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Current Affairs - 22 November 2025

INDIA'S AGRICULTURE EXPORTS DEFY U.S. TARIFF PRESSURES

Key Drivers of India's Export Growth

- **Strong Performance by Major Agri-Export Segments** - India's agricultural export growth in 2025-26 has been led by non-basmati rice, buffalo meat, marine products, coffee, and fruits & vegetables — each surpassing or nearing previous record levels.
- **Non-Basmati Rice: Growth After Lifting of Export Curbs** - Export buoyancy is largely due to the removal of restrictions imposed in 2022–23 to contain food inflation. With good monsoons and high government stocks, non-basmati rice exports are on track to exceed the record \$6.5 billion achieved last year.
- **Buffalo Meat: Set to Break Decade-Old Record** - Buffalo meat exports may surpass the 2014-15 peak of \$4.8 billion, supported by rising demand in key markets.
- **Marine Products: Rising Despite Trump Tariffs** - Marine product exports rose 17.4% in April–September 2025 and could exceed the historic \$8.1 billion (2022-23). Despite the 58% U.S. tariff, exports grew from \$3.4 billion to \$4 billion, as exporters diversified into China, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, EU, and Canada.
- **Coffee Exports: Driven by High Global Prices** - Coffee exports more than doubled from \$739 million (2019-20) to \$1.8 billion (2024-25) and may exceed \$2 billion this year. The rise is driven mainly by soaring global prices as ending stocks fall to a 25-year low, rather than higher volumes.
- **Fruits & Vegetables: Consistent Growth in Fresh and Processed Form** - Both fresh and processed fruits & vegetables continue steady export growth.
- **Signs of Improvement: Tariff Rollback and Possible Trade Deal**
 - There are positive developments:
 - A potential India–US trade deal may materialise before year-end.
 - The US President has rolled back tariffs on several food products — including spices, coffee, tea, and fresh fruits — directly benefiting Indian exporters.



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Rising Farm Imports Outpace Overall Import Growth

- India's agricultural imports grew **5.9%** in April–September 2025 (from \$18.4 bn to \$19.5 bn), outpacing overall imports, which rose **4.5%** during the same period.
- Unlike exports, India's farm imports are not diversified and remain dominated by just a few commodities, primarily:
 - Vegetable oils
 - Fresh fruits
 - Pulses
 - Raw cotton
- **Vegetable Oils: India's Top Import Item**
 - Vegetable oil imports soared 13.5% in April–September 2025.
 - Imports are likely to approach the record \$20.8 bn level of 2022–23.
 - This remains India's single largest agricultural import.
- **Pulses: Imports Decline After Previous Surge**
 - Pulses imports hit an all-time high of \$5.5 bn in 2024–25.
 - In 2025–26, they have fallen sharply due to:
 - A bumper domestic crop
 - Reimposition of import duties lifted earlier during high inflation.
- **Fresh Fruit Imports Expand Rapidly**
 - Fresh fruit imports crossed \$3 bn in 2024–25.
 - April–September 2025 imports were \$1.5 bn.
 - The US is now the dominant supplier, accounting for 50.4%, thanks to high demand for:
 - Almonds
 - Walnuts
 - Pistachios
 - Other dry fruits
- **Raw Cotton: India Turns Net Importer**
 - India has shifted from being a net exporter to a net importer of raw cotton.
 - Imports are expected to exceed \$1.5 bn this fiscal.

The key reason: domestic yield stagnation due to the absence of new technologies post-Bt cotton.



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INLAND WATERWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (IWAI)



based tourism in the Northeast.

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) recently signed a series of major agreements valued at about ₹3,000 crore to boost cargo movement, passenger transport and river-

- It is a **statutory body** established under the **Inland Waterways Authority of India Act (IWAI), 1985**.
- It came into existence on 27th October 1986 for the **development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation**.

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.

The Authority primarily **undertakes projects for development and maintenance of inland water transport (IWT) infrastructure on national waterways** through grants received from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

- It also takes up **techno-economic feasibility studies and prepares proposals for the declaration of other waterways as National Waterways**.
- It also **advises the Central Government** on matters related to IWT and **assists States in the development of the IWT sector**.

Headquarters: Noida, Uttar Pradesh

The Authority also has its regional offices at Patna, Kolkata, Guwahati, and Kochi and sub-offices at Allahabad, Varanasi, Farakka, Sahibganj, Haldia, Swroopganj, Hemnagar, Dibrugarh, Dhubri, Silchar, Kollam, Bhubaneshwar, and Vijayawada.



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CENTRE MOVES TO STREAMLINE SECURITY RULES ACROSS 250 SEAPORTS

- Seaport security in India is a critical component of national security, economic stability, and international trade, particularly as the ports handle a vast majority of the country's international trade.
- **Key Framework and Organisation**
 - **International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code:** India's port security measures are largely compliant with the mandatory ISPS Code, a global framework established after 9/11 to safeguard ships and port facilities from terrorism and other threats.
 - **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) - The New Regulator:** In a significant recent reform, the Government of India has designated CISF as the Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) for ports.
- **Challenges to Port Security**
 - The security environment in the maritime domain presents several ongoing challenges:
 - **Non-standardised Security:** Historically, security arrangements at many non-major ports lacked uniformity and expert oversight, which the new CISF mandate aims to address.
 - **Transnational Threats:** Ports remain vulnerable to non-traditional threats, including:
 - Maritime Terrorism
 - Smuggling and Drug Trafficking (Ports are often routes for large hauls of narcotics).
 - Cyberattacks on port IT infrastructure and systems.
 - **Infrastructure Gaps:** Ensuring uniform, high-quality infrastructure and sufficient skilled manpower across over 250 ports remains an operational challenge.

Current Affairs - 22 November 2025

Centre Brings All Seaports Under Uniform Security Oversight

- To strengthen coastal security, the Union Government has appointed the CISF as the central security regulator for more than 250 seaports, including private cargo-handling ports. This brings all ports under a unified security architecture.
- In the first phase, 80 **export-import (EXIM) ports** will be placed under CISF control for access management, cargo screening, and waterfront patrolling.
- CISF will function as a “sovereign security force” at these sites.
- **CISF to Conduct New Security Assessments**
 - For all EXIM ports CISF will carry out:
 - Port Facility Security Assessments (PFSA)
 - Port Facility Security Plans (PFSP)
 - This will ensure compliance with global standards and eliminate vulnerabilities.
- **Hybrid Security Model for Port Operations**
 - A new multi-layered model has been proposed:
 - **CISF** → core security roles (access control, patrolling, screening)
 - **State Police / SISF / Private Security** → non-core duties (traffic, gate operations)
 - This ensures uniformity while optimising manpower across port ecosystems.

Why the Change Matters?

- India has over **250 seaports**, including 80 EXIM ports that handle international trade through customs clearance, cargo movement, storage and logistics.
 - Until now, security across non-major ports was fragmented and inconsistent.
 - Many ports currently rely on private security agencies or local police, resulting in uneven security standards.
 - CISF already secures the 13 major ports across multiple coastal states.
 - By expanding CISF’s mandate to regulation, assessment, planning and training, India aims to build **secure, efficient and globally compliant EXIM gateways**, boosting economic competitiveness and supporting its growing maritime footprint.
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NEW GUIDELINES TO DEFINE OBSCENITY IN ONLINE CONTENT

- The Supreme Court, while hearing a case arising from a controversy surrounding comedian Samay Raina and content featuring an explicit joke, had asked the government to devise guidelines that balance **free speech under Article 19(1)(a)** with reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2).

Key Features of the Proposed Obscenity Guidelines

- **Introducing a New Definition of “Obscene Digital Content”**
 - The amendment seeks to explicitly define obscenity for the first time within the IT Rules.
 - This would mark one of the most sweeping shifts in online content regulation, extending traditional broadcast-like restrictions to digital spaces.
- **Expansion of the Code of Ethics**
 - The proposal adds a comprehensive “Obscenity” chapter under the Code of Ethics applicable to curated content (OTT platforms) and digital news platforms. Online platforms would be required to avoid content that:
 - Offends “good taste or decency”,
 - Depicts indecent, vulgar, suggestive, repulsive, or offensive themes,
 - Presents criminality as appealing,
 - Shows visuals or words reflecting a snobbish or slandering attitude toward regional, ethnic, or linguistic groups.
 - A total of **17 such restrictions** are proposed.
- **Alignment with Cable Television Standards**
 - Digital rights advocates note that the government has transposed the Cable TV Programme Code, originally meant for regulated broadcast TV, onto digital platforms.
- **Requirement for OTT Compliance with the Cinematograph Act**



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Current Affairs - 22 November 2025

- OTT platforms may be required to ensure content is fit for “public exhibition”, similar to films certified under the Cinematograph Act, 1952.
- Although officials claim this applies only to OTTs, the draft amendment does not explicitly make this distinction.
- **Revival of IT Rules 9(1) and 9(3)**
 - Rules 9(1) and 9(3), which enforce the Code of Ethics, were stayed by the Bombay High Court.
 - Despite this, the note seeks to revive and expand these rules, raising constitutional concerns.
- **Application of the “Community Standards Test”**
 - Supreme Court’s test from **Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal** would be used to assess obscenity. Content would pass this test if:
 - A reasonable person with contemporary community standards does not find that it appeals to lustful or voyeuristic interests, and
 - The content has literary, scientific, artistic, or political value.
 - Digital rights advocates, however, warn that the broad nature of the proposed rules could lead to overreach and arbitrary censorship.

Criticism

- Digital rights organisations have flagged several risks:
 - **Overbroad Definitions:** The proposed language could classify a wide range of content as obscenity.
 - **Executive Overreach:** Critics argue that the government is attempting to expand its regulatory powers through the IT Rules rather than parliamentary amendments.
 - **Impact on Free Speech:** Ambiguous standards like “good taste” may violate free speech protections.
 - **Overlap with Pending Court Cases:** Several parts of the IT Rules are already stayed or under judicial scrutiny.
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INTERSTELLAR OBJECTS



Recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) released new images of Comet 3I/Atlas, an interstellar object that astronomers have determined is billions of years old.

- Interstellar objects are celestial bodies that **originate outside the solar system**, and travel through it.
- These objects are **not gravitationally bound to a star**.
- They can come from other solar systems and be thrown into interstellar space (the area between the stars) due to **collisions** or be slingshotted by a planet's or star's gravity.
 - **1I/Oumuamua (2017)**, **2I/Borisov (2019)** and **Comet 3I/Atlas** are the recently known interstellar objects.

Characteristics of Interstellar Objects:

- **Origin:** They originate from outside our solar system, often from other star systems or the interstellar medium.
- **Hyperbolic Orbit:** They basically move in an **open-ended hyperbolic orbit**, where there is a perihelion point but no aphelion.
- **Speed:** These objects move at such great speeds that the Sun's gravitational pull is not able to slow them down enough during their outbound leg.

Significance of Interstellar Objects:

- **Insights into other star systems:** Interstellar objects can provide clues about the formation and evolution of other star systems.
- **Understanding planetary formation:** They can help us understand **how planets form** and evolve in different environments.



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Current Affairs - 22 November 2025

WHAT IS SAGAR KAVACH?



The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) successfully conducted the comprehensive Coastal Security Exercise Sagar Kavach-02/25 along the Maharashtra and Goa coastline recently.

- It is a **biannual coastal security drill** led by the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** that tests and improves coastal security mechanisms against asymmetric threats.
 - A wide range of **central and state agencies**, including the **Indian Navy, State Police, Marine Police, Fisheries, Customs**, are part of this exercise.
 - The exercise aims to **assess the preparedness of all participating agencies in handling coastal security emergencies**, preventing attacks on vital coastal installations, and further strengthening the multi-layered Coastal Security Network.
 - During the exercise, security forces are split into a **"Red team"** that **simulates infiltrators** and a **"Blue Team"** that **detects and neutralises them**, assessing inter-agency coordination and response times.
 - The key activities of the Sagar Kavach drill generally include heightened surveillance, boat patrols, vehicle checks, and simulated attacks on vital installations to strengthen the country's coastal security framework.
 - **Recognizing the pivotal role of fishermen** in coastal security, the exercise emphasizes the need for their active involvement.
 - **Fishermen are urged to promptly report any unknown vessels** operating in proximity to the coast to the ICG.
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