

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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§1 TOP HEADLINES

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- 11 UNEP's "Limiting Overshoot" report warns global warming will "very likely" cross 1.5°C within the next decade, mapping a peak-and-decline recovery pathway. **GS3**
- 12 ICAR and ICRISAT convene the Global Dryland Congress 2026 in New Delhi, marking 50 years of India-led dryland-agriculture cooperation. **GS1/GS3**

§2 POLITY & GOVERNANCE

GS1 / GS2

Population & Associated Issues; Government Policies

11 Sep 2026 · Source: PIB / Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner

Census 2027 Phase-II: Field Enumeration Begins in Ladakh and Snow-Bound J&K, With India's First Comprehensive Caste Column

Why in News: Field Population Enumeration for the Phase-II (winter-affected) areas of Census 2027 began on 1 September 2026 and runs through 30 September, covering 637 Enumeration Blocks in Ladakh and 4,146 Enumeration Blocks across 16 snow-bound districts of Jammu & Kashmir, ahead of these areas being cut off by winter. The reference date remains 00:00 hrs, 1 October 2026, with a five-day revision round from 1-5 October. Question 10 of the notified 40-question schedule records the caste/SC/ST status of every citizen through an open-ended column — the first time independent India's decennial Census has captured caste data comprehensively rather than only for SC/ST.

Background: Census 2027 is India's first fully digital Census, conducted under the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990, using a mobile-app-based, self-enumeration-plus-enumerator model instead of paper schedules. India's last full Census was in 2011; the 2021 Census was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent administrative deferrals. The decision to enumerate caste data for all communities (not merely SCs/STs, as in every Census since 1951) follows years of political demand for a nationwide caste census and was formally approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2025.

KEY FACTS

- Phase-II field enumeration window: 1-30 September 2026, in areas that would otherwise be snowed in during the standard February-March schedule.
- 637 Enumeration Blocks in Ladakh; 4,146 Enumeration Blocks across 16 snow-bound J&K districts.
- Self-enumeration phase for the rest of India ran 17-31 August 2026, via the Census mobile app.
- Reference date/time for the whole Census: 00:00 hrs, 1 October 2026; revision round 1-5 October 2026.
- 40-question schedule notified by the Registrar General of India on 14 August 2026; Question 10 captures caste for every respondent in an open column.
- This is India's first Census conducted primarily through a digital/mobile-app platform rather than paper schedules.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Constitutional basis: Census falls under Entry 69, Union List (Seventh Schedule); conducted under the Census Act, 1948 — a Union subject with no state veto over methodology.
- The caste column revives the debate last settled (administratively) after the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011, whose caste data was never officially released due to data-quality concerns — Census 2027 must avoid the same fate.
- Digitisation raises data-privacy and cybersecurity questions under the DPDP Act, 2023, since caste is designated sensitive personal data in most policy contexts.
- Caste enumeration outcomes will directly feed future OBC sub-categorisation exercises and Article 15(4)/16(4) reservation policymaking.
- Logistics in high-altitude, low-connectivity terrain (Ladakh, Kashmir Valley) test the feasibility of app-based enumeration as a governance-delivery model more broadly.

● LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember "3 Cs of Census 2027": Cut-off-by-winter areas go first (Phase-II), Caste is counted for all (Question 10), and it's Conducted digitally for the first time.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS1 Mains 2015: "Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanisation in India" — population-data questions of this kind draw directly on Census methodology; caste-enumeration debates are a recurring Mains GS1/GS2 theme since the 2011 SECC controversy.

Probable Prelims MCQ: Consider the following statements regarding the Census of India: 1. The Census is conducted under the Census Act, 1948. 2. Census falls under the State List of the Seventh Schedule. 3. Census 2027 is being conducted using a mobile-app-based digital methodology for the first time. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 only (c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 3 only

Answer: (a) — Census is a Union List (Entry 69) subject, not State List; statement 2 is false.

GS1

GS2

Census Act 1948

SECC 2011

DPDP Act

GS2

Structure, Organisation, Functioning of Judiciary

10 Sep 2026 · Source: Supreme Court of India / LiveLaw court reporting

Supreme Court Collegium Clears 11 Fresh HC Judge Recommendations Amid a Renewed Transparency Debate

Why in News: On 10 September 2026 the Supreme Court Collegium cleared recommendations for 8 judicial officers to the Delhi High Court and 3 to the Karnataka High Court. The appointments landed days after a sitting Supreme Court judge publicly noted that recent Collegium resolutions (2025-26) often carry no stated reasons, unlike the fuller reasoning practice under earlier Chief Justices, reviving calls for a finalised Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) with mandatory reasoning.

Background: India's judges-appoint-judges Collegium system arose from the Supreme Court's own Second (1993) and Third (1998) Judges Cases, interpreting "consultation" under Articles 124 and 217 as effectively requiring the judiciary's primacy. Parliament's attempt to replace it — the 99th Constitutional Amendment and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014 — was struck down as unconstitutional in the NJAC judgment (2015) for violating the "independence of judiciary" basic feature. Since 2017 the Collegium has published its resolutions online, but without a court-enforceable obligation to record reasons, leaving disclosure practice inconsistent.

KEY FACTS

- 11 fresh High Court judge recommendations cleared on 10 September 2026 (8 for Delhi HC, 3 for Karnataka HC).
- Collegium comprises the CJI plus the four senior-most Supreme Court judges for SC appointments; CJI plus two senior-most SC judges for HC appointments.
- NJAC judgment, 2015: struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act and the NJAC Act, 2014 by a 4:1 majority.
- The Memorandum of Procedure (MoP), meant to formalise Collegium working rules, remains unfinalised nearly a decade after the NJAC verdict.
- Collegium resolutions have been published on the Supreme Court website only since October 2017.
- Article 124(2) and Article 217(1) require the President to act "after consultation" with named judges — the constitutional text the Collegium's primacy interpretation rests on.

- Judicial independence versus accountability: the Collegium was created precisely to insulate appointments from executive interference, but that insulation also removes it from ordinary accountability mechanisms.
- Absence of a finalised MoP means no binding eligibility criteria, no mandatory reasoning, and no institutionalised timeline — a recurring administrative-law criticism.
- Comparative angle: several common-law democracies (UK's Judicial Appointments Commission, South Africa's Judicial Service Commission) use mixed judicial-executive-law bodies, offering a reform template short of the NJAC model already struck down.
- Reasoned resolutions would strengthen public confidence without necessarily compromising judicial primacy — a middle path several jurists have proposed.
- Way forward: finalising the MoP through judiciary-executive dialogue, rather than fresh legislation, avoids re-litigating the basic-structure question settled in 2015.

● LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Three Judges Cases built the Collegium; the Fourth attempt (NJAC, 2014) to dismantle it was struck down in 2015. "3 built it, the 4th couldn't kill it."

PYQ LINKAGE

Conceptually anchored to the NJAC judgment (2015) — a recurring GS2 Mains theme on judicial appointments, basic structure doctrine, and separation of powers; regularly tested in Prelims as a statement-based question on Articles 124/217 and the Second/Third Judges Cases.

Probable Prelims MCQ: With reference to the Collegium system of judicial appointments in India, consider the following statements: 1. It originated from the Supreme Court's interpretation of "consultation" under Articles 124 and 217. 2. The 99th Constitutional Amendment Act sought to replace it with the NJAC and was upheld by the Supreme Court. 3. A finalised Memorandum of Procedure currently governs all Collegium appointments. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — the NJAC Act was struck down, not upheld (statement 2 false); the MoP remains unfinalised (statement 3 false).

GS2

Judiciary

NJAC 2015

Article 124/217

Basic Structure

§3 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GS2

International Institutions, Agencies & Fora

11 Sep 2026 · Source: BRICS Finance Track Joint Statement (New Delhi)

BRICS Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors Demand Urgent IMF-World Bank Governance Reform

Why in News: Ahead of the 18th BRICS Summit (12-13 September 2026, New Delhi), BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors issued a joint statement on 11 September 2026 calling for urgent reform of IMF quota and voting shares and greater emerging-economy representation in IMF/World Bank leadership. The statement also directed the BRICS Payment Task Force to advance cross-border payment interoperability and endorsed greater use of local currencies in intra-BRICS trade and investment.

Background: BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, plus Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE and Indonesia since 2024) has long argued that IMF quota shares — last realigned in 2010 and only partially rebalanced since — under-

represent the group's ~35% share of global GDP (PPP terms). The bloc's New Development Bank (NDB), headquartered in Shanghai and founded in 2015, was itself created partly in response to perceived slow reform at the Bretton Woods institutions.

KEY FACTS

- Joint statement issued 11 September 2026, two days ahead of the Leaders' Summit (12-13 September, New Delhi) under India's 2026 BRICS chairship.
- Core demand: reform of IMF quota and voting-share formula plus greater emerging-market representation in IMF/World Bank senior leadership.
- BRICS Payment Task Force mandated to advance cross-border payment interoperability, reducing reliance on dollar-clearing systems.
- New Development Bank (NDB): headquartered in Shanghai, established 2015, current membership expanded beyond founding five.
- India is positioning a digital-currency-linkage agenda within BRICS to support local-currency trade settlement.
- BRICS bloc (post-2024 expansion) now accounts for a substantial share of global population and PPP-adjusted GDP, the statistical basis for the reform demand.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Bretton Woods reform debate: IMF quota realignment requires 85% weighted voting-share approval, giving the US (16-17% share) an effective veto — the structural bottleneck BRICS is targeting.
- De-dollarisation push versus practical constraints: local-currency settlement reduces transaction-cost exposure to sanctions but faces convertibility and liquidity limits among BRICS currencies.
- India's dual-track diplomacy: pushing multilateral reform while deepening its own bilateral ties with both Western creditors and BRICS partners — a balancing act relevant to India's "multi-alignment" foreign-policy doctrine.
- NDB as a parallel/competing institution to IMF/World Bank raises questions about institutional fragmentation versus genuine reform of existing bodies.
- Way forward: incremental quota-share gains are more realistic than wholesale governance overhaul, given the veto-threshold problem.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"85 blocks the door": IMF's 85% super-majority voting threshold is why the US's ~16-17% share can single-handedly block quota reform — the exact number BRICS wants changed.

PYQ LINKAGE

The New Development Bank's headquarters (Shanghai) and founding-member composition are a recurring Prelims static fact; IMF quota-reform and Bretton Woods architecture are a recurring GS2/GS3 Mains theme on global economic governance.

Probable Prelims MCQ: Consider the following statements about the New Development Bank (NDB): 1. It was established by the BRICS grouping in 2014-15. 2. Its headquarters is located in Shanghai, China. 3. Membership of the NDB is restricted only to the original five BRICS founding members. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — NDB membership has since expanded beyond the founding five (statement 3 false).

GS2

BRICS

IMF Reform

NDB

De-dollarisation

Modi-Putin Bilateral Talks: Final S-400 Squadron, Su-57 Technology Transfer and a \$100-Billion Trade Target

Why in News: PM Modi held bilateral talks with President Putin in New Delhi on 11 September 2026, ahead of the BRICS Summit, focused on raising bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030 (from over \$60 billion currently), and on defence-technology cooperation: confirmation that the fifth and final S-400 Triumf squadron — from India's 2018, \$5.43-billion, five-regiment deal — will be delivered by November 2026 after Ukraine-war-related delays, alongside talks on Su-57 fighter technology transfer and a lighter, 1.3-tonne BrahMos-NG missile variant (versus the current 2.9-tonne BrahMos).

Background: India signed the \$5.43-billion S-400 deal with Russia in October 2018, drawing US sanctions-waiver concerns under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) that India ultimately navigated without penalty. India-Russia defence ties date to Cold War-era supply arrangements and remain central despite India's post-2014 diversification toward US, French and Israeli platforms.

KEY FACTS

- Bilateral trade target: \$100 billion by 2030, up from over \$60 billion currently.
- Fifth and final S-400 Triumf squadron (of the 2018, \$5.43-billion, five-regiment deal) confirmed for delivery by November 2026.
- BrahMos-NG under discussion: a lighter 1.3-tonne variant versus the current 2.9-tonne BrahMos missile.
- Su-57 fighter-technology transfer discussions form part of the broader defence-technical cooperation agenda.
- Talks held in New Delhi on 11 September 2026, ahead of the 18th BRICS Summit (12-13 September).
- Energy and critical-minerals cooperation also featured on the bilateral agenda.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Strategic autonomy versus dependence: deepening Russia defence ties amid Western sanctions pressure tests India's "multi-alignment" doctrine against genuine platform diversification.
- CAATSA precedent: India's earlier S-400 sanctions-waiver navigation is a template for managing future US friction over Russia defence deals.
- Indigenisation angle: BrahMos-NG development under India-Russia joint venture (BrahMos Aerospace) supports the Atmanirbhar Bharat defence-manufacturing goal even within an imported-platform relationship.
- Trade diversification: a \$100-billion target requires addressing the current trade imbalance (energy imports dominate) with greater non-energy exports.
- Way forward: sequencing S-400 delivery completion with technology-transfer negotiations (Su-57) tests how far India can extract indigenisation commitments from a legacy defence partner.

● LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"5-4-1": 5 regiments in the S-400 deal, \$5.4 billion the price tag, 1 squadron (the last) still pending delivery this edition.

PYQ LINKAGE

The S-400 Triumf system (Russian origin, air-defence missile system) is a recurring Prelims static-current hybrid fact; India-Russia defence relations under CAATSA sanctions-waiver diplomacy is a recurring GS2/GS3 Mains theme.

Probable Prelims MCQ: The S-400 Triumf air-defence missile system, sometimes seen in the news, is associated with which of the following countries?

- (a) France (b) Israel (c) Russia (d) United States

Answer: (c) Russia

GS2

GS3

India-Russia

S-400

CAATSA

BrahMos-NG

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§4 DEFENCE & SECURITY

GS2 / GS3

India & Neighbourhood; Security in Maritime Domain

08-10 Sep 2026 · Source: Ministry of Defence / MEA, Colombo

Rajnath Singh's Sri Lanka Visit — First by an Indian Defence Minister in 38 Years — Yields Three Defence MoUs

Why in News: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh undertook a three-day visit to Colombo (8-10 September 2026) — the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Sri Lanka in 38 years, the last being Defence Minister K.C. Pant's visit in 1988. Meeting President Anura Kumara Disسانayake on 9 September, India and Sri Lanka signed three defence MoUs: modernisation of the Sri Lanka Air Force's six remaining L70 anti-aircraft guns (funded via a Government of India grant); an academic-cooperation pact between India's National Defence College and its Sri Lankan counterpart; and an NCC-level youth/cadet exchange programme.

Background: India-Sri Lanka defence engagement has historically lagged behind India's economic and infrastructure assistance to Colombo, even as Sri Lanka sits astride critical Indian Ocean sea lanes. Recurring calls by Chinese research/survey vessels at Sri Lankan ports in recent years have sharpened India's interest in deeper defence-institutional ties, given New Delhi's long-standing "Neighbourhood First" and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrines.

KEY FACTS

- First Indian Defence Minister visit to Sri Lanka since K.C. Pant's 1988 visit — a 38-year gap.
- Three MoUs signed on 9 September 2026: L70 gun modernisation, NDC-level academic cooperation, NCC youth exchange.
- L70 modernisation covers the Sri Lanka Air Force's six remaining L70 anti-aircraft guns, funded via a Government of India grant (not a commercial sale).
- Visit conducted against the backdrop of recurring Chinese research-vessel port calls in Sri Lanka.
- Falls under India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and Neighbourhood First doctrines.
- Meeting held with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disسانayake, whose government has sought to balance India-China relations since taking office.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Grant-funded (not commercial) defence hardware upgrades signal India's soft-power approach to neighbourhood defence diplomacy, distinct from transactional arms sales.
- India-Sri Lanka-China triangulation: Colombo's balancing act between New Delhi and Beijing shapes the strategic calculus of every Indian engagement with the island.

- Indian Ocean Region (IOR) maritime-security competition: Sri Lanka's location astride key sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) makes it disproportionately significant to India's maritime-security doctrine relative to its size.
- Institutional/people-to-people diplomacy (NDC academic ties, NCC exchange) builds durable defence relationships that outlast any single government in Colombo.
- Way forward: sustained, calendar-based defence engagement (not one-off visits after decades) is needed to compete with China's more consistent economic and infrastructure engagement in Sri Lanka.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"38 years, 3 MoUs, 1 President": remember the visit by its numbers — a 38-year gap since the last Defence Minister visit, 3 fresh MoUs, meeting 1 president (Dissanayake).

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematically linked to the recurring GS2 Mains focus on India's neighbourhood-first policy and China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean Region — a theme UPSC has tested repeatedly in the context of Sri Lanka, Maldives and the IOR maritime balance.

Probable Prelims MCQ: The "SAGAR" doctrine, often seen in the context of India's maritime diplomacy, stands for:

- (a) Strategic Alliance for Growth and Regional-security (b) Security and Growth for All in the Region (c) South Asian Governance and Regional-cooperation (d) Sea Access and Global Autonomous Routes

Answer: (b) Security and Growth for All in the Region

GS2

GS3

Sri Lanka

SAGAR

Neighbourhood First

IOR

THEIAS AKADEMIA

A defence-diplomacy story like today's Sri Lanka visit always carries an unstated ethical dimension — national interest versus regional trust-building. If GS4 case-study framing is where you feel least confident, **EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy)** is built exactly for that gap. theiasakademia.com.

§5 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GS3

Indigenisation of Technology; Space

05 & 09 Sep 2026 · Source: ISRO official release

ISRO's Semi-Cryogenic Engine Achieves 100% Rated Thrust — 200 Tonnes at Mahendragiri

Why in News: On 5 September 2026, ISRO conducted the ninth hot test of its Semi-Cryogenic Engine Power Head Test Article (PHTA) at the ISRO Propulsion Research Complex, Mahendragiri (Tamil Nadu) — the first test in the series to reach full 100% thrust level of 200 tonnes, sustained for 5 of a total 35-second test duration. Days later, on 9 September, ISRO separately hot-tested its CE20 cryogenic engine at its Main Engine and Stage Test facility, ahead of integration into the C32 flight stage for the upcoming LVM3-M7 mission.

Background: The semi-cryogenic engine (SE2000, in the 2,000 kN thrust class) is designed to power the SC120 stage, intended to eventually replace LVM3's existing L110 liquid-core stage and significantly boost India's heavy-lift launch capability. Semi-cryogenic engines use a refined kerosene (rather than liquid hydrogen) as fuel with liquid oxygen as oxidiser, offering higher density and easier ground handling than fully cryogenic engines while retaining strong specific-impulse performance — a technology only a handful of spacefaring nations have mastered indigenously.

KEY FACTS

- Ninth hot test of the Semi-Cryogenic Engine Power Head Test Article, conducted 5 September 2026 at Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.
- First test in the series to reach 100% rated thrust: 200 tonnes, sustained for 5 seconds within a 35-second total test.
- Earlier tests in the series validated 47% (94t), 60% (120t) and 88% (175t) thrust levels progressively.
- Engine designation: SE2000 (2,000 kN thrust class), intended for the SC120 stage.
- SC120 is meant to eventually replace LVM3's existing L110 liquid-core stage.
- Separately, the CE20 cryogenic engine was hot-tested on 9 September 2026 for integration into the C32 stage of the LVM3-M7 mission, targeted for Q4 2026.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Semi-cryogenic propulsion mastery places India in a very small group of nations with fully indigenous heavy-lift engine capability, reducing dependence on foreign launch-vehicle technology.
- Higher-thrust engines directly translate into greater payload-to-orbit capacity — relevant to India's future heavy satellite, lunar and human-spaceflight ambitions (Gaganyaan follow-ons, Bharatiya Antariksha Station).
- Staged thrust-validation (47%→60%→88%→100%) reflects a deliberately incremental, risk-managed testing philosophy standard in propulsion engineering.
- Commercial angle: a fully indigenous heavy-lift capability strengthens India's position in the global commercial launch-services market (via NewSpace India Limited).
- Way forward: engine qualification must now be followed by full SC120 stage-level testing before an actual flight induction — a multi-year process even after a successful PHTA milestone.

🌸 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the climb: 47 → 60 → 88 → 100 (percent thrust) is ISRO's staircase to a fully indigenous 200-tonne semi-cryogenic engine.

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematically linked to recurring GS3 Mains and Prelims coverage of India's indigenous launch-vehicle propulsion programme (cryogenic engine development following the 1990s US technology-denial regime under MTCR) — a frequently tested "achievements of Indians in S&T" theme.

Probable Prelims MCQ: Consider the following statements regarding semi-cryogenic rocket engines: 1. They use refined kerosene as fuel and liquid oxygen as oxidiser. 2. They offer higher propellant density and easier ground handling than fully cryogenic engines. 3. India's semi-cryogenic engine under development is intended to power the SC120 stage, replacing the existing L110 stage of LVM3. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) — all three statements are correct.

GS3

ISRO

Semi-Cryogenic Engine

LVM3

Indigenisation

GS3

Deep Ocean Mission; Blue Economy

09 Sep 2026 · Source: PIB / Ministry of Earth Sciences

India Launches ORV Sagar Manthan — First Advanced Indigenous Ocean Research Vessel

Why in News: Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launched ORV Sagar Manthan on 9 September 2026 at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers' (GRSE) Rishi Bankim shipyard, Kolkata. Built for the National Centre for Polar and Ocean

Research (NCPOR) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the vessel is a flagship deliverable of the Deep Ocean Mission's Vertical-4 (ocean-observation and survey capability), costing roughly ₹840 crore.

Background: The Deep Ocean Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2021 as a multi-ministerial programme to explore India's deep-sea resources — polymetallic nodules, cobalt-rich crusts, hydrothermal-sulphide deposits — and to develop underwater vehicles, ocean-climate services and deep-sea biodiversity assessment capability. India holds a UN-allotted 75,000 sq. km pioneer-investor area in the Central Indian Ocean Basin for polymetallic-nodule exploration, making dedicated survey-vessel capacity a strategic necessity rather than a scientific luxury.

KEY FACTS

- Vessel dimensions: 89.50m length x 18.80m breadth; 5,900 Gross Tonnage; top speed of 14 knots.
- Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) at its Rishi Bankim shipyard, Kolkata.
- Approximate cost: ₹840 crore, funded under the Deep Ocean Mission's Vertical-4.
- Operating agency: National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Survey capability: multibeam bathymetry, multichannel seismic surveys, and ROV/AUV deployment to depths of up to 6 km, including in the Southern Ocean.
- Designed service life: 30 years.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Blue Economy strategic value: deep-sea mineral survey capacity underpins India's claim and exploitation rights over its Central Indian Ocean Basin pioneer-investor area under UNCLOS/International Seabed Authority rules.
- Indigenisation angle: an Indian-built (GRSE) ocean-research vessel reduces reliance on foreign-chartered survey ships, a long-standing constraint on India's deep-ocean science programme.
- Polar-research linkage: NCPOR's mandate spans both polar (Antarctic/Arctic) and ocean research, connecting this vessel to India's broader polar-science and Southern Ocean-monitoring commitments.
- Environmental angle: deep-sea mining exploration raises unresolved ecological concerns about seabed-ecosystem disruption, a live global-governance debate at the International Seabed Authority.
- Way forward: survey capability must be matched with downstream deep-sea mining and processing technology for India to convert exploration rights into an actual extractive Blue Economy.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"Manthan means churning" — just as the mythological Samudra Manthan churned the ocean for treasures, ORV Sagar Manthan churns India's Central Indian Ocean Basin pioneer-investor area for polymetallic nodules.

PYQ LINKAGE

The Deep Ocean Mission (approved 2021) has featured in recent Prelims cycles as a statement-based question on India's ocean-exploration missions and their objectives — a recurring static-current hybrid topic.

Probable Prelims MCQ: With reference to India's Deep Ocean Mission, consider the following statements: 1. It was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2021. 2. It is implemented solely by the Ministry of Earth Sciences with no other ministry involved. 3. India holds a pioneer-investor area in the Central Indian Ocean Basin for polymetallic-nodule exploration. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — Deep Ocean Mission is a multi-ministerial programme, not restricted to MoES alone (statement 2 false).

GS3

Deep Ocean Mission

NCPOR

Blue Economy

UNCLOS

§6 ECONOMY

GS3

Effects of Liberalisation; Trade Agreements

11 Sep 2026 · Source: European Commission press release (IP_26_184)

European Commission Sends EU-India Free Trade Agreement to Council for Signature

Why in News: The European Commission on 11 September 2026 formally submitted proposals to the EU Council for signature and conclusion of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement, whose negotiations concluded in January 2026. Once ratified, it will be the largest trade agreement either side has signed: the EU will free up 97% of tariff lines covering 99.5% of Indian export value, with 70.4% duty-free immediately on entry into force (including full immediate zero-duty for textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, and marine products); India will cut or eliminate tariffs on 96% of EU goods exports.

Background: India-EU FTA negotiations, first launched in 2007, were suspended in 2013 over disagreements on data-security status, automobile-tariff cuts, and movement-of-professionals (Mode-4 services) provisions, before being relaunched in 2022. The EU is India's largest trading-goods partner as a bloc, and India has separately concluded FTAs with the UK (2025) and EFTA (2024) in recent years as part of a broader push to diversify export markets.

KEY FACTS

- Formal Commission-to-Council transmission: 11 September 2026; negotiations concluded January 2026.
- EU tariff liberalisation: 97% of tariff lines, covering 99.5% of Indian export value; 70.4% duty-free immediately on entry into force.
- Immediate zero-duty sectors for India: textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, marine products.
- India's reciprocal commitment: tariff cuts/elimination on 96% of EU goods exports.
- Estimated EU-exporter savings: approximately €4 billion annually once fully implemented.
- Combined market size: roughly 2 billion people and a combined GDP of about \$24 trillion.
- Entry into force targeted for late 2026 or the first half of 2027, pending EU Council approval, European Parliament consent, and India's internal ratification processes.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Sectoral winners: India's labour-intensive export sectors (textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, marine products) gain immediate duty-free access — directly supporting employment-intensive manufacturing goals.
- Sectoral sensitivities: India's dairy and certain agricultural sub-sectors remain politically sensitive in FTA negotiations generally, requiring careful safeguard design even where this deal does not fully liberalise them.
- Diversification strategy: this FTA, alongside the UK and EFTA agreements, reduces India's reliance on any single export destination amid global trade fragmentation.
- Ratification-risk angle: EU Council and European Parliament approval are not guaranteed formalities — agricultural lobbies in EU member states have stalled past EU trade deals (e.g., EU-Mercosur) at this very stage.
- Way forward: India must pair tariff access with export-competitiveness reforms (logistics costs, compliance ease) to convert market access into actual export growth, a gap seen after some of India's past FTAs.

🌸 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember "97-99.5-96": EU frees 97% of tariff lines covering 99.5% of India's export value; India reciprocates on 96% of EU goods — three numbers, one deal.

PYQ LINKAGE

Recurring GS3 Mains theme on India's Free Trade Agreements and their sectoral impact — comparable in structure to past questions on India's FTAs with ASEAN, Japan, and the UK.

Probable Prelims MCQ: With reference to the EU-India Free Trade Agreement (2026), consider the following statements: 1. Negotiations for this agreement were first launched in 2007. 2. Under the agreement, the European Union will make 99.5% of Indian export value duty-free. 3. The agreement has already entered into force following its January 2026 conclusion. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — the agreement still awaits EU Council/Parliament approval and Indian ratification; it has not yet entered into force (statement 3 false).

GS3

EU-India FTA

Trade Policy

Blue Economy

GS3

Government Budgeting; GST Architecture

08 Sep 2026 (still developing) · Source: GST Council communication / PIB

GST Council Defers One-Year GST 2.0 Rate-Rationalisation Review to 7 October

Why in News: Reporting on 8 September 2026 indicated the GST Council will review the fiscal and revenue impact of the September 2025 rate rationalisation — which collapsed the earlier four-slab structure (5/12/18/28%) into a simplified 5%/18% structure plus a 40% sin/luxury rate — before considering further cuts. The stock-take meeting, initially expected imminently, has since been pushed to 7 October 2026; agenda items flagged include blocked Input Tax Credit (ITC) under Section 17(5) for construction and works contracts, buyer protection against supplier default, inverted-duty-structure refunds, cross-state ITC transfer, and a status check on the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) rollout.

Background: GST was introduced via the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016, replacing a web of central and state indirect taxes with a unified destination-based consumption tax administered by the GST Council under Article 279A. The September 2025 "GST 2.0" rate rationalisation was itself a major simplification exercise responding to years of criticism over slab complexity and classification disputes.

KEY FACTS

- Original four-slab GST structure (5/12/18/28%) collapsed to a two-slab 5%/18% structure plus a 40% sin/luxury rate in September 2025.
- One-year stock-take of this rationalisation now scheduled for 7 October 2026, deferred from an earlier expected date.
- Key pending agenda items: Section 17(5) blocked-ITC rules for construction/works contracts; buyer protection on supplier GST default; inverted-duty-structure refund mechanics; cross-state ITC transfer; GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) operational status.
- GST Council functions under Article 279A of the Constitution, chaired by the Union Finance Minister with state finance ministers as members.
- GST itself was introduced via the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016, effective from 1 July 2017.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Revenue-versus-relief trade-off: further rate cuts reduce compliance friction and consumption-tax burden but risk further denting states' GST revenue, already a point of Centre-state fiscal friction post-compensation-cess expiry.

- Cooperative federalism test: the GST Council's consensus-based (rarely voted) functioning is repeatedly cited as a model of fiscal federalism, but deferred meetings and unresolved agenda items strain that model.
- GSTAT rollout delay reflects a broader pattern of tribunalisation gaps in India's tax-dispute-resolution architecture, leaving taxpayers reliant on slower High Court routes.
- Blocked-ITC disputes (Section 17(5)) for construction/works contracts have generated significant litigation, an implementation-design flaw rather than a rate-structure issue.
- Way forward: a genuinely rationalised GST (ideally a single moderate rate) remains the original vision; incremental slab tweaks are a second-best but politically necessary path.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"4 became 2, plus 1 sin rate": four slabs (5/12/18/28) became two (5/18), with a 40% sin/luxury rate bolted on — the whole GST 2.0 story in six numbers.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 Mains theme on GST design and Centre-state fiscal federalism has been tested repeatedly since GST's 2017 rollout, including on the rationale for GST Council mechanisms and compensation arrangements.

Probable Prelims MCQ: Consider the following statements regarding the GST Council: 1. It was constituted under Article 279A of the Constitution. 2. It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister. 3. All its decisions are taken exclusively by a simple majority vote of state finance ministers, excluding the Centre. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) — the Council functions predominantly by consensus, and the Centre has a weighted vote share, not exclusion (statement 3 false).

GS3

GST

Article 279A

Fiscal Federalism

GSTAT

GS3

Infrastructure: Railways

09 Sep 2026 · Source: PIB / Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

CCEA Clears 8 Railway Multi-Tracking Projects Worth ₹20,804 Crore Across 9 States

Why in News: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 9 September 2026 approved eight railway multi-tracking projects worth ₹20,804 crore, spanning 31 districts across nine states. Five projects (₹10,021 crore) cover Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana — including third/fourth lines on the Arakkonam-Renigunta stretch and doubling of the Hosur-Omalur line — while three projects (₹10,783 crore) cover West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Background: Railway multi-tracking (adding parallel lines to existing single or double-track routes) is a core strategy under the National Rail Plan (targeting a modernised, congestion-free network by 2030) to decongest saturated freight-and-passenger corridors without the land-acquisition burden of building entirely new alignments. It directly supports the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan's multi-modal logistics-integration goals.

KEY FACTS

- Total outlay: ₹20,804 crore for 8 projects across 31 districts in 9 states.
- Combined additional track length: approximately 1,196 km.
- Southern cluster (₹10,021 crore): Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana — includes Arakkonam-Renigunta 3rd/4th line and Hosur-Omalur doubling.
- Eastern/Central cluster (₹10,783 crore): West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh.

- Targeted completion: 2029-30.
- Falls under the National Rail Plan and PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan frameworks.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Multi-tracking is a capital-efficient decongestion tool compared to greenfield lines, minimising land-acquisition and rehabilitation costs while boosting freight/passenger capacity on saturated corridors.
- Eastern-cluster states (Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh) are mineral-rich regions where rail-freight capacity directly affects coal, steel and cement logistics costs and, by extension, national energy security.
- Southern-cluster projects support the industrial corridors of Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh-Karnataka-Telangana, aiding manufacturing competitiveness under the broader "Make in India" push.
- PM Gati Shakti integration ensures multi-modal alignment (road, port, rail) rather than isolated rail-only capacity addition — a shift from earlier siloed infrastructure planning.
- Way forward: financing 9-state simultaneous execution requires robust project-management capacity within Indian Railways/RVNL to avoid the time-and-cost overruns that have historically plagued Indian infrastructure projects.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"8-9-31-1196": 8 projects, 9 states, 31 districts, ~1,196 km of new track — one clean number chain for this CCEA approval.

PYQ LINKAGE

Syllabus-anchored to the GS3 "Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways" sub-heading — a recurring Mains theme on India's infrastructure-investment models and multi-modal logistics integration under PM Gati Shakti.

Probable Prelims MCQ: The "PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan" primarily aims at:

- (a) Providing direct cash transfers to farmers for irrigation infrastructure (b) Integrated, multi-modal planning of infrastructure projects across ministries (c) Privatisation of all railway freight corridors (d) Setting up new All India Services cadres for infrastructure governance

Answer: (b) Integrated, multi-modal planning of infrastructure projects across ministries

GS3

Railways

PM Gati Shakti

National Rail Plan

Infrastructure

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