

NEWS TODAY

Curated Insights from "The Hindu" newspaper

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- 1. Relevance Across Exam Stages:** Current affairs are integral to all stages of the exam—Prelims, Mains, and the Interview. Familiarity with recent developments aids in answering questions effectively at each stage and demonstrates your up-to-date knowledge.
- 2. Informed Decision-Making:** Knowledge of current events enhances your ability to make informed decisions, develop well-rounded opinions, and understand the implications of various policies and issues.
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- 4. Analytical Skills:** Engaging with current affairs sharpens your analytical abilities by encouraging you to evaluate and interpret complex information and its impacts from multiple perspectives.
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Allegations of Ghee Adulteration in Tirupati Laddu Spark Political Controversy

The article discusses serious allegations made by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and his son, Nara Lokesh, against opposition leader Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing the **adulteration of ghee used in Tirupati's famous laddu prasadam** with 'foreign fat.' The controversy escalated with the involvement of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which called for an independent investigation, while former MP Subramanian Swamy sought a Supreme Court-monitored probe. Despite the political charges, the sale of laddus and devotees' visits to the temple remain unaffected.

Policing the laddu

The Tirupati laddu issue should be limited to one of quality control. In the face of it, the allegations are rather serious - the adulteration of ghee (clarified butter) - used in the making of Tirupati's laddu prasadam - with foreign fat. The charges were made by no less than Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu himself, and his son and Minister Nara Lokesh, on Sep 2 member 18, against his predecessor and Leader of the Opposition, N. Taranika Mohan Reddy of the Yuvana Samika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP). Since then, the issue has snowballed into a free-for-all, with leaders of Mr. Naidu's central alliance partner, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), seeking an independent investigation. Former BJP MP Subramanian Swamy has even sought a Supreme Court-monitored probe. Unsurprisingly, as the tiru festival continues, close to 50 million devotees do not seem to have deserted Tirupati from making the laddu prasadam to the Tirupati temple, which has allowed down the sale of the laddu. The tiru festival of these charges, close to 50 million devotees when the BJP faces tough challenges to retain power in Andhra Pradesh, raises serious concerns of their being politically motivated, and its deep irreconcilable, having been made by a central authority of Andhra Pradesh.

The quality test was conducted by the Centre for Analysis and Learning in Livestock and Food (CALF) in July, but Naidu announced the findings in September, close to State elections, raising concerns of political motives. The analysis suggested various types of 'foreign fat,' but the extent of contamination remains unclear. Questions were raised about why the samples were not sent to the National Food Laboratory (NFL) for final verification. Despite calls from Hindutva groups to remove temple administration from state control, the Supreme Court has upheld laws governing religious endowments. The article urges that the **issue remain one of quality control, without devolving into communal politics.**

India's Double Gold at Chess Olympiad: A Historic Triumph and a Call for Greater Support

India's double gold at the **Chess Olympiad** in Budapest is a historic achievement, **only matched by two other countries before.** The Indian men's team dominated throughout, while the women's team, despite some setbacks, also triumphed. The success was driven by young talents like **D. Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, Divya Deshmukh, and Vantika Agrawal**, signaling a bright future for Indian chess. However, the depth in Indian women's chess is not as strong as the men's, and more efforts are needed to promote the game among girls and organize elite tournaments in India to further strengthen the sport.

India's Strategic Dilemma: Easing Chinese FDI Amid Border Tensions and Economic Risks

Recent speculation suggests that India may consider easing restrictions on Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI), despite ongoing border tensions. While India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar mentioned progress in resolving some disengagement issues with China, the militarization of the border remains a concern. Meanwhile, economic commentators have suggested integrating into China's supply chains to bridge India's investment gaps.

However, this approach overlooks security risks, India's growing trade deficit with China, and the global trend of economic de-risking from China. China's demands for normalizing relations include facilitating business and media access, but it shows little willingness to address India's concerns, including the altered border status quo and trade imbalances.

China's strategy of dominating critical sectors like electric vehicles and its preference for exporting over domestic consumption poses further risks for India. Given China's economic policies, India must adopt a cautious and selective approach to Chinese investments, focusing on sectors that align with national security and industrial goals.

Weighing in on business as usual with China



Adnan K. Kamdar
A former investment banker, now a geopolitical analyst.

Integrative of economic de-risking to a 44% China. The approach involves deepening ties with other nations to diversify away from China's supply chains and economic influence.

China's demands
As it recent Track 1 and Track 2 dialogues, China has made it clear that it expects India to accept the altered status quo and to move on to full normalization. This includes: 1) India must accept specific demands: a) a joint playing field for Chinese companies; b) facilitation of new, expansion of direct flights; and c) permitting Chinese companies to invest in India. India pointed out that these issues were merely symptoms of a more fundamental problem that they had created, and that they must address it first.

India's stance was not yet prepared to accommodate India's offer on the issue of the border in an all-inclusive deal. India's relationship with China is not yet ready to be engaged in a game of attrition and expect the border side to cave in incrementally and acquiesce to the new facts on the ground they are created in Eastern Ladakh. Their proposal is one they have successfully deployed in other markets, particularly the South China Sea.

The Chinese position is revealed in an unambiguous manner given the global trend of de-risking from China. India has a 2.5% share of China's GDP. However, India's share has been removed from the English edition of the report 'India's Trade Impact' (ITTI) available in the far more influential Chinese edition. Second, the Chinese are not inclined to discuss India's long-standing problem of a huge bilateral trade deficit and the implications thereof by India companies in accessing the Chinese market. According to International Trade Centre (ITC) data, India's trade deficit with China reached \$205 billion in Q1 2024, from \$64 billion in 2020, which is a 3x increase in deficit. India's trade deficit with Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) imports from \$100 billion in 2020 to \$240 billion in 2023, as a source of incremental trade for the world's largest economies. China has established a track record of weaponizing such dependencies.

Third, both the United States and India and China are increasingly recognizing their economic and security interdependence. In such a world, India would do well to take a differentiated policy towards economic relations with China.

From strategic security and economic angles, India would do well to take a differentiated policy towards economic relations with China.

The economic commentary
In the face of the current situation, the Economic Survey 2024 has forecasted India's growing trade deficit with China through 2027. This view has been echoed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its latest report. India's trade deficit with China is expected to reach \$205 billion in 2024, from \$64 billion in 2020, which is a 3x increase in deficit. India's trade deficit with Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) imports from \$100 billion in 2020 to \$240 billion in 2023, as a source of incremental trade for the world's largest economies. China has established a track record of weaponizing such dependencies.

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The Third Biennial of the CRI in 2024

debated down on industrial policy, with a primary objective to reduce the cost and complexity of the private sector to enhance the strategic importance of the sector.

China's objective of diversifying foreign investment, including into India, is to create a more resilient and diversified economic structure. This includes the promotion of electric vehicles, solar equipment and lithium-ion batteries, and the expansion of exports to other emerging markets. China's objective is to create a more resilient and diversified economic structure, including the promotion of electric vehicles, solar equipment and lithium-ion batteries, and the expansion of exports to other emerging markets.

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The game plan
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Assessing India's Defense Exports: Legal Obligations and International Humanitarian Law

The Supreme Court of India recently dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) aimed at halting the export of defense equipment to Israel due to alleged war crimes in Gaza, citing foreign policy as outside its jurisdiction. However, this issue raises important normative questions about India's position as an emerging defense exporter.

Several countries, including the Netherlands and the UK, have curtailed arms exports to Israel based on assessments that such exports could facilitate violations of international humanitarian law (IHL). In contrast, Indian law lacks specific provisions for evaluating a recipient country's compliance with IHL before exporting defense goods. While the **Indian Foreign Trade Act** and the **Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems Act** *allow the government to regulate exports* based on international obligations, they do not mandate an assessment of **IHL compliance**, creating a legal gap.

The Supreme Court has previously incorporated international law into domestic law to address such gaps. The **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**, which prohibits the export of arms that may be used for war crimes, is **not binding on India** as it is **not a signatory**. However, India is obligated under the **Geneva Conventions** to ensure that its exports do not contribute to violations of IHL.

Scholars suggest that India's existing domestic laws imply a duty to refrain from supplying arms if there is a reasonable expectation they will be misused. To strengthen its credibility as a responsible defense exporter, India should consider amending its laws to explicitly require assessments of IHL compliance for countries receiving Indian defense goods.



Legal and Practical Implications of Section 107 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023: A Critical Analysis

The **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**, introduces **Section 107**, which empowers courts to attach and forfeit properties considered "**proceeds of crime**" during police investigations, a power that was not explicitly present in the **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**. This section allows police officers, with necessary approvals, to attach property without preconditions or the requirement to record written reasons for their beliefs, unlike the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)**, which imposes specific conditions for attachment.

Key highlights include:

- **No Preconditions:** Unlike the PMLA, Section 107 *does not require a written record of reasons* for attachment, allowing for more immediate actions during investigations.
- **Disposal of Property:** The BNSS is *silent on when the property can be disposed of*, creating potential issues regarding the rights of property owners. The court may distribute proceeds of crime to affected individuals, or if no claimants exist, the property is forfeited to the government without a conclusive trial.
- **Safeguards:** While Section 107 mandates a show-cause notice and provides for ex parte orders if the concerned person fails to represent their case, it lacks clear guidelines for the **District Magistrate** in identifying claimants.
- **Legal Concerns:** Article 300A of the Constitution protects individuals from being deprived of property without due process, raising concerns about the fairness and legality of the BNSS provisions. The *lack of a clear definition* of "**proceeds of crime**" and the rapid disposal process may lead to unjust outcomes.

In conclusion, while the BNSS aims to expedite the disposal of proceeds of crime and empower state mechanisms, it presents significant legal and practical challenges that could undermine the rights of individuals and the principle of due process.

Empowering Women in Jammu and Kashmir's Political Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities

As Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) approaches the second phase of its Assembly elections on September 25, the persistent marginalization of women in politics warrants urgent attention. Despite women constituting nearly 48% of the electorate, their representation remains dismal, with only 3.6% of candidates being women in the 2014 Assembly elections and just nine women out of 219 candidates in the first phase of the 2024 elections. This underrepresentation is rooted in the patriarchal social structure and political instability in the region, which discourages women's participation.

Although initiatives like a 33% reservation for women in the J&K Assembly exist, cultural and institutional barriers continue to hinder women's political engagement. Major political parties, such as the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party, have historically sidelined women, often fielding them in unwinnable constituencies or token positions. The lack of dedicated women-centric policies further exacerbates the issue, as there are no significant initiatives addressing women's economic, social, and political empowerment.

Despite improvements in women's literacy, a significant gender gap persists, and women's labor force participation remains low at around 25%. The absence of gender-responsive budgeting and electoral reforms continues to fuel political exclusion.

To rectify this imbalance, it is crucial to incorporate women's perspectives in governance and policy-making. Implementing measures such as free childcare, healthcare benefits, and family support for female politicians, alongside political quotas, could transform the political landscape. Following the dilution of Article 370 in 2019, new laws present an opportunity to bolster women's rights and participation. The hope is to normalise women's political representation in J&K, transforming it from an exception to the norm.

On the margins of the political sphere

The political representation of women is an exception and not a norm in J&K

STATE OF PLAY
Bilal Ahmad Wazir
Binish Qadri



As Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) enters the second phase of the Assembly elections on September 25, the persistent marginalisation of women in the political sphere demands critical scrutiny. Despite women comprising almost 48% of the electorate in the Union Territory, their political representation has remained poor. In the 2014 J&K Assembly elections, only 3.6% of the total candidates were women. In the 2024 elections, there were only nine women out of the 219 candidates in the first phase. The political landscape is deeply rooted in J&K's patriarchal social structure that views public and political life as male-dominated. Further, political instability and concerns about safety in a volatile atmosphere have kept women at the margins. While there have been legal and advocacy efforts in expanding the representation of women, such as granting 33% reservation to women in the J&K Assembly, they often fall short of addressing the deep-seated cultural and institutional barriers that limit women's political engagement. The two main political parties in the region—the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party—have historically sidelined women. Even female leaders, including former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, have failed to effect the needed transformation, as they often conform to the male-dominated political structures themselves. When women are fielded as candidates, it is often in constituencies considered unwinnable

or in token positions within party structures. In the 2020 District Development Council elections, though 33% of the seats were reserved for women, actual representation barely crossed 10%. **No women-centric policies** Further, there are no dedicated women-centric policies. Neither the major political parties nor the local governance institutions have implemented policies that specifically address the economic, social, and political empowerment of women, such as reserving seats for women in legislative bodies, introducing gender-sensitive economic schemes, or supporting women entrepreneurs in J&K. While women's literacy in J&K has improved over time, the gender gap remains significant—60% of women are literate compared to 84% of men. Additionally, women's labour force participation is abysmal, hovering around 25%. The absence of gender-responsive budgeting, economic empowerment initiatives, or electoral reforms contributes to the ongoing political exclusion of women. Elections are a mechanism to ensure that all sections of society are represented, but when half the population is underrepresented, the very foundation of democracy is undermined. In J&K, where women's participation is notably low, the absence of female voices results in policies that

fail to comprehensively address gender disparities, further entrenching patriarchal norms. The formulation and implementation of inclusive, women-centric policies are imperative for ensuring equitable representation in democratic governance. Making women's perspectives integral to peace-building, education, healthcare, and employment will ensure that they are women, including electoral reforms and capacity-building initiatives for women, could substantially alter the status quo. After the dilution of Article 370 in J&K in 2019, the UT came under the scope of Central Laws, including the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2008). There is a strong foundation now to support women in participating more actively in politics. These laws offer a chance to not only boost women's involvement in decision-making but also to secure their rights as women by focusing on political participation, we can empower women to shape their own futures and create a more inclusive society in J&K. Our hope is that it will slowly become a norm to see women represented politically in J&K, not an exception.

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Unequal Burdens: The Strain on Professional Indian Women in Balancing Work and Household Responsibilities

A recent Data Point revealed that professional Indian women work longer hours than their global counterparts, averaging 55 hours a week in demanding fields like auditing and IT. This finding was highlighted after the tragic death of 26-year-old Anna Sebastian Perayil, who succumbed to "work stress" at Ernst & Young, igniting discussions about the overwhelming workloads faced by professionals in India.

Despite increased acceptance of women's professional commitments, the burden of household responsibilities remains largely unchanged. Employed women spend approximately 5.8 hours daily on unpaid domestic work, combined with their work hours, leaving them with only 7-10 hours for rest. In contrast, unemployed men engage in significantly less household work, averaging only 3.5 hours per day, while employed men contribute about 2.7 hours.

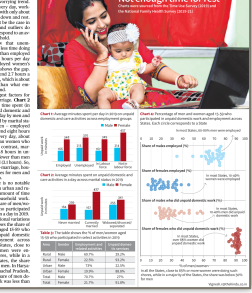
Marriage significantly exacerbates this imbalance, with married women, whether employed or not, spending around eight hours daily on unpaid labor—double the amount of their unmarried counterparts. Conversely, married men reduce their household contributions post-marriage.

The data indicate a consistent trend across urban and rural areas and various states, with nearly 85% of women engaged in domestic tasks, while participation among men remains below 50% in many regions. This pervasive inequity underscores the urgent need for societal and structural changes to balance work and domestic responsibilities.

Working women's double shift

Working women get only 7-10 hours for rest every day due to work at a double shift

KEY TAKEAWAYS
Professional Indian women work longer hours than their global counterparts, averaging 55 hours a week in demanding fields like auditing and IT. This finding was highlighted after the tragic death of 26-year-old Anna Sebastian Perayil, who succumbed to "work stress" at Ernst & Young, igniting discussions about the overwhelming workloads faced by professionals in India.



The Transportation Revolution in Indian Cities: Enhancing Mobility and Economic Potential through Metro Rail Investments

Indian cities are poised for a **transportation revolution**, with an estimated expenditure of **₹3 trillion** planned for metro rail projects from **2022 to 2027**. This investment aims to enhance **urban mobility** and unlock significant **economic potential**. Studies indicate that investing in public transport can create thousands of jobs and yield economic returns **5-7 times** greater than the initial investment.

The **National Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy** and **Metro Rail Policy**, introduced in **2017**, encourage the adoption of TOD as a strategy for urban planning. Currently, **27 Indian cities** are developing metro systems, aiming to improve access to jobs and combat congestion and pollution caused by increased private vehicle use.

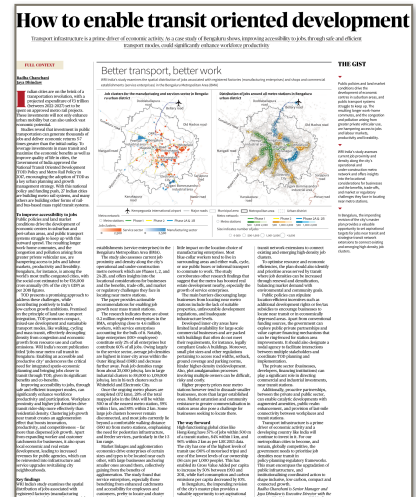
Research highlights the necessity of **integrated spatio-economic planning** to connect jobs with transit systems, particularly in **Bengaluru**, where significant time is spent commuting due to poor public transport. The TOD approach promotes compact, mixed-use developments, encouraging sustainable transport and contributing to low-carbon growth.

Key findings from a recent study on job distribution in **Bengaluru Metropolitan Area (BMA)** reveal:

- Approximately 0.2 million registered enterprises employ about 4.6 million workers, mainly in the service sector.
- **Job densities** are highest in inner-city areas, with the completion of metro phases projected to bring **28% of mapped jobs** within **500 meters** of a metro station.
- Challenges remain, such as inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and the disconnect of large job clusters from transit stations.

Barriers to locating businesses near metro stations include high property prices, limited land availability, and regulatory hurdles. Lessons from global cities like **Hong Kong**, where a significant percentage of jobs are near transit, highlight the benefits of efficient public transport systems.

Moving forward, Bengaluru's **master plan revision** offers an opportunity to set targets for jobs near transit, promoting balanced development. Public policies should incentivize businesses to locate near transit, and public-private partnerships can enhance last-mile connectivity. For metropolitan cities to remain globally competitive, prioritizing job densities near transit in policy and planning is essential for inclusive, low-carbon, and connected urban growth.



California's Legislation on Deepfakes

California Governor Gavin Newsom has enacted three bills targeting deepfake content in election advertising following Elon Musk's sharing of a negative deepfake video of Vice President Kamala Harris.

Key aspects of the legislation include:

1. **Prohibition of Deceptive Content:** It is illegal to distribute election-related ads with materially deceptive content, including deepfakes.
2. **Specific Bills:**
 - o **AB 2655:** Requires large online platforms to remove or label deceptive election-related deepfakes.
 - o **AB 2839:** Expands the period for which deceptive AI-generated content cannot be distributed.
 - o **AB 2355:** Mandates disclosure for electoral ads containing altered content.
3. **Exemptions for Parody:** Content classified as satire or parody is exempt from these restrictions.



While the bills aim to enhance electoral integrity and combat misinformation, their effectiveness and enforcement remain uncertain, particularly as elections approach. Violators may face limited penalties, raising questions about the actual impact on platforms like X and high-profile individuals.

Unusual Seismic Event Linked to Greenland Landslide: A Warning of Climate Change Impacts

On **September 16, 2023**, seismic stations worldwide detected an unusual signal lasting nine days, initially classified as an **unidentified seismic object (USO)**. The signal had a single frequency, unlike typical earthquake tremors. After collaboration among **68 researchers** from **15 countries**, it was determined that the waves originated from a **massive landslide** in Greenland's **Dickson Fjord**, triggered by the collapse of the **Hvide Støvhorn peak**.

The landslide produced a **mega-tsunami**, with approximately **25 million cubic meters** of rock and ice displacing water and creating waves up to **200 meters** high. In the fjord's confined space, the waves reflected, resulting in a **seiche**—an oscillation that persisted for over nine days and matched the recorded seismic waves.

The **glacier's melting** due to **global warming** destabilised the slopes, leading to the collapse. This event highlights the increasing frequency and severity of such phenomena in warming **Arctic and subarctic regions**, suggesting that similar **landslide mega-tsunamis** may occur more frequently as climate change progresses.



Challenges and Conservation Efforts for Rhinoceros Populations Worldwide

Despite a slight increase in the global **rhinoceros population**, particularly the **white rhino** (from **15,942 in 2022** to **17,464 in 2023**), poaching remains a critical threat driven by high demand for rhino horns, especially in **South Africa**, where **586 rhinos** were killed in 2023. This figure represents an increase from **551** in the previous year. While other subspecies, like the **black** and **greater one-horned rhino**, have stable numbers, the **northern white rhino** is technically extinct, with only two females left in a conservancy in **Kenya**.

Rhinoceros Species	IUCN Status
White Rhinoceros (<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>)	Near Threatened
- Southern White Rhinoceros	Near Threatened
- Northern White Rhinoceros	Critically Endangered (functionally extinct)
Black Rhinoceros (<i>Diceros bicornis</i>)	Critically Endangered
Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros (<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>)	Vulnerable
Javan Rhinoceros (<i>Rhinoceros sondaicus</i>)	Critically Endangered
Sumatran Rhinoceros (<i>Dicerorhinus sumatrensis</i>)	Critically Endangered

Overall, the global rhino population stands at just under **28,000**, down from **500,000** at the beginning of the 20th century. The **International Rhino Foundation** emphasizes that **habitat loss and climate change** contribute to rhino decline, but **poaching** remains the primary threat, fueled by the misconception of medicinal properties of rhino horns.

Philip Muruthi, from the **Africa Wildlife Foundation**, highlights successful protection measures that have increased rhino numbers in

Kenya from **380 in 1986** to **1,000** last year. He advocates for **reducing demand for rhino horns**, employing **new technologies for monitoring**, and **educating communities on the ecological and economic benefits of rhinos**.

Rhinos play a vital role in their ecosystems by maintaining habitats for other herbivores and aiding forest growth through seed dispersal. The extinction risk faced by the **northern white rhino**, symbolised by the preserved body of the last male, **Sudan**, underscores the urgent need for continued conservation efforts.



Number of rhinos slightly increases, but so does threat of poaching

Associated Press
The rhinoceros population across the world has risen slightly since the 1980s, mostly in South Africa, as poaching has been brought under control. But the numbers are still low, and the species remain vulnerable to poaching, according to a report published by the International Rhino Foundation on Tuesday.

The number of rhinos worldwide rose from 24,000 in 2022 to 25,000 in 2023, the report said, according to the International Rhino Foundation. The report also noted that the number of rhinos in South Africa rose from 15,942 in 2022 to 17,464 in 2023, the report said. The report also noted that the number of rhinos in South Africa rose from 15,942 in 2022 to 17,464 in 2023, the report said.

With all five subspecies combined, there are just under 28,000 rhinos left in the world, from 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century.

From an egg and sperm provided by a white rhino, the African Wildlife Foundation has bred a black rhino. A total of 166 rhinos were killed in Africa in 2023, most of them in South Africa, which has the highest population of rhinos, according to the International Rhino Foundation. In the United States, there are just under 25,000 rhinos left in the world, from 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century.

Rhinos have various environmental benefits, including carbon sequestration and disease control. But poaching, based on the belief that their horns have medicinal properties, remains the biggest threat.

Philip Muruthi, the vice president for species conservation at the Africa Wildlife Foundation, said poaching has been reduced in Kenya, but remains a major threat. He said that poaching has been reduced in Kenya, but remains a major threat.

Muruthi also advocates for a campaign that would educate the public on the ecological and economic benefits of rhinos and the value of their conservation.

Across an eight-hour period that saw poaching and poachers for other rhinos, rhinos are targeted for their horns. Muruthi stressed that the poachers are not just after the horns, but also the rhinos themselves. The poachers are not just after the horns, but also the rhinos themselves.

The body of the last male northern white rhino, named Sudan, that died in 2018, has been preserved and displayed at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. It is a symbol of the species' extinction and the urgent need for conservation.

Labour Force Survey Annual Report (July 2023 - June 2024)

The **Labour Force Survey Annual Report** for July 2023 to June 2024 indicates that the **unemployment rate (UR)** for individuals aged 15 years and above remained steady at **3.2%**.

Key findings include:

- The unemployment rate for **males** decreased slightly from **3.3%** to **3.2%**, while the rate for **females** increased from **2.9%** to **3.2%**.
- The **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** rose to **60.1%**, up from **57.9%** the previous year. For **males**, LFPR was **78.8%**, and for **females**, it increased significantly from **37%** to **41.7%**.
- The **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** in usual status improved to **58.2%**, up from **56%**. For **males**, the WPR was **76.3%**, and for **females**, it increased from **35.9%** to **40.3%**.

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**, introduced by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** in April 2017, aims to provide timely employment and unemployment indicators. The PLFS estimates key metrics, including WPR, LFPR, and UR, in both rural and urban areas annually, and six annual reports have been published since its inception. The seventh Annual Report is based on data collected during July 2023 to June 2024.

Resilient Growth of India's NBFC Sector Under Scale-Based Regulations

The **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC)** sector in India has shown significant resilience and improvement under the **Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework** since its introduction in October 2022, as per the RBI's September 2024 bulletin.

Key highlights include:

- Improved asset quality:** Gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratios decreased substantially, from 4.4% (government NBFCs) and 10.6% (non-government NBFCs) in December 2021 to 2.4% and 6.3% by December 2023.
- Strong credit growth and adequate capital levels** have been maintained with a low delinquency ratio.
- The sector has also shown enhanced **profitability** with better **return on assets (RoA)** and **return on equity (RoE)**.
- The introduction of **Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) norms** for government-owned NBFCs is expected to further strengthen the sector's financial discipline and risk management.
- Major NBFCs like LIC Housing Finance, Bajaj Finance, Shriram Finance, and others have been identified in the **upper layer** under the SBR framework.

Overall, the NBFC sector is demonstrating robust growth, risk management improvements, and financial resilience.

India's Nifty and Sensex Rank Among Top Global Performers in 2024, Rally Expected to Continue

India's **NSE Nifty 50** and **S&P BSE Sensex** are among the top-performing global indices in 2024, trailing only the **Nasdaq** and **S&P 500**. The **Nifty** gained **18.7%**, and the **Sensex** rose **17%**, ranking third and fourth globally. Analysts expect the rally to continue into **2025**, driven by **foreign portfolio inflows** and positive domestic growth outlook. The U.S. **Federal Reserve's rate cut** in September accelerated the momentum. India's stock market weightage in **MSCI** also surpassed **China**. However, both indices are now in **overbought territory** with high **price-to-earnings ratios**.

NBFC sector resilient under scale-based regulations framework: RBI bulletin

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The non-banking financial companies (NBFC) sector in India continues to demonstrate resilience within the scale-based regulations (SBR) framework, improving in asset quality and diversifying funding base, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials said.

At the end of December 2023, the sector maintained double-digit credit growth, adequate capital levels, and low delinquency ratio, the officials said in an article 'Peeling the Layers: A Review of the NBFC Sector in Recent Times', published in the September 2024 edition of the RBI bulletin.



Since the introduction of SBR in October 2022, the performance metrics for NBFCs have shown significant positive trends. The asset qualities have improved, the article stated. The gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio has decreased significantly, falling from a range of 4.4% for government NBFCs and 10.6% for non-government

NBFCs in December 2021, to 2.4% (for government NBFCs) and 6.3% (for non-government NBFCs) by December 2023, reflecting improved asset quality and risk management within the sector.

According to the article, there has been a consistent rise in profitability, evidenced by improved return on assets (RoA) and return on equity (RoE). As of December 2023, NBFCs have demonstrated robust credit growth, adequate capital, and low delinquency ratios, signalling a resilient financial landscape, it said.

Moreover, the extension of prompt corrective action (PCA) norms even to government-owned NBFCs

is expected to fortify the sector further. These regulations aim to enhance financial discipline and risk management.

The RBI has identified several major NBFCs as part of the upper layer under the SBR framework.

These include LIC Housing Finance, Bajaj Finance, Shriram Finance, Tata Sons, L&T Finance, Indiabulls Housing Finance, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services, PNB Housing Finance, Tata Capital Financial Services, Aditya Birla Finance, HDB Financial Services, Muthoot Finance, and Bajaj Housing Finance.



Racial Economic Disparities Persist in South Africa 30 Years After Apartheid

Thirty years after apartheid, South Africa's economy remains racially divided, with Black South Africans facing higher unemployment and limited access to top management positions. The national unemployment rate was 33.5% in mid-2023, but 37.6% among Black South Africans, compared to 7.9% for white South Africans. Despite efforts through Black economic empowerment laws, white people still hold 65.9% of top private-sector management roles, while Black representation is just 13.8%. Economic disparities persist, with Black South Africans largely in lower-level or unskilled jobs, highlighting the ongoing racial economic divide.

Oceans on the Brink: Report Warns of Imminent Threats to Marine Life and Planetary Health

A report from the **Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)** warns that the world's oceans are *nearing a level of acidity* that could threaten marine life and the climate.

It identifies **nine critical factors** necessary for sustaining life on Earth, *six of which have already exceeded safe limits* due to human activities. Ocean acidification is poised to become the seventh factor breached, driven largely by rising carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion.

The report highlights other critical areas that have surpassed sustainable thresholds, including climate change, loss of biodiversity and habitats, and increased pollution from plastics and chemical fertilizers.

Critical Factors for Planetary Health

Critical Factors	Status
1. Climate Change	Exceeded Safe Limits
2. Ocean Acidification	Approaching Exceedance
3. Loss of Natural Species	Exceeded Safe Limits
4. Loss of Natural Habitat	Exceeded Safe Limits
5. Freshwater Availability	Exceeded Safe Limits
6. Rise in Pollutants (e.g., plastics, chemical fertilizers)	Exceeded Safe Limits
7. Chemical Contaminants	Not Exceeded
8. Biodiversity Loss	Not Exceeded
9. Land Use Change	Not Exceeded

Supreme Court Ruling: Child Sexual Exploitation Material Attracts Criminal Liability Under POCSO and IT Acts

The **Supreme Court** of India ruled that actions such as viewing, downloading, storing, possessing, distributing, or displaying child pornography incur criminal liability under the **POCSO Act** and the **Information Technology Act**. This decision overturned a **Madras High Court** ruling that deemed mere possession of such material as non-criminal. The court emphasized that child sexual exploitation continues through the recording and dissemination of abuse, exacerbating the trauma for victims. The court proposed amending the term "child pornography" to "**Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material (CSEAM)**" to better reflect the severity of the crime. It also clarified that possessing links or viewing such material constitutes '**constructive possession**', making individuals accountable for their actions, and directed courts to adopt this terminology in their judgments.

Groundbreaking judgment

The verdict was based on an appeal filed by Just Right for Children Alliance against a Madras High Court ruling that said mere possession of pornographic material was not an offence under POCSO Act

What the SC said:
 ■ Sexual act is only the beginning of a child's victimisation

■ CSEAM and actual act of abuse share a common, malevolent intent: the exploitation and degradation of a child

■ Keeping such material without deleting them amounted to 'possession' or even intent to transmit them to others

■ A person is accountable if at any point of time he/she had an invariable degree of power and knowledge to control, modify, or destroy the material

Any visual depiction of a sexually explicit act which any ordinary person of a prudent mind would reasonably believe to *prima facie* depict a child or appear to involve a child, would be deemed as 'child pornography' for the purposes of the POCSO

SUPREME COURT



Suspected Amoebic Meningoencephalitis Claims Life of Kerala Man

M. Manikandan, a 38-year-old man from Kasaragod, Kerala, died from suspected *amoebic meningoencephalitis* while being treated in a Kannur hospital. After returning from Mumbai with a fever, he was initially treated in Kasaragod but was transferred to Kannur when his condition worsened. Testing indicated amoebic meningoencephalitis, with confirmation pending from a PCR test. He was treated with miltefosine.

Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

Amoebic meningoencephalitis is a rare but severe **brain infection** caused by the **Naegleria fowleri** amoeba, typically found in warm freshwater environments.

Key Points:

- **Symptoms:** Headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, seizures, and coma.
- **Diagnosis:** Confirmed through tests of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and PCR tests to detect the amoeba.
- **Treatment:** Prompt treatment with antifungal medications like *miltefosine* is crucial.
- **Prevention:** Avoid freshwater bodies during warm weather and use nose clips while swimming.

India Reports First Case of Clade 1b Strain of Mpox in Kerala

India has confirmed its first case of the **Clade 1b strain of Mpox** in a 38-year-old man who arrived in Kerala from the **United Arab Emirates**. He was hospitalised in Malappuram after showing symptoms. The **WHO** declared Mpox a global public health emergency in August due to the emergence of this new, more dangerous strain. Previously, a case involving the West African **Clade 2 strain** was reported in Delhi in a 26-year-old from Haryana.

Mpox Overview

Mpox, previously known as monkeypox, is a viral zoonotic disease caused by the Mpox virus. It is characterized by fever, body aches, and a distinctive rash that forms blisters and scabs. The disease primarily spreads through close contact with infected individuals, including skin-to-skin contact and respiratory droplets.

Strains of Mpox

Clade 1b

This strain, considered more dangerous, was recently declared a global public health emergency by the WHO in August due to its rapid spread and increased severity. The first case of Clade 1b in India was reported in a 38-year-old man returning from the UAE.

Clade 2 (West African strain)

This strain has been less severe and was previously reported in India, with a case involving a 26-year-old from Haryana. Clade 2 is known for a lower fatality rate compared to Clade 1b.

As the disease evolves, monitoring and preventive measures are crucial to control its spread and impact on public health.

Modi Advocates for Global Institutional Reform at UN Summit

During the United Nations 'Summit of the Future' conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the need for reforming global institutions to achieve global peace and development. He stated that humanity's success relies on collective strength rather than conflict, alluding to ongoing global issues such as the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Modi highlighted India's leadership in advocating for reforms within the UN and its Security Council, including permanent representation for Africa and other regions. He described the recent inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G-20 as a significant step in this direction.

The UN adopted the Pact for the Future, which addresses 21st-century challenges through initiatives like the Global Digital Compact and discussions on human rights and AI governance. Modi also stressed the importance of global digital governance to protect national security and offered India's digital public infrastructure for global sharing.

His remarks came as he concluded his three-day visit to the United States, where he held meetings with the Indian diaspora and planned bilateral discussions post-summit.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Manipur Amid Ongoing Ethnic Violence

The Central and Manipur state governments are reviewing the scope of the **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** as its six-month extension is set to expire on **September 30**. The Act currently maintains "disturbed area" status in hill districts, while it has been gradually withdrawn from valley districts since 2022 due to improved security conditions. However, rising concerns about armed groups, extortion, and abductions have prompted discussions about expanding the AFSPA's coverage.

While the Union government points to the increase in armed presence and criminal activities as reasons for potential re-implementation, state officials argue that the situation is under control, highlighting proactive police actions resulting in over **500 arrests** in the past 16 months. The ongoing ethnic violence, which erupted on **May 3, 2023**, has resulted in **at least 237 deaths** and has exacerbated tensions between the tribal Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.

Despite the presence of insurgent groups and security-related incidents, the Chief Minister indicated that imposition of AFSPA in valley areas could not ensure ideal law and order conditions, reflecting the complexities of the security situation in the state. The review of AFSPA is crucial as ethnic unrest has allowed insurgent groups, often operating from Myanmar, to gain influence in the region.

"News Highlights: Key Updates in Brief"

National

- The **Maharashtra** Cabinet approved 24 proposals ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, including the renaming of **Pune International Airport** to **Jagadguru Sant Tukaram Maharaj Pune International Airport**.

International

- Tribal violence near the **Porgera Gold Mine** in **Papua New Guinea** has led to the closure of the mine and at least 32 deaths from shootouts among rival factions.
- Cholera** has killed at least 388 people and sickened 13,000 in war-torn **Sudan**, where ongoing conflict and severe flooding exacerbate a humanitarian crisis affecting millions.

Bihar Special (if any)

Bihar Government Launches Inquiry into OBC Certificate Issuance for AIIMS Official's Son

The Bihar government has launched an inquiry into alleged irregularities in the issuance of OBC non-creamy layer (NCL) certificates for Dr. Auroprakash Pal, son of Dr. Gopal Krushna Pal, executive director of AIIMS Patna. Since children of Group A/Class I officers fall under the creamy layer, they are not eligible for the 27% reservation for OBCs.

The certificates were issued from Patna, despite Dr. Pal's domicile being in Odisha. Following Dr. Pal's request to cancel the certificate on September 10, a committee was formed to investigate potential lapses. Dr. Auroprakash, based on the April certificate, secured admission to a postgraduate MD program at AIIMS Gorakhpur.

मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ने पटना-गया-डोभी मार्ग की शीघ्रता से पूर्णता का दिया निर्देश

मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ने पटना-गया-डोभी मार्ग के बचे हुए कार्य को दो महीने के अंदर पूरा करने का निर्देश दिया है। यह निर्देश उन्होंने कनौदी गांवके पास एनएच 83 पर आयोजित समीक्षा बैठक में दिया। सीएम ने कहा कि इस मार्ग के पूरा होने से पटना से डोभी तक यात्रा में समय की बचत होगी और झारखंड पहुंचने में भी कम समय लगेगा।

सीएम ने पहले सरिस्ताबाद और नाथपूर गांव के पास निर्माणाधीन लिंक पथ का निरीक्षण किया और उसे शीघ्र पूरा करने की बात की। इसके अलावा, उन्होंने जहानाबाद में विभिन्न विभागों की 57.15 करोड़ की योजनाओं का उद्घाटन और 65.63 करोड़ की योजनाओं का शिलान्यास किया। इसमें कल्या ग्राम में पंचायत सरकार भवन और गृह विभाग के तहत एससी-एसटी सह महिला थाना भवन का उद्घाटन शामिल है। उन्होंने 150 महिला सिपाही बैरक और अन्य पुलिस भवनों का भी शिलान्यास किया।

बिहार में एटीएम की तरह ई-स्टांप मशीनों की जल्द होगी शुरुआत

बिहार में जल्द ही एटीएम की तरह ई-स्टांप मशीनें उपलब्ध होंगी, जिससे आम लोगों को सुविधा होगी। इस मशीन को पहले राज्य मुख्यालय में परीक्षण के लिए लगाया जाएगा, और सफल परिणाम मिलने पर इसे सभी निबंधन कार्यालयों और अन्य स्थानों पर स्थापित किया जाएगा।

उत्पाद एवं मद्य निषेध विभाग के सचिव विनोद सिंह गुंजियाल ने बताया कि राज्य सरकार का उद्देश्य फिजिकल स्ट्यांप को हटाकर पूरी तरह से ई-स्टांप प्रणाली को लागू करना है। बिहार, एटीएम वेंडिंग मशीन के माध्यम से स्ट्यांप बेचने वाला देश का पहला राज्य बनेगा। वर्तमान में ई-स्टांप की बिक्री को-ऑपरेटिव बैंकों के जरिए की जा रही है, और आम जनता की सुविधा के लिए फ्रैंकिंग मशीन से न्यायिक स्ट्यांप की बिक्री भी हो रही है।

साथ ही, हाईकोर्ट समेत 40 व्यवहार कोर्ट और निबंधन कार्यालयों में ई-कोर्ट फीस की बिक्री फ्रैंकिंग मशीन से होती है। पुराने कार्यालय भवनों का जीर्णोद्धार और नए कार्यालय भवनों का निर्माण भी किया जा रहा है।

बिहार में सड़क निर्माण के लिए वन भूमि की अनिवार्यता समाप्त

केंद्रीय पर्यावरण एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय ने 20 सितंबर को एक अधिसूचना जारी की है, जिसके अनुसार सड़क (नेशनल हाईवे) निर्माण के लिए अब वन भूमि के उपयोग के बदले गैर वन भूमि देने की अनिवार्यता समाप्त कर दी गई है। इस फैसले से बिहार की रुकी हुई 50,000 करोड़ रुपये की सड़क परियोजनाओं का मार्ग प्रशस्त होगा।

पहले, सड़क निर्माण में वन भूमि के उपयोग के लिए गैर वन भूमि देने की बाध्यता थी, जिसमें पेड़ लगाने के लिए पैसे देने और नकद राशि जमा करने की जरूरत थी। 2022 में एक नई शर्त के अनुसार, जितनी वन भूमि का उपयोग होगा, उतनी ही गैर वन भूमि सरकार को उपलब्ध करानी होती थी। बिहार सरकार ने इस नियम का विरोध करते हुए कहा था कि इससे राज्य में सड़क निर्माण में कठिनाई होगी, विशेषकर उन परियोजनाओं के लिए जो परिवेश पोर्टल पर पहले से अपलोड की जा चुकी थीं।

अब केंद्र सरकार ने बिहार की मांग स्वीकार कर ली है, और कहा है कि यदि गैर वन भूमि उपलब्ध नहीं है, तो पेड़ लगाने के पैसे और नेट प्रेजेंट वैल्यू के अनुसार पैसे का भुगतान करके सड़क निर्माण कराया जा सकेगा। यह नियम केंद्र सरकार की सभी एजेंसियों पर लागू होगा।



End of Summary

This marks the end of today's summary from *The Hindu*. We trust this has added value to your exam preparation. Keep engaging with current affairs to sharpen your insights and strengthen your knowledge. We'll be back tomorrow with more updates to guide you on your path to success.

Thank you for reading. Stay focused and dedicated!

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