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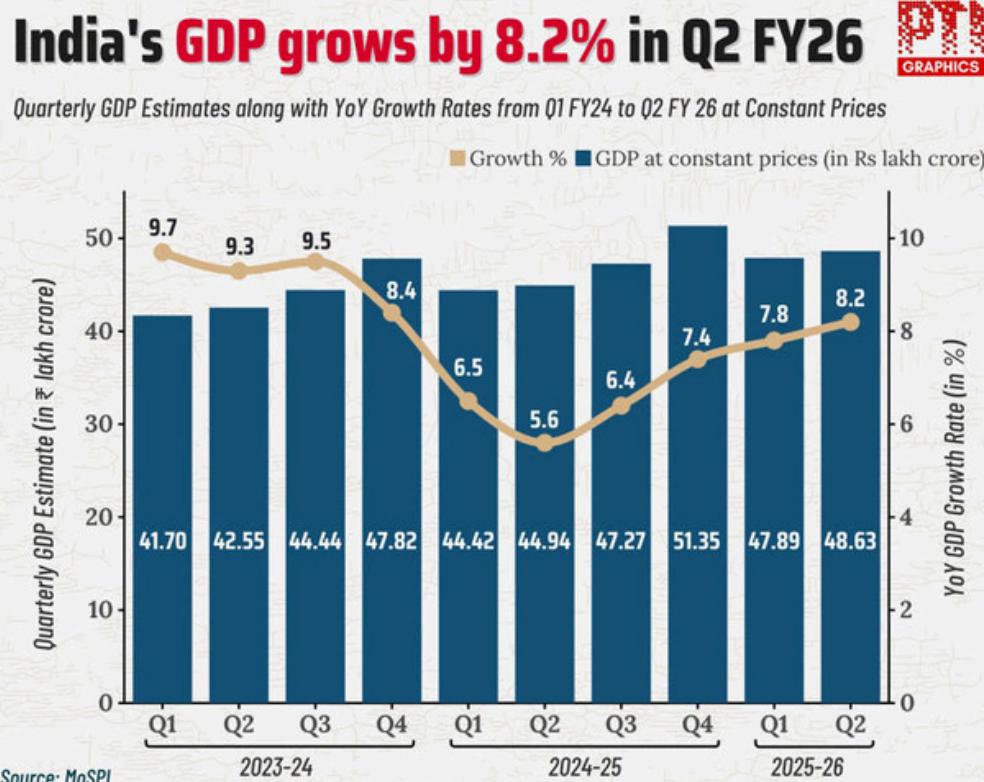
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## India posts six-quarter high GDP growth of 8.2%



India's GDP grew at a six-quarter high of 8.2% in the second quarter (July-September) of the financial year 2025-26, buoyed by a relatively strong performance of the manufacturing and services sectors, official data showed. Data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Friday showed that the last time India's GDP grew faster was in the quarter ending March 2024, the final quarter of 2023-24. The growth in Q2 of 2025-26 was significantly faster than the 5.6% growth recorded in the same quarter of last year, and even faster than the 7.8% in Q1 of this year.

However, economists say that while the real GDP growth rate — which removes the inflation effect — has been higher than expected, the relatively low nominal growth rate of 8.7% shows economic activity is still subdued. According to Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis, this lower nominal GDP growth would make it more difficult for the government to achieve its fiscal deficit target of 4.4%, which had been pegged to a nominal growth of 10.1%. The manufacturing sector grew at a six-quarter high of 9.1% in Q2 of 2025-26, up from 7.7% in Q1. While some of this was genuine growth, the sector's performance was also bolstered by a low base effect. The aggregate services sector, too, grew at a relatively robust 9.2% in Q2 of this financial year, which came on a high base of 7.2% in Q2 last year. Looking deeper, the "financial services, real estate and professional services" sub sector grew at a nine-quarter high of 10.2%. This was followed by the "public administration, defence and other services" sub-sector, which grew at 9.7%. The agriculture sector grew at 3.5% in Q2 of 2025-26, down from the 4.1% seen in Q2 of last year, and the 3.7% in Q1 of this year.

### Ready to take off



A Wefly eVolt W280F eVTOL aircraft is seen at the Wefly Aviation (Suzhou) Co. Ltd. booth during the Aero Asia 2025 in Zhuhai, in southern China's Guangdong province. Aero Asia 2025 is an international aviation and aerospace exhibition that runs between November 27 and 30.



The India Meteorological Department issued red and orange alerts for various districts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh as Cyclone Ditwah continued to move over coastal Sri Lanka and the adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal on Friday. The cyclone is likely to reach over southwest Bay of Bengal near north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and south Andhra Pradesh coasts by early Sunday. It is likely to move parallel to the Tamil Nadu coast and lose intensity as deep depression by Sunday evening.

## Putin to visit India for two-day annual summit next week

### Putin's India visit and political context

- Putin will undertake a two-day state visit to India on 4–5 December 2025 for the 23rd Annual Summit, his first trip since the Ukraine invasion, and will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and meet President Droupadi Murmu.
- The visit happens amid US tariffs on India's imports of Russian crude and continuing Western sanctions on Moscow, which have reduced India's purchase volumes and created trade frictions that both sides want to address.

### Summit agenda: defence, energy, Ukraine

- The summit is framed as a chance to review the “special and privileged strategic partnership” and set a future vision across defence, nuclear energy, trade, science and culture, while also exchanging views on regional issues such as the Ukraine war.
- New Delhi is expected to raise the widening trade deficit caused by large-scale Russian oil imports and to press for more balanced trade and clarity on payment mechanisms, including local-currency settlements that can bypass sanctions constraints.

### Ukraine war and diplomatic positioning

- India has repeatedly called for an end to the Ukraine conflict via dialogue while avoiding explicit condemnation of Russia, with Modi reportedly telling Putin that “now is not the time for war.”
- Talks come as a new 28-point peace plan is being discussed among the US, Russia, Ukraine and European states, and Delhi will seek Russia's assessment while maintaining its careful balancing act between Moscow and Western partners.

### Defence ministers' meeting and S-400 issues

- On the sidelines of the summit, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov will meet in New Delhi to review ongoing defence cooperation and explore new areas of partnership.
- A key topic is the timely delivery of the remaining S-400 air-defence units; India has received three of five contracted squadrons, with the last two now expected only by 2026–27, and will push Moscow to stick to updated timelines while also securing additional missiles and MRO support in India.
- The talks will cover co-production and joint development in shipbuilding and weapons, and fit into the broader “Mission Sudarshan Chakra” concept, under which the S-400 has already been used operationally and branded as a mythological shield for protecting key national assets.

### Strategic implications for India

- Together, the summit and the defence-ministerial underline that, despite sanctions, supply delays and India's diversification towards Western suppliers, Russia remains a central pillar of India's high-end military capability, especially in air defence, nuclear energy and legacy platforms.

## Delay in getting syntactic foam hits Samudrayaan

- India's Samudrayaan deep-sea mission has hit a schedule setback because a critical syntactic foam cladding, being procured from France, has been delayed, pushing key sea trials to around mid-next year.

### Mission overview and significance

- Samudrayaan aims to send a three-person submersible (MATSYA-6000) to 6,000 metres below sea level, placing India among a small group of countries capable of crewed dives to such depths and supporting future deep-sea mining and scientific exploration.
- The core vehicle is a pressure-resistant sphere that will dive to the ocean floor, survey and scour it, and collect soil and rock samples, forming a central pillar of India's Deep Ocean Mission roadmap for accessing polymetallic nodules and other high-seas resources.

### Current test configuration and planned trial sequence

- NIOT in Chennai has built a full-scale steel replica of the submersible as a test platform; this simulator has already undergone dives to about 100 metres to validate basic systems.
- The next major milestone is a 500-metre uncrewed dive, originally slated for December 2024, which is a prerequisite before shifting to the final titanium personnel sphere and attempting deeper, crewed descents.

### Role and status of syntactic foam

- Before the 500-metre test, the steel sphere must be clad in syntactic foam—a lightweight composite made of hollow glass or ceramic microspheres in resin—which provides buoyancy while withstanding enormous external pressure.
- This foam is being manufactured in France and tested in Norway; only after certification will it be shipped to India and attached to the submersible, but procurement and testing delays mean delivery is now expected only by the end of the year.

### Knock-on effects on titanium sphere and full-depth tests

- Once foam-equipped tests at 500 metres are complete and performance verified, the final titanium alloy sphere—already being fabricated by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre—will undergo separate lab pressure tests in Russia to simulate 6,000-metre conditions.
- These steps push the complete 6,000-metre trial window to around 2027, but officials still hope to achieve a key intermediate milestone by sending the foam-clad steel version on a 500-metre dive by about April next year, assuming timely material delivery.

### Broader technological and strategic implications

- The episode exposes India's dependence on specialised foreign materials and testing infrastructure for cutting-edge undersea technology, even as domestic capabilities in titanium welding, life-support systems and vehicle design have progressed.
- Successful resolution of the foam bottleneck and subsequent trials would not only validate India's ability to operate at hadal depths but also strengthen its position in global deep-sea governance debates over resource extraction, environmental safeguards and technology access.

# India launches 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' to provide relief supplies to Sri Lanka

"Operation Sagar Bandhu" as a humanitarian mission to support Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah, using naval and air assets to deliver emergency relief while signalling New Delhi's "Neighbourhood First" and MAHASAGAR regional vision.

## Nature and scale of Operation Sagar Bandhu

- Operation Sagar Bandhu is framed as an urgent Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) initiative to aid Sri Lanka, which is reeling from severe floods, landslides and infrastructure damage caused by Cyclone Ditwah.
- The first tranche of supplies—about 4.5 tonnes of dry rations and 2 tonnes of fresh rations along with other essentials—was delivered to Colombo by Indian Navy ships INS Vikrant and INS Udaygiri, with additional air-delivered consignments of around 12 tonnes (and more subsequently) sent by Indian Air Force transport aircraft.

## Diplomatic messaging and political signalling

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's condolence message to Sri Lankans who lost family members emphasises that India "stands ready" to provide more aid, explicitly linking the operation to the Neighbourhood First policy and the MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's statement that "Operation Sagar Bandhu commences" reinforces the image of India as first responder in the Indian Ocean, extending solidarity to its "closest maritime neighbour" and projecting responsible regional leadership.

## Use of naval presence and regional security context

- This notes that INS Vikrant and INS Udaygiri were already in Sri Lanka for an International Fleet Review marking the Sri Lanka Navy's 75th anniversary, and their diversion for relief showcases flexible use of deployed assets for HADR missions.
- Sri Lankan defence authorities have reportedly requested use of Vikrant's aircraft for rescue and relief, indicating operational trust and deepening defence cooperation at a moment when Sri Lanka faces a major internal crisis.

## Humanitarian content and operational details

- The consignments include food staples, ready-to-eat items, dairy and bakery products, beverages, tents, tarpaulins, blankets, hygiene kits and other basic survival materials aimed at immediate household needs in heavily flooded districts.
- NDRF teams and additional IAF aircraft (C-130J and IL-76) are being deployed with boats, cutting tools, communications gear and medical kits, showing that the operation is not just about symbolic aid drops but also about sustained on-ground rescue capacity.

## Strategic implications for India–Sri Lanka ties

- The branding "Sagar Bandhu" ("friend across the seas") continues a pattern set by earlier missions like "SAGAR" and "Sagar Araksha," reinforcing a narrative of India as a dependable, values-driven partner in the Indian Ocean rather than a transactional power.
- In the longer term, such high-visibility relief operations can help New Delhi counter external influence in Sri Lanka, build goodwill among the local population, and normalise Indian military presence in the island's vicinity under a humanitarian banner.

# Navy to hold International Fleet Review in Visakhapatnam in Feb.

- Indian Navy will host an International Fleet Review (IFR) in Visakhapatnam in February 2026, using the event both as maritime diplomacy and as a signal of India's role in shaping Indo-Pacific security architecture.

## Purpose and themes of IFR 2026

- The IFR will revolve around the themes "United through Oceans" and "Bridges of Friendship," underlining how India wants to use naval platforms to promote cooperative security and connectivity rather than hard balancing alone.
- This edition coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Republic, so it doubles as a milestone event to showcase indigenous naval capabilities and India's evolution as a maritime power since independence.

## Historical context of India's fleet reviews

- India last hosted an International Fleet Review in 2016 at Visakhapatnam, while the earlier one in 2001 in Mumbai marked 50 years of the Republic; the 2026 review thus continues a pattern of using major national anniversaries for high-visibility naval diplomacy.
- This notes that the maritime domain has become central to India's foreign and security policy, reflecting a shift from a largely continental mindset to one in which sea power and sea-lane security are key instruments of statecraft.

## Strategic messaging and Indo-Pacific setting

- With references to climate change, illegal fishing, economic inequality and multilateralism, the piece frames maritime challenges as transnational issues that require broad coalitions, giving India space to present itself as a "key architect" of multilateral maritime engagement.
- The India-China competition in the Indian Ocean is mentioned as intense but managed without direct naval confrontation, underscoring Delhi's preference for calibrated engagement—using events like IFR, MILAN and IONS to build networks that can counterbalance China without overt bloc politics.

## Instruments of naval diplomacy highlighted

- New Delhi's recent gifting of patrol vessels to Vietnam, interceptor craft to Mozambique, and the setting up of a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka are cited as examples of capacity-building that enhance India's reputation as a "first responder" and security provider in the Indo-Pacific.
- India's participation in numerous bilateral and multilateral exercises—SIMBEX, Varuna, CORPATs, QUAD's Malabar, MILAN, and KONKAN—showing how fleet reviews, exercises and humanitarian missions together create a dense web of operational partnerships.

## Political signalling and multilateral order

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is quoted reiterating India's commitment to a rules-based international order and calling for reform of outdated multilateral structures, using the maritime setting to project India's broader foreign-policy line.
- By hosting IFR 2026 alongside Exercise MILAN and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs, India positions Visakhapatnam as a hub for regional dialogue and signals an ambition to lead agenda-setting on Indo-Pacific maritime norms and cooperative security mechanisms.

## **PRELIMS CORNER :**

**1.The term “Auramine” recently seen in news is?**

- (a) A dormant Volcano
- (b) Nuclear Submarine
- (c) Malware used in cyberattacks
- (d) A banned hazardous dye used as food additive

**2.According to the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, the expression “Scheduled Areas” means such areas as declared by:**

- (a) President
- (b) Parliament
- (c) Governor of a state
- (d) State legislature

**3.Hayli Gubbi volcano recently seen in news located at?**

- (a) Ethiopia
- (b) Eritrea
- (c) Kenya
- (d) Tanzania

**4.The Changthang plateau of Ladakh region is known for the production of:**

- (a) Saffron
- (b) Pashmina Wool
- (c) Golden Silk
- (d) Wheat

**DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE**

## **NATIONAL**

### **WHO calls on countries to make fertility care safer and affordable**

- World Health Organization (WHO) has released its first-ever global guideline on infertility, urging countries to make fertility care safer, fairer and more affordable through a package of 40 recommendations that span prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

#### **Rationale and scale of the problem**

- WHO highlights infertility as a major but neglected public-health and equity issue, affecting around 1 in 6 people of reproductive age globally and causing significant emotional distress, stigma and financial hardship.
- Despite rising demand for infertility services, access remains severely limited, with tests and treatments in many countries funded almost entirely out-of-pocket and often costing as much as or more than an average household's annual income, especially for IVF.

#### **Key recommendations on prevention and early action**

- The guideline stresses tackling modifiable risk factors such as untreated sexually transmitted infections and tobacco use, and promotes lifestyle interventions like healthy diet, regular physical activity and smoking cessation for individuals and couples planning pregnancy.
- WHO calls for early education about fertility and infertility in schools, primary healthcare and reproductive health facilities so that people can make informed reproductive plans and seek timely care.

#### **Integrating fertility care into health systems**

- Countries are urged to integrate fertility care into national health strategies, benefit packages and financing mechanisms rather than leaving it to the private market, promoting cost-effective options at each stage of care.
- The guidelines emphasise that services should be people-centred and rights-based, embedded within broader sexual and reproductive health programmes that respect gender equality and informed choice about whether and when to have children.

#### **Clinical management and treatment pathways**

- WHO provides guidance on standardised clinical pathways to diagnose common biological causes of male and female infertility, thereby encouraging evidence-based testing instead of ad-hoc or unnecessary procedures.
- Treatment is framed as a stepwise ladder: starting from simpler measures such as counselling on fertile periods and basic medical management, and only then moving to more complex interventions like intrauterine insemination or in vitro fertilisation (IVF) when clinically indicated and aligned with patient preferences.

#### **Financial protection and psychosocial support**

- Recognising that catastrophic out-of-pocket spending on fertility treatments can push households into poverty, the guideline calls for public financing and policy measures that protect poorer families while curbing unregulated, profit-driven practices.
- It also underscores the psychological burden of infertility, urging health systems to ensure ongoing psychosocial support and counselling for individuals and couples dealing with infertility and its social consequences.

# Reserve Bank issues 244 consolidated master directions

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has carried out a major clean-up and consolidation of its rulebook by issuing 244 consolidated Master Directions (MDs) and repealing 9,446 older circulars, with the aim of reducing compliance burden and improving regulatory clarity for regulated entities.

## Scale and purpose of the exercise

- RBI reviewed roughly 3,500 directions, circulars and guidelines issued over several decades and merged the applicable instructions into 244 Master Directions administered by the Department of Regulation.
- The stated objective is to cut duplication and complexity so that regulated entities (REs) no longer have to track thousands of scattered circulars, thereby easing compliance and supporting “ease of doing business.”

## Coverage: entities and regulatory areas

- The 244 MDs consolidate instructions for 11 categories of REs: commercial banks, small finance banks, payments banks, local area banks, regional rural banks, urban and rural cooperative banks, all-India financial institutions, non-banking financial companies, asset reconstruction companies and credit information companies.
- Each type of institution now has separate master directions for each functional area (for example, prudential regulation, governance, customer service), giving them a single structured reference framework instead of multiple overlapping circulars.

## Treatment of legacy circulars

- Of the 9,446 circulars, 3,809 have been subsumed into the new master directions and 5,673 have been repealed as obsolete or redundant, significantly pruning the stock of regulations.
- Once the consolidated MDs take effect, the repealed circulars will no longer be operative, which reduces the risk of conflicting instructions and interpretative disputes for supervised entities.

## Drafting approach and structure

- The MDs have been drafted in a “continuous flow” style so that the main operative provisions appear in the core text, with advisory or good-practice elements clearly flagged as such.
- Regulatory instructions that are entity-specific but not tied to a single function have been grouped in separate “miscellaneous” master directions, while board-level responsibilities have been carved out as distinct sections within each MD to sharpen governance focus.

## Regulatory and market implications

- For banks and NBFCs, the consolidation should lower compliance costs, speed up internal policy updates, and make supervisory expectations more transparent, even though the underlying regulatory standards have largely been carried over on an “as-is” basis rather than rewritten.
- System-wide, the exercise signals RBI’s move toward more codified, user-friendly regulation, which can facilitate digital compliance tools, reduce ambiguity in enforcement, and improve accountability by making it easier for stakeholders to see what rules apply and where they are located.

# RBI issues final norms for digital banking channels

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued its final guidelines for digital banking channels, sharply strengthening customer consent, access, and fraud-risk controls while clarifying what banks can and cannot mandate in the name of “digital.”

## Customer consent and choice

- Banks must now obtain explicit, documented consent before activating any digital banking service (internet, mobile, or other e-channels), and this consent has to be properly recorded for audit and dispute-resolution purposes.
- Lenders are barred from making the use of any digital channel a precondition for other facilities such as debit cards; combining services can be offered as a convenience, but the decision to enrol in digital banking rests solely with the customer.

## Use of mobile numbers and alerts

- While customers cannot be forced into digital channels, banks may still collect and record mobile numbers at account opening in line with KYC requirements, mainly to send transaction alerts and important communications.
- Banks must clearly inform customers that SMS or email alerts will be sent to the registered number or email for both financial and non-financial transactions, strengthening transparency and real-time awareness of account activity.

## Network-independent access and service continuity

- Any bank offering mobile banking services other than via a dedicated app has to ensure that customers across all mobile network operators can use those services; in other words, digital access should be network-independent and not tied to a specific telecom provider.
- Banks are also required to ensure continuous compliance with directions issued by the RBI’s Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, which are periodically updated, so that backend infrastructure keeps pace with evolving security and interoperability norms.

## Risk mitigation and fraud-management obligations

- The norms require banks to adopt risk-based transaction limits—per transaction, per day, per week or month—and other controls such as velocity checks and enhanced fraud screening, calibrated to each bank’s risk perception.
- Banks must put in place risk-based transaction monitoring and surveillance systems that analyse customer behaviour, flag unusual patterns, and, where necessary, seek prior confirmation for outlier transactions, aligning with RBI’s broader fraud-risk-management framework.

## Product display and conduct standards

- Third-party products, including those of promoter groups or subsidiaries, cannot be displayed or pushed on banks’ digital channels unless specifically permitted by RBI, limiting mis-selling and conflicts of interest on apps and web platforms.
- Overall, the framework attempts to balance innovation and digital push with consumer protection, ensuring that digital banking remains voluntary, transparent and secure rather than a forced migration that could disadvantage less tech-savvy or vulnerable customers.



# Trump says he will stop all migration from 'Third World'

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced a plan to "permanently pause" all migration from what he calls "Third World countries," tying this drastic escalation in immigration policy to a recent fatal shooting of two National Guard soldiers in Washington, D.C.

## Triggering incident and political framing

- The announcement follows an alleged "ambush-style" attack in Washington by an Afghan national that killed one National Guard member and wounded another, which Trump presents as proof of the security risks posed by immigrants from poorer countries.
- By linking the shooting, his earlier decision to deploy National Guard troops, and the need to halt migration, Trump uses a single criminal act to justify sweeping, system-wide restrictions and to portray himself as acting decisively in defense of national security.

## Substance of Trump's proposed measures

- Trump says he will "permanently pause migration from all Third World countries" to let the U.S. immigration system "fully recover," though he does not define which states fall under this label or how a "permanent" pause would be implemented in law.
- He also threatens to reverse "millions" of admissions approved under former President Joe Biden, indicating potential mass re-adjudication or cancellation of visas, refugee approvals, and other lawful pathways granted in the previous administration.

## Green-card and vetting escalation

- This notes that Trump's team has ordered a "full-scale, rigorous re-examination" of every green card issued to immigrants from 19 "countries of concern," expanding scrutiny from new arrivals to long-term lawful permanent residents.
- These 19 countries broadly overlap with those already facing earlier visa or entry restrictions—including Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, Haiti, Venezuela and others—suggesting a layered strategy that combines entry bans with retroactive security reviews.

## Rhetorical strategy and domestic politics

- Trump's language casts immigrants as conditional "assets" whose presence depends on perceived economic or cultural utility and suggests denaturalisation or deportation for those deemed security risks or "non-compatible with Western civilisation."
- Politically, the move fits into his broader second-term agenda centered on mass deportations and hardline border policies, mobilising his base by fusing fears about terrorism, crime, and the legacy of the Afghanistan war into a single anti-migration narrative.

## Legal, humanitarian and international implications

- A blanket suspension of migration from a loosely defined "Third World" category would invite major legal challenges on grounds of discrimination and due process, given its sweeping nature and lack of clear criteria.
- Such measures would severely affect refugees, students, workers and family-based migrants from large parts of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, straining U.S. relations with many partner states and undermining its human-rights and asylum commitments.

# Nearly 100 killed, dozens missing as Cyclone Ditwah pummels Sri Lanka

• Cyclone Ditwah has already caused severe loss of life and damage in Sri Lanka while simultaneously threatening India's east coast, prompting large-scale emergency preparations in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

## Human toll and situation in Sri Lanka

- Nearly 100 people are reported dead and dozens missing in Sri Lanka as of Friday evening, with the toll driven mainly by incessant rains, floods and landslides triggered by Cyclone Ditwah.
- Around 25 of Sri Lanka's 26 districts are badly hit, with tens of thousands displaced, roads submerged, and normal life badly disrupted across multiple provinces.

## Meteorological features of Cyclone Ditwah

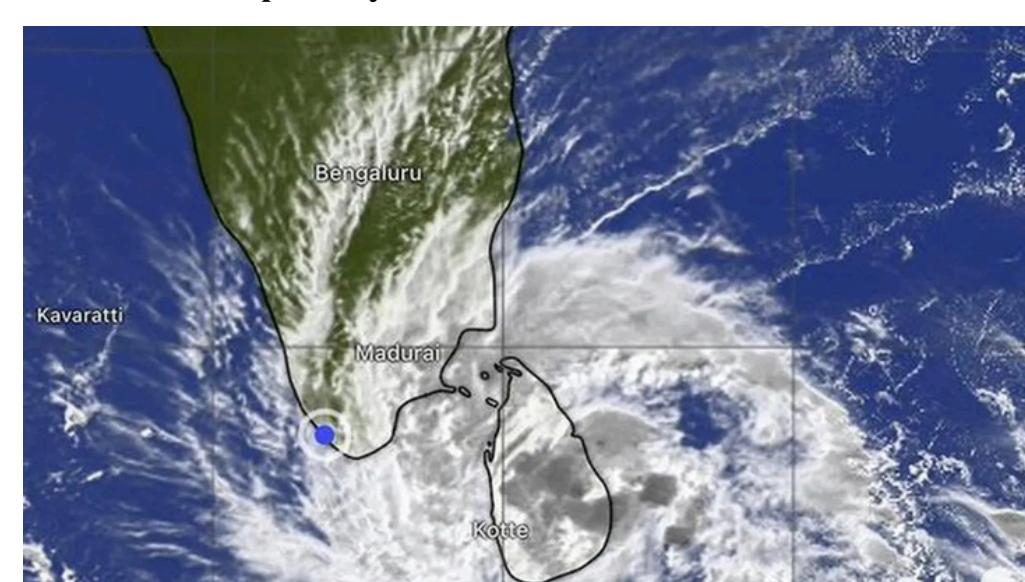
- The cyclone is moving north and northwest after crossing Sri Lanka, tracking towards the coast of Tamil Nadu and then into the Bay of Bengal, which increases the risk of prolonged heavy rainfall along its path.
- The system has produced unprecedented cumulative rainfall over several days in Sri Lanka, with many districts recording more than 200–300 mm, explaining the scale of flooding and landslides.

## Administrative response and relief in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre and Meteorology Department have declared many areas as "disaster zones," ordered evacuations, and opened schools and public buildings as temporary shelters for affected families.
- The government has announced compensation for those who lost relatives and homes, urged ministers and opposition MPs to visit their districts, and appealed for disciplined use of scarce relief resources amid criticism of the disaster response.

## Economic and social impacts in Sri Lanka

- Transport and daily commerce are heavily disrupted: roads are inundated, some regions remain cut off, crops and small businesses have been damaged, and poor households are especially vulnerable to the loss of shelter and livelihoods.
- Tourism is hit just as the high season approaches, with authorities forced to cancel river safaris and other attractions due to swollen rivers and unsafe conditions, threatening much-needed foreign exchange earnings.
- Tropical storms develop over warm ocean waters near the equator. Warm air rises, creating a zone of low pressure. As this air cools, it is displaced by more rising warm air from below, setting up a continuous cycle that generates strong winds and heavy rainfall.
- As the system intensifies and its rotation speeds up, a calm, clear eye forms at the centre, marked by very low air pressure.
- Once wind speeds reach 63km/h (39mph), the system is classified as a cyclonic or tropical storm – Cyclone Ditwah has a wind speed of 65km/h, giving it a current technical designation of storm. If winds increase to 119km/h (74mph) or more, it becomes a tropical cyclone.



## After fifth coup, life limps back to normal in Guinea-Bissau capital

### Immediate post-coup situation

- The piece notes that “life limped back to normal” in the capital a couple of days after soldiers seized power, emphasizing partial rather than full normalcy and signalling lingering tension.
- Vehicles, taxis and pedestrians have returned to main roads, and security has been relaxed in some areas but remains tight at key locations, showing a controlled reopening under military oversight.

### New military leadership and political context

- The military high command has appointed General Horta N’Tam, the army chief of staff, as transitional leader for one year, institutionalising the coup and sidelining the electoral process that was under way.
- The takeover occurred just one day before provisional results of the 23 November presidential and parliamentary elections were due, reinforcing the perception that the coup is directly tied to disputed outcomes and elite struggles for power.

### Economic precarity and social pressures

- Traders, shopkeepers and market vendors are portrayed as returning to work immediately, not because conditions are stable but because poverty leaves them no choice, with interviewees stressing they must work daily simply to eat.
- Markets, shops, restaurants and small grocery outlets have reopened, yet business remains weak, underlining how political shocks quickly depress already fragile livelihoods in one of West Africa’s poorest states.

### Security measures and public space

- A nationwide curfew imposed during the coup has been lifted, and land, air and sea borders that were sealed on the day of the takeover have reportedly reopened, signalling the junta’s desire to project a return to order and normality.
- Nonetheless, surrounding neighbourhoods of Bissau are described as relatively deserted and thinly populated markets persist, indicating continued fear, uncertainty and possibly reduced mobility outside central corridors.

### Historical pattern of coups and governance failure

- This situates this event as the fifth successful coup since independence from Portugal in 1974, with numerous failed attempts in between, underlining a long-term pattern of military intervention and institutional fragility.
- It links repeated coups to “chaotic administration” and deep poverty, showing how weak state capacity and poor governance create space for recurring unconstitutional power grabs.

### Narco-state dynamics and international implications

- The piece recalls that Guinea-Bissau has become a key hub for Latin American cocaine transiting to Europe, with Latin American drug lords exploiting porous institutions, which has earned the country the label of a potential or actual “narco-state.”
- By noting that drug trafficking networks thrive amid instability, the article hints that the coup may be intertwined with struggles over control of illicit revenue streams, making the crisis not only a domestic political issue but also a concern for European and regional security actors focused on cocaine routes.

### Overall analytical takeaways

- The framing “life limps back to normal” captures a paradox: surface-level routine has resumed, yet structural drivers of instability—contested elections, military politicisation, poverty and drug-economy penetration—remain unaddressed.
- This implicitly suggests that without reforms to civilian governance, security sector accountability and anti-narcotics cooperation, Bissau’s periodic returns to “normality” will be temporary respites between further episodes of upheaval.

## Hungary PM defies EU, promises Putin to keep buying Russian oil

- Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has openly defied the European Union by assuring Russian President Vladimir Putin that Hungary will continue buying Russian oil and maintain broad cooperation with Moscow, despite EU pressure and sanctions over the Ukraine war.

### Core events

- Orbán met Putin at the Kremlin and pledged that Hungary would keep purchasing Russian oil and continue energy cooperation with Russia, framing Russian supplies as the backbone of Hungary’s current and future energy security.
- This was Orbán’s fourth meeting with Putin since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, underscoring his sustained engagement with Moscow while most EU leaders have avoided direct contact with the Russian president.

### EU context and tensions

- The EU’s post-2022 sanctions framework aims to phase out Russian fossil fuels, with a general embargo on seaborne Russian oil and pressure to end all Russian energy imports by around 2027, though Hungary and some Central European states obtained pipeline exemptions.
- Brussels sees Budapest’s continued large-scale imports of Russian oil as exploiting this exemption and weakening the common sanctions regime, complicating efforts to maintain a unified front against Russia’s invasion.
- Orbán’s repeated one-on-one meetings with Putin have angered many EU partners, who argue he has no mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Union and accuse him of undermining EU foreign policy coherence.

### Hungary’s energy dependence

- Hungary’s energy system is structurally reliant on Russian hydrocarbons: in recent years the majority of its oil and gas has come from Russia via the Druzhba pipeline and long-term contracts, making rapid diversification costly and technically difficult.
- Orbán uses this dependence domestically to justify his defiance of sanctions, arguing that cutting Russian supplies abruptly would jeopardize energy security, raise prices, and damage the Hungarian economy.
- Critics contend that Budapest has had time and EU support to diversify but has chosen instead to deepen ties with Russian suppliers, gaining short-term economic benefits while increasing long-term strategic vulnerability and political isolation within the EU.

### Strategic and political implications

- For Russia, Orbán’s stance provides an important political and economic breach in the EU sanctions wall, giving Moscow continued revenue and a friendly voice inside both the EU and NATO.
- For the EU, Hungary’s position complicates negotiations on new sanctions packages, weakens collective leverage over Moscow, and fuels debates about how to handle a member state that repeatedly blocks or dilutes common decisions on Russia and Ukraine.
- Domestically, Orbán—facing re-election—uses his Moscow diplomacy to project an image of a pragmatic leader securing cheap energy and resisting “external pressure,” which fits his long-standing narrative of sovereignty against Brussels while preserving his strategic partnership with Putin.



# Prelims Corner: Explanations

## Q1. Ans d

**Auramine O** – It is a synthetic yellow dye, produced from compounds such as dimethylaniline and formaldehyde. The dye appears as yellow flakes or powder and dissolves easily when mixed with solvents. Used in – Industry, including textile and leather processing, printing inks, paper manufacturing, etc. Banned for food use – It is bright in colour, easily available and low-cost, yet remains unapproved for use as a food additive. International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) – classifies auramine as a substance that is possibly carcinogenic to humans. Commonly found in – Sweets, turmeric powder, and street food snacks, gives a bright yellow hue that looks more appealing to consumers.

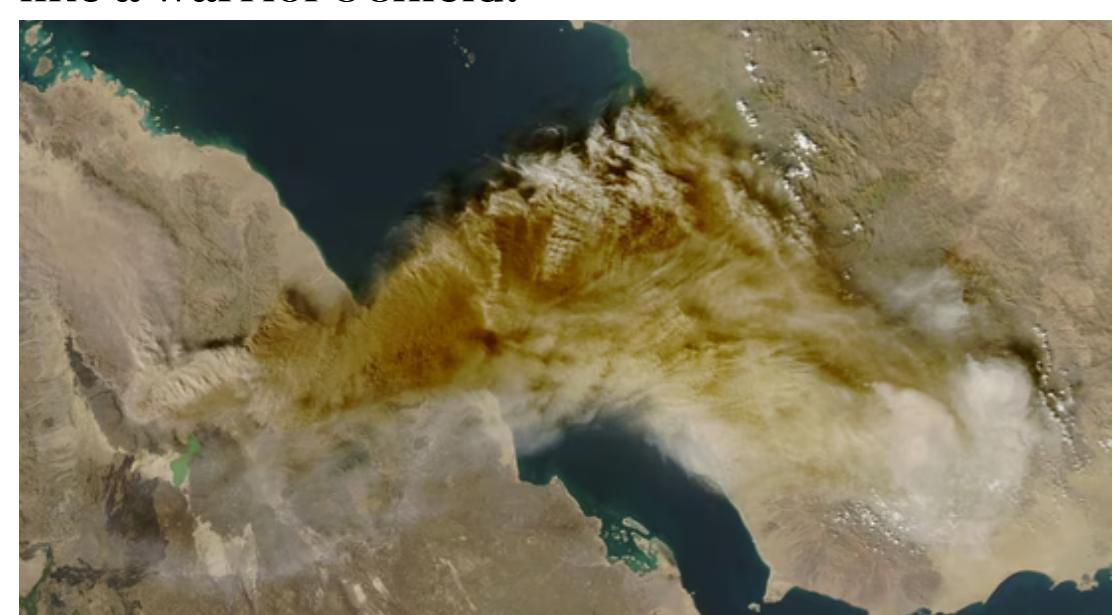


## Q2. Ans a

Article 244 in Part X of the Constitution of India envisages a special system of administration for certain areas designated as 'Scheduled Areas' and 'Tribal Areas'. In the Constitution of India, the expression "Scheduled Areas" means such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas. The President is empowered to declare an area to be a scheduled area. He can also increase or decrease its area, alter its boundary lines, rescind such designation or make fresh orders for such re designation on an area in consultation with the Governor of the State concerned. Recently, the Supreme Court has held that Parliamentary or State law wouldn't apply to Scheduled Areas only if the Governor notifies so.

## Q3. Ans a

**Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano** , dormant for over 12,000 years, erupted, sending a massive ash cloud across the Red Sea and South Asia. The thick ash cloud reached India, resulting in the diversion of several flights. **Type and Location:** Hayli Gubbi is a shield volcano in Afar, Ethiopia, part of the Erta Ale Range. Situated at the edge of the East African Rift, where the African and Arabian plates are slowly diverging. Shield volcanoes are broad, gently sloping, formed by thin, fluid lava flows. Eruptions are usually less explosive, with lava spreading wide like a warrior's shield.



## Q4. Ans b

**The Changthang plateau** of the Ladakh region is primarily known for the production of Pashmina wool. This fine cashmere wool is sourced from the undercoat of a specific breed of goat known as the Changthangi or Changra goat, which is native to the high-altitude region. The local nomadic community, the Changpa tribe, are semi-nomadic pastoralists who have herded these goats, along with sheep and yaks, for centuries. Their livelihood and the regional economy are largely dependent on the trade of this world-class fiber.



## Case Study:



**Women in Tehran let their hair down as Iran's hijab law takes the back seat**

It was something unthinkable just a few years earlier in the Islamic Republic, whose conservative Shiite clerics and hard-line politicians long pushed for strict enforcement of laws requiring women to cover their hair. But the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini and the nationwide protests that followed enraged women of all ages and views in a way few other issues have since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. For the past 46 years, Iran's rulers have imposed the hijab rule. At the strictest times, the police and the Basijis, the all-volunteer force of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, kept a close eye on women in the streets to ensure compliance. Women of all ages went uncovered at the Tajrish Bazaar, walking past the blue-tile domes of the Imamzadeh Saleh shrine. Two police officers on the street talked among themselves as the women passed by unremarked. Hard-liners within Iran's theocracy repeatedly have called for increased enforcement of the hijab laws. Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has pushed to halt that, saying in September in an interview with NBC News that "human beings have a right to choose." Yet the worry of a renewed government crack down persists for a population exhausted by the grind of international sanctions and the widespread fear that another war with Israel will come.

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**The Dubai Fitness Challenge — the line-up includes the Dubai Run, Dubai Ride, Dubai Stand Up Paddle, Dubai Yoga, along with three Fitness Villages, 30 Fitness Hubs and several events, classes and activities — is a flagship community programme Dubai has been hosting since 2017. The month-long event — being held from November 1 to 30 this year — challenges people to perform 30 minutes of exercise daily for 30 days (30x30).**