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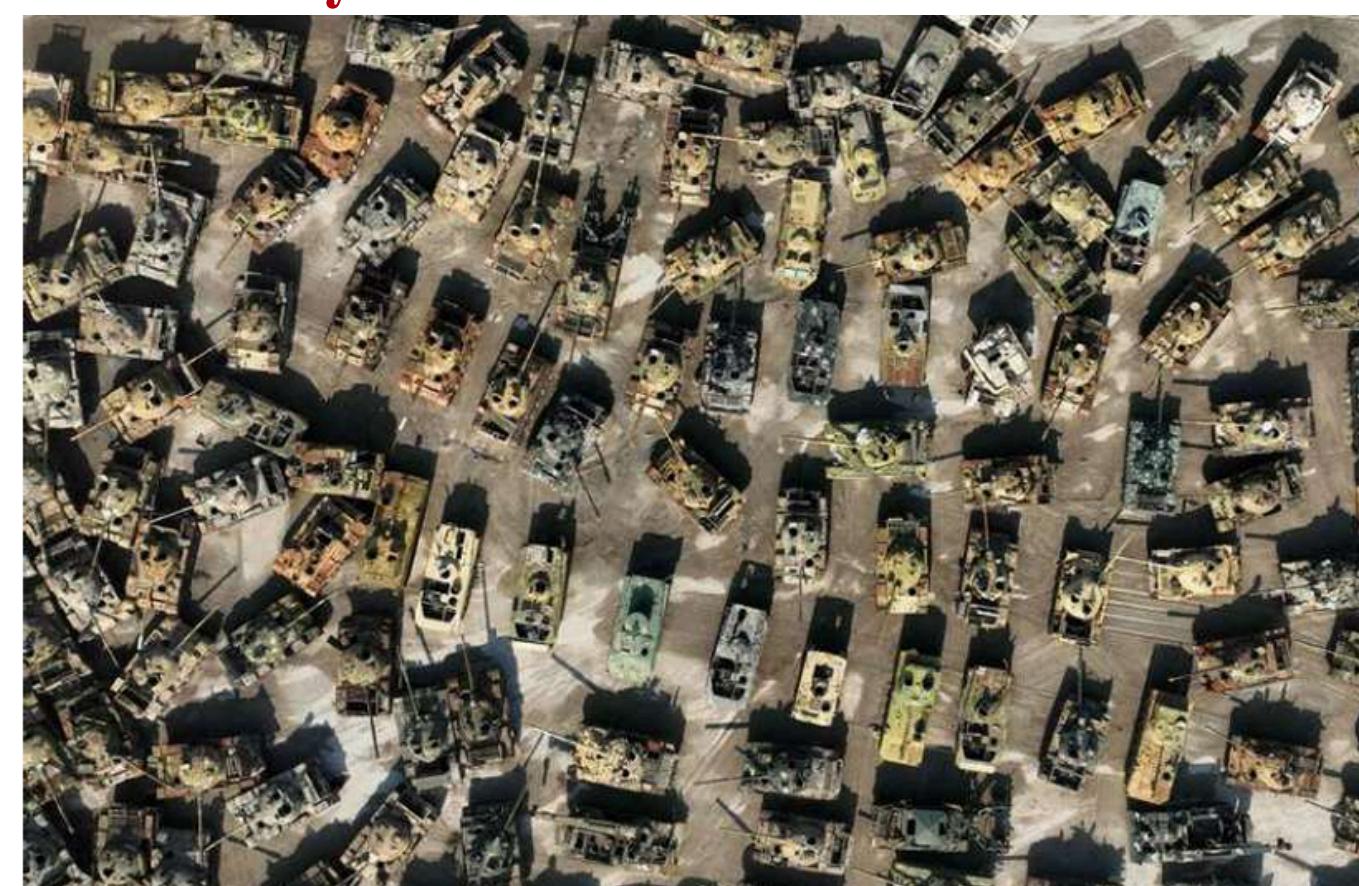
SC asks govt. to regulate content on Internet



The Supreme Court on Thursday 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. 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 Court says victims of online abuse have to be protected, and seeks 'preventive mechanisms' 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.

War Booty



An aerial photo taken on November 27 in the countryside of the northern Syrian city of Idlib shows a cemetery of Army tanks and armoured vehicles that were confiscated by rebel forces during the fall of the regime of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. December 8 will mark the first anniversary of the ouster of Syria's longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad.



The Israeli military carried out another series of strikes against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon on Thursday, exactly a year in to the ceasefire with the militant group. The November 27, 2024 ceasefire sought to end over a year of hostilities between the two sides. According to the ceasefire agreement, Hezbollah was to pull its forces north of the Litani River, some 30 km north of the border with Israel, and have its military infrastructure there dismantled.

Rajasthan govt. taking steps to bring excess Yamuna waters during monsoon, says Minister

- Rajasthan government is preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) to divert excess monsoon flows of the Yamuna to water-scarce districts in the Shekhawati region, under the framework of the 1994 Yamuna Water Agreement and a 2024 MoU with Haryana.

Policy objective:

- Rajasthan aims to capture Yamuna flood/“excess” waters that currently flow wastefully during the monsoon and use them to address long-standing drinking and irrigation water shortages in four Shekhawati districts (such as Churu, Jhunjhunu, and Sikar).
- The move is framed as both a utilisation of Rajasthan’s entitled share (1.119 BCM / about 1,917 cusecs) and an exercise in water security for future projects in the region.

Institutional and political context:

- The announcement is linked to the ninth meeting of the Upper Yamuna Review Committee in Noida, signalling that the decision sits within an inter-state, centrally mediated basin-management framework rather than unilateral state action.
- It operationalises a tripartite 2024 MoU between Rajasthan, Haryana and the Union government to prepare a joint DPR for underground pipelines from Hathnikund/Okhla, ending a decades-long dispute over how Rajasthan should physically draw its share.

Technical and implementation aspects:

- The DPR concerns a “transportation system” to divert monsoon flows via pipelines/underground conveyance from Haryana into Rajasthan, minimising transmission losses and bypassing existing canal constraints; the Central Water Commission’s appraisal is the next key step.
- A joint task force with officials from Rajasthan and Haryana has been constituted to coordinate technical design, routing and cost-sharing, indicating that interstate cooperation on engineering choices is still evolving.

Expected benefits and regional impact:

- The project is projected to provide a permanent or long-term solution to drinking water scarcity and enhance irrigation potential in around four districts of the Shekhawati belt, with later phases expected to extend to irrigation over a larger command area.
- Socio-economically, the scheme is portrayed as transformative for a historically water-deficit, out-migrating region, potentially stabilising agriculture and rural livelihoods and responding to a 30-year political demand.

Risks, trade-offs and unanswered questions:

- Reliance on “excess” monsoon flows assumes sufficient surplus in future years; climate variability, competing upstream uses and environmental flow needs in the Yamuna raise uncertainty about actual dependable yield in high-flow months.
- This does not discuss ecological impacts on the Yamuna or downstream users, the high capital costs (earlier estimates around ₹19,000–24,000 crore) and energy requirements for pumping, or how operation will be prioritised in years of below-normal monsoon, all of which will critically shape the project’s sustainability and interstate politics.

Cyclone Ditwah to bring intense rainfall till weekend in T.N.

- Cyclone Ditwah is a cyclonic storm over coastal Sri Lanka and the adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal that is forecast to bring intense rainfall over Tamil Nadu till the weekend, especially in the southern and delta districts before impacting northern parts of the state.

Track, location and timing

- The cyclone is currently positioned over coastal Sri Lanka and adjacent southwest Bay of Bengal, moving northwestwards and expected to reach near the north Tamil Nadu–Puducherry–south Andhra Pradesh coasts around November 30.
- In the next 48–72 hours, its rain bands will first impact southern and delta districts and then spread to north coastal and interior Tamil Nadu as the system moves closer to the coast.

Rainfall intensity and alerts

- The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Chennai, has issued a red alert for several southern and delta districts, including Nagapattinam, indicating a high likelihood of extremely heavy rainfall on Friday and Saturday. A red alert implies the possibility of more than 20 cm of rain in 24 hours.
- An orange alert has been issued for a wider set of districts, including Chennai, Tiruvallur and Vellore, signalling very heavy rainfall (11–20 cm) as the cyclone’s influence shifts northward over the weekend.

Geographic spread of impact

- This highlights that southern, delta and adjoining districts will get the brunt of rainfall initially, with specific reference to Nagapattinam, while interior and northern districts of Tamil Nadu are expected to see intense downpours on Saturday as the system moves closer.
- Coastal stretches from Chengalpattu to Nagapattinam are under heightened warning, reflecting concerns not only about rainfall but also about strong winds and rough sea conditions along these exposed coasts.

Nature and strength of the system

- RMC has classified Ditwah as a cyclonic storm, not (as of now) a severe cyclonic storm, indicating moderate but still potentially damaging wind speeds alongside very heavy rainfall.
- The system’s exact landfall point and intensity remain uncertain; officials note that clarity will improve as the cyclone moves closer to the Tamil Nadu coast, which is typical in tropical cyclone forecasting where track errors narrow near landfall.

Name, origin and broader implications

- “Ditwah” is a name contributed by Yemen in the North Indian Ocean cyclone naming list and refers to the Detwah (Ditwah) Lagoon in Socotra, underlining how regional naming conventions incorporate cultural and geographic references.
- For Tamil Nadu, the key policy implication is the need for heightened disaster preparedness—closure of schools, pre-positioning of relief teams, and reservoir management—since intense multi-day rainfall over coastal and interior districts can trigger urban flooding, riverine floods, and landslides, as highlighted in recent advisories and state government reviews.



Union Law Ministry defends simultaneous polls proposal

- Union Law Ministry has formally defended the “simultaneous elections” (One Nation, One Election) proposal before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), arguing that synchronising polls and even curtailing tenures of legislatures through constitutional amendment does not violate the Constitution’s basic structure.

Core claim on constitutional validity

- The Ministry’s written submission states that the draft framework for simultaneous elections neither damages the Constitution’s basic structure nor infringes on the federal structure, directly countering opposition parties’ main critique.
- It reasons that the Constitution already allows flexible legislative terms and that Parliament can use the amendment procedure to adjust tenures for the limited purpose of synchronisation, so long as essential features such as democracy, federalism and separation of powers remain intact.

Argument on five-year tenure and curtailment

- The Ministry highlights Articles 83(2) and 172(1), which say that the term of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is five years “unless sooner dissolved”, to show that a full five-year tenure is not sacrosanct and has always been conditional.
- It cites historical precedent: the 42nd Constitutional Amendment during the Emergency extended the tenure of legislatures to six years, later restored to five years by the 44th Amendment, to argue that both extension and curtailment are constitutionally permissible via amendment.

Basic structure and separation of powers reasoning

- Referring to the Supreme Court’s Kesavananda Bharati judgment, the Ministry accepts that the basic structure doctrine limits Parliament’s amending power but contends that changing the election calendar does not touch core features like separation of powers, judicial review or the republican form of government.
- It emphasises that the proposal does not confer unchecked authority on any organ; rather, it maintains the existing distribution of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary while only re-ordering the timing of electoral cycles.

Voters’ rights and mid-term elections

- Responding to fears that shorter tenures will dilute citizens’ voting rights, the Ministry argues that mid-term or early elections do not limit the electorate’s plenary power to choose representatives; voters still retain the right to vote and contest, guaranteed under Article 326 and implemented via the Representation of the People Act.
- It clarifies that even if an Assembly or Lok Sabha is elected for a reduced term under the synchronised schedule, the act of curtailment itself does not negate universal adult suffrage or free and fair elections, so the basic structure remains unaffected.
- The Ministry underscores that simultaneous elections aim to reduce the frequency of polls, model code impositions and associated expenditure, presenting the reform as an efficiency measure rather than a power-consolidation strategy.

CISF alters tenure, posting policy at Parliament

- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has overhauled its tenure and posting policy for personnel deployed at Parliament, extending their minimum stint to four years and tightening eligibility and training norms to strengthen security after the December 2023 breach and subsequent complaints by MPs.

Change in tenure and rationale

- The tenure of CISF personnel at the Parliament House Complex has been increased from three to a minimum of four years, with the possibility of a one-year extension, deviating from the force’s usual three-year posting norm.
- The extended tenure is intended to make personnel more familiar with MPs, their movement patterns, and the layout of the complex, which is seen as crucial for accurate identification, secure access management, and layered threat detection and response.

Background: security breach and MPs’ complaints

- The policy revision follows a major security breach on 13 December 2023 in the new Parliament building, when intruders jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber and released smoke canisters, after which the Union Home Ministry approved CISF deployment at the complex.
- It also responds to complaints by several MPs about being stopped or aggressively questioned by CISF personnel at entry points, and to earlier representations such as DMK MP M. Mohamed Abdulla’s letter on being interrogated about his purpose of visit.

New posting framework and rotation

- CISF now has full charge of core security layers at Parliament—access control, perimeter and internal security, counter-terror and counter-sabotage response, bomb-threat management, and fire and disaster preparedness—with about 3,300 personnel deployed.
- To balance continuity with infusion of “new blood”, a fixed proportion of the sanctioned strength will be rotated out every year, creating overlapping batches that preserve institutional memory while updating skills and reducing complacency.

Tightened eligibility norms

- Personnel selected for Parliament duty must have a clean service record, be in SHAPE-1 medical category, have no disciplinary or vigilance issues, and must have completed at least two specialised courses (such as NSG- or Army-led counter-terror modules) along with Parliament-specific requirements.
- A mandatory multi-stage screening process has been introduced, including psychological assessment, battle physical efficiency tests, PHC-specific induction training, and comprehensive security clearance, so only rigorously vetted and fit personnel guard the complex.

Training, drills and operational preparedness

- CISF is regularly conducting scenario-based mock drills simulating bio-terror and CBRN incidents, terrorist attacks, drone threats, cyber-attacks, bomb threats, evacuations and air-contamination situations, with fire contingency elements integrated into exercises.
- Night-firing practice and joint multi-agency drills with Delhi Police, NSG, NDRF and others aim to improve coordination, low-light response, and real-time readiness, indicating a shift towards “airport-style” technologically enabled security for Parliament.

Broader implications and concerns

- The revamped policy signals a permanent, high-intensity CISF footprint at Parliament, replacing earlier mixed arrangements with Parliament Security Service, CRPF and Delhi Police, and reflecting a securitisation response to both terror threats and high-profile breaches.

Army chief unveils road map to build future-ready force

Overall aim and context

- The roadmap, announced at the Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2025, seeks to respond to an evolving global security environment characterised by multi-domain conflicts, rapid technological change and the need for joint operations.
- It builds on the Army's earlier "Decade of Transformation" (2023–2032) and positions the Army's internal reforms within broader national initiatives on self-reliance, technology absorption and defence modernisation.

Three-phase transformation pathway

- Phase 1 up to 2032 (often described as the "HOP" stage) focuses on accelerated transition—restructuring force design, speeding up capability development and improving operational readiness, effectively laying the groundwork for a decade of transformation.
- Phase 2 till 2037 (the "STEP" stage) is a five-year period of consolidation, where gains from Phase 1 are stabilised, institutionalised and scaled across formations, especially in areas like network-centric warfare, long-range fires and logistics reforms.
- Phase 3 up to 2047 (the "JUMP" stage) aims to deliver an integrated, next-generation force design, with theatre-level integration, seamless jointness and pervasive use of advanced technologies, thereby making the Army fully "future-ready" for India@2047.

Four "springboards" for change

- Self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) through indigenisation and domestic defence manufacturing is identified as the foundational springboard, with emphasis on deeper technology absorption and reducing external dependencies.
- Innovation (Anusandhan) is to shift from pilot projects to enterprise-scale impact in artificial intelligence, cyber, quantum, autonomous systems, space and advanced materials, backed by platforms like iDEX and Defence Innovation Organisation.
- Adaptation (Anukulan) focuses on reforming organisational structures, doctrines and human resource policies to exploit new technologies and address hybrid, grey-zone and information-centric threats.
- Integration (Ekikaran) stresses deeper fusion between the military, industry, academia and other services, supporting jointness, integrated theatre commands and whole-of-nation approaches to security.

Linking reforms to operational lessons

- General Dwivedi cites Operation Sindoora as an example of how sustained reforms in readiness, technology and joint planning have translated into decisive battlefield outcomes, reinforcing the case for continuing structural change.
- The narrative presents recent operations and border standoffs as proof that investments in surveillance, drones, precision fires and joint planning have paid off, and that further modernisation is essential to retain a decisive edge.

Strategic and policy implications

- By synchronising Army reforms with the Defence Ministry's "Year of Reforms" 2025 agenda, the roadmap is positioned as part of a broader push towards integrated theatre commands, multi-domain operations and technology-driven deterrence.
- The plan's emphasis on indigenous capability, civilian-military fusion and long-term phased transformation suggests that future resource allocations, R&D collaborations and organisational changes will be benchmarked against the 2047 future-ready force vision, shaping India's defence policy debates for the next two decades.

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

- India and Indonesia have moved significantly closer to finalising a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile deal during the third India-Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi, with both sides now working through pricing and phased procurement details.

Status and significance of the BrahMos deal

- The dialogue, co-chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Indonesian Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, focused heavily on BrahMos procurement, indicating that political approval exists and the discussion has entered the technical-commercial stage.
- If concluded, Indonesia would become the second foreign customer for BrahMos after the Philippines, reinforcing India's emergence as a credible missile exporter and strengthening New Delhi's defence footprint in Southeast Asia.

Technical features and upgrades of BrahMos

- BrahMos is an Indo-Russian, ship-launched, land-based and air-launched supersonic cruise missile (around Mach 2.8–3) already operational in all three Indian services and used for precision strikes, including against targets inside Pakistan during Operation Sindoora.
- Work is under way to upgrade its range from about 290 km to roughly 500 km for land-attack roles and around 400 km for anti-ship missions, while also adding electronic counter-countermeasures; this significantly enhances its deterrence value for maritime states like Indonesia.

Indonesia's motivations and regional context

- For Jakarta, acquiring BrahMos would bolster coastal defence and sea-denial capabilities along strategic chokepoints such as the Malacca and Sunda Straits, amid growing concerns over Chinese naval presence and grey-zone activities in its maritime zones.
- Indonesia's interest fits a broader regional trend in which ASEAN states such as the Philippines seek long-range precision strike assets from India to diversify away from traditional Western or Chinese suppliers and signal resolve over maritime sovereignty.

India's export strategy and defence industry goals

- India sees the BrahMos export line, including the planned compact BrahMos-NG variant, as a flagship of its Atmanirbhar Bharat agenda and aims to sell to at least 10–17 countries across South Africa, West Asia and Southeast Asia over the coming decade.
- Successful conclusion of the Indonesia deal, estimated in open sources at roughly USD 450 million, would provide economies of scale for production, strengthen the India-Russia joint venture, and showcase India's capability to deliver high-end systems with training and logistics support.

Broader defence cooperation at the dialogue

- Beyond BrahMos, the ministers discussed collaboration in defence medicine and pharmaceuticals, including joint R&D, technology transfer and training to improve military health resilience, reflecting a widening of the security agenda beyond hardware.
- Both sides reiterated commitment to a free, open, peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific, grounded in international law and respect for sovereignty, and Indonesia welcomed India's proposal for a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee, signalling interest in co-development and co-production rather than a purely buyer-seller relationship.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1.The Matabari Tourism Circuit which aims to boost cultural, spiritual, and eco-tourism is to be set up in which state?

- (a) Nagaland**
- (b) Tripura**
- (c) Assam**
- (d) Sikkim**

2.Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi in which of the following states?

- (a) Bihar**
- (b) Uttar Pradesh**
- (c) Uttarakhand**
- (d) Assam**

3.Which one of the following gases is the primary cause of Ocean acidification?

- (a) Methane**
- (b) Carbon monoxide**
- (c) Carbon dioxide**
- (d) Sulphur dioxide**

4.Which is the only national park that protects endangered Nilgiri tahr?

- (a) Periyar National Park**
- (b) Eravikulam National Park**
- (c) Kaziranga National Park**
- (d) Gir National Park**

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

NATIONAL

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

- India faces a recurring problem of chemical adulteration in food through non-permitted synthetic dyes, with the banned industrial dye auramine O emerging repeatedly in inspections despite regulations and enforcement drives.

Nature and risks of auramine O

- Auramine O is a bright synthetic yellow dye used in textiles, leather, printing inks, paper and microbiological staining, but it is not approved as a food colour in India or major global markets.
- Toxicological studies link ingestion to liver and kidney damage, spleen enlargement, mutagenic effects that can alter genetic material, and potential cancer risk; the International Agency for Research on Cancer classifies it as “possibly carcinogenic to humans.”

Why it persists in the food chain

- Despite a clear ban, auramine O continues to enter foods because it is cheap, vividly coloured, easily available in chemical markets, and mimics natural or permitted colours in items like turmeric, chickpeas, sweets and street snacks.
- Small-scale manufacturers and vendors, especially in informal markets, often buy loose, unlabelled industrial dyes from local traders and may be unaware that these are non-food grade, highlighting gaps in awareness and supply-chain regulation.

Structural weaknesses in enforcement

- Implementation of food safety rules is uneven across States because of differences in lab capacity, staffing and surveillance systems, making routine detection of illegal dyes difficult, particularly in the vast unorganised food sector.
- Recent controversies—such as allegations of auramine use in roasted chana—have exposed weak market surveillance, inadequate random testing, delayed public warnings and limited accountability within regulatory agencies.

Regulatory and enforcement responses

- Under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, auramine O is fully prohibited in food; FSSAI and State authorities conduct periodic sampling, intensified surveillance during festivals, and targeted raids that have led to seizures of unlabelled dye packets and prosecutions.
- Several States are expanding awareness programmes for small food businesses and street vendors, while FSSAI is promoting mobile labs and rapid test kits to enable on-the-spot detection of non-permitted colours at markets and points of sale.

Broader strategy to combat food colour adulteration

- Eliminating auramine O requires a multi-pronged approach: tighter regulation of chemical markets selling industrial dyes, harmonised and frequent inspections, stronger penalties (including licence cancellation and jail for repeat offenders), and faster adjudication of cases.
- Long-term solutions also depend on sustained community-level education for small manufacturers, clearer labelling of permitted colours, consumer awareness campaigns on recognising high-risk products, and building a culture of compliance and ethical business practices in the food sector.

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

Union government has formally rejected the IMF staff's baseline assumption that recently imposed 50% US tariffs on Indian goods will remain in place "indefinitely," and has also called the Fund's estimate of the tariffs' drag on India's GDP growth "on the high side."

Detailed analysis in points:

- IMF's tariff assumption and growth impact
 - In its 2025 Article IV staff report, the IMF assumes that 50% US tariffs on a range of Indian exports will persist for a prolonged period, forming part of its baseline macro scenario.
 - On this basis, IMF staff estimate that the tariffs will shave about 0.4 percentage points off India's GDP growth in FY2025-26 and 0.3 percentage points in the following year, mainly by depressing external demand and investment in export-oriented sectors.
- Government's disagreement with "indefinite" tariffs
 - Indian authorities argue that it is unrealistic to assume tariffs at such punitive levels will remain indefinitely, pointing to the likelihood of future negotiations, trade diversification and possible dispute-resolution outcomes.
 - They also stress that the IMF's baseline ignores upside from India's active pursuit of new free trade agreements and market diversification, which could offset or reduce the impact of US trade barriers over the medium term.
- Differing views on magnitude of growth hit
 - While the government broadly agrees with the IMF's assessment of global risks and outlook, it considers the staff's estimate of the growth impact "on the high side," arguing that front-loading of exports and shifting to other markets will cushion the shock.
 - Authorities acknowledge that some sectors could be "heavily affected," but maintain that the overall macroeconomic effect should remain "manageable" given India's relatively low dependence on goods exports and strong domestic demand.
- Policy implications suggested by IMF
 - IMF staff recommend that if tariffs persist, India should consider pausing fiscal consolidation in FY2026-27 to adopt a neutral fiscal stance, and also see scope for modest monetary easing as the shock opens a negative output gap amid benign inflation.
 - The Fund also calls for targeted, transparent and time-bound support to industries most hurt by tariffs to mitigate distributional impacts, while warning that escalating global trade tensions and geoeconomic fragmentation remain key downside risks.
- India's response on macro-policy stance
 - The government and the Reserve Bank of India accept that external uncertainty is elevated but reaffirm commitment to the existing fiscal consolidation path and inflation-targeting framework, signalling reluctance to loosen policy merely on the basis of a scenario they view as pessimistic.
 - Officials highlight the "upside potential" from recently concluded and upcoming FTAs and argue that India's resilient growth—projected by the IMF at 6.6% in FY2025-26 even under the high-tariff baseline—demonstrates that the economy can absorb the shock without major policy deviation.

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

- International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest Article IV review, has given India's national accounts statistics (including GDP and GVA) a 'C' grade, indicating that while data are available with reasonable frequency and detail, methodological weaknesses "somewhat hamper surveillance."

Meaning of the 'C' grade and timing

- The IMF uses a four-tier scale (A, B, C, D); 'C' is the second-lowest and signals that data have notable shortcomings that limit their usefulness for closely monitoring the economy, even though basic publication standards are met.
- The assessment is significant because it comes just as India is releasing quarterly national accounts for the current financial year, so debates about growth numbers and policy calibration are taking place against the backdrop of external doubts about data quality.

Methodological weaknesses flagged in national accounts

- The IMF notes that India still uses 2011-12 as the base year for GDP and GVA, which is considered outdated for a fast-changing economy, and relies heavily on wholesale price indices as deflators because comprehensive producer price indices are lacking.
- It criticises the "excessive use" of single-deflation methods and highlights sizeable, recurring discrepancies between GDP estimated from the production/income side and from the expenditure side, suggesting incomplete coverage of expenditure data and the informal sector.

Issues with seasonality, granularity and revisions

- The IMF points to the absence of routinely published seasonally adjusted GDP series and limited use of modern statistical techniques in quarterly national accounts, which makes it harder to separate underlying trends from short-term noise.
- It also calls for more granular breakdowns of gross fixed capital formation by institutional sector and better-disaggregated quarterly production and expenditure data, noting that some of these breakdowns are published with long lags that constrain real-time analysis.

Assessment of inflation statistics (CPI)

- For India's main inflation indicator, the Consumer Price Index, the IMF assigns a 'B' grade, implying that CPI data are broadly adequate for surveillance but still have weaknesses.
- The CPI's problems echo those of GDP: the base year (2012), item basket and weights are outdated, meaning the index may not fully reflect current consumption patterns and spending habits, even though it is released monthly with good timeliness and coverage.

Concerns on fiscal and other statistics

- On government finance statistics, the IMF finds that while central and state-level monthly data are timely, consolidated general government accounts (central + all states + local bodies + off-budget funds) are not compiled or are available only with long lags, limiting a comprehensive view of public finances.
- External, monetary and financial sector statistics receive relatively better marks, but the IMF still notes gaps in coverage and interconnectedness, especially for non-bank financial companies and household balance sheets, suggesting scope for a more integrated data system.

Policy and credibility implications

- The 'C' grade does not imply that India's GDP figures are unusable, but it raises questions for investors, rating agencies and domestic policymakers about the precision of growth estimates and the reliability of GDP-to-debt, productivity and inequality calculations derived from them.
- The government has indicated that new base years for GDP and CPI and improved compilation methods are planned, but until those reforms materialise and discrepancies narrow, India will face continuing scrutiny over the quality and transparency of its official macroeconomic statistics.

Myanmar's election will be a sham, says rebel leader

Chin Brotherhood's view that Myanmar's planned December 2025 election under the military junta will be a "sham" that neither reflects people's will nor contributes to ending the civil war that began after the 1 February 2021 coup.

Key analytical points:

- Rebel characterization of the election
 - Yaw Mang, spokesperson of the Chin Brotherhood based in Mindat township of Chin State, argues that the elections are irrelevant to resistance groups and civilians, likening them to an "event on another planet" because power will remain with the junta's generals regardless of voting.
 - He predicts junta leaders may appear in military uniform or civilian dress to legitimise themselves but insists this cosmetic change will not stop military operations and attacks against ethnic communities.
- Chin Brotherhood's struggle and China factor
 - The Chin Brotherhood, formed in December 2023 after a junta crackdown, is one of several ethnic resistance groups fighting the military regime in Myanmar's western Chin State bordering India's Mizoram.
 - Yaw Mang alleges that the junta receives military support from China for operations against ethnic armed groups, framing the conflict partly as a struggle against external-backed exploitation of Chin State's resources without sharing benefits with local populations.
- Appeal to India and cross-border linkages
 - In his interview during a rare visit to New Delhi, Yaw Mang urges the Indian government to assist people in Chin State with essential supplies such as food and medicines and to help restore telephone connectivity, highlighting the humanitarian crisis along the India-Myanmar border.
 - He stresses shared ethnic and cultural ties with Mizoram and says the Chin would cease fighting if they could secure rights comparable to those enjoyed by people across the border in India, signalling a preference for friendly relations with New Delhi.
- Evolution and support of the armed movement
 - This notes that the Chin Brotherhood initially attacked junta forces without adequate training, suffering casualties, but later received guidance from the Arakan Army, a powerful ethnic armed group active in Rakhine State and part of the broader anti-junta coalition.
 - This cooperation reflects a wider pattern in Myanmar's civil war, where newer People's Defence Forces and local outfits increasingly coordinate with established ethnic armies, enhancing their operational effectiveness against the military regime.
- Implications for Myanmar's peace process and regional security
 - By dismissing the election as illegitimate and vowing to continue armed struggle, the Chin Brotherhood's stance underscores that large swathes of Myanmar's resistance movement see no political off-ramp under current conditions, reducing the credibility of the junta's promised "roadmap to democracy."
 - For India, the combination of intensified conflict, refugee flows into Mizoram and Nagaland, and appeals for cross-border support complicates border management and diplomacy, forcing New Delhi to balance security concerns and humanitarian obligations while dealing with the junta in Naypyidaw.

Japan will pay a 'painful price' if it steps out of line over Taiwan: China

- China's Defence Ministry has warned that Japan will "pay a painful price" if it "steps out of line" on the Taiwan issue, reacting sharply to Tokyo's plan to deploy a medium-range surface-to-air missile unit on Yonaguni Island, roughly 100–110 km from Taiwan's coast.

Trigger: Japan's Yonaguni missile deployment

- Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi has said plans are "steadily moving forward" to station a medium-range SAM unit at a base on Yonaguni as part of a broader build-up along the Nansei/Southwest island chain to deter Chinese military activity near Taiwan and the East China Sea.
- Tokyo argues that the deployment is defensive, aimed at protecting Yonaguni and lowering the chances of an armed attack on Japan, while Taiwan's officials have publicly welcomed the move as helpful for stability in the Taiwan Strait.

China's message and historical framing

- Beijing insists that "resolving the Taiwan question" is an internal Chinese matter and that Japan, which colonially ruled Taiwan from 1895 to 1945, has "nothing to do" with it; the warning invokes Japan's wartime history to portray current moves as a failure to reflect on past aggression.
- Chinese defence spokespersons accuse Tokyo of "entertaining the delusion" of military intervention in the Taiwan Strait and stress that the People's Liberation Army has the capability to defeat any outside force crossing China's "red lines" on Taiwan.

Escalating Japan-China tensions over Taiwan

- Relations are described as at their worst level in years after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan could trigger a military response from Japan, signalling a more explicit security linkage between Taiwan's defence and Japan's own security.
- China views Japan's statements and deployments as part of a wider US-aligned containment effort, while Japan sees them as necessary responses to China's growing military pressure around Taiwan and increased incursions near Japanese airspace and waters.

US angle and media report controversy

- This also notes a separate controversy: a Wall Street Journal report claimed that US President Donald Trump, after speaking with Xi Jinping, advised Takaichi in a call not to provoke China over Taiwan's sovereignty, effectively urging Tokyo to moderate its rhetoric.
- Japan has publicly denied that Trump gave such advice, saying the call focused on cooperation and easing tensions; this denial seeks to project policy autonomy and avoid the impression that Washington is restraining Tokyo on Taiwan even as security coordination deepens.

Strategic implications

- China's "painful price" warning is meant to deter Japan from deeper involvement in a Taiwan contingency, but it may harden Japanese threat perceptions and accelerate the militarisation of the southwestern islands, including greater US-Japan integration of air and missile defences.
- For the wider region, the episode underscores how Taiwan has become the central flashpoint in China-Japan relations, with any step such as new missile deployments or sharper political statements quickly feeding a cycle of deterrence signalling, mutual suspicion and potential crisis escalation.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans b

To transform Tripura into a vibrant hub of cultural, spiritual and eco-tourism by connecting key heritage and nature sites across the state. The project forms part of the Prime Minister Modi's vision of transforming Northeast India into a vibrant global tourism hub. It is a 4-night, 5-day itinerary designed to showcase Tripura's rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and spiritual landmarks. It includes: Agartala – the state capital and gateway to Tripura; Neer Mahal – a stunning lake palace blending Hindu and Mughal architecture; Sepahijala – known for its wildlife sanctuary and botanical gardens; Udaipur – home to the revered Tripura Sundari Temple (Matabari); Chabimura – famous for its rock carvings on steep hill faces; Dumboor Lake – a picturesque spot with islands and boating options.

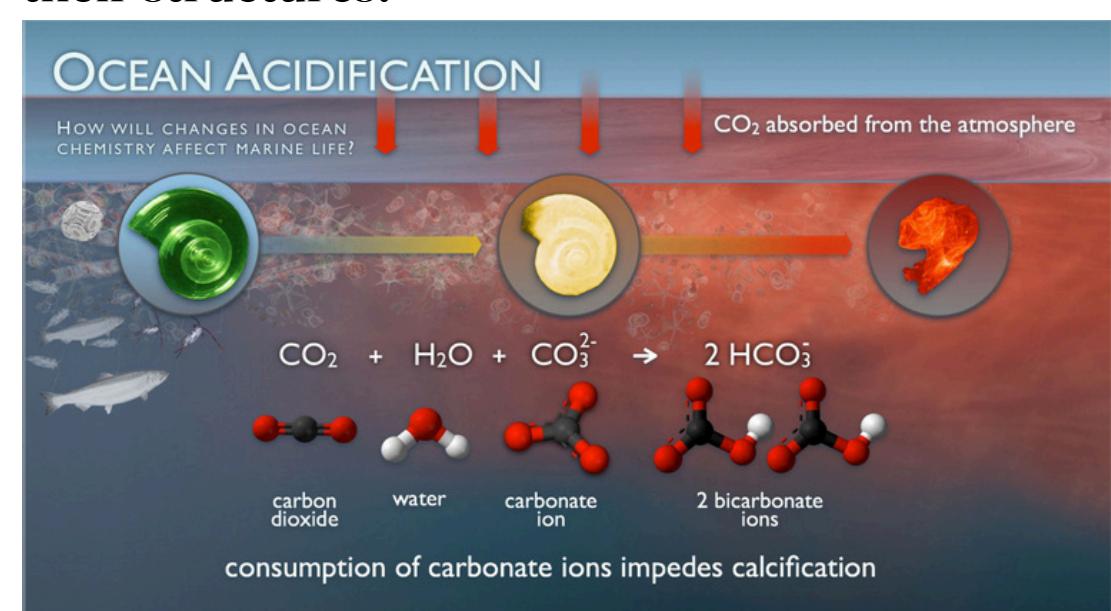


Q2. Ans c

Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi at the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Uttarakhand's Chamoli. It is a unique blend of ritual, theatre, music, and dance, deeply rooted in the local traditions of the Garhwal Himalayas. Community - It is dedicated to the custodial god, Bhumiyal Devta, a local divinity whose temple houses most of the festivities. The festival involves theatrical performances of the Ramayana and local legends, in which people sing songs and wear masks while dancing. There are 18 different types of masks made of Bhojpatra, Himalayan birch, that performers wear during the event, represent different deities and mythological figures.

Q3. Ans c

The primary cause of ocean acidification is carbon dioxide (CO₂). When increased amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere dissolve in seawater, it reacts with water to form carbonic acid, which lowers the ocean's pH, making it more acidic. Most of the increased CO₂ in the atmosphere is due to burning fossil fuels for energy production and transportation. Ocean acidification can negatively affect many marine organisms, particularly those with calcium carbonate shells or skeletons, as it can make it difficult for them to build and maintain their structures.



Q4. Ans b

Eravikulam National Park is the only national park that primarily protects the endangered Nilgiri tahr. It is home to the largest population of Nilgiri tahrs in the world. The park was established to protect the indigenous population of the Nilgiri tahr, which is an endangered mountain goat species. It is located in the Western Ghats of Kerala and is a critical stronghold for the species' conservation. The park was declared a sanctuary in 1975 and upgraded to a National Park in 1978, specifically with the objective of protecting the Nilgiri tahr population.



Case Study:



The world-famous naive painters in a Serbian village

Pavel Hajko never tires of painting roosters. Inside his home studio in Kovacica — a sleepy town in northern Serbia famous for its style of naive art — the brightly coloured creatures cover the walls. Mr. Hajko and his fellow artists have become world-famous for their childlike renderings of the traditional village life of the Slovak minority in the atlands of the Banat region, north of the Danube. “In naive painting, everything is done as you learn. It’s not a school where the colour has to be this or that... we can put any colour,” he said. The naive painting movement of self-taught artists first emerged in the 1930s, depicting everything from harvests to the traditional dress of the region. Last year UNESCO recognised the Kovacica painters on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, a milestone for a movement shaped by unschooled artists. The Slovak minority accounted for less than one percent of Serbia’s population in the 2022 census. A 2024 study found the community has declined over the last three decades, partly due to its ageing population and migration to Slovakia. For art historian Elenka Djuris, this makes preserving the paintings of the unique culture “tied to the area of Kovacica” all the more critical.

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Hong Kong's deadliest fire in three decades has highlighted its risky use of flammable bamboo scaffolding and mesh for building work in a tradition dating back centuries to mainland China. For decades in the skyscraper-strewn former British colony, bamboo has been the material of choice for scaffolding — cheap, abundant and flexible — bound together with nylon cords. Hong Kong, despite its modernity, still has around 2,500 registered bamboo scaffolding masters.