Current Affairs - 29 October 2026

WHAT IS DEARNESS ALLOWANCE (DA)?



- It is an **allowance given to** a **government employee, public sector employee, and pensioner** in India.
- It's a way to **mitigate** the **impact of rising costs of living and inflation** on people's earnings.
- It **ensures** that **employees are protected against inflation**, where the salary components help employees deal with the increasing prices of goods and essential items.
- **Types of DA:**

Industrial Dearness Allowance (IDA):

- It is applicable to **employees working in the public sector.**
- The **revision** is done on a **quarterly basis, depending** on the **Consumer Price Index (CPI),** to successfully change the salaries according to the increasing rate.

Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA):

- It is mostly applicable to **employees working in the central government sector.**
- The **revision** is done **twice a year based on the changes in the CPI.**
- VDA has **three parts:**
  - **Fixed Variable DA**
  - **Base Index**
  - **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**

Is DA Taxable?

- It is **fully taxable** under the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Employees** are **required to declare it separately** when filing income tax returns.

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WHAT IS THE UNIFIED LOGISTICS INTERFACE PLATFORM (ULIP)?



- ULIP is a **digital gateway** that **allows industry players** to **access logistics-related datasets from various Government systems** through API-based integration.
- It was **conceptualized** by the **NITI Aayog** and was developed under the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP).
- It was **launched as part of the 'National Logistics Policy (NLP)'** in **2022**.
- The platform is **maintained and operated by NICDC Logistics Data Services (NLDS).**
    - NICDC Logistics Data Services (NLDS) is a **joint venture** between the **Government of India,** represented by the **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT),** and **Japanese IT major NEC Corporation**, with a **50:50** equity participation.
- It **covers major logistics databases,** including **VAHAN, SARATHI, FASTag,** FOIS, ICEGATE, and Port Community Systems.

Objectives:

- To create a **nationwide single window logistics platform** for end-to-end visibility.
- To **develop a logistics gateway** by **integrating information** available with various government agencies across the value chain.
- To provide visibility for **optimal usage of various modes of transportation**.
- To provide data which can be utilized by the stakeholders for **simplification of complicated processes like compliance,** document filing, certifications, and approvals.
- To offer a platform for **data exchange among government and private entities** who are directly or indirectly involved in the Indian Logistics ecosystem.

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- **Benefits:**
  - It will give direct and indirect benefits to all logistics stakeholders, like **verification of drivers** and **vehicle details,** tracking & **tracing of consignment**, **Route Optimization Planning,** and timely **updates on the destination** of the consignment, etc.
  - It will **enable structured planning** by helping in decision-making on optimum use of modes of logistics, thereby saving cost and time.

CONTAINER MANUFACTURING PROMOTION SCHEME



- It aims to establish a **globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem** by promoting domestic manufacturing and encouraging investment across the value chain.
- The initiative seeks to **reduce import dependence and strengthen supply-chain resilience**.
- It also supports **new manufacturing facilities** and **expands existing container manufacturing units.**
- The scheme provides assistance through major components: **investment support, operational expenditure and testing and certification.**
- **Components under Container Manufacturing Promotion Scheme:**
  - **Interest Subvention Assistance (ISA):**
    - ISA provides a **3% per annum interest subvention** on eligible term loans (capital loans) availed by container manufacturers to set up **greenfield facilities and brownfield expansion of existing manufacturing capacity.**
    - To qualify for this support, projects must meet the **following criteria:**
      - **Greenfield facilities** must have an annual capacity of at **least 1,00,000 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs)**

- Brownfield expansions must add at **least 25,000 TEUs** of annual capacity to be commissioned within three years of in-principle approval, and comply with global container standards.

- **Operational Expenditure Assistance (OEA):** The component provides a financial outlay to support containers manufactured as per global shipping standards and sold by eligible manufacturers.

Eligibility Criteria: To avail support, manufacturers must meet a minimum **local-content requirement of 70% through FY 2031-32.**

- These criteria will further rise to **90% from FY 2032-33** to strengthen the domestic supply chain.

Testing and certification assistance: A financial outlay has been allocated to support the setting up of common facilities for testing, including dynamic longitudinal impact testing.

FIRST CLASS ORDER OF ZAYED II



Indian Pilot Smit Machchhar recently received the UAE's First Class Order of Zayed II for his bravery in protecting 174 passengers aboard a Flydubai flight during an alleged attack by his Omani co-pilot.

- It is one of the United Arab Emirates' **(UAE's) prestigious civilian decorations.**
- It is **named after Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan,** the **country's founding President.**
- It is generally **awarded to foreign diplomats, senior officials**, and **distinguished international figures** whose work has made a significant contribution to the country or its international relations.
- **Indian Recipients:**
  - **Two former Indian ambassadors to the UAE**, **Navdeep Singh Suri** and **Sunjay Sudhir**, were previously awarded the same decoration for their contributions to strengthening bilateral relations.

EXERCISE IN-ROKN



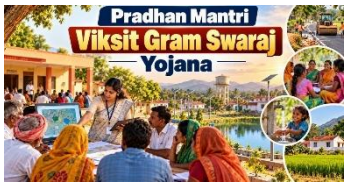
- It is a **bilateral naval exercise** conducted between **Indian Navy (IN) and South Korea Navy** (RoKN).

- **Phases**
  - **Harbour phase**: During this phase personnel of both navies will participate in professional interactions, cross-deck visits, cross-training activities and sporting events.
    - These activities will facilitate the exchange of operational experiences and Best Practices, while fostering **mutual understanding and professional camaraderie.**
  - **Sea Phase:** It involves **INS Sahyadri and ROKS Munmu the Great**, providing opportunities to strengthen operational coordination, enhance interoperability and consolidate professional ties between the two navies.
- It underscores the shared commitment of India and the Republic of Korea to strengthening maritime cooperation and **contributing to peace, stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.**

Key Facts about INS Sahyadri:

- INS Sahyadri is the third ship of the Shivalik-class guided-missile stealth frigates. It was built by Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai.
- It is **indigenously designed,** constructed and commissioned in 2012.
- It is equipped with cutting-edge weapons and sensors to identify and eliminate **threats from the air, the surface, and the subsurface.**
- **Armaments:** The ship is capable of carrying **Barak-1 and Shtil-1 3S90M missiles, BrahMos anti-ship** missiles, anti-submarine rocket launchers.
- It is equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors and can carry multi-role helicopters. It represents the 'coming of age' of India's warship building capabilities.

PRADHAN MANTRI VIKSIT GRAM SWARAJ YOJANA



- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** (CSS) aimed at strengthening **grassroots governance** and rural development **across the country.**

- **Time Period:** 2026-27 to 2030-31
- **Coverage:** The scheme will **extend to all States/UTs**, including institutions of rural local government (traditional local bodies) in **non-Part IX areas where Panchayats do not exist.**
- **Key Features of Pradhan Mantri Viksit Gram Swaraj Yojana:**
  - **Annual planning target**: Support preparation of**55 lakh Gram Panchayat Development Plans** on the eGramSwaraj portal, bringing together village priorities, departmental interventions and available resources.
  - **Capacity building:** Train and provide **digital support to around 32 lakh elected representatives,** Panchayat functionaries and other stakeholders annually.
  - **Financial accountability:** Support at **least 2.55 lakh online audit plans annually** and timely completion of the corresponding audits through AuditOnline, alongside better accounting, public disclosure and mobilisation of Panchayats' own revenue.
  - **Citizen engagement:** Each coordinated awareness exercise is intended to reach **at least one crore citizens.**
    - The scheme will use Gram Sabhas and existing outreach tools, **including PANCHAM,** a two-way platform available in 17 Indian languages.
  - **Implementation:** States and Union Territories will submit **annual action plans** for appraisal by a **Central Empowered Committee.** No permanent posts will be created under the scheme, although need-based contractual staff may provide technical support.

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KHELO INDIA SPORTS GOODS MANUFACTURING SCHEME



- It aims to promote **investment, manufacturing, innovation and exports**, and strengthen India's position in the **global sports goods sector.**
- It provides support across the **sports goods manufacturing value chain**, from infrastructure and investment to research, skills, certification and market development.
- **Time Period:** 2026 to 2033-34.
- It has two parts: **incentives that support manufacturing** and interventions that **build the wider ecosystem.**
- **Key Features of Khelo India Sports Goods Manufacturing Scheme:**
    - **Developing Integrated Manufacturing Zones:** These zones will bring together manufacturers, suppliers, testing facilities, design and prototyping centres, and ancillary enterprises.
    - **Attracting Investment and Expanding Production:** The scheme earmarks a combined ₹1,130 crore for **Anchor Investment Support and Turnover Linked Support**.
    - **Upgrading existing clusters and supporting MSMEs**: Existing sports goods manufacturing clusters will receive support for **upgrading common facilities and shared infrastructure** through cost-sharing with States, helping smaller enterprises strengthen their manufacturing capabilities.
    - **Supporting international certification:** To improve access to international markets, ₹105 crore has been allocated to **help manufacturers obtain and renew certifications** from **International Sports Federations.**
    - **Research co-funding** will be encouraged through convergence with the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation.** DPIIT-registered sports start-ups will be eligible for grants of up to ₹20 lakh.

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- **Developing industry-aligned skills:** Skill development initiatives will be implemented in collaboration with the **Ministry of Skill Development** and **Entrepreneurship** and relevant industry stakeholders to meet evolving workforce requirements.
- **Promoting Indian sports goods globally:** Branding, outreach and market development initiatives will draw on the **Export Promotion Mission** to improve the visibility of Indian sports goods and expand their international reach.

CYCLONE ARNAB: HOW EL NIÑO MADE IT STRONGER AND FASTER

Cyclone Arnab, the first cyclone of 2026 in the North Indian Ocean basin, made landfall on India's east coast, crossing the Andhra Pradesh and Yanam (Puducherry) coasts.

The "very severe" cyclonic storm has since weakened into a "severe" cyclonic storm. It uprooted trees and power poles, triggered widespread power outages, and forced the evacuation of over 1,80,000 people across Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

This raises a key question: what role did El Niño — the abnormal warming of Pacific Ocean surface waters — play in intensifying Arnab?

How Cyclone Arnab Formed and Intensified?

- Began as a low-pressure system in the southeast Bay of Bengal on October 23.
- Intensified into Cyclone Arnab by October 26. Rapidly escalated into a "severe" and then a "very severe" cyclone — with wind speeds of 125-135 kmph.
- Faster-than-forecast movement: The IMD advanced its landfall prediction from forenoon to early hours of Oct 28.
- Landfall began around 1 am Oct 28, crossing between Bapatla and Visakhapatnam with wind speeds of 125-135 kmph, gusting to 140 kmph.

An Unusual Pattern: Sustained Intensity After Landfall

- Normally, cyclones lose strength upon hitting land due to friction and obstacles.
- Arnab defied this pattern — it maintained intensity for at least six hours after landfall before weakening to a "severe" storm.

- As per IMD, Arnab remained stationary near Narsapur (Andhra Pradesh) and Yanam (Puducherry) since 4 am, slowing the landfall process (normally completed within ~6 hours, depending on cyclone speed/size).
- Heavy rainfall recorded: Visakhapatnam (217mm), Kalingapatam (147mm), Tuni (123mm), Kakinada (118mm), Machilipatnam (115mm), Gopalpur (94mm).

The El Niño Connection

- 2026's El Niño is forecast to be among the strongest since records began; the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has warned of its potential impact on Asian cyclones.
- **Normal Pattern**: Odisha and West Bengal coasts are most prone to Bay of Bengal cyclones.
- **During El Niño Years**: Cyclones instead tend to affect Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu — linked to where cyclones form and the paths they take.
- **Mechanism**: El Niño causes abnormal warming in the equatorial and central Pacific, altering rainfall patterns, temperatures, and global wind patterns — including unusual warming in the North Indian Ocean.
- As the southwest monsoon weakens, the monsoon trough (a shifting low-pressure band) moves southwards; El Niño further alters wind patterns and air pressure near the equator.

Conclusion

Cyclone Arnab exemplifies how large-scale climate phenomena like El Niño can reshape not just where cyclones strike, but how intensely and how quickly they do so.

By warming the North Indian Ocean and shifting cyclone formation closer to the equator, this year's unusually strong El Niño redirected Arnab toward Andhra Pradesh rather than the traditionally more vulnerable Odisha-West Bengal coast, while also fuelling its rapid intensification and unusually sustained strength post-landfall.

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