night to avoid sunlight. Fibre links already exist under the National Quantum Mission; free space points the way to satellite links.

POINT 3 · 40S

The hard parts. Fibre QKD reaches only a few hundred km, and our servers still use imported processors. In 1987 the US refused India a Cray supercomputer; C-DAC built PARAM instead.

CLOSE · 30S

Secure communication is the nervous system of a modern military. A denial once built PARAM; the same resolve must make India's quantum shield its own.

Explain QKD in one plain sentence and quote one fact (5.56 km). Practise aloud against a 3-minute timer.

How to give a lecturette → **110 lecturette topics →**

GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE WEEK

“India's clean-energy push must not come at the cost of endangered wildlife”

On 4 Oct two captive-bred **Great Indian Bustards** were released in Jaisalmer's Desert National Park. Fewer than 150 remain in the wild, and **power-line collisions** are their biggest killer. The same Thar is India's best solar and wind resource, and its transmission lines cross the bird's last habitat.

FOR

- Extinction is permanent; a power line can be rerouted or buried.
- The Thar grasslands are an ecosystem, not wasteland. The bustard is their warning sign.
- Green growth that wipes out a species is not sustainable growth.
- India's climate leadership loses credibility if clean projects kill rare wildlife.

AGAINST

- Climate change threatens far more species, and people, than any power line.
- The Thar has India's best sun and wind; clean power has to cross it.
- Burying lines across vast areas is slow and costly.
- Captive breeding and the egg ‘jumpstart’ method can save the bird without halting projects.

HOW TO CONCLUDE

It need not be either-or. Bury or mark lines near breeding sites, route new ones around core habitat, and keep breeding birds: clean power and the bustard can both win.

GD guide for the SSB →

OUR SSB FACULTY

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Col Manoj Batra (Retd)



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Facts from PIB press releases of the week. Views are framed for discussion practice.