Current Affairs – Notes

19 October 2026

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1 ASI launches conservation works on the upper rampart (wall) of the Brihadeeswarar (Big) Temple, Thanjavur

Tamil Nadu

News

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has launched conservation works, estimated at ₹59 lakh, on the upper rampart (upper wall) of the Big Temple (Brihadeeswarar / Rajarajeshwaram), Thanjavur – a UNESCO World Heritage site (Daily Thanthi, 18 Oct 2026). Reason: roots of plants and creepers growing on the wall penetrate the gaps between stones and weaken the structure; rainwater stagnation also damages the old masonry. Vegetation is being removed, damaged portions repaired and a 'brick jelly concrete' coat applied – following archaeological conservation norms without altering the monument's original character.

Key facts

Work	Conservation of the upper rampart – ₹59 lakh; Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
Reason	Plant and creeper roots entering stone joints; rainwater stagnation
Temple	Brihadeeswarar / Rajarajeshwaram / Big Temple – Rajaraja Chola I, 1003–1010 CE
Architect	Kunjara Mallan Raja Raja Perunthachan
Vimana	About 66 m (216 ft); entirely granite; Dravidian style
UNESCO	1987 – Thanjavur; 2004 – Gangaikonda Cholapuram & Darasuram added → 'Great Living Chola Temples'

Background

- History: Built by Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 CE), the temple is also called 'Dakshina Meru'; completed in 1010 CE, it marked its 1,000th year in 2010. The vimana over the sanctum is taller than the gopurams – unlike later Tamil temples where gopurams dominate. The fortified walls around the temple are believed to have been added in the 16th century.
- Architecture: the complex spans about 40 acres with two rectangular prakarams; a huge monolithic Nandi at the entrance; Chola-period murals and Tamil inscriptions on Chola administration.
- Body & law: Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) – founded 1861 by Alexander Cunningham; under the Union Ministry of Culture, HQ New Delhi. Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958 – 2010 amendment: 100 m 'prohibited area' around a monument, next 200 m 'regulated area'; created the National Monuments Authority (NMA).
- UNESCO group 'Great Living Chola Temples': Brihadeeswarar, Thanjavur (Rajaraja I); Brihadeeswarar, Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Rajendra I, Ariyalur district); Airavatesvara, Darasuram (Rajaraja II, near Kumbakonam).

Tamil Nadu link: the 'Sathaya Vizha', held at the Thanjavur Big Temple on Rajaraja Chola I's birth star (Sathayam in the month of Aippasi), has been celebrated as a Tamil Nadu Government function since November 2022. All three temples of the UNESCO group lie in Thanjavur and Ariyalur districts.

2 Maiden export of 1.755 tonnes of organic palmyra jaggery powder from Erode district to Varna, Bulgaria

Tamil Nadu

News

Facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the maiden consignment of 1.755 MT of certified organic palmyra jaggery powder, made from palmyra blossom nectar, was flagged off on 15 Oct 2026 from Gobichettipalayam, Erode district, to Varna, Bulgaria, to be shipped via Chennai Port. Made and exported by Wellbeing Foods (Erode) with Chetty Exports (Chennai); importer Sow Life Ltd (Bulgaria). It carries India's NPOP and EU organic certification. The organic project covers 137 acres; farmers are expected to get 15–22% higher prices than in the domestic market.

Key facts

Consignment	1.755 MT organic palmyra jaggery powder – maiden export; 15 Oct 2026
Route	Gobichettipalayam (Erode) → Chennai Port → Varna (Bulgaria, Black Sea)
Certification	NPOP (India) + EU organic
APEDA	APEDA Act 1985; functional from 1986; Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Dept of Commerce); implements NPOP
Palmyra	Borassus flabellifer – State tree of Tamil Nadu
Bulgaria	Capital Sofia; adopted the euro on 1 Jan 2026 – 21st eurozone member

Background

- Palmyra (Borassus flabellifer): revered as 'Karpagatharu', it is Tamil Nadu's State tree. Sap tapped from the inflorescence into a lime-coated pot stays unfermented as 'pathaneer' (neera); fermented, it becomes 'kallu' (toddy). Boiling pathaneer gives karupatti (palm jaggery) and panangarkandu (palm candy). The tender fruit's jelly is 'nungu' (ice apple); the sprouting seed gives 'panangkizhangu'.
- Economy: APEDA is a statutory body under the 1985 Act, under the Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry; it promotes exports of scheduled agricultural and processed food products. It implements India's National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) – standards and accreditation of certification bodies.
- Geography: Bulgaria – a Balkan country in south-east Europe; capital Sofia; the Danube on the north (border with Romania), the Black Sea on the east. Varna is a port city on the Black Sea coast. It joined the EU in 2007 and adopted the euro on 1 Jan 2026.
- Geographical Indication: 'Udangudi Panangarupatti' of Tiruchendur taluk, Thoothukudi district, got a GI tag in 2023 – red sand-dune (theri) soil and dry climate give higher sucrose and long shelf life; no chemical additives. GI Act 1999; registration valid for 10 years, renewable.

Tamil Nadu link: the palmyra is the State tree. In 2021 Tamil Nadu launched the 'Palmyra Development Mission', distributing 76 lakh palm seeds and 1 lakh saplings at 100% subsidy; palmyra research is done at the Government Agricultural College, Killikulam (Thoothukudi district).

3 WINDS project to install automatic rain gauges and weather stations in States runs over a year late due to land shortage

Agriculture

News

The 'Weather Information Network and Data System' (WINDS), executed through the Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) under the Union Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, is running more than a year behind schedule (The Hindu, 16 Oct 2026). Target: 1,197 automatic weather stations (AWS) and 49,313 automatic rain gauges (ARG) – about 50,500 in all. As of 9 Sept 2026 only 113 AWS (9.4%) and 1,730 ARG (4%) were installed – over 96% pending. Main reason: lack of suitable free land for the instruments; in States such as Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Kerala most proposed sites were rejected. On IMD advice, a 3 Dec 2025 amendment capped rooftop rain gauges at 10–15% of the total. Private partners: Skymet, Ingen Technologies, Azista Industries.

Key facts

Scheme	WINDS – Weather Information Network and Data System; launched July 2023 under PMFBY
Execution	MNCFC (Agriculture Ministry); States via private partners
Density	AWS at taluk/block level; ARG at gram panchayat level
Target	1,197 AWS + 49,313 ARG
Status (9 Sept)	113 AWS (9.4%), 1,730 ARG (4%) – 96%+ pending
Hurdle	Land shortage; rooftop ARG cap 10–15% (3 Dec 2025 amendment)

Background

- Purpose: hyper-local, panchayat-level weather data for computing claims under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), agro-advisories and disaster management. The WINDS portal, YES-TECH (Technology-based Yield Estimation System) manual and AIDE app were launched under PMFBY in July 2023; the WINDS manual is dated 1 Sept 2023.
- PMFBY (2016): farmers' premium – 2% for kharif, 1.5% for rabi, 5% for commercial/horticultural crops; the rest is borne by the Centre and States.
- India Meteorological Department (IMD): founded 1875; under the Ministry of Earth Sciences; HQ New Delhi. Six Regional Meteorological Centres – New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Nagpur, Guwahati. IMD insists rain gauges be ground-mounted for standardised data.
- Science: rain gauge – rainfall (mm); barometer – atmospheric pressure; hygrometer – humidity; anemometer – wind speed. An automatic weather station measures all these together and transmits automatically.

Tamil Nadu link: the news report on WINDS does not mention Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) installed 224 automatic weather stations in 224 blocks under the National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) in 2007–08. IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre is at Chennai (Nungambakkam).

4 Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2024 and 2025 conferred on 106 young performing artists

Awards

News

The Sangeet Natak Akademi's 'Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar' for 2024 and 2025 was conferred on 106 young artists in all on 19 Oct 2026 (Monday) at the Meghdoot Theatre complex, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi; Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat presented the awards. Awardees span music, dance, theatre, folk and tribal arts, puppetry and allied arts. The award: ₹25,000 cash, a tamrapatra (copper plaque) and an angavastram. The awardees were selected by the Akademi's General Council in June 2026.

Key facts

Ceremony	19 Oct 2026 – Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi; presented by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Culture Minister)
Awardees	106 young artists (2024 + 2025)
Award	₹25,000 + tamrapatra + angavastram; artists under 40; instituted 2006
Sangeet Natak Akademi	31 May 1952 – set up; 28 Jan 1953 – inaugurated by President Rajendra Prasad; Ministry of Culture; New Delhi
First Chairman	Dr P. V. Rajamannar
Bismillah Khan	Shehnai maestro; born Dumraon (Bihar); Varanasi; Bharat Ratna 2001

Background

- Sangeet Natak Akademi – the national academy of music, dance and drama; an autonomous body of the Union Ministry of Culture. Its top honours: the Akademi Fellowship (Akademi Ratna – ₹3 lakh) and the Akademi Award (Akademi Puraskar – ₹1 lakh, conferred by the President). For 2024–25, 108 artists were chosen for the Akademi Award.
- Ustad Bismillah Khan (1916–2006): shehnai maestro born in Dumraon, Bihar, who lived in Varanasi; played the shehnai at the Red Fort on Independence Day 1947; Bharat Ratna 2001. This award for young artists was instituted in 2006, after his death.
- Musicians awarded the Bharat Ratna: M. S. Subbulakshmi (1998 – the first musician), Pt Ravi Shankar (1999), Lata Mangeshkar and Bismillah Khan (2001), Bhimsen Joshi (2009), Bhupen Hazarika (2019).

Tamil Nadu link: the Sangeet Natak Akademi's first Chairman, Dr P. V. Rajamannar, was a former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court. The 2024–25 Yuva Puraskar list includes Carnatic music (vocal, flute) categories. At State level, the 'Kalaimamani' award for artists is given by the Tamil Nadu Eyal Isai Nataka Manram.

5 CARA issues nationwide directions to strengthen adoption procedures, safeguard records and protect children's identity

Welfare Schemes

News

The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), under the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, issued three Office Memorandums to all State/UT Adoption Resource Agencies (SARAs) under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the Adoption Regulations, 2022 (Ministry notification: 16 March 2026). (1) No child may be declared 'legally free for adoption' until due inquiry, tracing of biological parents and restoration efforts are complete; the two-month reconsideration period for surrendered children is mandatory. (2) Physical and digital records must be preserved and handed over to a designated authority even if an adoption agency or child care institution closes – this helps adult adoptees in 'root search'. (3) Under Section 74, photographs, videos or identifying details of children must not be disclosed anywhere, including social media; violations attract penal action under Section 74(3).

Key facts

Issued	CARA – 3 Office Memorandums; Ministry notification 16 March 2026
Legal basis	Juvenile Justice Act 2015 (amended 2021); Adoption Regulations 2022
CARA	Set up 1990; statutory body under Sec 68 of JJ Act; HQ New Delhi
Ministry	Ministry of Women and Child Development
Section 74	Bar on disclosing children's identity; 74(3) – penalty
Hague Convention	Inter-country adoption – 1993; India ratified 2003; CARA = Central Authority

Background

- CARA was set up in 1990; Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 gave it statutory status. It is the nodal body that monitors and regulates in-country and inter-country adoption of orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children. SARAs work at State level and Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs) at the field level.
- Procedure: a child is declared 'legally free for adoption' by the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC). Under the JJ Act, adoption orders are issued by the District Magistrate (after the 2021 amendment). The Act applies to all Indians irrespective of religion.
- Personal law: the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs; for Muslims and Christians the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 provides only guardianship.
- International: Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption (1993) – India ratified it in 2003; CARA is its Central Authority. Any sale or payment in adoption is illegal.

Tamil Nadu link: to stop female infanticide, the 'Cradle Baby Scheme' began in Salem district in 1992 under CM Jayalalithaa; it was extended to Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and Dharmapuri in 2001 and to Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai in 2011. Babies received in the cradles are sent to licensed adoption centres.

6 61st meeting of the International Committee of Legal Metrology (CIML) in New Delhi, 26–28 Oct 2026 – India hosts it for the first time

International

News

The 61st meeting of the International Committee of Legal Metrology (CIML) – the governing committee of the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML) – is being held in New Delhi (The LaLiT) on 26–28 October 2026. This is the first time India is hosting it. The Department of Consumer Affairs is organising it with the OIML. 26 Oct – seminar 'Evolutions in Legal Metrology'; 27 Oct – OIML Strategy Workshop. More than 100 international delegates will attend. International Recommendations, the OIML Certification System (OIML-CS) and digital transformation will be discussed. The 60th meeting was held in Paris in October 2025.

Key facts

Meeting	61st CIML meeting – 26–28 Oct 2026, New Delhi (first time in India)
Organisers	Department of Consumer Affairs + OIML
OIML	Intergovernmental body set up 1955; HQ (BIML) Paris; India a member since 1956
OIML certificates	In 2023 India became the 13th country authorised to issue OIML certificates
Indian law	Legal Metrology Act 2009; IST Rules 2026 (Aug 2026)
World Metrology Day	20 May – marks the 1875 Metre Convention

Background

- Legal metrology is the State's assurance that weights, measures and measuring instruments used in trade are accurate. OIML was set up in 1955; the International Bureau of Legal Metrology (BIML) in Paris is its secretariat. It issues 'International Recommendations' (OIML R) for measuring instruments.
- India: the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 (in force from 1 Apr 2011) replaced the weights-and-measures Acts of 1976 and 1985; it mandates the metric system and declarations on pre-packaged goods. The Department of Consumer Affairs administers it; enforcement is by States. Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM) – Ranchi; Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSL) – Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Guwahati, Ahmedabad, Varanasi, Nagpur.
- Science: the SI system has 7 base units (metre, kilogram, second, ampere, kelvin, mole, candela), maintained by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM, Sèvres, France). India's National Metrology Institute, CSIR–National Physical Laboratory (NPL, New Delhi), maintains Indian Standard Time (IST = UTC + 5:30, 82.5° E longitude). The 'Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026' were notified in August 2026.

Tamil Nadu link: in Tamil Nadu the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 is enforced by the Labour Department – Assistant Commissioners of Labour and Labour Inspectors check weights and measures in shops. State rules: 'Tamil Nadu Legal Metrology (Enforcement) Rules, 2011'.

7 Dr Dhal Singh Bisen sworn in as the 9th Governor of Uttarakhand at Lok Bhavan, Dehradun (19 Oct 2026)

Appointments

News

President Droupadi Murmu appointed Governors for six States on 12 Oct 2026. Accordingly, Dr Dhal Singh Bisen was sworn in as the 9th Governor of Uttarakhand at Lok Bhavan, Dehradun on 19 Oct 2026 (Monday). Acting Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court Manoj Kumar Tiwari administered the oath; Chief Secretary Anand Bardhan read out the warrant of appointment; CM Pushkar Singh Dhami was present. He succeeds Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd), Governor since September 2021.

Key facts

Oath	19 Oct 2026 – Lok Bhavan, Dehradun; 9th Governor
Appointment	12 Oct 2026 – by the President (six Governor appointments)
Predecessor	Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd), since 2021
Profile	Born 1952, Seoni district, MP; physician, farmer; 4-time MP MLA; former MP Minister; 17th Lok Sabha MP (Balaghat, 2019–24)
Uttarakhand	Formed 9 Nov 2000; capital Dehradun; summer capital Gairsain; High Court Nainital

Background

- Constitution: a Governor for each State (Art 153; the 7th Amendment, 1956 allows one person for two or more States). The State's executive power vests in the Governor (Art 154). The President appoints the Governor by warrant under hand and seal (Art 155).
- Tenure and qualifications: holds office during the pleasure of the President, normally 5 years (Art 156). Must be a citizen of India and 35 years of age (Art 157). Acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers headed by the CM, except in discretionary matters (Art 163).
- Uttarakhand: created as 'Uttaranchal' on 9 November 2000 under the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2000; renamed 'Uttarakhand' in January 2007. First Governor: Surjit Singh Barnala. Dehradun is the capital; Gairsain (Bhararisain) in Chamoli district was declared summer capital in 2020. In Dec 2025 the Raj Bhavans at Dehradun and Nainital were renamed 'Lok Bhavan'.

Tamil Nadu link: in the same 12 Oct 2026 list, Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar – who had held additional charge of Tamil Nadu since March 2026 – was appointed full-time Governor of Tamil Nadu; he assumed charge at Lok Bhavan, Chennai on 15 Oct 2026. Om Prakash Mathur was appointed to Kerala.

8 Braj Mohan Ram sworn in as Governor of Odisha at Lok Bhavan, Bhubaneswar (18 Oct 2026)

Appointments

News

Braj Mohan Ram, appointed by President Droupadi Murmu on 12 Oct 2026, was sworn in as Governor of Odisha at Lok Bhavan, Bhubaneswar on 18 Oct 2026 (Sunday). Orissa High Court Chief Justice Harish Tandon administered the oath. CM Mohan Charan Majhi and Speaker Surama Padhy were present. He succeeds Hari Babu Kambhampati, Governor since January 2025. A senior BJP leader from Palamu, Jharkhand, he was a three-time Lok Sabha MP from Palamu.

Key facts

Oath	18 Oct 2026 – Lok Bhavan, Bhubaneswar
Oath by	Orissa HC Chief Justice Harish Tandon (Art 159)
Predecessor	Hari Babu Kambhampati (from 3 Jan 2025)
Profile	Palamu (Jharkhand) – three-time Lok Sabha MP (1996–2004); Ranchi University graduate
Lok Bhavan	On MHA's suggestion (2025): Raj Bhavan → Lok Bhavan; Raj Niwas → Lok Niwas
Odisha	Separate province 1 Apr 1936 (Utkal Divas); 'Orissa' → 'Odisha' in 2011

Background

- Lok Bhavan: on the Union Home Ministry's suggestion to drop the colonial association and adopt a people-centric name, Governors' residences (Raj Bhavan) were renamed 'Lok Bhavan' and Lt Governors' residences (Raj Niwas) 'Lok Niwas' in late 2025; West Bengal and Ladakh were among the first.
- Constitution – Governor's powers: oath before the High Court Chief Justice, or in his absence the senior-most judge (Art 159). Pardon and remission (Art 161); assent / withholding / reserving Bills for the President (Art 200); ordinances (Art 213); report to the President on breakdown of constitutional machinery (Art 356). Must not be a member of Parliament or a State Legislature; emoluments cannot be cut during the term (Art 158).
- Odisha: became a separate province on linguistic lines on 1 April 1936 – celebrated as 'Utkal Divas' (Odisha Day). The Orissa (Alteration of Name) Act, 2011 renamed it 'Odisha', and the 96th Constitutional Amendment (2011) changed 'Oriya' to 'Odia' in the Eighth Schedule. Capital Bhubaneswar (earlier Cuttack); the High Court at Cuttack is still called the 'Orissa High Court'.

Tamil Nadu link: the landmark ruling on the Governor's power of assent to Bills (Art 200) came in 'State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu' on 8 April 2025 – the Supreme Court held that Bills cannot be kept pending indefinitely and, using Art 142, deemed assent granted to 10 Bills. A five-judge Bench later gave its opinion on the President's reference (Art 143) on 20 November 2025. Tamil Nadu's Governor's residence is now 'Lok Bhavan', Chennai.

9 SBI named 'World's Best Consumer Bank 2026' by Global Finance – second year in a row

Awards

News

New York-based Global Finance magazine named State Bank of India (SBI) the 'World's Best Consumer Bank 2026'; the winners were announced on 16 July 2026. The award was presented at the World's Best Bank Awards ceremony in Oct 2026, held on the sidelines of the IMF–World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok, Thailand. It is SBI's second consecutive win (it also won in 2025). SBI Chairman Challa Sreenivasulu Setty credited the bank's digital transformation.

Key facts

Award	World's Best Consumer Bank 2026 – Global Finance magazine (1987, New York)
Announced / ceremony	Announced 16 July 2026; ceremony Oct 2026, Bangkok (IMF–World Bank Annual Meetings)
Streak	Second year running (2025 award – Oct 2025, Washington)
SBI Chairman	Challa Sreenivasulu Setty (since 28 Aug 2024)
Other 2026 winners	World's Best Bank – Santander (Spain); Best Corporate Bank – DBS (Singapore)
SBI	HQ Mumbai; India's largest commercial bank; over 100 million registered YONO users

Background

- History: Bank of Calcutta (2 June 1806) → Bank of Bengal (1809). With the Bank of Bombay (1840) and Bank of Madras (1843), these three 'Presidency Banks' merged on 27 Jan 1921 to form the Imperial Bank of India.
- Birth of SBI: On the recommendation of the All India Rural Credit Survey Committee (AIRCS, 1951; report 1954) headed by A.D. Gorwala, the Imperial Bank became the State Bank of India on 1 July 1955 under the SBI Act, 1955. On 1 Apr 2017, five associate banks and Bharatiya Mahila Bank were merged into SBI.
- Reserve Bank: recommended by the Hilton Young Commission (1926); began on 1 Apr 1935 under the RBI Act, 1934 (first Kolkata; Mumbai from 1937); nationalised on 1 Jan 1949. Bank nationalisation: 14 banks on 19 July 1969; 6 more in 1980.
- Economy: consumer (retail) banking covers personal savings, home/vehicle loans and digital payments. Financial inclusion, digital banking and customer service are among the judging criteria.

Tamil Nadu link: the Bank of Madras (1843) was one of the three Presidency Banks from which SBI descends. Public sector banks Indian Bank (1907) and Indian Overseas Bank (founded in 1937 by M.Ct.M. Chidambaram Chettiar) are headquartered in Chennai; both were nationalised in 1969.

10 Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal launches the National Strategic Trade Command Centre (NSTCC) in New Delhi

Economy

News

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal launched the National Strategic Trade Command Centre (NSTCC) at Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi, on 15 Oct 2026. Developed by the Department of Commerce, it uses integrated data analytics to give a single view of India's trade performance, export promotion schemes, regulatory approvals and application pendency. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Lav Agarwal were present. Reviewing the SCOMET dashboard, the Minister asked the Inter-Ministerial Committee to meet regularly – weekly if needed – to clear pending applications.

Key facts

Launch	15 Oct 2026 – Piyush Goyal, Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi
Developed by	Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Dashboards	IEC, Advance Authorisation, EPCG, Certificate of Origin, SCOMET, restricted imports/exports
Analytics	Product- and market-wise; FTA utilisation; benchmarking DGFT regional authorities
Built on	DGFT systems and the Trade Connect ePlatform; automated alerts later
Access	Phased access for ministries, State governments, Export Promotion Councils

Background

- DGFT: an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; formerly the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports, renamed DGFT in 1991. It implements the Foreign Trade Policy under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992, and issues the 10-digit Importer Exporter Code (IEC).
- Foreign Trade Policy 2023: in force from 1 Apr 2023; an open-ended policy with no end date. EPCG lets exporters import capital goods duty-free, with an export obligation of 6 times the duty saved within 6 years.
- SCOMET – Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies: India's national export control list for dual-use (civil–military) items; their export needs a licence.
- World Trade Organization (WTO): 1 Jan 1995 (Marrakesh Agreement, 1994); replaced GATT; HQ Geneva (Switzerland); India is a founding member. The Commerce Ministry has two departments – Commerce, and Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Tamil Nadu link: in 2024–25 Tamil Nadu topped India's electronics exports for the third year running – $14.65 billion (41.23% of the national total). Tiruppur is India's 'knitwear capital' and a major hub of cotton knitwear exports. DGFT has a zonal office in Chennai.

11 Government reconstitutes the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) – S.C.L. Das named part-time Chairperson

Appointments

News

The Centre reconstituted the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) with effect from 16 Oct 2026. Retired IAS officer (1992 batch, AGMUT cadre) Subhas Chandra Lal Das (S.C.L. Das) was appointed part-time Chairperson for three years; he is a former Union MSME Secretary and currently chairs the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC). The post had been vacant for about three and a half months after former Chairperson Bhanu Pratap Sharma's extended tenure ended on 30 June 2026. Six part-time members were named – banking: Arijit Basu (former SBI MD), Satish Kashinath Marathe (former RBI Central Board director), Ramanathan Subramanian (former RBI Executive Director); insurance: Siddhartha Mohanty (former LIC CEO & MD), Neerja Kapur (former New India Assurance CMD), T.L. Alamelu (former IRDAI whole-time member, non-life).

Key facts

Effective	From 16 Oct 2026; Finance Ministry notification
Chairperson	S.C.L. Das – part-time, 3 years (earlier Bhanu Pratap Sharma, 2022–June 2026)
Banking members	Arijit Basu, Satish K. Marathe, Ramanathan Subramanian
Insurance members	Siddhartha Mohanty, Neerja Kapur, T.L. Alamelu
Role	Recommends whole-time directors and non-executive chairpersons of PSBs, financial institutions and public sector insurers
Final say	FSIB only recommends; final approval – ACC chaired by the PM

Background

- History: the P.J. Nayak Committee (RBI, 2014) recommended a Banks Board Bureau (BBB). 'Indradhanush' (Aug 2015) set out 7 elements of PSB reform (ABCDEFG: Appointments, BBB, Capitalisation, De-stressing, Empowerment, Framework of accountability, Governance). BBB began work in 2016; its first chairman was Vinod Rai.
- Birth of FSIB: after the Delhi High Court held that the BBB was not competent to select directors of public sector general insurers, the BBB was converted into the FSIB in July 2022. It was set up by a government resolution of the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance; it is not a statutory body.
- Set-up: India now has 12 public sector banks (after the 2020 mergers). LIC – 1 Sept 1956, Mumbai; insurance regulator IRDAI – Hyderabad. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) is chaired by the PM, with the Home Minister as member.

Tamil Nadu link: three institutions whose top posts go through FSIB selection are headquartered in Chennai – Indian Bank and Indian Overseas Bank (public sector banks) and United India Insurance (public sector general insurer).

12 Madhya Pradesh tops the country in crop-residue burning, overtaking Punjab (15 Sept–15 Oct 2026)

Environment

News

As per satellite monitoring data of CREAMS at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI, New Delhi), 793 crop-residue burning events were recorded in the 7 monitored States between 15 Sept and 15 Oct 2026 (724 in the same period of 2025). Madhya Pradesh topped the country with 350 (138 in 2025), followed by Punjab 185, Uttar Pradesh 134, Rajasthan 99, Uttarakhand 16, Haryana 8 and Delhi 1. One reason is MP farmers shifting from soybean and black gram to paddy. On 13 Oct, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan told Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan to identify affected districts and villages. (MP also topped during the April 2026 wheat-harvest season, with Vidisha district the worst.)

Key facts

Data	CREAMS – IARI, New Delhi; satellite monitoring (kharif season 15 Sept – 30 Nov)
Total	793 (2025: 724) – 7 States, 15 Sept–15 Oct
Madhya Pradesh	350 (2025: 138) – first
Other States	Punjab 185; UP 134; Rajasthan 99; Uttarakhand 16; Haryana 8; Delhi 1
Cause (MP)	Shift from soybean and black gram to paddy; short harvest–sowing window
Machines	Over 3.54 lakh crop residue management (CRM) machines supplied

Background

- Causes: in the paddy–wheat cycle the gap between paddy harvest and wheat sowing is short; combine harvesters leave tall stubble; the Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act, 2009, delayed paddy transplanting and squeezed the window further.
- Science: burning releases PM2.5, PM10, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and methane, and destroys soil nitrogen, organic matter and microbes. PM2.5 are fine particles 2.5 micrometres or smaller that go deep into the lungs.
- Solutions: 'Pusa Decomposer' – a fungus-based microbial solution developed by IARI that rots straw in the field. 'Happy Seeder' – a tractor-mounted machine that sows wheat without removing the straw.
- Law and administration: the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) was formed by an ordinance in 2020, replacing EPCA; the CAQM in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021 now gives it statutory backing. The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) has 4 stages based on Delhi-NCR air quality and is enforced by the CAQM.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu is not among the 7 States monitored by CREAMS; large-scale residue burning like north India's is not reported here. Tamil Nadu's paddy seasons are Kuruvai, Samba and Thaladi; the Cauvery delta (Thanjavur) is the 'rice bowl of Tamil Nadu'. The Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute is at Aduthurai (Thanjavur district).

13 Chinese state media show, for the first time, a YJ-21 anti-ship ballistic missile launched from a PLA H-6K bomber

Defence

News

Footage released by Chinese state media (reported 15–16 Oct 2026) showed, for the first time, a YJ-21 ('Ying Ji' – 'Eagle Strike') anti-ship ballistic missile being launched from a PLA Air Force H-6K bomber. The hypersonic 'carrier-killer' is claimed to cruise above Mach 6 with a terminal speed of about Mach 10; its range is estimated at 1,000–2,000 km. One H-6K can carry up to four YJ-21s. Some outlets describe this as 'eight years' after the missile's unveiling (Zhuhai Airshow 2018), but its widely documented first public appearance was in 2022 (April – launch video from a Type 055 destroyer; November – a YJ-21E model under an H-6K at the Zhuhai Airshow).

Key facts

Missile	YJ-21 ('Ying Ji-21' – Eagle Strike)
Type	Anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM); hypersonic
Platform	H-6K bomber (Chinese version based on the Soviet Tu-16); Type 055 destroyer
Speed (claimed)	Cruise Mach 6+; terminal ~Mach 10
Range (estimate)	About 1,000–2,000 km
Earlier reveal	Apr 2022 – Type 055 launch video; Nov 2022 – Zhuhai Airshow (YJ-21E)

Background

- Science: a ballistic missile is rocket-powered only in its initial phase and then follows a gravity-driven arc to the target (e.g. Agni). A cruise missile is jet-powered and guided throughout a low flight (e.g. BrahMos). 'Mach number' = an object's speed ÷ the speed of sound in that medium (named after Austrian physicist Ernst Mach); above Mach 5 = hypersonic.
- Strategy: China's anti-ship ballistic missiles (land-based DF-21D, DF-26 and others) are seen as part of its 'anti-access/area-denial' (A2/AD) approach to keep foreign navies away from its coast. Air launch extends the strike reach further.
- India – BrahMos: the India–Russia inter-governmental agreement was signed in Moscow on 12 Feb 1998 (Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for India, N.V. Mikhailov for Russia). Name = Brahmaputra + Moskva rivers. First test 12 June 2001, Chandipur (Odisha). JV share – India 50.5%, Russia 49.5%.
- India's hypersonic missile: DRDO's Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM) – range about 1,500 km; successfully tested in November 2024; first shown publicly at the 77th Republic Day parade (26 Jan 2026).

Tamil Nadu link: the Indian signatory of the BrahMos agreement was Rameswaram-born 'Missile Man' Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (TNDIC) was launched at Tiruchirappalli on 20 Jan 2019 by then Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman; nodes: Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli. (There is no verified report of BrahMos production in Tamil Nadu.)

14 Asian Para Games: women's 10m air rifle SH1 – Mona Agarwal wins gold with a Games record, Avani Lekhara takes silver

Sports

News

At the 5th Asian Para Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan (18–24 Oct 2026), Mona Agarwal won gold in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 final on 19 Oct at the Aichi Prefectural General Shooting Range, scoring 250.0 – a new Asian Para Games record (previous: Avani Lekhara's 249.6 at Hangzhou). Avani Lekhara took silver with 249.6 and South Korea's Yunri Lee bronze (227.9). On the same opening medal day (19 Oct) India also won medals in athletics, judo and swimming.

Key facts

Event	5th Asian Para Games, Aichi-Nagoya (Japan), 18–24 Oct 2026; 18 sports
Gold	Mona Agarwal – 250.0 (Games record)
Silver / Bronze	Avani Lekhara 249.6 / Yunri Lee (South Korea) 227.9
Mona Agarwal	Born Sikar, Rajasthan (1987); polio at nine months; took up shooting Dec 2021; Paris 2024 bronze
Avani Lekhara	Jaipur, Rajasthan (2001); Tokyo 2020 gold + bronze; Paris 2024 gold; Khel Ratna 2021; Padma Shri 2022
Previous Games	Hangzhou 2022 (held 2023) – India 111 medals (29 gold)

Background

- Para-shooting classes: SH1 – athletes who can hold the gun without external support (standing, or seated in a chair/wheelchair); both rifle and pistol. SH2 – athletes whose arm impairment needs a stand to support the rifle; rifle only. Rules are World Shooting Para Sport (IPC) rules adapted from the ISSF (HQ – Munich, Germany).
- Asian Paralympic Committee (APC): HQ Dubai (UAE); founded 2002 at Busan (South Korea). Asian Para Games – 2010 Guangzhou (China), 2014 Incheon (South Korea), 2018 Jakarta (Indonesia), 2022 Hangzhou (China; held in 2023), 2026 Aichi-Nagoya (Japan). The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is headquartered in Bonn (Germany).
- Avani Lekhara: spinal injury in a 2012 car accident. At Tokyo 2020 she won 10m air rifle SH1 gold – the first Indian woman to win a Paralympic gold – and also 50m rifle 3 positions SH1 bronze. Gold again at Paris 2024 (30 Aug) – the first Indian woman with two Paralympic golds; Mona took bronze in the same final.

Tamil Nadu link: no direct Tamil Nadu link in this event (both shooters are from Rajasthan). Tamil Nadu's Paralympic star is high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu of Periavadagampatti, Salem district: Rio 2016 gold (T42), Tokyo 2020 silver, Paris 2024 bronze (T63); Padma Shri and Arjuna (2017), Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna (2020).

15 Japan readies its Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) mission to Mars' moon Phobos for launch on an H3 rocket

Space

News

JAXA's Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) spacecraft was scheduled to launch on H3 flight No. 10 (H3-24L configuration) from the Yoshinobu Launch Complex, Tanegashima Space Center, at 04:41 JST on 20 Oct 2026 (01:11 IST, 20 Oct); the reserve window runs to 7 Nov. After about a year's cruise it will reach the Mars system in 2027 and study both Phobos and Deimos; it will land on Phobos to collect at least 10 g of regolith, and deploy the French-German 'IDEFIX' rover there. Its sample capsule will land in Australia in 2031. The original 2024 launch slipped because of H3 problems.

Key facts

Mission	Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) – JAXA; Phobos sample return
Launch	H3 flight 10 (H3-24L), Tanegashima; 20 Oct 2026, 04:41 JST (scheduled)
Sample	≥10 g from Phobos; capsule lands in Australia in 2031
Rover	IDEFIX (~25 kg) – CNES (France) + DLR (Germany); named after the dog in 'Asterix'
Other partners	NASA – MEGANE gamma-ray/neutron spectrometer; ESA – communications support
Phobos / Deimos	~22 km / ~12 km; discovered by Asaph Hall (USA) in 1877

Background

- Moons of Mars: Phobos ('fear') and Deimos ('dread') are named after the sons of the Greek war god Ares (Roman 'Mars'); discovered in 1877 by Asaph Hall at the US Naval Observatory. MMX seeks to settle whether they are captured asteroids or formed from debris of a giant impact on Mars. Earth–Mars launch windows open about every 26 months.
- JAXA: formed on 1 Oct 2003 by merging ISAS, NAL and NASDA. Hayabusa – sample from asteroid Itokawa (returned 2010); Hayabusa2 – sample from asteroid Ryugu (capsule landed in Australia, Dec 2020). If MMX succeeds, it will be the first sample return from the Mars system.
- India: Mangalyaan (Mars Orbiter Mission – MOM) was launched on 5 Nov 2013 by PSLV-C25 from Sriharikota and entered Mars orbit on 24 Sep 2014. India became the first country to reach Mars orbit on its maiden attempt and the first Asian nation to do so.

Tamil Nadu link: Mangalyaan's Programme Director Mylswamy Annadurai was born at Kothavadi, Coimbatore district; he was Project Director of Chandrayaan-1 and received the Padma Shri (2016). S. Arunan, the Project Director who built the Mangalyaan spacecraft, is also from Tamil Nadu.

16 Asian Para Games: Kancheepuram's Thulasimathi (with Manasi Joshi) assures India's first medal by reaching the doubles semi-finals

Sports

News

At the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games on 17 Oct 2026, Kancheepuram's Thulasimathi Murugesan and Manasi Joshi beat China's Liu Yuemei and Li Tongtong in straight games in women's doubles SL3–SU5 (Group A) to reach the semi-finals, assuring India's first medal (at least bronze) of the Games. They had earlier beaten an Indonesian pair. The same day Thulasimathi won her SU5 singles match 21-2, 21-2. (This was the first medal assured; India's first medals were actually won on 19 Oct.)

Key facts

Athlete	Thulasimathi Murugesan – born 11 Apr 2002, Kancheepuram; congenital left-hand impairment
Class	Singles SU5; doubles SL3–SU5 (partner Manasi Joshi)
17 Oct win	Beat China's Liu Yuemei/Li Tongtong in straight games – semi-final; medal assured
Hangzhou 2022	Singles SU5 gold; women's doubles silver (with Manasi); mixed doubles bronze (with Nitesh Kumar)
Paris 2024	Women's singles SU5 silver – lost the final to China's Yang Qiuxia
Award / training	Arjuna Award 2024 (announced 2 Jan 2025); Gopichand Academy, Hyderabad; studies veterinary science at Namakkal

Background

- Para-badminton classes: WH1, WH2 – wheelchair; SL3, SL4 – standing, lower-limb impairment; SU5 – standing, upper-limb impairment; SH6 – short stature. Para-badminton made its Paralympic debut at Tokyo 2020.
- Governing body: the Badminton World Federation (BWF) – HQ Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia); it has governed para-badminton since 2011. India's Paralympic badminton golds: Pramod Bhagat (SL3) and Krishna Nagar (SH6) – Tokyo 2020; Nitesh Kumar (SL3) – Paris 2024.
- Historic feat: at Paris 2024 (2 Sep), Thulasimathi (silver) and Manisha Ramadass (bronze) in women's singles SU5 became the first Indian women to win Paralympic badminton medals; the same day Nithya Sre Sivan won SH6 bronze – all three from Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu link: on 25 Sep 2024 the Chief Minister presented cash awards to the Paris 2024 Paralympic medallists – ₹2 crore to Thulasimathi; ₹1 crore each to Nithya Sre Sivan, Manisha Ramadass and Mariyappan Thangavelu. All three Tamil Nadu para-shuttlers – Thulasimathi, Manisha and Nithya Sre – received the Arjuna Award for 2024.

17 Jantar Mantar protest violence probe: SC-appointed HPEC headed by former SC judge Justice R. Subhash Reddy

Judiciary

News

To probe allegations of excessive police force (pellet guns, tear gas, lathi charges) and of protester violence against police during the July 2026 student protests at Jantar Mantar, Delhi and elsewhere (over alleged exam paper leaks; led by the 'Cockroach Janata Party' (CJP); clashes during the 20 July march to Parliament), a Supreme Court bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana constituted a five-member High-Powered Enquiry Committee (HPEC) on 18 Aug 2026, headed by former SC judge Justice R. Subhash Reddy. Allegations of targeted violence and sexual harassment against women protesters get priority. On 15 Oct 2026 the panel invited complaints and evidence through the portal hpec.nic.in; vulnerable witnesses' identities will be kept confidential.

Key facts

Constituted by	Supreme Court – 18 Aug 2026; bench: CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi, V. Mohana
Case	Shailendra Mani Tripathi v. Union of India – WP(Crl) 280/2026
Chair	Justice R. Subhash Reddy (SC judge 2018–22; ex-Chief Justice, Gujarat HC)
Members	Ravi Shankar Jha (ex-CJ, Punjab & Haryana HC), Shalinder Kaur (ex-judge, Delhi HC), Rishi Kumar Shukla (ex-CBI Director), L.R. Bishnoi (ex-DGP, Meghalaya)
Mandate	Police force, chain of command, protester violence, property damage – interim report 'at the earliest'
Complaints	hpec.nic.in portal (15 Oct 2026) or in person – Shiksha Sadan, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi

Background

- Constitution: Article 19(1)(b) – right to assemble peaceably and without arms; Article 19(3) – the State may impose 'reasonable restrictions' in the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India and public order. Prohibitory orders are now issued under Section 163 BNSS (formerly Section 144 CrPC).
- Jantar Mantar as protest site: protests shifted there after curbs on the Boat Club lawns near India Gate in 1993. In Oct 2017 the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered protests there to end. In Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (July 2018; Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan) the SC held there cannot be a complete ban on protests at places like Jantar Mantar and Boat Club, and ordered guidelines.
- Follow-up: on 11 Oct 2026 the Delhi Police Commissioner, on an MHA committee's recommendation, de-notified Jantar Mantar as a designated protest site; Ramlila Ground, Burari Ground and CBD Ground (East Delhi) were named instead.
- History: 'Jantar Mantar' = 'yantra' (instrument) + 'mantra' (calculation). Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber/Jaipur built observatories at Delhi (1724), Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi and Mathura. Jaipur's Jantar Mantar became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010; the Delhi observatory is an ASI-protected Monument of National Importance.
- Justice R. Subhash Reddy: born 5 Jan 1957, Kamaram, Medak district (Telangana); judge, Andhra Pradesh HC (2002–16); Chief Justice, Gujarat HC (Feb 2016 – Nov 2018); Supreme Court judge (2 Nov

2018 – 4 Jan 2022).

Tamil Nadu link: there is no direct Tamil Nadu link in this news (the chair hails from Telangana). Astronomy link: the 'Madras Observatory', set up in Chennai by William Petrie in 1786, became the East India Company's official observatory in 1792; its work moved to the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (founded 1 April 1899), where John Evershed discovered the radial flow of gas in sunspots (the 'Evershed effect', 1909). It is now run by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru.

18 'Akhand Prahar-II': Indian Army's integrated combat exercise in the Jaisalmer desert, Rajasthan (Konark Corps)

Defence

News

The Indian Army conducted Exercise 'Akhand Prahar-II' in the Jaisalmer desert sector of Rajasthan (reported 18 Oct 2026). It was jointly conducted by the 'Black Mace' Brigade and the 'Battle Axe' Division (12 Infantry Division) of the Konark Corps (XII Corps) under Southern Command. Aim: integrate New Generation Equipment (NGE) and force multipliers with conventional capabilities and validate combat readiness in a multi-domain battle environment. Konark Corps GOC Lt Gen A.V.S. Rathee commended the formations. It follows 'Akhand Prahar' (first edition), held in Nov 2025 as part of tri-service Exercise 'Trishul'.

Key facts

Exercise	Akhand Prahar-II – reported 18 Oct 2026; 1st edition Nov 2025 (part of tri-service Ex Trishul)
Location	Jaisalmer desert sector, Rajasthan (Thar Desert)
Formations	Black Mace Brigade + Battle Axe Division (12 Infantry Division, HQ Jaisalmer)
Corps / Command	Konark Corps (XII Corps) – HQ Jodhpur; Southern Command – HQ Pune
Reviewed by	Lt Gen A.V.S. Rathee, GOC, Konark Corps
Aim	Integrate NGE & force multipliers with conventional power; multi-domain combat readiness

Background

- Army structure: 7 commands – Northern (Udhampur), Western (Chandimandir), South Western (Jaipur), Southern (Pune), Eastern (Kolkata), Central (Lucknow) and the training command ARTRAC (Shimla). Hierarchy: Command → Corps → Division → Brigade → Battalion. Southern Command has XII Konark Corps (Jodhpur) and XXI Sudarshan Chakra Corps (Bhopal).
- First 'Akhand Prahar' (Nov 2025): held in the Jaisalmer desert as part of tri-service Exercise Trishul; the newly formed all-arms 'Rudra' Brigade was validated; indigenous drones, counter-drone systems and electronic-warfare (EW) grids were used.
- Geography: the Thar (Great Indian) Desert lies mostly in Rajasthan; Jaisalmer is on the India–Pakistan border. The Aravallis bound it on the east; shifting dunes are called 'dhrian' and salt lakes 'dhand'; the Indira Gandhi Canal irrigates it.
- Nuclear tests: India's first nuclear test, 'Smiling Buddha', was held at Pokhran (Jaisalmer district) on 18 May 1974 (PM Indira Gandhi, President V.V. Giri); 'Operation Shakti' (Pokhran-II) followed on 11

and 13 May 1998 – hence 11 May is National Technology Day.

Tamil Nadu link: the same Southern Command's 'Dakshin Bharat Area' HQ is in Chennai; Southern Army Commander Lt Gen Rajesh Pushkar reviewed it on 15 Oct 2026. The Madras Regiment, the Army's oldest infantry regiment, has its Regimental Centre at Wellington, Nilgiris (war cry: 'Veera Madrassi, Adi Kollu'). The Officers Training Academy (OTA), Alandur, Chennai, began on 15 Jan 1963 and has trained women officers since 1992.

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