

# THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



Civil Service Institute | Pala | Thiruvananthapuram | South India's Premier Civil Service Coaching Institute | www.civilservicepala.com

**Social, educational survey in Karnataka off to a slow start**

The Hindu: 23/09/2025- Page 3

**India and Morocco sign defence cooperation MoU**

The Hindu: 23/09/2025- Page 4

**Justice Kant flags need for evaluation of judges**

The Hindu: 23/09/2025- Page 4

**Super Typhoon Ragasa approaches China**

The Hindu: 23/09/2025- Page 7

**Number of polluted river sites are showing a slight reduction**

The Hindu: 23/09/2025- Page 6

## Jaishankar meets Rubio to fix ties strained by tariffs, visa fees

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in what appeared to be an effort by both countries to mend ties strained by several U.S. measures, including the 50% tariffs on Indian products and the hike in H-1B visa fees. Monday's meeting, held on the sidelines of the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), took place as Indian and U.S. trade negotiators prepared for their next round of discussions. Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal is also in the U.S. this week.



However, in the past week, the U.S. had also passed more punitive actions, such as cancelling a waiver for India's Chabahar port project in Iran, visa revocations for Indian corporate executives for alleged involvement in the fentanyl illegal drug trade, as well as imposing a \$100,000 fee for H-1B visa applications, a large number of which come from Indian tech firms or for Indian professionals. The Ministry of External Affairs had warned of "humanitarian consequences" of the decision, and hoped the U.S. government would address the "disruptions" caused. Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Rubio shook hands at a photo opportunity before the meeting, but avoided making any comments to the press. No date has yet been announced for the Quad summit, which would bring U.S. President Donald Trump and other Quad leaders to Delhi for the meeting due in November. The Rubio-Jaishankar meet on Monday was expected to discuss that.

## Lights Up



Diyas lit by devotees on the first day of Navratri festival



French-Bengali art collaboration brings Kolkata's ghats to life »page 2



54 vessels are being built for Navy; 10 to join fleet this year »page 4



# STATE



## Social, educational survey in Karnataka off to a slow start

- The second Social and Educational Survey in Karnataka started slowly due to technical glitches and server issues. Delays in distributing kits to enumerators and reluctance among some teachers affected participation in certain districts.
- The implications of the Social and Educational Survey in Karnataka are significant for policymaking and social justice:
- The survey aims to provide accurate, up-to-date data on the social, economic, and educational status of various castes and communities across Karnataka, replacing outdated information from decades ago.
- It helps the government identify regions and communities that need focused welfare programs, scholarships, and development initiatives.
- Data from the survey will guide the formulation and revision of reservation policies, targeting social and educational backwardness more effectively.
- The survey supports evidence-based policymaking by capturing detailed demographics, which can reshape education, employment, and political representation in the state.
- It can highlight inequalities and gaps, enabling more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.
- The survey has potential political implications as caste data can influence social dynamics and reservation debates, leading to mobilization of caste groups and political discourse.
- Overall, the survey is a tool to promote social justice, inclusion, and evidence-driven governance in Karnataka.

This comprehensive data collection is viewed as a step toward more inclusive and accurate policy interventions addressing the diverse needs of Karnataka's population.

## A golden tribute: French-Bengali art collaboration brings Kolkata's ghats to life at Durga Puja pandal

- French artist Thomas Henriot and Bengali artist Tapas Datta collaborated to create a large artwork depicting the ghats of the Ganga at Kolkata's Hatibagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal.
- The artwork measures 22 feet by 7 feet and uses golden threads, with completion taking over two years of research and work.
- The piece features the historic Basu Bazar Palace in Bagbazar, a key site for Durga idol immersion during the Puja.
- The theme highlights the historic and architectural beauty of Kolkata's ghats, aiming to display them in their "real glory."
- The collaboration was chosen because of the locality's proximity to some of the city's oldest ghats and to emphasize the cultural heritage of the area.
- The project is part of broader French-Bengali collaborations and will include further projects featuring art students from Kolkata and Europe.
- The Hatibagan Sarbojanin theme last year also included a unique Indo-Irish collaboration to mark 75 years of India-Ireland diplomatic ties.
- Durga Puja in Kolkata was inscribed on the UNESCO list in December 2021, making it the first festival from Asia to receive this status.
- UNESCO recognized Durga Puja as an event that fosters collective worship, artistic creativity, and community spirit.
- This UNESCO status has helped boost international awareness and appreciation for Indian culture, encouraging efforts to preserve similar traditions worldwide.



## India and Morocco sign defence cooperation MoU to boost strategic alliance

- India and Morocco signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation in Rabat, aiming to boost their strategic alliance.
- The MoU paves the way for collaboration in defence industry, joint exercises, military training, capacity building, and defence sector exchanges.
- A new Defence Wing is being opened at the Embassy of India in Rabat.
- The agreement focuses on key areas such as fighting terrorism, maritime security, cyber defence, peacekeeping, military medicine, drones, and counter-drone technologies.
- Both countries seek joint co-development, co-production, and specialised training programs for armed forces.
- The leaders stressed the importance of multilateral cooperation to address regional and global security challenges, especially in the Indian Ocean and Atlantic corridors.
- The meeting is seen as a milestone in strengthening ties, with an invitation extended to the Moroccan Defence Minister for further discussions.
- Strengthening bilateral relations through a robust institutional framework for defence cooperation enhances mutual security and trust.
- Multilateral cooperation facilitated through these ties addresses broader regional and global security challenges, including maritime security in the Indian Ocean and Atlantic corridors.



## Misuse of defamation law highlights need for slur to be 'decriminalised': judge

### Case file

Justice M.M. Sundresh's remark reopens the question of whether defamation by a private person can be treated as a crime

■ In the Subramanian Swamy versus Union of India case (2016), the top court had upheld the constitutional validity of criminal defamation, deeming it a 'reasonable restriction' on the right to free speech



■ In recent months, various SC Benches have stayed summons in criminal defamation cases, often making critical comments such as 'do not be so touchy' or 'the court is not a forum to settle political scores'

- A Supreme Court judge, Justice M.M. Sundresh, expressed concern over the frequent misuse of criminal defamation law by private individuals and political parties in India.
- Justice Sundresh echoed the need for "decriminalising" slurs, stating that it's time to rethink criminal defamation as a crime, especially when used for personal or political vendettas.
- The article references the 2016 Supreme Court judgment in Subramanian Swamy vs. Union of India, which upheld criminal defamation as a reasonable restriction on free speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- Recent cases have involved politicians and journalists facing multiple defamation charges based on statements made in the Lok Sabha and in the media, raising concerns about freedom of speech and judicial overreach.
- The judge's comments reflect growing unease over how criminal defamation proceedings can be weaponized, urging a move towards more civil remedies and protection for honest criticism.

### Legal & Procedural Issues

- **Overlapping laws** – In India, defamation can be pursued both as a civil wrong (damages) and as a criminal offence (punishment under IPC Sections 499–500). This duality leads to complexity and misuse.
- **Ambiguity in definition** – What qualifies as "harm to reputation" is subjective and often vague, leaving room for arbitrary interpretation.
- **Slow judicial process** – Defamation suits drag on for years, making them costly and mentally draining for both parties.

## Justice Kant flags need for evaluation of judges



- Justice Surya Kant, Supreme Court judge, emphasized the need for performance evaluation of judges.
- Suggested a mechanism with specific parameters and guidelines to gauge judges' efficiency and steer workflow.
- Stressed the importance of introspection in institutions, not acting as a "school principal."
- Highlighted that some judges have excellent disposal rates, but others fail due to different circumstances.
- Noted that disposal rates differ – e.g., criminal appeals vs. bail cases – and thus need proper benchmarks.
- Warned against using single case disposal (like criminal appeals) as a measure of performance.
- Said judges must know their tasks and deliver, as it is the public's legitimate expectation.
- Stressed self-evaluation by every jurist to prevent case backlogs.
- Opposed constant adjournments, calling them demoralising and dangerous.

Overall, he flagged the importance of judicial accountability, timely justice, and structured evaluation for improving the system.

### Steps Towards Reform

- Filling Vacancies swiftly through a transparent system.
- Digitisation & AI tools for faster case management.
- Performance evaluation of judges with clear benchmarks.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) – mediation, arbitration to reduce burden.
- Judicial infrastructure upgrade – more courts, better facilities.
- Simplification of procedures for citizens.

The Indian judiciary needs an overhaul, not in its independence (which is its strength), but in its efficiency, accountability, and accessibility. A balance between judicial independence and performance evaluation is essential for restoring public trust and ensuring timely justice.

## 54 vessels are being built for Navy; 10 to join fleet this year

India is rapidly expanding and indigenising its naval fleet, aiming for a self-reliant, modernised Navy to secure the Indian Ocean Region.

- The Indian Navy is undertaking its largest-ever shipbuilding programme with 54 vessels under construction in Indian shipyards.
- About 10 ships will join the fleet this year; all 54 are expected to be inducted by 2030.
- India targets expanding naval strength to 200+ warships and submarines by 2035, possibly 230 by 2037.
- The programme supports India's long-term maritime strategy, countering China and Pakistan and safeguarding national interests.
- It aligns with the SAGAR vision (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and projects India as a "first responder" and "preferred security partner" in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The initiative is driven by Atmanirbhar Bharat, promoting indigenous defence manufacturing and generating employment.
- Transformation: Indian Navy has moved from being a "Buyer's Navy" to a "Builder's Navy."
- INS Androth, built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), is a recent addition – more than 80% indigenous content.
- On July 1, the Navy commissioned INS Tamal, a stealth multi-role frigate built in Russia – the last major warship constructed abroad.
- Future inductions: 10 ships by December 2025, marking one of the largest single-phase inductions in recent years.
- Overall goal: Strengthen maritime security, build partner capabilities, and promote regional cooperation.



## PRELIMS CORNER :

1. "Geneva Package" recently seen in media related to :

- (a) International Labour Organization
- (b) World Health Organization
- (c) World Intellectual Property Organization
- (d) World Trade Organization

2. Which of the following is termed as "forever chemicals" frequently seen in the media ? (a)

- Organobromine compounds.
- (b) Bisphenol A
- (c) Organohalides
- (d) Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances

3. Kodava tribes seen in the media frequently belongs to which one of the following regions ?

- (a) Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Odisha
- (c) Karnataka
- (d) Gujarat

4. Red Sand dunes called 'Theri Kaadu' which was in news recently is located in :

- (a) Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Maharashtra
- (c) Tamil Nadu
- (d) Karnataka

## Number of polluted river sites are showing a slight reduction: CPCB

- **CPCB Report (2023):** Number of polluted river sites in India reduced slightly to 807 in 2023, from 815 in 2022.
- **Most polluted sites (Priority I):** Declined from 45 (2022) to 37 (2023).
- **Measurement parameter:** Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) used to assess river health.
  - BOD > 30 mg/litre = Priority I (most polluted, urgent remediation needed).
- **Polluted River Stretches (PRS):**
  - 2023: 296 PRS across 271 rivers.
  - 2022: 311 PRS across 279 rivers.
- **State-wise distribution (2023):**
  - Maharashtra: Highest PRS (54).
  - Followed by Kerala (31), Madhya Pradesh (18), Manipur (18), Karnataka (14).
  - Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand: Highest number of Priority I stretches (5 each).
- **2022 comparison:**
  - Gujarat & Uttar Pradesh: 6 Priority I stretches each.
  - Maharashtra: 55 polluted stretches (highest).
- **CPCB monitoring scale:** 4,736 water quality stations across India (rivers, lakes, creeks, drains, canals).

### Human Health Issues

- **Unsafe drinking water** – high levels of pathogens, heavy metals, and chemicals cause diseases.
- **Waterborne diseases** – cholera, dysentery, hepatitis, typhoid spread through contaminated rivers.
- **Toxic exposure** – industrial effluents with arsenic, lead, mercury cause chronic health problems.

### Governance & Management Issues

- **Weak enforcement of pollution control laws.**
- **Unregulated discharge** – industries and urban sewage often released untreated.
- **Fragmented responsibility** – multiple agencies involved, leading to poor coordination.
- **Lack of awareness & participation** among local communities.

While there is a slight overall reduction in polluted sites and "Priority I" stretches, Maharashtra, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh remain major contributors, showing the need for stronger river pollution control measures. River pollution is not just an environmental problem but a health, economic, and governance challenge, demanding stricter regulation, wastewater treatment, and community involvement.

## H1-B fee hike spooks 'dull' Indian IT stocks



### Immediate Impact and Clarification

- The U.S. clarification that the H-1B visa fee hike applies only to new applicants from 2026 and not current visa holders or all petitions helped remove immediate worries for Indian IT firms.
- The measure gives companies time to upskill and increase local hiring in the U.S., with only a marginal short-term impact expected.

### Declining H-1B Dependence

- Indian IT firms have significantly reduced their reliance on H-1B visas over the past 6-8 years.
- Data shows a sharp fall in the share of total H-1B approvals for Indian companies, with tech providers focusing more on local hiring and diversifying talent pools.
- Industry leaders expect Indian tech companies to continue reducing dependence on H-1B visas, and have developed strategies to cope with higher costs and friction.

### Long-term Cost Concerns

- Despite the immediate relief, companies with continued dependence on H-1B visas will face significant cost increases, potentially disrupting business models and revenue streams in the future.
- Reassessment of business strategies by IT firms is anticipated as costs rise.

### Stock Market and Sector Response

- Indian IT stocks, already subdued due to lower earnings and sector issues, declined further in direct response to the H-1B fee hike announcement.
- Structural concerns linger, with analysts saying the long-term impact of persistent U.S. actions and risks around outsourcing could further affect IT stocks.
- The sector has seen increased risk mitigation such as local hiring, increased nearshoring/offshoring, and strategic adaptation to visa challenges.

## Euro's 'global moment' risks slipping away

### Euro's Global Influence at Risk

- Concerns are rising that the Euro's "global moment" could be slipping away despite support from European leaders and the European Central Bank's push to increase the currency's international influence.

### Motivations Behind the Push

- Alarm over U.S. trade policy under President Donald Trump and a desire to protect Europe from global economic shocks are driving renewed interest in boosting the Euro's role globally.
- European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde urges leaders to back the Euro with real financial commitments rather than just rhetoric.

### Challenges Facing the Euro

- The Euro is the world's second-most-used currency for trade and reserves but lags behind the U.S. dollar, which remains dominant due to its use in global banking and trade settlements.
- Efforts to strengthen the Euro have had limited success, with practical steps like increasing central bank reserves and using the Euro for commodity transactions often faltering.

### Need for Deeper Reforms

- Three main reforms are suggested: creating a big enough stock of safe Euro assets, completing Europe's monetary union, and responding to digital currency competition.
- A lack of politically backed safe assets, such as Eurobonds or similar instruments, is one of the biggest roadblocks.

### Political and Fiscal Barriers

- Proposals for stronger fiscal unions and joint debt issuance regularly face resistance, especially from northern European countries wary of shouldering southern European liabilities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and recent joint EU recovery funds showed unprecedented measures but these are seen as exceptions, not the rule.

### Capital Union Dilemmas

- Efforts to create shared liability, deeper capital markets, and integrated fiscal management hit roadblocks related to sovereignty and national interest, particularly for countries like Germany.

### Outlook

- Without bold institutional and financial reforms, the Euro risks losing its chance to rival the dollar's global status, as calls for deeper unity and more "safe assets" remain mostly unmet.

## Experts raise concerns as Albania pits AI-generated Minister against corruption



### AI-generated Minister Announcement

- Albania appointed "Diella," an AI-generated virtual Minister, to handle public tenders, aiming to curb corruption and improve transparency in government contracts.

### Promised Benefits

- Prime Minister Edi Rama touted Diella as incorruptible, having no personal interests or family ties, and claimed this would ensure 100% corruption-free tenders.

### Concerns Raised

- Technical, ethical, and political concerns dominate, especially regarding Diella's accountability, oversight, and susceptibility to biased input data.
- Experts highlight that Diella's reliability hinges on data quality, and flawed input could lead to mistakes or reinforce biases.
- Issues of responsibility and control remain unresolved—critics question who would be culpable for Diella's decisions.

### Public and Political Response

- The opposition has appealed to Albania's Constitutional Court over control and accountability issues.
- Experts worry about a system without human accountability, reducing public officials to mere implementers of machine decisions.

### Broader Implications

- There is skepticism about whether Diella will help Albania meet EU standards for accession.
- Some fear the technology could become a tool for hiding corruption if the system is manipulated with biased data or programming.

### Official Measures

- A government decree was issued, stating that the Prime Minister retains responsibility for Diella and the virtual ministry.

### Uncertainties

- Unclear details about Diella's functioning and the impact on ongoing public contracts.
- Concerns persist around potential old corruption practices being masked by new digital tools.

## China to evacuate 400,000 as Super Typhoon Ragasa approaches

China is undertaking one of its largest evacuation efforts as Super Typhoon Ragasa threatens with destructive winds, floods, and landslides, underlining the growing climate risk of extreme storms.

- Super Typhoon Ragasa is approaching China, prompting large-scale evacuations.
- In Shenzhen city, about 400,000 residents are being relocated from vulnerable coastal and low-lying areas.
- The storm is forecast to bring sustained winds of 236 km/h with gusts up to 285 km/h.
- Authorities warned of torrential rains, floods, and landslides, with risks of urban flooding and infrastructure damage.
- Hong Kong issued a high alert, suspending schools and businesses, with flights cancelled.
- Guangdong and Fujian provinces have suspended train services and cancelled flights.
- Emergency shelters have been set up, and over 10,000 rescue workers are on standby.
- The typhoon is expected to be one of the most powerful storms in recent years to hit the region.
- The Philippines, which was hit earlier by Ragasa, suffered heavy rainfall, flooding, and landslides before the storm moved toward China.
- Climate experts highlight that warming oceans due to climate change are fueling stronger, more destructive typhoons.

Recurring typhoons are not just natural disasters but multi-dimensional crises affecting the environment, economy, society, and governance, while also underlining the climate change challenge.



# Prelims Corner: Explanations

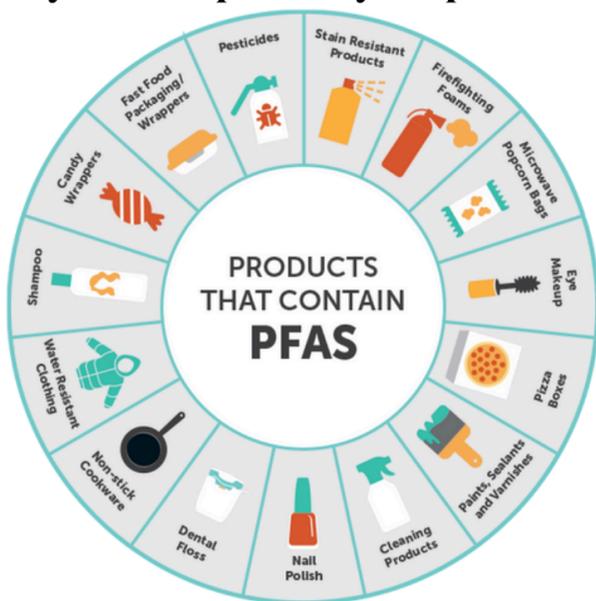
**Q1. Ans d**

The World Trade Organization’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in Geneva culminated in the package. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with global trade rules. It came into force in 1995 (One of the youngest international organizations). The WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established in the wake of the Second World War. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.



**Q2. Ans d**

“Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances” (P.F.A.s) are called “forever chemicals” because they tend to stick around in the atmosphere, rainwater, and soil for long periods. They are a large chemical family of over 4,700 highly persistent chemicals that don’t occur in nature. P.F.A.s are man-made chemicals used to make non-stick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain resistant fabrics, cosmetics, firefighting forms, and many other products that resist grease, water, and oil. They do not break down and remain in the environment for long periods. Some of these PFAs can build up in people and animals if they are repeatedly exposed to the chemicals.



**Q3. Ans c**

The Kodava people, or Kodavas, are an ethnolinguistic group from the region of Kodagu in the southern Indian state of Karnataka and a distinct tribal community with their language, faith, customs and traditions. Kodavas are the original settlers of the Kodagu (Coorg) district in Karnataka. Kodagu and Kodavas need Constitutional protection to preserve our unique culture and traditions.

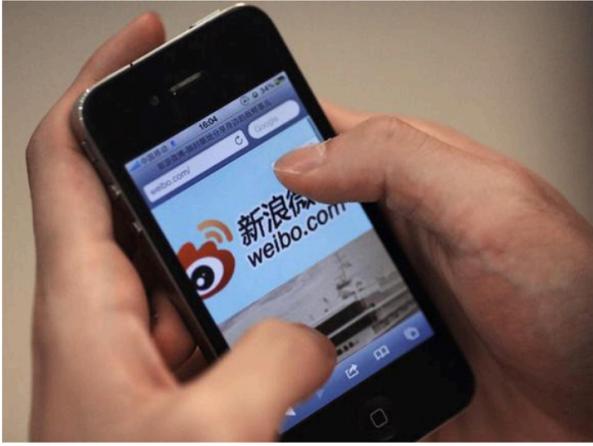


**Q4. Ans c**

Small desert situated in the state of Tamil Nadu. It consists of red sand dunes and is confined to the Thoothukudi district. The red dunes are called theri in Tamil. They consist of sediments dating back to the Quaternary Period and are made of marine deposits. They have very low water and nutrient retention capacity. The dunes are susceptible to aerodynamic lift. The soil's iron-rich heavy minerals like ilmenite, magnetite, garnet, hypersthene and rutile had undergone leaching by surface water and were then oxidized because of the favourable semi-arid climatic conditions.



## Case Study:



China announces two-month social media crackdown.

China's top Internet regulator announced a sweeping two-month crackdown on social media, vowing to combat content containing "malicious incitement of conflict" and "negative outlooks on life such as world-weariness." Beijing requires social media companies to moderate content on their platforms, with posts strictly controlled to avoid anything deemed to be too subversive, vulgar, pornographic or generally harmful. The notice from the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) follows announcements of penalties this month against three popular digital platforms, which it said had neglected content management duties. Micro-blogging platform Weibo and short video platform Kuaishou, the Instagram-like Xiaohongshu are the three popular platforms. Authorities have not specified what punitive actions are being taken against the three platforms. "The crackdown aims to "foster a more civilised and rational online environment," the statement said.

## International Sign Language Day



**The International Day of Sign Languages is observed worldwide on September 23 every year. The day is dedicated to raising awareness about the crucial role sign languages play in upholding the human rights of the deaf community in the world. This year's theme, No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights, emphasises the crucial role of sign language in ensuring equality, inclusion, and dignity for persons who are deaf.**



**United against War - Protesters march as they participate in a demonstration as part of a nationwide protest and general strike against the war in Gaza, in Bologna, Italy. France and other countries prepare to recognise a Palestinian state at UN.**