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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP)

In the News: The Government of India has expanded the Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) to 13 international airports as of September 2025, adding airports such as Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Trichy, Kozhikode, and Amritsar. The programme is designed to make immigration faster, smoother and more secure for eligible travellers.

Key Points:

- FTI-TTP allows **Indian passport holders** and **Overseas Citizens of India (OCI cardholders)** to use automated biometric e-gates at designated airports for quicker immigration clearance.
- To enroll in the programme, applicants must register online at the official portal, submit required documents and personal details, and then provide biometric data (fingerprints, facial image) at an authorized centre such as an airport or a Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).
- Once approved, trusted travellers can scan their boarding pass and passport at e-gates at arrival and/or departure, followed by biometric verification; after this they receive immigration clearance automatically, cutting down wait times significantly (to about 30 seconds).
- The programme is **free of cost**, making it accessible to all eligible persons without additional fees.
- As of now, FTI-TTP has been implemented at airports including Delhi (Indira Gandhi International), Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Cochin, Ahmedabad etc., and is being expanded.
- The programme aims to strengthen both **traveller convenience** and **national security**, aligning with broader government goals such as reducing queues, manual checks and improving travel infrastructure.
- Uptake has been moderate but growing—around **3 lakh travellers** have registered, of which about **2.65 lakh** have used the facility.

SC Restores Raja Bahadur Sardar Singh's Estates to Trust

In the News: The Supreme Court has restored the **₹3,000-crore historic estates** of Constituent Assembly member and former parliamentarian **Raja Bahadur Sardar Singh** to a trust he had created for charitable purposes. This comes after nearly four decades of litigation with the **State of Rajasthan** over his will.

Key Points:

- Raja Bahadur Sardar Singh was a member of the **Constituent Assembly of India** and later served as a parliamentarian.
- He had established a **charitable trust** during his lifetime, dedicating his extensive estates and wealth for public good.
- After his death, the **State of Rajasthan** contested the will, leading to prolonged litigation spanning almost 40 years.
- The dispute revolved around whether the vast properties, valued at around **₹3,000 crore**, should vest with the State or remain with the trust.
- The **Supreme Court's ruling** upheld the validity of Sardar Singh's will and confirmed that the estates belong to the trust he founded.
- This judgment marks a major victory for the principle of **honouring charitable intentions** expressed in a valid will.
- The estates will now be managed by the charitable trust for the purposes envisioned by Sardar Singh, ensuring public benefit in line with his original vision.

Justice M. Sundar Appointed CJ of Manipur HC

In the News: On **11 September 2025**, the Supreme Court Collegium recommended Madras High Court Judge **M. Sundar** as the next Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court. This recommendation is to take effect after the retirement of the incumbent Chief Justice on 14 September 2025.

Key Points:

- Justice M. Sundar is currently the **senior-most** judge of the Madras High Court.
- He was born on **19 July 1966** in Chennai, and enrolled as an advocate in **1989**, practising mainly in civil law before the Madras High Court.

- He was elevated to the Madras High Court as a **permanent judge** on **5 October 2016**.
- His elevation to Chief Justice of Manipur High Court is to happen **upon the retirement** of the current Chief Justice, scheduled for **14 September 2025**.
- The recommendation is part of a broader set of Collegium suggestions made for three high courts—**Patna, Meghalaya, and Manipur**. In the same resolution, Justices P. B. Bajantri and Soumen Sen were also recommended for Patna and Meghalaya respectively.

New Delhi Declaration on Manuscript Heritage

In the News: On **13 September 2025**, the **New Delhi Declaration** was adopted at the closing of the three-day '**Gyan Bharatam**' conference on India's manuscript heritage, held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The declaration emphasised that manuscripts are "not merely relics of the past, but a guiding light for the future," and called for renewed global efforts to preserve, digitise, and disseminate their knowledge.

Key Points:

- The declaration was adopted by participants of the '**Gyan Bharatam**' global conference, which focused on safeguarding India's rich manuscript heritage.
- It recognised manuscripts as a **living source of wisdom and cultural continuity**, not just historical artifacts.
- The declaration stressed the need for **preservation, digitisation, and wide dissemination** of manuscript knowledge.
- The conference provided a platform for scholars, archivists, and policymakers to discuss strategies for **modernising access** to manuscripts.
- By adopting the New Delhi Declaration, the conference highlighted India's role in **global knowledge preservation** and cultural leadership.

Tirumala Hills, Erra Matti Dibbalu Enter UNESCO Tentative List

In the News: The Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills (Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh) and Erra Matti Dibbalu (Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh) were added to UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites

Key Points:

- **What has happened:** Tirumala Hills (including features such as the Eparchaeon Unconformity and Silathoranam natural arch) and Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Dunes) have been included in India's UNESCO Tentative List under natural heritage sites.
- **Why Tentative List:** This is a mandatory first step before a site can be formally nominated for full World Heritage status. It indicates state intent to protect and preserve these natural heritage sites.
- **About Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Dunes):**
 - Located along the coast near Visakhapatnam; notified as a National Geo-heritage Monument. Area ~1,500 acres.
 - Composed of sand, silt, clay, with distinctive reddish hue due to natural oxidation. Contains sediment layers and dendritic drainage patterns that record sea-level fluctuations and climatic changes in the late Quaternary period.
 - First documented by British geologist William King in 1886. Threats: tourism, filming, unregulated construction/encroachment.
- **About Tirumala Hills:** Geological features include the **Eparchaeon Unconformity**, marking a boundary between very old (Precambrian, >2.5 billion years) rocks and younger formations (Proterozoic, the Cuddapah Supergroup). Also includes **Silathoranam (Natural Arch)**, located near Tirumala temple, believed to be ~1.5 billion years old. Rich biodiversity: part of the Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve & Venkateswara National Park; includes species like red sanders, *Cycas beddomei*, and Jerdon's Courser.
- **Significance & Justification:**
 - Geological: offers insights into Earth's history, gap in geological record via Eparchaeon Unconformity.
 - Ecological / Biodiversity contributions. Natural beauty and rare geomorphological formations. Research, education & tourism potential, provided conservation is ensured.
- **Official Status and Process:** The sites were officially added to the Tentative List on **August 27, 2025**. With this addition, India now has **69 properties** on its Tentative List (49 cultural, 17 natural, 3 mixed).

- **Conservation Challenges & Next Steps:** Need for regulation: curb unregulated tourism, filming and construction around these areas. Potential for setting up buffer zones and better protection legislation. Using the UNE SCO Tentative status to attract global recognition, funding, expertise for conservation.

Delivery of 'Androth' – Second ASW Shallow Water Craft to Navy

In the News: Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, delivered *Androth*, the second Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC) in the series, to the Indian Navy.

Key Points:

- **What is Androth / ASW-SWC series:** *Androth* is the second ship in a series of eight ASW Shallow Water Crafts being built by GRSE for the Indian Navy. Purpose: these crafts are designed for anti-submarine warfare in shallow/coastal waters, along with roles such as coastal surveillance, mine-laying, search & attack operations, and working in coordination with naval aircraft.
- **Technical / Design Details:**
 - Length: ~77 metres.
 - Propulsion: Diesel engines with water-jet propulsion. It's among the largest Indian naval warships using the diesel+waterjet combination.
 - Armament & sensors: Equipped with lightweight torpedoes, indigenous ASW rockets, a shallow-water SONAR, combat management system, and a 30 mm naval surface gun (indigenous) among other systems. Indigenous content: Over 80 % (some sources say ~88 %) indigenous content.
- **Strategic / Symbolic Aspects:** The ship is named *Androth*, after Androth Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago — underlining India's commitment to guarding its maritime boundaries and littoral zones. Supports the vision of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) especially in defence manufacturing.
- **Timeline & Delivery Details:** The delivery ceremony took place in Kolkata on 13 September 2025. This comes about four months after the delivery of the first ASW SWC of the series, *Arnala*, which was delivered on 8 May 2025 and commissioned on 18 June 2025.
- **Operational Advantages & Features:** Shallow draught (~2.7 meters) allows better manoeuvrability in coastal and littoral waters. Ability to conduct sub-surface surveillance, search & attack in shallow water zones, mine-laying, and coordinate operations with aircraft.

SC on amended Waqf Act: What has been stayed, what remains

In the News: The Supreme Court of India passed an interim order in petitions challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. The Court declined to stay the entire Act, but stayed (put on hold) certain specific provisions until the petitions are conclusively decided.

Key Points:

- **What the Court refused / Act as a whole remains in force:** The Court found *no case prima facie* to stay **all provisions** of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. Thus, most parts of the amended law continue to operate.
- **Provisions stayed / on hold:** The Supreme Court has temporarily suspended the implementation of **three key clauses**, including:
 1. The clause requiring that a person must have "*practising Islam for at least five years*" before dedicating property as a waqf.
 2. The cap/limits on number of non-Muslims who can be appointed to Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards.
 3. Possibly other clauses alleged to affect property rights or ownership via district collectors / Government property definitions etc., which have been held in abeyance.
- **What remains / not stayed:** All other sections of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 not specifically stayed by the SC's interim order continue to be operational. The provisions for transparency, registration, auditing of waqf properties etc., that are not under specific challenge stay in effect.
- **Duration / nature of stay:** The stay on the specified provisions will remain in place **until petitions are finally decided**. The Court's approach is **interim / temporary**, not a final verdict on constitutionality yet.
- **Key legal / constitutional concerns raised:** The "5-year practice of Islam" requirement is challenged as vague and possibly violating Article 25 (freedom of religion) or equal protection. Concerns about representation (non-Muslims, women) in Waqf Boards and whether caps violate minority rights / religious endowment rights. Issues over definitions of

“Government property”, “designated officer” powers in Sections like 3C, 3D (government being able to declare waqf property as government property) which could result in arbitrary loss of waqf status.

Issues in SC hearings on timeline for the President and Governors to assent to Bills

In the News: The Supreme Court of India is hearing a Presidential Reference made by President Droupadi Murmu under Article 143, concerning whether the President and Governors must follow fixed timelines when giving assent to Bills passed by state legislatures. This follows an earlier April 8, 2025 decision in *State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu*, where a two-judge Bench had set some timelines and ruled that Governors cannot indefinitely delay assent. The Constitution Bench has reserved its verdict (11 September 2025) after hearing arguments from the Centre and several states.

Key Points:

- **Background Case – Tamil Nadu Governor Case (8 April 2025):** The Supreme Court held that the Governor cannot indefinitely delay assent to Bills passed by the State Legislature. In particular, for Bills re-passed by the legislature after being returned, the Governor cannot reserve them for the President; some timelines were also directed in that judgment.
- **Presidential Reference (Article 143):** President Murmu raised 14 questions about the powers and discretion of Governors and the President under Articles 200 & 201 of the Constitution concerning assent to Bills. The Constitution Bench (5 judges, led by CJI B.R. Gavai) is hearing the matter.
- **Issues / Arguments Raised:** States like Tamil Nadu & Kerala argued that the legal questions raised by the Reference are already settled by prior judgments (including the April 8 decision) and therefore the Reference may not be maintainable. The Centre and others counter that advisory jurisdiction under Article 143 can still be invoked even for clarifying already decided law, especially when executive actions are under dispute.
- **Scope of Judicial Powers & Federal Balance:** Whether the Court can lay down rigid timelines for Governor/President to grant or withhold assent (or return/reserve) without infringing on constitutional discretion or upsetting federal equilibrium. Whether timelines amount to rewriting the Constitution (i.e. altering Articles 200 & 201) instead of interpreting them.
- **Blanket Timelines” vs. Individual Cases:**
 - The government argued that just because there are examples of delay does not justify imposing a universal, uniform timeline across the board for all Governors/Presidents.
 - On the other hand, proponents say delays harm legislative functioning and that democracy demands accountability; thus timelines help prevent misuse of discretion.
- **Interim / Related Orders:**
 - In the Tamil Nadu case, SC used Article 142 (its inherent powers) to deem certain bills as assented, since the Governor had delayed beyond what was considered permissible.
 - The Reference is to clarify whether similar legal precedents/directives can be generalized.
- **Current Status :**
 - The Supreme Court has **reserved judgment** in the Presidential Reference case (as of September 11, 2025) after hearing both sides.
 - The bench will only address the questions posed in the Presidential Reference; it will *not* revisit the correctness of the April 8 two-judge Bench ruling beyond what is asked.

PM Modi Inaugurates Bioethanol, Polypropylene Projects in Assam

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Assam Bioethanol Plant at Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL), Golaghat, using bamboo as feedstock, and laid the foundation stone for a new polypropylene plant also at NRL. These are part of development projects worth approximately ₹18,000-₹18,530 crore for Assam.

Key Points:

- **Projects & Locations:**
 - Assam Bioethanol Plant (using bamboo feedstock) inaugurated at Numaligarh, Golaghat.
 - A Polypropylene Plant's foundation stone laid at Numaligarh Refinery Limited, Golaghat.
- **Investment & Scale:**
 - Total projects in Assam announced amount to ~ ₹18,000-₹18,530 crore.
 - Bioethanol plant cost: ~ ₹5,000 crore.
 - Polypropylene plant cost: ~ ₹7,230 crore.

- **Feedstock & Supply Chain:**
 - The bioethanol plant is bamboo-based (second-generation ethanol), which is renewable and locally available.
 - To support this, the government will facilitate cultivation of bamboo by farmers, establish small bamboo chipping units in the region, and procure bamboo locally. Approximately **₹200 crore annually** to be spent in this sector (bamboo supply chain etc.).
- **Strategic & Economic Significance:**
 - These plants aim to reduce India's dependence on fossil fuels and imported crude oil and boost green energy.
 - The polypropylene plant supports manufacturing across multiple sectors (textiles, plastics, automotive, agricultural, medical equipment) under schemes like "Make in Assam" & "Make in India".
 - These projects are expected to generate employment for farmers, youth, and tribal communities in Assam and help in socio-economic development of the region.
- **Political & Social Context:**
 - PM Modi highlighted past restrictions on bamboo cutting in the Northeast, and noted that the current government has lifted such bans, which helps local communities.
 - Part of broader push for energy security, industrial growth, and regional development

RBI Launches Microsite on Indian Banknotes

In the News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched a new microsite for Indian banknotes — indiancurrency.rbi.org.in. The microsite was introduced via a press release (PR 2025-2026/1075). The aim is to enhance public awareness about the design, security, and usage of Indian currency banknotes.

Key Points:

- **Purpose & Access:** The microsite is meant to serve as a one-stop destination for information on Indian banknotes—covering design, security features, exchange rules, etc.
- **Features of the Microsite:**
 - **360-degree view** of banknotes: Users can examine each banknote from all angles to understand design elements and security features more clearly.
 - **Security features description:** Details of what makes a genuine note (watermark, security thread, colour changing ink, latent image, etc.).
 - **Multimedia / interactive content:**
 - Videos, audio guides, animations, and interactive games.
 - These help different categories of users (students, general public) learn in a more engaging way.
- **Banknote Exchange & Related Info:**
 - The microsite includes a dedicated section explaining how to exchange old, damaged or withdrawn notes.
 - It clarifies eligibility, procedures, and channels for exchange at banks/RBI counters.
- **Audience & Impact :**
 - Designed for wide public awareness — students, general public, educators.
 - The interactive and multimedia tools help in financial literacy and awareness of counterfeit prevention.
 - Aims to build trust in the monetary system by making security features transparent and accessible.
- **Complementing Existing Efforts:**
 - The microsite complements RBI's earlier portals / resources about banknotes by bundling many elements (design, security, exchange, etc.) into one interactive platform.

5th Coast Guard Global Summit 2027

In the News: India will host the **5th Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS)** in **Chennai** in 2027. The event coincides with the **Golden Jubilee** (50th anniversary) of the Indian Coast Guard. This was unanimously decided at the 4th CGGS held in Rome, Italy.

Key Points:

- **Host & Timing:**
 - The summit will be held in **Chennai** in 2027. Scheduled during the **Golden Jubilee year** of the Indian Coast Guard (since its establishment in 1977) to mark 50 years of service.
- **Duration & Main Events:**

- Three-day event. Will feature an **International Coast Guard Fleet Review**, where coast guard vessels from multiple nations will participate.
- Also includes a **World Coast Guard Seminar**, providing a platform for discussion on maritime challenges and cooperation.
- **Decision & Participants:**
 - The decision to host was made unanimously at the 4th CGGS in Rome (11-12 September 2025).
 - The Rome summit had participation from **115 countries** and various international organisations.
- **Themes & Objectives:**
 - Strengthen international maritime cooperation and foster interoperability among coast guards worldwide.
 - Promote trust, information exchange, capacity building, training, technical assistance.
 - Focus areas likely include maritime search and rescue (M-SAR), marine pollution response, environmental protection, countering transnational maritime crimes, and improving maritime domain awareness.
- **Strategic Significance:**
 - Hosting CGGS in 2027 offers a chance for India to showcase its maritime leadership and role in global maritime security.
 - It builds on India's presidency of CGGS (after taking over from Italy) following the 4th summit. Enhances defence dip

Sex Sorted Semen Facility under Rashtriya Gokul Mission

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a ₹10-crore sex sorted semen facility at the Purnea Semen Station in Bihar. The facility, under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, uses the indigenously developed **Gausort** technology and is aimed at helping farmers in Eastern & North-Eastern India.

Key Points:

- **Facility & Location:**
 - Located at the Semen Station, Purnea, Bihar. Created with Central assistance of **₹10 crore**. Annual capacity: ~ **5 lakh doses** of sex-sorted semen.
- **Technology Used:**
 - Uses **Gausort**, an indigenous sex-sorting technology launched on 5 October 2024.
 - Aims to make sex sorted semen available at reasonable rates to farmers especially in the Eastern and North-Eastern regions.
- **Purpose and Benefits:**
 - Sex-sorted semen increases the likelihood of female calves by about **90% accuracy**, helping reduce economic burden on dairy farmers.
 - Helps in producing more replacement heifers, boosting dairy productivity and improving farmer incomes.
 - Particularly beneficial to small, marginal farmers and landless labourers in the region.
- **Connection with Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)**
 - The facility is part of RGM, which is focused on development & conservation of indigenous bovine breeds, enhancing milk production, and making dairying remunerative for rural farmers.
 - Under RGM, there are existing sex sorted semen production facilities in government semen stations in various states (e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh).
 - Also, there are subsidies: farmers get up to **50% cost subsidy** for sex sorted semen under RGM
- **Scale & Infrastructure:**
 - Purnea semen station itself is one of the largest government semen stations in India, established under RGM with central assistance of ~ **₹84.27 crores**.
 - The station (before the sex sorted facility) has capacity to produce ~ **50 lakh doses per annum** of conventional semen.
- **Cost Implications & Accessibility:**
 - With the introduction of Gausort, the cost of each dose of sex sorted semen is expected to fall (though the exact new rate for this facility isn't specified in that announcement).
 - Under RGM, cost of sex sorted semen has been reduced from ~ ₹800 per dose to ~ ₹250 per dose for eligible farmers.

Amit Shah Inaugurates India's Largest Sports Complex in Ahmedabad

In the News: On September 16, 2025, Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Veer Savarkar Sports Complex at Naranpura, Ahmedabad. The project cost is approximately **₹825 crore**, and the complex is described as the largest and one of the most modern sports complexes in India.

Key Points:

- The Veer Savarkar Sports Complex at Naranpura, Ahmedabad, was built for **₹825 crore** and was inaugurated by Amit Shah to provide world-class infrastructure for athletes.
- The complex is spread over **1,19,000 square meters**, includes athlete housing, medical support, slow motion analysis theatre, facilities for indoor and outdoor sports, hostel for coaches, and is eco-friendly with a **275-kilowatt solar power plant** and **60 KLD sewage treatment plant**.
- It has modern amenities including multiple entry gates (seven of them), parking for around **900 vehicles**, and full medical, nutritional, and coach-accommodation infrastructure to support high performance athletes.
- Amit Shah said that the complex has been named after freedom fighter Veer Savarkar, emphasised that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India should not settle for second place, and reiterated the government's goal to make India number one in every field by **2047**.
- The sports budget has increased significantly over the last decade: from **₹1,643 crore in 2014-15** to **₹5,300 crore** in recent years, funding which has contributed to infrastructure like this complex, athlete support under TOPS, and expansion of schemes like Khelo India.
- Shah claimed that the facility is not just large but among the most modern in the world, and expects it to help Ahmedabad become the "sports capital of India."

IAF Proposes ₹2 Lakh Crore Rafale Jet Deal

In the News: Recently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Defence to procure **114 Rafale fighter jets** in a "Made in India" framework. The deal is valued at approximately **₹2 lakh crore** (~ US\$22-24 billion) and is under review by the Defence Ministry.

Key Points:

- The proposal calls for 114 Rafale jets to be produced under the "Make in India" initiative, involving collaboration between Dassault Aviation (France) and Indian aerospace companies.
- Of the 114 jets, around **18 will be "fly-away" aircraft**, meaning they will be delivered ready to fly from abroad rather than assembled in India.
- The deal is expected to be among India's largest defence procurement contracts, setting a new benchmark in terms of scale and investment for fighter-jet acquisition.
- Proposed indigenous content under the deal is about **60%**, meaning a majority of the components, assembly, and maintenance will happen within India.
- The procurement aims both to plug the IAF's fighter jet strength shortfall and to bolster domestic defence manufacturing capacity.
- The deal is currently in the review phase: the Ministry of Defence has begun examining the IAF's proposal; it has not yet been cleared by the Defence Procurement Board.

MNRE Launches India's First National Geothermal Energy Policy

In the News: The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) notified/ launched India's first **National Policy on Geothermal Energy (2025)**. The policy is aimed at boosting geothermal energy development as part of India's clean energy transition and Net Zero by 2070 goals.

Key Points:

- **Policy Release & Purpose :** The National Policy on Geothermal Energy (2025) has been notified to harness India's largely untapped geothermal resources, integrate geothermal into the renewable energy mix, and support the Net Zero 2070 commitment.
- **Scope of Applications:** It covers both electricity generation and direct-use applications, such as: space heating and cooling (including via Ground Source Heat Pumps, GSHPs) agriculture (greenhouses, cold storage), aquaculture, tourism, desalination.

- **Geothermal Provinces & Potential:** India has identified **10 geothermal provinces**, including regions such as the Himalayas, Cambay Basin, Aravalli, Mahanadi Basin, and Godavari Basin. Estimated potential is about **10 GW** from geothermal sources.
- **Innovation & Technology Emphasis:** The policy encourages: research & development, adoption of global best practices advanced/ enhanced geothermal systems hybrid plants repurposing / retrofitting abandoned oil & gas wells for geothermal energy.
- **Regulatory, Institutional & Ecosystem Measures:** The stewardship & regulatory oversight for geothermal energy will rest with MNRE. Emphasis on inter-ministerial collaboration, state governments, oil & gas firms, research institutions, and international bodies. Supportive measures such as enabling local innovation, public-private partnerships, and building the ecosystem for geothermal development.
- **Financial & Incentive Framework:** Some of the incentives / support include: fiscal incentives (tax holidays, import duty exemptions) viability gap funding, concessional loans, foreign direct investment (FDI) up to 100% allowed, support in grid access, priority, waivers, etc. (from some sources)
- **Pilot & Demonstration Projects:** MNRE has sanctioned **five pilot projects** focused on resource assessment and demonstration to evaluate feasibility and lay groundwork for scale-up.

PM Modi Inaugurates PM Mitra Park in Dhar

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated (laid the foundation/stones of) the first **PM MITRA Park** in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh. The event also involved launching benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).

Key Points:

- **Project & Purpose:** The **PM MITRA Park** is India's first greenfield **Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Park**, aimed at boosting textile manufacturing, strengthening the textile value chain, promoting exports, and preserving local textile heritage—especially the Maheshwari saree tradition.
- **5F Vision:** The Park aligns with the government's "5F" vision: **Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign**, integrating every stage from raw materials (cotton, silk) to design, processing, and exporting.
- **Location, Scale & Investment:** The Park is located in Behnsola, Dhar district. It spans approximately 2,158 acres of land. Industrial units will occupy around 1,300 acres. Over ₹20,000 crore (₹ 20,746 crore) of investment has already been secured from 84 investors.
- **Heritage & Cultural Significance:** PM Modi emphasized the legacy of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar and her patronage of the Maheshwari saree. He noted that the Park will help carry forward this rich textile heritage of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Impact on Local Economy & Employment:** Farmers will benefit through better returns for raw materials like cotton and silk. The textile sector gets a boost, with infrastructural support (design, processing, exports) centralized. Intended to generate significant employment (both direct & indirect) in the region.
- **Other Concurrent Measures:** During the inauguration, PM Modi released benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana amounting to over ₹450 crore to more than 15 lakh women.

Election Commission Revamps EVM Ballot Paper Design

In the News: The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced revised guidelines under Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 for the design and printing of EVM ballot papers. These changes are meant to improve clarity, readability and voter convenience, starting with the Bihar assembly polls.

Key Points:

- **Design & Photographs:** Photographs of candidates on EVM ballot papers will now be in **colour** rather than black-and-white. The candidate's face will occupy **three-quarters of the photo space** for better visibility.
- **Font & Names Uniformity:** All candidate names (and NOTA) will be printed in the same font type and same font size, which will be large enough for easy readability. The serial numbers of candidates/NOTA are to be printed in the international form of Indian numerals, in font size 30 and in bold.
- **Paper Quality & Colour:** Ballot papers will be printed on **70 GSM paper**. For Assembly Elections, the paper will be **pink-coloured**, with specified RGB values.
- **Layout / Other Format Changes:** No more than 15 candidates shall be arranged on one sheet of a ballot paper. The NOTA option will be placed after the last candidate on the ballot panel.
- **Roll-out & Starting Point:** These upgraded ballot papers will be used starting with the Bihar Assembly elections.

ASI to Revise Sarnath Plaque, Credits Benares Ruler's Family

In the News: Ahead of a UNESCO team's visit and India's proposal to include **Sarnath** in the **World Heritage List** for the 2025-26 cycle, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has announced plans to revise the main plaque at Sarnath. The change will credit the family of Babu Jagat Singh (from the erstwhile Benares ruler Chait Singh's lineage) for first exposing the archaeological importance of the site, instead of attributing it to British officials.

Key Points:

- **Who is Jagat Singh & His Role:** Jagat Singh was a descendant of the former ruler Chait Singh of Benares. In around **1787-88**, on his orders, digging at an ancient mound in Sarnath (while procuring building materials in the area) inadvertently revealed Buddhist relics, thus bringing the site's archaeological significance to light.
- **What's Being Changed / Corrected:** The plaque currently credits Mr. Duncan and Col. E. Mackenzie (British officers) for "first bringing to light" the archaeological importance in **1798 AD**. ASI intends to correct this to say that Jagat Singh's work in **1787-88** predated those British accounts. ASI will also adjust accompanying notice boards / cultural boards so that the narrative is more historically accurate.
- **Precedent Corrections:** Earlier in the year, the ASI had already corrected another plaque at the **Dharmarajika Stupa** in Sarnath which had described Jagat Singh in a negative or misleading way (as "destroyer", etc.). The revised version now states that the stupa "came to light" through his action, removing the derogatory descriptions.
- **Why Now / Context:** The timing coincides with India pushing for **UNESCO World Heritage** status for Sarnath. Accurate historical attribution may be seen as part of strengthening the heritage credentials. Descendants of Jagat Singh (the family) submitted a proposal to ASI for correction. ASI Director-General has confirmed the year of exposure (site's discovery) will be revised based on new findings.
- **Implications:** Revising the plaque helps in **decolonising** the narrative — recognising indigenous/local contributions. It may affect public perception, academic records, tourism material, cultural presentation of Sarnath. It underscores the importance of archival research, local histories, and correcting colonial-era distortions.

India & FAO Launch Blue Ports for Smart Fisheries

In the News: India's Department of Fisheries under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying signed a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to strengthen **Blue Ports** infrastructure. Under this initiative, three Smart and Integrated Fishing Harbours in Gujarat, Daman & Diu, and Puducherry, are being developed with a combined investment of **₹369.80 crore**.

Key Points:

- **Programme Launch & Institutional Collaboration:** The Government of India (DoF) and FAO have formalized cooperation via the TCP agreement to work on developing Blue Ports. The first webinar under this series was held on 18 September 2025 to share global best practices and build capacity among stakeholders.
- **What are Blue Ports:** These are fishing harbors designed to be *smart, sustainable, inclusive*, integrating advanced technologies while ensuring ecological stewardship. They are intended to transform the post-harvest fisheries infrastructure, improve efficiency, traceability, and reduce environmental footprint.
- **Pilot Harbours & Investment:** Three Smart and Integrated Fishing Harbours have been approved under this initiative:

Harbour	Location
Vanakbara	Diu
Jakhau	Gujarat
Karaikal	Puducherry

- **Total investment:** **₹369.80 crore**.
- **Technology & Infrastructure Components:** The Blue Ports will deploy/benefit from: 5G, Artificial Intelligence, digital platforms and automation for port operations. Eco-friendly infrastructure: rainwater harvesting, electric-powered equipment, energy-efficient lighting, robust waste management, sewage treatment. Real-time monitoring using sensors, IoT, satellite communication, data analytics.
- **Supporting Schemes & Policies:** The Blue Ports initiative is aligned with existing Indian programmes: *Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana* (PMMSY) – central scheme for upgrading fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure. *Fisheries & Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund* (FIDF) – for financing infrastructure in fisheries sector.

- **Webinar & Capacity Building:** The first webinar under the Blue Ports framework was conducted to define foundations of Blue Ports, share global models (including a case study of Port of Vigo, Spain), discuss stakeholder roles, and address challenges such as climate resilience, traceability, and energy transition.

Mission Shakti 5.0

In the News: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched **Mission Shakti 5.0**, the fifth phase of the state's flagship programme for women's safety, dignity, and empowerment. The month-long campaign coincides with the start of Sharadiya Navratri, and will run for **30 days**.

Key Points:

- **Start Date & Duration:** Mission Shakti 5.0 begins **22 September 2025**, aligned with Sharadiya Navratri, and continues for 30 days.
- **Objectives:** The phase focuses on enhancing women's safety, dignity, and empowerment through stronger policing, wider outreach, awareness, and interdepartmental coordination.
- **Policing & Visibility Measures:**
 - Increased **foot patrols** by police.
 - Activation of **PRV-112 vehicles** (Rapid Response Vehicles) constantly on roads.
 - Senior police officers (IGs, DIGs, ADGs etc.) to inspect police lines, join patrols, and engage with public directly.
- **Role of Women Police Personnel & Outreach:**
 - Deployment of **44,177 women police personnel**.
 - These personnel will be active in **57,000 village panchayats** and **14,000 urban wards**, engaging women and girls, informing them of their rights, and government schemes.
 - Special deployment in public and religious places, fairs and during festival period for increased safety monitoring.
- **Awareness & Legal Rights:**
 - Awareness campaigns about women's rights, government welfare schemes.
 - Use of help lines (like 1090) for women.
 - Legal aid, sensitization, outreach via schools, colleges, and local communities.
- **Enforcement & Special Measures:**
 - Anti-Romeo squads to take "exemplary action" against offenders, while ensuring sensitivity and targeting actual offenders.
 - Law enforcement to be gender-neutral when acting against offenders.

India-AI Impact Summit 2026

In the News: The Government of India via the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) will host the *India-AI Impact Summit 2026* at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The summit aims to shift global AI discourse toward impact, especially for development, social good, and inclusive growth.

Key Points:

- **Summit Theme & Evolution:** The Summit represents a strategic shift from earlier global summits that centred largely on AI safety, regulation, or governance, toward emphasising *measurable impact*—how AI can be implemented to bring tangible benefits, particularly in sectors like health, education, agriculture, climate etc.
- **Organisers & Stakeholders:** Organised by MeitY under the IndiaAI Mission.
 - Participants expected include global leaders, governments, industry players, startups, researchers, civil society, and multilateral organisations.
- **Objectives / Key Goals:**
 - Democratise access to AI resources (data, compute, models).
 - Promote inclusive development of AI applications that are localised, multilingual, culturally grounded.
 - Use AI for sustainable development (climate resilience, environment) and social good.
 - Build safe, transparent, fair, human-centric, and trusted AI systems.
 - Empower the Global South's voice in the AI narrative; reduce the "AI divide."
- **Features & Flagship Initiatives:**

- Thematic” structure with identified themes like *Democratization of AI, AI for Social Impact, Safe & Trustworthy AI, Global South inclusion*, etc.
- Global hackathons, innovation challenges, an AI Expo, side events, working groups that prepare deliverables & action-plans.
- Flagship initiatives include support for startups, local foundational AI models, fellowship programmes, lab networks, etc.
- **Preparatory Steps & Stakeholder Input:** Public consultations held in June 2025 with over 300 stakeholders to shape themes, formats. Calls for proposals / side events and partnerships aligned with thematic areas.

Oil India, RVUNL to Jointly Develop 1.2 GW Green Energy Projects in Rajasthan

In the News: On **September 19-20, 2025**, Oil India Limited (OIL) has signed a Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) with Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RVUNL) to establish a Joint Venture Company (JVC) for developing **1.2 gigawatts (GW)** of renewable energy projects in Rajasthan.

Key Points:

- **Capacity & Mix:** The projects will consist of **1,000 MW solar power** and **200 MW wind power**, to be developed within RVUNL’s Renewable Energy Park in Rajasthan.
- **Location & Park:** The projects will be developed within RVUNL’s Renewable Energy Park in Rajasthan.
- **Joint Venture Structure:** A Joint Venture Company (JVC) has been formed under the JVA. OIL brings its expertise in energy, while RVUNL brings its experience in power project development.
- **Roles & Expertise:** OIL brings its energy sector expertise, while RVUNL contributes its experience in power project development. The partnership will cover solar, wind, green hydrogen, and other renewable energy initiatives.
- **Beneficiaries:** Clean power generated will be supplied to Distribution Companies (DISCOMs) and commercial customers.
- **Signatories & Administration:** The agreement was signed by Devendra Shringi (CMD, RVUNL) and Ranjan Goswami (ED Business Development, OIL), in the presence of Rajasthan’s Principal Secretary – Energy, and OIL’s Director (Operations).
- **Strategic Alignment:** This move fits into OIL’s broader clean energy strategy, driven via its subsidiary OIL Green Energy Limited (OGEL), which has been advancing OIL’s portfolio in renewables, compressed biogas, energy storage, and green hydrogen. Also aligns with India’s national goals for renewable energy and net-zero carbon ambitions.

India Finalises DPDP Rules To Host AI Impact Summit 2026

In the News: On **September 2025**, the Government of India announced that it has finalised the rules under the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act** and will host the **India-AI Impact Summit 2026**. The announcement included the unveiling of the summit’s official logo and flagship initiatives by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Key Points:

- The **DPDP rules** are ready and will be officially notified by **28 September 2025**, after extensive consultations involving over 3,000 stakeholders.
- The **India-AI Impact Summit 2026** will be held on **19-20 February 2026** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, marking India’s first global AI summit.
- The **logo** features the **Ashoka Chakra** at its center, symbolising ethical governance, with **neural network flares** radiating outward to represent AI’s potential to bridge divides and promote inclusive progress.
- The summit will be guided by the three **Sutras: People, Planet, Progress**, and organised around seven **Chakras**: Human Capital, Inclusion, Safe & Trusted AI, Resilience, Science, Democratising AI Resources, and Social Good.
- Flagship initiatives include **UDAAN – Global AI Pitch Fest, YuvaAI Innovation Challenge, AI by HER, Global Innovation Challenge for All, Research Symposium, and AI Expo**.
- India has launched **eight indigenous foundational AI model projects** in areas like multilingual systems, healthcare, agriculture, and governance, and has started building a network of **30 Data & AI Labs**, with a roadmap for 570 labs across the country.
- The initiatives aim to democratise access to compute power, data, and AI training, positioning India as a **Global South leader** in responsible and inclusive AI development.

INTERNATIONAL

Israeli Airstrike in Qatar (Attack on Doha)

In the News: Israel launched an airstrike in Doha, Qatar, targeting senior Hamas officials during ongoing ceasefire negotiations mediated by Qatar and the U.S. The strike killed six people, including a Qatari security officer, and wounded others.

Key Points:

- **Target & Timing:** The attack hit a residential compound in the Leqtaifiya (West Bay Lagoon) district of Doha, where Hamas leadership was believed to be meeting. The meeting was reportedly connected to discussions of a U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal between Hamas and Israel.
- **Casualties:** Six people were killed, including five Hamas members and one Qatari security officer. Among the dead: the son of senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya and his office director. Some senior Hamas figures were injured but survived.
- **Israel's Justification & Position:** Israel claimed the strike was aimed at weakening Hamas's leadership, particularly due to recent attacks on Israeli citizens and forces. It called on Qatar to either expel or prosecute Hamas leaders operating from its territory. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu defended the operation as targeting threats.
- **Qatar's Reaction:** Qatar condemned the strike as a violation of its sovereignty, calling it "state terrorism" and accusing Israel of undermining peace efforts, especially since Qatar was a mediator in the ceasefire negotiations.
- **International & Diplomatic Fallout:** The United Nations Security Council (including with U.S. support) condemned the strike. Multiple Arab and Islamic nations expressed solidarity with Qatar and criticism of Israel. Concerns were raised that the strike jeopardises ongoing ceasefire negotiations and regional stability.
- **Implications for Ceasefire Negotiations:** The attack is seen by many observers as hurting or possibly derailing negotiations, given the timing (while those talks were active) and the role of Qatar as mediator.

2025 Primetime Emmy Awards

In the News: The 77th Primetime Emmy Awards were held at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. The ceremony honoured the best in U.S. prime-time TV from June 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025.

Key Points:

- **Ceremony Details:**
 - Host: Nate Bargatze. Date & Location: September 14, 2025, at Peacock Theater, Los Angeles.
 - Broadcast on: CBS and Paramount.
- **Top Winners:** *The Studio* won Outstanding Comedy Series. *The Pitt* won Outstanding Drama Series. *Adolescence* won Outstanding Limited or Anthology Series.
 - **Notable Individual Wins / Records:** **Seth Rogen** won his first Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy for *The Studio*.
 - **Noah Wyle** won his first Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama for *The Pitt*, 26 years after his last nomination for *ER*. **Cristin Milioti** won her first Emmy for Outstanding Actress in a Limited Series or Movie for *The Penguin*. **Owen Cooper** became youngest male acting winner (Age 15 years) ever at the Emmys for *Actor in a supporting role for the Adolescence*.
 - **Tramell Tillman** made history as the first Black man to win Best Supporting Actor in a Drama Series for *Severance*. **Jean Smart** won her fourth Best Comedy Actress award for *Hacks*.
- **Other Highlights & Moments:**
 - *The Studio* set a record for the most wins for a comedy series in its debut season.
 - *Severance* had the most nominations across all categories (27).
 - *The Studio*, in contrast, was the most-nominated first-year comedy (23 nominations).
 - Acceptance speeches were in the spotlight: at least one was censored (Hannah Einbinder).
 - The host introduced a donation-linked mechanism: long acceptance speeches reduced a live donation to Boys & Girls Clubs; by the end of the show about **US\$350,000** was raised.

US, South Korea, Japan Launch Freedom Edge Military Exercise

In the News: The United States, South Korea, and Japan commenced a five-day joint air, naval and multi-domain exercise called Freedom Edge, off and around Jeju Island, South Korea. The drills run through September 19, 2025.

Key Points:

- **Purpose & Context:**
 - Freedom Edge is aimed at enhancing cooperation among the three nations in air, maritime, and cyber domains.
 - It's being held as a response and deterrence to North Korea's growing missile and nuclear threats.
- **Duration & Location:**
 - Five-day exercise from September 15 to September 19, 2025.
 - Conducted in international waters east and south of Jeju Island, South Korea.
- **Scope & Activities:**
 - Trains ballistic missile defence & air-defence capabilities.
 - Features maritime interdiction operations.
 - Includes medical evacuation training.
- **Trilateral Cooperation:**
 - Described by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command as the "most advanced demonstration of trilateral defence cooperation to date."
 - Builds interoperability among US, South Korea, and Japan.
- **Reactions & Opposition**
 - North Korea strongly condemned the exercises, calling them a "reckless show of strength" and warned of negative consequences.
 - Protests noticed in Seoul by civilians opposing the drills.

India Rises to 38th in Global Innovation Index 2025

In the News: On September 17, 2025, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) released the *Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025*, where India secured the **38th rank out of 139 economies**. This is a significant improvement compared to its 81st position in 2015, and India also retained the **top position among lower-middle-income countries** and the **first place in the Central and Southern Asia region**.

Key Points:

- India ranked **32nd in Innovation Outputs** and **52nd in Innovation Inputs**, showing that the country produces relatively stronger results from its innovation investments compared to the resources available. Under the seven pillars of the index, India performed the best in **Knowledge and Technology Outputs**, where it ranked **22nd globally**, reflecting its strength in patents, publications, and high-technology exports. India ranked **38th in Market Sophistication**, indicating robust capital markets, venture capital availability, and trade dynamics that support innovation activity.
- India showed weaker performance in **Business Sophistication (64th)**, **Infrastructure (61st)**, and **Institutions (58th)**, with respective scores of **29.2**, **45.2**, and **53.5**, highlighting structural gaps that need policy attention.
- In the **Creative Outputs** pillar, India ranked **42nd**, reflecting progress in cultural and creative goods and services, though still trailing its technology outputs.
- The report also highlighted India's presence in the list of the world's top 100 **science and technology clusters**, with **Bengaluru ranked 21st**, **Delhi at 26th**, **Mumbai-Maharashtra at 46th**, and **Chennai at 84th**, underscoring the geographic spread of India's innovation hubs.
- Globally, **Switzerland retained the first position for the 15th consecutive year**, followed by Sweden, the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore, while **China entered the top 10 for the first time**, signaling a shift in global innovation leadership.

India Establishes Satellite Tracking Station Near Diego Garcia

In the News: India and Mauritius have signed a landmark agreement in September 2025 to establish a telemetry, tracking, and telecommunications station (satellite tracking station) in Mauritius, near the strategic US-UK base of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago. The pact was signed during Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam's visit to India.

Key Points:

- The new station will enable India to track and receive data from satellites and launch vehicles as well as enhance its capabilities in space science and telecommunications.

- India will assist Mauritius in developing the station and related infrastructure under a broader cooperation that includes an economic and security package worth about **US\$680 million**, covering development, security and infrastructure initiatives.
- The location is strategically significant because Diego Garcia is a major military base used by the US and UK, and the new station gives India a vantage point in the Indian Ocean Region amid rising Chinese naval activity.
- With Mauritius reclaiming its sovereignty over the Chagos Islands (while the UK retains a 99-year lease for operations of Diego Garcia), India's cooperation in setting up this station aligns with new legal and geopolitical arrangements in the region.
- The agreement also includes cooperation in aspects beyond tracking, such as space research, science, and application, maritime surveillance, and telecommunications.

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Australia sets a new emissions reduction target of 62% by 2035 under the Paris Agreement, aligning with global climate goals amid domestic risk warnings.

In the News: The Australian government led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a new emissions reduction target: **62-70% below 2005 levels by 2035**. This builds on Australia's previous target of 43% reduction by 2030, and reaffirms its commitment to reach net zero by 2050.

Key Points:

- **New Target & Baseline:** Australia will aim to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by **62-70% below 2005 levels** by the year **2035**.
- **Connection with Existing Goals:**
 - The target is part of the trajectory to achieve already legislated goals: a **43% reduction by 2030** and **net zero by 2050**.
 - The plan accompanies the release of the "Net Zero Plan," which outlines sectoral pathways and policy levers to achieve the 2035 goal.
- **Advice & Analysis:**
 - The **Climate Change Authority** provided advice recommending the 62-70% range.
 - Modelling by CSIRO and other bodies under different scenarios suggests that while the upper end (70%) is more challenging, it is technically feasible.
- **Implementation Policies / Measures:** Some of the key policies and measures to meet the target include:
 - Strengthening the *Safeguard Mechanism* to lower emissions from large industrial emitters. Promoting electrification and efficiency.
 - Expanding clean fuels and clean technology, including for transport and industry.
 - Boosting investment in things like home energy storage (batteries), EV infrastructure, industrial decarbonisation.
- **Economic and Social Dimensions / Risk Warnings:**
 - Treasury and the Climate Change Authority modelling warn that failing to manage the transition smoothly could pose risks to living standards, especially in a "disorderly transition" scenario.
 - On the positive side, the baseline and upside scenarios project significant economic benefits: growth in GDP, new jobs, reduced electricity costs etc.
 - There is also concern over the credibility of the targets from opposition, industry, and environmental groups, with debates over whether the 62% lower bound is strong enough.
- **International & Paris Agreement Context:**
 - The target update is part of Australia's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), as required under the Paris Agreement's cycle of increasing ambition.
 - Australia claims that this range of ambition is among higher ones for advanced economies.

2025 World Trade Report

In the News: The **2025 World Trade Report** published by the World Trade Organization examines how **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** interacts with international trade, exploring both the opportunities and risks. It highlights projections up to 2040 and urges policy action to ensure benefits are shared broadly.

Key Points:

- **Theme & Focus:**
 - The central theme of the report is "Making trade and AI work together to the benefit of all."
 - It looks at how AI technologies could transform trade in goods and services, but also warns of inequalities that might arise if gaps in policy, technology, infrastructure aren't addressed.
- **Projected Impacts by 2040:**
 - Global trade (goods + services) could increase by **34-37%** relative to scenarios with less AI uptake.
 - Global GDP could rise by **12-13%** across various scenarios, depending on how fast countries adopt AI and bridge digital divides.
- **Risks & Challenges:**
 - Without inclusive policies, AI may deepen the economic divide between high-income and low- or middle-income countries.
 - Digital infrastructure gaps (access to compute, connectivity, data), regulation, and skills are key constraints.
 - Regulatory fragmentation among countries could reduce the potential benefits.
- **Policy Implications / Recommendations:**

- Need for policies that support **access to data, compute resources, AI-friendly regulation, skills development**, especially in developing economies.
- International cooperation to manage trade rules in a world where AI is more embedded in trade workflows.
- Address issues of fairness, transparency, trust, and ethical use of AI in trade contexts.
- **Scenarios & Variants:**
 - The report models different scenarios depending on how much “policy catch-up” and technology uptake occurs.
 - In the “fast catch-up / inclusive” scenario, outcomes are far better; in slower or more unequal uptake, gains are much more modest.
 - Emphasis that effects will vary by country and sector; some will gain more than others.

Neeraj Ghaywan's *Homebound* Selected as India's Official Entry to Oscars 2026

In the News: The Film Federation of India (FFI) has chosen the Hindi film *Homebound*, directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, as India's submission in the **Best International Feature Film** category for the **98th Academy Awards, 2026**.

Key Points:

- *Homebound* was selected from among **24 Indian films** across various languages. The film stars **Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa**, and **Janhvi Kapoor**.
- It is inspired by a 2020 New York Times essay by Basharat Peer, “A Friendship, a Pandemic and a Death Beside the Highway”.
- *Homebound* premiered in May 2025 at the Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard section, where it received a standing ovation. Later, at TIFF 2025, it was second runner-up for the International People's Choice Award.
- The narrative follows two childhood friends from a rural North Indian village striving to pass the national police exam, facing caste, communal, and social discrimination along the way.
- The film is produced by **Dharma Productions** (Karan Johar), Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Somen Mishra, with **Martin Scorsese** as executive producer. *Homebound* is scheduled for a theatrical release across India on **September 26, 2025**.

US Sanctions on Chabahar Port — Notes

In the News: The United States has decided to **revoke the sanctions waiver** previously granted for operations at Iran's Chabahar Port. The waiver will end from **29 September 2025**, exposing Indian and other foreign entities involved in the port to sanctions under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA).

Key Points:

- The waiver had been granted in **2018** and permitted India to develop and manage parts of Chabahar Port, especially the Shahid Beheshti terminal, without facing US sanctions.
- With the waiver revoked, entities operating at Chabahar will be under the risk of US penalties. This includes companies, financial institutions, or individuals involved in managing or supplying services to the port.
- India is currently assessing the legal, diplomatic, and economic implications of this decision. The government has publicly “taken note” and is examining how it will impact its strategic and connectivity interests.
- One immediate effect is that trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia via Chabahar—which India has been pushing as a corridor bypassing Pakistan—faces increased uncertainty.
- The US move is seen as aligning with its broader “maximum pressure” policy on Iran. It could affect future investments, infrastructure operations, and bilateral cooperation involving India, Iran, and Afghanistan.

About Chabahar Port:

- **Location & Structure:** Chabahar is a seaport in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province, on the Gulf of Oman. It has two main terminals — **Shahid Kalantari** and **Shahid Beheshti** — each with multiple berths. India, through its entity India Ports Global Limited, operates the Shahid Beheshti terminal.
- **Strategic Role:** The port provides India a route to Afghanistan and Central Asia that **bypasses Pakistan**, which is critical for trade, connectivity, regional diplomacy and economic access. It also factors into India's plans under the International North-South Transport Corridor and for enhancing its influence in the region.
- **History & Agreements:** India and Iran first agreed to develop part of Chabahar in the early 2000s; India signed multiple agreements in 2016 for upgrading berths, building container handling facilities, improving connectivity to Afghanistan, and financing components of infrastructure.

With a \$100k Price Tag on H-1B Visas — Notes

In the News: On September 19, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed a proclamation that imposes a **\$100,000 fee** for companies sponsoring new H-1B visas (for high-skilled foreign workers). It takes effect from **September 21, 2025**, for new applicants (especially those outside the U.S.).

Key Points:

- The \$100,000 fee replaces much smaller administrative fees (previously approximately \$1,500) associated with H-1B visa sponsorship.
- **Who is affected:** New H-1B visa applicants outside the U.S. in the lottery process after Sept 21, 2025. Those already holding H-1B visas, or whose petitions were filed before the new rule, or those in the U.S. seeking extensions or change of status, are **not affected**.
- Unclear / vague areas: How often the fee must be paid (every entry / re-entry / annually?), how exemptions will work (e.g. national interest), details of implementation and compliance are not yet fully clear.
- Scale of impact on Indians: Indians have been the largest beneficiaries of H-1B visas (over 70% of approvals in recent years).
- Effect on companies: Tech giants and Indian IT service firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro etc.) rely heavily on H-1B workers. This new cost could make sponsoring many foreigners prohibitively expensive.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defense Pact — Notes

In the News: On **17 September 2025**, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a “Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement” in Riyadh, under which any act of aggression against one country would be considered an aggression against both.

Key Points:

- The pact is designed as a **defensive arrangement**, not offensive; it does *not* name any specific adversary.
- Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif said Pakistan’s nuclear capability “will be made available” to Saudi Arabia under this agreement. This is being interpreted by many as Saudi Arabia coming under Pakistan’s nuclear umbrella.
- The agreement aims to strengthen joint deterrence against threats, deepen defense cooperation, and enhance regional security.
- The agreement comes amid growing regional tensions — particularly after Israeli military actions (e.g. the strike in Qatar) — and concerns among Gulf nations about U.S. reliability as a security guarantor.
- Pakistan has suggested that the framework could be broadened, with other Arab countries possibly joining in similar mutual defence commitments.
- Implications:
- For Saudi Arabia, this pact may serve as a strategic deterrent, especially vis-à-vis Israel, and to balance threats in the Middle East.
- For Pakistan, this formalizes and strengthens its military relationship with Saudi Arabia, including the first public suggestion of provision of nuclear deterrence to an allied state under certain conditions.
- For regional security, this could shift the balance of deterrence, potentially increasing strains with states like India and Israel, and raising concerns about nuclear proliferation or escalation.
- For India, reactions include urging Saudi Arabia to remain mindful of bilateral ties and regional sensitivities. India is monitoring the development’s potential impact.

SPORTS

India Defeats Pakistan by Seven Wickets in Asia Cup 2025

In the News: On **14 September 2025**, India defeated Pakistan by **seven wickets** in a high-profile Asia Cup Group A clash in Dubai. India successfully chased Pakistan’s total of 128 with 25 balls remaining, strengthening its position in the tournament.

Key Points:

- **Pakistan’s Innings:** Pakistan was restricted to **127/9 in 20 overs**, with only Sahibzada Farhan (40 runs) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (33* runs) showing resistance.
- **Indian Bowling Performance:** India’s bowlers dominated the innings. **Kuldeep Yadav** took 3 wickets for 18 runs, while **Axar Patel** added 2 wickets. Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya provided crucial early breakthroughs.

- **India's Batting Performance:** India chased the target in **15.5 overs**. **Abhishek Sharma** gave a fast start with 31 runs off 13 balls. **Tilak Varma** contributed 31 runs, while captain **Suryakumar Yadav** anchored the chase with an unbeaten 47.
- **Result:** India won the match by **seven wickets**, comfortably surpassing Pakistan's total with more than four overs to spare.
- **Context:** The game carried extra tension as it was the first meeting between India and Pakistan after the May 2025 border conflict. The Indian team did not shake hands with the Pakistani players, drawing media attention.
- **Significance:** The win boosted India's standing in Group A, highlighted the strength of its spin attack, and showcased batting depth ahead of the knockout stages.

Women's Hockey Asia Cup Final — 2025

In the News: On **14 September 2025**, China defeated India **4–1** in the final of the Women's Asia Cup held in Hangzhou, China. This victory gave China its third Asia Cup title and secured direct qualification for the **2026 FIH Women's Hockey World Cup**.

Key Points:

- India struck first in the opening minute when **Navneet Kaur** converted a penalty corner to give her team an early 1–0 lead.
- China equalised in the second quarter through **Ou Zixia**, bringing the scoreline level at 1–1 before halftime.
- In the second half, China dominated the game with goals from **Li Hong, Zou Meirong, and Zhong Jiaqi**, sealing a comfortable 4–1 win.
- The final highlighted China's strong defensive record throughout the tournament, as they had conceded only one goal before the championship match.
- India had an impressive run to the final but fell short against China, finishing as **silver medallists** of the tournament.
- **Japan** claimed the **bronze medal** after winning the third-place playoff, ensuring representation from three major Asian hockey powers on the podium.
- The win ensured that **China qualified directly** for the upcoming 2026 World Cup, while India will have to go through qualification rounds to secure its spot.

Jaismine Lamboria Crowned World Champion

In the News: At the **2025 World Boxing Championships** in Liverpool, Jaismine Lamboria won gold in the women's 57 kg (featherweight) category, defeating Olympic silver medallist Julia Szeremeta of Poland by a **4–1 split decision**. This victory made her the **ninth Indian boxer** to claim a World Championship gold.

Key Points:

- Jaismine is 24 years old and hails from **Bhiwani, Haryana**, a region known for producing successful boxers.
- Her boxing journey includes winning a bronze medal at the **2022 Commonwealth Games**, competing at the **2024 Paris Olympics**, and earning a gold at the World Boxing Cup in Astana earlier in 2025.
- In the final match against Julia Szeremeta, Lamboria lost the first round narrowly but adjusted her strategy in the middle rounds, using her **reach, combination punching, and superior defence** to outperform her opponent.
- By winning this title, Lamboria joined a select group of Indian world champions, including Mary Kom, Nikhat Zareen, Sarita Devi, Nitu Ghanghas, Lovlina Borgohain, Saweety Boora, Jenny RL, and Lekha KC.
- This is one of India's best performances in a World Championships edition held overseas, highlighted by multiple medals from the Indian women boxers.

India defeats Switzerland 3–1 in Davis Cup World Group

In the News: India secured a **3–1 win** over Switzerland in the Davis Cup **World Group I** tie held in **Biel/Bienne**. With this result, India has advanced to the **2026 Davis Cup Qualifiers**, marking their *first away victory against a European team since 1993*.

Key Points:

- **Match result & significance:** India beat Switzerland **3–1** in the World Group I tie. This win ensures India qualifies for the **2026 Davis Cup Qualifiers**. First time since **1993** that India has beaten a European nation *away* in Davis Cup.
- **Key players & performances:** **Dhakshinেশwar Suresh** (debutant) defeated Switzerland's Jerome Kym in straight sets to open the tie. **Sumit Nagal** made a strong return, winning both his singles matches including the reverse singles against Henry Bernet which sealed the tie.
 - Doubles match: The Indian pair (N. Sriram Balaji & Rithvik Bollipalli / Rithvik Choudary Bollipalli) lost a tight doubles rubber to Jakub Paul and Dominic Stricker.

- Venue & context: The tie was played in **Biel/Bienne**, Switzerland, on indoor hard court.
- Weather/surface conditions: indoor setting helped with consistency; Swiss had home advantage but India overcame that. (Implicit from match venue info)

Jasmine Lamboria Wins Gold at World Boxing 2025

In the News: At the **World Boxing Championships 2025** held in Liverpool, India's **Jasmine Lamboria** won the **gold medal** in the women's 57 kg (featherweight) category, defeating Poland's Olympic silver medallist **Julia Szeremeta** via a 4-1 split decision. This marked one of India's standout performances in the tournament

Key Points:

- **Who is Jasmine Lamboria / Background:**
 - 24 years old, from Bhiwani, Haryana.
 - Part of a family with sporting legacy—trained by her uncles who were national-level boxers.
 - Previous accomplishments include a bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
 - Represented India at the 2024 Paris Olympics.
- **The Event & Opponent:**
 - Event: World Boxing Championships 2025, Liverpool Arena, England.
 - Final match opponent: Julia Szeremeta from Poland, who is an Olympic silver medallist.
- **The Match / Performance:**
 - Jasmine won by split decision, 4-1.
 - She was behind after the first round but turned the match around from the second round onwards, showing improved technique, mental resilience and strong strategy.
- **Significance of the Win:**
 - It is her first World Championship gold.
 - India's performance in the women's category was among the best overseas showings: multiple medals.
 - Boosts her profile as one of India's leading boxers in featherweight division.
- **Other Indian Medal Winners in Same Tournament:**
 - **Minakshi Hooda** also won gold in 48 kg category. **Nupur Sheoran** secured silver in the +80 kg category.
 - **Pooja Rani** won bronze.
- **Broader Implications:** Reflects the growing strength of Indian women boxers on the world stage. Redemption of sorts after her early exit at Paris 2024 Olympics; shows improvement both physically & mentally. Enhances India's medal tally and prestige in international boxing tournaments.

Apollo Tyres Becomes Team India's New Jersey Sponsor in ₹579 Cr Deal

In the News: On September 16, 2025, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced that **Apollo Tyres** has won the lead front-of-jersey sponsorship rights for India's national cricket team under a **₹579 crore** deal running until **March 2028**, replacing Dream11 after its exit.

Key Points:

- Apollo Tyres will be the lead sponsor for **both the men's and women's national cricket teams**, and its logo will appear on jerseys in **all formats**, under a contract that extends till **end-March 2028**.
- The deal is valued at **₹579 crore**, which represents roughly a **62% increase** compared to the previous sponsorship deal by Dream11 (which was valued at about **₹358 crore**).
- Under the new agreement, Apollo Tyres will pay approximately **₹4.5 crore per match** for bilateral and most international fixtures, which is higher than Dream11's per-match rate of around **₹4 crore**.
- Dream11 exited as sponsor because of regulatory changes — specifically, the passage of the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**, which impacted fantasy gaming companies.
- The new sponsorship was secured via a **competitive bidding process**, in which brands linked to **gaming, betting, crypto and tobacco** were excluded from participation, according to BCCI's criteria. This marks Apollo Tyres' **first major sponsorship deal in Indian cricket**, strengthening its brand visibility and aligning with the commercial growth of Indian cricket.

2025 FIDE Grand Swiss Titles

In the News: From 3 to 15 September 2025, the FIDE Grand Swiss and FIDE Women's Grand Swiss tournaments were held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The events formed part of the qualification cycle for the 2026 World Chess Championship. In the Men's (Open) section Anish Giri won the title, with Matthias Bluebaum taking second place. In the Women's section, R Vaishali Rameshbabu defended her Women's Grand Swiss title, finishing on top via tiebreak over Kateryna Lagno. Both Vaishali and Lagno earned spots in the Women's Candidates Tournament 2026.

Key Points:

- The **Open section** of the 2025 FIDE Grand Swiss had **116 players**, played over **11 rounds** with Swiss-system pairing, and was held at the Silk Road EXPO in Samarkand. Anish Giri scored **8/11** to claim first place by defeating Hans Niemann in the final round.
- Matthias Bluebaum, seeded 32nd, scored **7.5/11** and edged other players via tiebreaks to secure the **second qualifying spot** for the 2026 Candidates Tournament in the Open section.
- In the Women's Grand Swiss, 56 players competed, also over 11 rounds. R Vaishali Rameshbabu scored **8/11**, tied with Kateryna Lagno, but won the title on tiebreaks, thus defending her Grand Swiss title for a second consecutive time.
- Kateryna Lagno, with 8/11, earned the **runner-up** position in Women's Grand Swiss and thereby also qualified for the Women's Candidates Tournament 2026.
- The total prize fund for the Open Grand Swiss was approximately **US\$625,000**, with the winner's share being about **US\$90,000**.
- Key stories: World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju had a disappointing tournament, suffering consecutive losses; young players like Abhimanyu Mishra and Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus had notable performances; veterans still showed strength and resilience.

Marium Fatima Becomes Bihar's First Woman FIDE Master

In the News: Marium Fatima of Muzaffarpur, Bihar, made history by becoming the first woman from Bihar to earn the **Woman FIDE Master (WFM)** title, awarded by FIDE (the International Chess Federation).

Key Points:

- **Who is Marium Fatima & Origin:** She is from **Muzaffarpur**, Bihar. Started chess very young — in class 3 — in St. Xavier's Kindergarten, Muzaffarpur.
- **Achievement & Title Details:** She has become the **first Woman FIDE Master (WFM)** from Bihar. Her current FIDE rating is **2083**.
- **Chessing Journey & Training:** Early coaching came through her school; later, her father arranged regular coaching in Patna under coaches like Minhazul Hoda and Kumar Gaurav. She won several state-level age-group tournaments (under-7, under-9, under-17, under-19).
- **Significance & Recognition:** This is a historic achievement for Bihar's chess community. The Director General of the Bihar State Sports Authority, Ravindran Shankaran, has officially congratulated her.

Arshdeep Singh Becomes First Indian to Reach 100 T20I Wickets

In the News: In the 2025 Asia Cup, during India's final group game against Oman on **19 September 2025**, left-arm fast bowler Arshdeep Singh became the **first Indian male bowler** to take **100 wickets in T20 Internationals**.

Key Points:

- He achieved the feat by dismissing Oman's Vinayak Shukla in that match. It took Arshdeep **64 matches/T20Is** to reach 100 wickets.
- His bowling average in T20Is at that point is about **18.49**, and his strike rate is approximately **13.34 balls per wicket**.
- Among full member nations' seamers, he now holds one of the best averages for reaching 100 wicket-milestones.
- Context / Background: Arshdeep Singh made his T20I debut in **July 2022** versus England. He is a left-arm medium-fast bowler, known for effective use of swing, death bowling, and variations.

QUICKEST TO 100 T20I WICKETS

	BY BALLS BOWLED	BY MATCHES PLAYED
RASHID KHAN	1,185	53
SANDEEP LAMICHHANE	1,220	54
ARSHDEEP SINGH	1,329	64
WANINDU HASARANGA	1,362	63
RIZWAN BUTT	1,426	66

SCIENCE AND TECH

ISRO-HAL SSLV Technology Transfer Pact

In the News: On 10 September 2025, ISRO, along with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and IN-SPACe, signed a formal Technology Transfer Agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Bengaluru for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) technology.

Key Points:

- The SSLV is a three-stage, all-solid launch vehicle developed by ISRO that can place satellites weighing up to 500 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- Under the agreement, HAL will receive a non-exclusive, non-transferable licence covering SSLV's design, manufacturing, quality control, integration, launch operations, post-flight analysis, training, and support.
- The technology transfer process is expected to be absorbed over the next two years, after which HAL will enter a 10-year production phase to mass-produce SSLVs for both domestic and international small satellite launch needs.
- HAL will have autonomy to build, operate, and commercialise SSLV launches, shifting from being mainly a component supplier to becoming a full launch service provider in the small satellite market.
- SSLV is designed for quick turnaround, on-demand launches, and suited for industrial production, making it an important element in India's space-sector reforms and its goal to capture a share of the global small launch vehicle market.

Vyommitra: ISRO's AI Half-Humanoid for Gaganyaan

In the News: ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan announced that *Vyommitra*, an AI-enabled half-humanoid robot, will be aboard the uncrewed test mission of Gaganyaan scheduled for December 2025. The robot is to simulate human presence in the spacecraft and help validate life-support, environment, and safety systems ahead of sending astronauts.

Key Points:

- **What is Vyommitra:** Vyommitra is a "half-humanoid" robot designed by ISRO. It has only upper body components (head, torso, arms) and no lower limbs. The name comes from Sanskrit: *Vyoma* = "space", *Mitra* = "friend".
- **Purpose & Role in Gaganyaan Mission:** To test and monitor spacecraft systems including life support, environmental controls (temperature, pressure, humidity, CO₂ levels), avionics, safety mechanisms. To simulate human functions (from the upper body) in microgravity and check responses of spacecraft systems before carrying humans.
- **Timeline:** The first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission carrying Vyommitra is expected in **December 2025**. The crewed Gaganyaan flight (with human astronauts, "Gaganyatris") is planned for **early 2027**.
- **Technological & Safety Features:**
 - Vyommitra will help test environmental hazards (temperature, pressure, humidity, CO₂) and give warnings if parameters deviate.

- The mission includes an **escape system** for safety, and the spacecraft will use **nine parachutes** to aid splash-down in the sea.
- **Partners & Institutions:** The development involves not just ISRO but also support from other Indian institutions like the Indian Air Force, Navy, DRDO etc.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Day of Democracy 2025: Theme, History & Significance

In the News: The International Day of Democracy is observed globally on **15 September 2025**. This year's theme, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and supported by the United Nations, is "**Achieving Gender Equality, Action by Action**". The day serves as a reminder for governments and citizens to protect democratic values, promote inclusion, and ensure equal participation.

Key Points:

- **Date & Background:**
- The day is observed every year on **15 September**.
 - It was established in **2007** by the United Nations General Assembly via resolution "Support by the United Nations system of efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies." The first observance was in **2008**.
 - Its roots trace to the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on 15 September 1997.
- **Theme 2025:** "Achieving Gender Equality, Action by Action."
 - The focus is on concrete measures to advance gender equality in democratic processes.
 - Key areas of action include: Promoting parity in parliaments and political structure Creating gender-sensitive institutions.
 - Combating gender-based violence and discrimination.
- **Purpose & Significance:**
 - To reaffirm democracy as a force for dignity, inclusion, peace, human rights and governance.
 - To promote citizen engagement, accountability, transparency and equal participation in democratic processes.
 - Particularly with respect to this year, emphasizing that democracy is not just about voting, but about ensuring that all genders have equal voice and are able to act.
 - Also a moment to reflect on challenges facing democracies globally such as misinformation, polarization, reduced civic space, under-representation of women, etc.

Amit Shah Opens 5th Rajbhasha Sammelan in Gandhinagar

In the News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the **5th Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhasha Sammelan** at the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. During his address, he urged that Hindi should expand beyond administrative/symbolic use and be adopted in fields like science, technology, law, and policing.

Key Points:

- **Main Message:**
 - Amit Shah emphasized there is *no conflict* between Hindi and other Indian languages; they can coexist and complement each other.
 - He called for Hindi to move beyond its traditional roles (spoken language, administration) and be used in scientific, technological, legal, and police contexts.
- **On Mother Tongue & Learning:** Shah stressed that promoting the mother tongue in early education is important; children think in their mother tongue and translating from a non-native language consumes mental effort (~25-30% of capacity).
- **Technological & Institutional Tools:**
 - He spoke of "Bahubhashi Anuvad Sarthi," a multilingual translation tool intended to assist communication across different languages.
 - Also discussed "Hindi Shabd Sindhu," a dictionary project which began with ~51,000 words and now has over **700,000** words.

- The goal is that by **2029**, it will become the largest dictionary among all languages. **Role of States & Example of Gujarat:** Gujarat was cited as a model state where both Gujarati (regional language) and Hindi coexist successfully in education and public life.
- Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Dayananda Saraswati, KM Munshi, Sardar Patel helped establish that balance.
- **Broader Vision & Goals:**
 - The push is to make Indian languages more relevant in everyday and formal spheres beyond traditional domains—law, policing, science, judiciary etc.
 - Shah indicated that this language policy is part of making communication more accessible to people, strengthening their connection with public institutions.

World Ozone Day 2025

In the News: World Ozone Day is observed every year on **September 16**. In 2025, the observance marks the **40th anniversary of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer** (signed in 1985) and highlights ongoing global efforts under the Montreal Protocol to protect and restore the ozone layer. The theme for 2025 is **“From science to global action.”**

Key Points:

- World Ozone Day was officially proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in **1994** in order to commemorate the signing of the Montreal Protocol on **16 September 1987**.
- The Montreal Protocol regulates nearly **100 substances** known to deplete the ozone layer; these include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and other ozone-depleting substances, and more recently, under the Kigali Amendment, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) even though they are not themselves ozone depleting but are powerful greenhouse gases.
- The 2025 theme, “From science to global action,” emphasizes that scientific understandings over the decades have led to policies and measures that must be maintained or strengthened in all countries to ensure the healing of the ozone layer.
- According to the World Meteorological Organization, the ozone layer is on track to return to 1980s levels by the middle of the 21st century if current policies are kept in force, though progress is fragile and requires sustained effort.
- The Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol are among the most successful environmental treaties; by **2009** they achieved universal ratification by all UN member states.
- The Montreal Protocol has phased out many ozone-depleting chemicals and has prevented large emissions of potent greenhouse gases, thus contributing to both ozone layer recovery and climate change mitigation.
- Key challenges remain including managing banks of banned ozone-depleting substances (in old equipment, foam, etc.), addressing emissions from feedstocks and by-products, controlling nitrous oxide which also impacts ozone, and aligning phasing down of HFCs with broader climate goals.

JOINT EXERCISE

INS Nistar Joins Exercise Pacific Reach 2025 in Singapore

In the News: The Indian Navy’s new Diving Support Vessel **INS Nistar** made its maiden port call at Changi Naval Base, Singapore, to participate in the biennial multinational submarine rescue exercise Pacific Reach 2025 (XPR-25), which commenced on 15 September.

Key Points:

- **Vessel & Commissioning:**
 - INS Nistar is India’s first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel (DSV).
 - It was officially commissioned on 18 July 2025.
- **Indigenisation:**
 - Over **80% indigenisation** has been achieved in INS Nistar’s design and construction.
- **Role & Capabilities:**
 - The ship is to function as the **mothership (MoShip)** for Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle(s) (DSRV).
 - It is equipped with side scan sonar, work-class and observation-class Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), deep-sea diving systems, etc.
- **Submarine Rescue Unit (East):**

- The SRU(E) will operate from INS Nistar during the exercise. It is part of India's capability to conduct submarine rescue operations.
- **Exercise Pacific Reach 2025:**
 - Biennial multinational submarine rescue exercise hosted by Singapore.
 - More than 40 nations are participating either as active participants or observers.
 - It has two main phases: **Harbour phase** and **Sea phase**. Harbour phase includes technical discussions (on submarine rescue systems), Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs), medical symposium, cross-deck visits.
 - Sea phase will see INS Nistar & SRU(E) engage in multiple intervention and rescue operations with participating navies/assets in the South China Sea.

APPOINTMENTS

Dr. Sima Bahous Begins Second Term at UN Women

In the News: On 11 September 2025, UN Secretary-General António Guterres reappointed Dr. Sima Sami Bahous for a second term as **Executive Director of UN Women** (also Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations). Her renewed mandate comes at a moment when global gender equality efforts are facing growing challenges.

Key Points:

- Dr. Sima Sami Bahous is originally from Jordan and has held the Executive Director role at UN Women since 2021; under her leadership, UN Women has pushed for stronger country-level impact and increased emphasis on women's rights in crisis response.
- Her second term is granted at a critical time, aligned with the newly adopted **Strategic Plan for UN Women for 2026-2029**, which emphasizes measurable results, stronger accountability, and gender equality in urgent global policies.
- Dr. Bahous has more than 35 years of experience in international development, diplomacy and UN leadership positions, including as Jordan's Permanent Representative to the UN, roles in UNDP, and work across the Arab States.
- She has committed to focussing in her new term on protecting women and girls in humanitarian emergencies, armed conflict, and climate-related disasters, ensuring that gender equality is central to peace, resilience, and inclusive development.
- Dr. Bahous also intends to deepen partnerships with governments, civil society, youth organisations and the private sector, to ensure global commitments translate into concrete improvements at local and national levels.

ECONOMY

SEBI Launches SWAGAT-FI to Attract Long-Term Foreign Investment

In the News: SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) approved the "SWAGAT-FI" framework (Single Window Automatic & Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors) to simplify access for certain foreign investors, extend their registration validity, unify investment routes, and reduce regulatory friction—all aimed at attracting long-term, stable foreign capital into Indian markets.

Key Points:

- **What SWAGAT-FI Is:** A regulatory framework to give "trusted/low-risk" foreign investors easier access to Indian capital markets. The "trusted" category includes sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, central banks, insurance companies, public retail funds etc. Entities heavily regulated in their home countries.
- **Major Reforms / Relaxations Offered:** Registration validity extended from **3 years to 10 years**. Unified registration across multiple investment routes: e.g. FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investors) and FVCIs (Foreign Venture Capital Investors). This reduces duplication of paperwork when the same entity invests via different routes. Option for using a **single demat account** for all securities held across different categories/routes of investment, with proper tagging to distinguish them. Faster onboarding via a single window/digital gateway (e.g. a portal) to reduce turnaround time.
- **Eligibility / Who Qualifies:** Entities that are "objectively low-risk" such as sovereign wealth funds, central banks, multilateral/international organizations, regulated public retail funds, insurance companies investing proprietary funds, pension funds. Hedge funds or high-risk speculative funds are *not* included in the privileged category.

- **Intended Impacts & Objectives:** Attract more **sticky, long-term foreign capital** rather than volatile short-term flows. Give foreign investors better regulatory certainty and predictability. Make India more competitive compared to other emerging markets by simplification, transparency, reduced compliance burdens.
- **Implementation & Timeline:** SWAGAT-FI was approved by the SEBI board on **12 September 2025**. The framework is expected to be gradually implemented over about six months, as systems/processes are put in place.

SBI Sells 13.18% Stake in Yes Bank to Japan's SMBC

In the News: State Bank of India (SBI) completed the sale of its **13.18% stake** in Yes Bank to Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC), in a deal valued at about **₹8,889 crore**. This transaction is part of a larger acquisition by SMBC, making it a key shareholder in Yes Bank.

Key Points:

- **Transaction Details & Value:** SBI sold **13.18% of its stake** in Yes Bank to SMBC. The sale brought in approximately **₹8,888.97 crore** (nearly ₹8,889 crore) for SBI.
- **Resulting Shareholding Structure:** After the sale, SBI continues to hold about **10.8%** in Yes Bank. SMBC becomes a major shareholder in Yes Bank, part of its move to acquire up to ~20% combined stake through purchases from SBI and other lenders.
- **Regulatory Approvals:** The deal has been approved by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**. Also cleared by the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**.
- **Strategic Significance:** This is one of the **largest cross-border investments** in India's banking sector. SMBC's entry is seen as adding global banking expertise, potentially strengthening Yes Bank's operations, especially in areas like corporate banking, cross-border finance, and treasury functions.
- **Background Context:** SBI had earlier become Yes Bank's major shareholder as part of its reconstruction in **March 2020**. The 2020 restructuring involved several banks, and over time, SMBC negotiated acquiring not just SBI's share but also from other banks who were part of the rescue effort.

ENVIRONMENT

India Records First Half-Year CO₂ Emission Drop in 2025

In the News: A report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), for *Carbon Brief*, showed that India's power-sector carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions **fell by about 1% year-on-year in the first half of 2025** (January-June) compared to the same period in 2024 — marking only the second such drop in almost 50 years.

Key Points:

- **Scale & Sector:**
 - The drop is specifically in the **power / electricity sector**, which contributes roughly 40% of India's annual greenhouse gas emissions.
 - It's a *sectoral half-year drop* (first time outside COVID years) rather than whole economy.
- **Contributors to the Emission Decline:** **Lower electricity demand growth** — milder summer weather and above-normal rainfall (especially pre-monsoon) reduced need for air conditioning, etc.
- **Expansion of clean energy / non-fossil power capacity** — India added **25.1 GW** of non-fossil capacity in Jan-June 2025, up ~69% over same period last year.
- **Higher hydropower output** — helped by abundant rainfall, increased hydropower generation also contributed.
- **Electricity Generation vs Fossil Generation:**
 - Total power generation rose by ~9 TWh compared to first half of 2024.
 - Yet *fossil-fuel generation fell* by ~29 TWh.
 - Clean sources increased: solar up ~17 TWh;
 - wind up ~9 TWh;
 - hydropower ~9 TWh;
 - nuclear ~3 TWh.
- **Other Sectors & Emission Trends:**

- Oil product demand growth stalled (i.e. nearly zero growth in oil sector) in the first half of 2025, compared to previous growth rates.
- However, emissions from *steel* and *cement* production rose (by ~7-10%) due to infrastructure investment.

