THE CAVALIER
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Week of 26 October – 1 November 2026 · Current affairs for your SSB board

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THE WEEK

Five stories the board may ask about

1 DEFENCE · SELF-RELIANCE

The Defence Minister calls for "Aatmanirbharta 2.0"

At **SWAVLAMBAN 2026**, the Navy's innovation seminar (New Delhi, 26–27 Oct), Rajnath Singh asked for **Aatmanirbharta 2.0**: top-end, affordable technology, supply-chain roadmaps (he named rare earths) and funding for high-risk research. He called foreign-specified **Buyer Nominated Equipment** on Indian-built ships a weak spot. The same day the **DAC** cleared proposals worth about ₹2.12 lakh cr, about 82% from Indian industry.

WHY IT MATTERS

India builds its warships' hulls at home but still imports much of what goes inside: propulsion, sensors and weapons. Phase 2 aims at that inner layer.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Back Indian makers, but demand proof of quality. Self-reliance that fails in war is not strength.

IO MAY ASK

He wants funding for projects that may fail. How do you tell a bold risk from a waste of public money?

Source: PIB, MoD, 26 Oct

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2 DEFENCE · DIPLOMACY

Talks with Japan and the US at Cebu, a frigate at Busan

At the 13th **ADMM-Plus** in Cebu, Philippines (28 Oct), Rajnath Singh met Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. With Japan: mine countermeasures and possible joint naval shipbuilding. With the US: a review of the **10-year defence framework** of Oct 2025, and zero tolerance for terror sponsors. INS Sahyadri meanwhile exercised with the Korean Navy at Busan.

WHY IT MATTERS

India is allied to none of the three, yet works closely with each. ADMM-Plus seats China and Russia too, so the real business happens on the sidelines.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Partnership without alliance keeps India's options open. It counts only if talk turns into co-production and joint exercises.

IO MAY ASK

India is not a treaty ally of the US or Japan. Is working this closely with them wise or risky?

Source: PIB, MoD, 26 & 28 Oct

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3 NEIGHBOURHOOD · BAY OF BENGAL

Seven Bay of Bengal nations hold their first sea exercise

The first **BIMSTEC Maritime Security Exercise** runs 30 Oct–3 Nov, with all seven members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It aims at interoperability, awareness of what moves at sea and shared coordination. The **Andaman and Nicobar Command** is highlighted. It follows the Delhi Declaration (13 Oct), which called the Bay a common security space.

WHY IT MATTERS

The Bay carries much of South and South-East Asia's trade. Its threats, drugs, trafficking, illegal fishing and cyclones, ignore borders.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Joint drills build trust that speeches cannot. India should lead by sharing information and help, not by showing its size.

IO MAY ASK

India is by far the biggest member. How does it lead BIMSTEC without looking like it dominates?

Source: PIB, MoD, 30 Oct

4 NATIONAL · LABOUR

A national board for gig and platform workers

On 30 Oct the Labour Ministry notified the **National Social Security Board** for unorganised, gig and platform workers, under the **Code on Social Security, 2020**. The Labour Minister presides. It only recommends and monitors schemes. Platforms may pay **1–2% of turnover** (capped at 5% of what they pay workers) once the Centre sets a start date.

WHY IT MATTERS

A delivery rider is neither a salaried employee nor a true freelancer. The Code gives such workers insurance and old-age schemes without making the app their employer.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Welfare for gig workers is overdue. It helps only once the levy and schemes are notified, and without killing the jobs.

IO MAY ASK

Gig work gives young people quick income. Why might it still be a poor long-term career?

Source: Cavalier daily, 30 Oct

5 SCIENCE · SPACE

GSLV-F18 launches NVS-03 to rebuild NavIC

ISRO's **GSLV-F18** launched the 2,250 kg **NVS-03** from Sriharikota on the night of 30 Oct, into a transfer orbit. It carries an indigenous atomic clock and a new L1 signal, which makes **NavIC** easier to build into phones. Only three NavIC satellites were giving navigation signals, one short of the four a receiver needs. NVS-03 should restore four once it reaches its final orbit.

WHY IT MATTERS

A foreign system can be degraded in a crisis; the push for NavIC is often traced to Kargil, 1999. Meanwhile the forces use receivers that combine several systems.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Good news, but not yet a success: orbit-raising decides it, and NVS-02 failed at that step. Keep GPS as a backup.

IO MAY ASK

GPS is free. Why should India spend on its own navigation system?

Source: Cavalier daily, 31 Oct

QUICK-FIRE

Know these cold

Garuda Shakti (11th)	India–Indonesia special forces · Banyuwangi, East Java · 27 Oct–6 Nov · Para (SF) · jungle terrain
INS Sahyadri	At Busan from 26 Oct · exercise with the Korean Navy · sea phase with ROKS Munmu the Great

Cyclone Arnab	First named cyclone of the year · formed 26 Oct · crossed the Andhra Pradesh–Yanam coast 28 Oct · NDRF and SDRF on relief
Container scheme	Cabinet, 28 Oct · ₹10,000 cr · capacity to rise from about 70,000 to 7.5 lakh TEUs
Ayushman Vay Vandana	Two years on 29 Oct · ₹5 lakh cover for everyone aged 70+ · 23.46 lakh admissions worth ₹5,668.80 cr
Who's who	ACM Ashutosh Dixit takes over as Air Chief 31 Oct · Air Marshal IS Walia Vice Chief from 1 Nov
Ekta Diwas	31 Oct · Sardar Patel's 151st birth anniversary · Ekta Parade at Ekta Nagar

TALKING POINT

Build at home, partner abroad. A home-built navigation satellite and a call for **Aatmanirbharta 2.0** on one side; Japan, the US and six Bay of Bengal neighbours on the other. That is strategic autonomy: depend on no one, work with everyone.

PRACTICE

Speak it

LECTURETTE OF THE WEEK

Strategic Autonomy: Friends with All, Allied to None

Why now: This week Rajnath Singh met his Japanese and US counterparts at Cebu, a frigate called at Busan, special forces

trained in Indonesia, and the DAC said about 82% of its ₹2.12 lakh cr list would come from Indian industry.

OPEN · 30S

"India does not pick a side. India picks its interest." Today I will speak on strategic autonomy.

POINT 1 · 40S

What it means. Deciding in the national interest, free of any bloc. India has no military alliance, but many partners: Japan, the US (a 10-year defence framework), Indonesia (Garuda Shakti).

POINT 2 · 40S

Why it works. Many partners mean many sources of technology, and no one can switch India off. Home-built strength backs it: NavIC, and a defence list about 82% Indian.

POINT 3 · 40S

Its limits. Imported engines, sensors and rare earths still tie India to others, and partners do not always agree with each other.

CLOSE · 30S

Autonomy is not isolation. It is the strength to say yes to many partners and a firm no to dependence on any one.

Give one example per partner (Japan, the US, Indonesia) and say why India is allied to none. Practise aloud against a 3-minute timer.

How to give a lecturette → 110 lecturette topics →

GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE WEEK

“Gig platforms, not the taxpayer, should pay for gig workers' social security”

On 30 Oct the Centre notified the **National Social Security Board** for gig and platform workers. Under the Code on Social Security, platforms may be asked to pay 1–2% of annual turnover (capped at 5% of what they pay workers) into a fund; the start date is not yet set. NITI Aayog (2022) projected 2.35 crore gig workers by 2029–30, up from 77 lakh in 2020–21.

FOR

- Platforms earn from workers' labour, so they should share the risk.
- Otherwise the cost falls on the taxpayer while profit stays private.
- A levy capped at 5% of payouts is a modest price.
- Workers switch apps, so a fund fed by all platforms follows them.

AGAINST

- The cost may be passed on to customers or cut riders' earnings.
- Small start-ups may not survive a levy.
- Social security is a duty of the State (Directive Principles).
- Heavy levies could make platforms hire fewer riders.

HOW TO CONCLUDE

Share the cost. The Code itself allows the Centre, States, platforms and CSR funds to pay together. Set the levy so that welfare grows without killing the jobs.

GD guide for the SSB →

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