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Current Affairs - 04 December 2025

WHAT IS A SOLAR FLARE?



- It is an **intense burst of radiation** coming from the **release of magnetic energy** associated with **sunspots**.
- A flare appears as a **sudden, intense brightening of a region on the Sun**, lasting several **minutes to hours**.
- Flares **occur when intense magnetic fields** on the Sun **become too tangled**.
 - Like a rubber band that snaps when it is twisted too far, the tangled magnetic fields **release energy** when they snap.
- The energy emitted by a solar flare is more than a **million times greater than the energy from a volcanic eruption** on Earth.
- **Coronal mass ejections often accompany solar flares**, though scientists are still trying to determine exactly how the two phenomena are related.
- **Effect of Solar Flare on Earth:**
 - The intense radiation emitted during a solar flare can **affect satellite communications, disrupt radio signals**, and even pose a **risk to astronauts** in space.
 - Additionally, the increased solar radiation can lead to **geomagnetic storms**, which may **impact power grids** and **cause auroras** (northern and southern lights) at lower latitudes.

What are Sunspots?

- Sunspots are **areas that appear dark on the surface of the Sun**.
 - They appear dark because they are **cooler than other parts** of the Sun's surface.
 - **Why are sunspots relatively cool?**
 - It's because they **form in areas where magnetic fields are particularly strong**.
 - These magnetic fields are so strong that they **keep some of the heat within the Sun from reaching the surface**.
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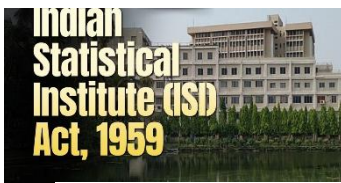
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INDIAN STATISTICAL INSTITUTE (ISI) ACT, 1959



• The Indian Statistical Institute was **founded by Professor P.C. Mahalanobis in Calcutta in 1931.**

- The ISI, **established earlier as a society**, plays a crucial role in **statistical research, education, and training** in India.
- The ISI Act, 1959 primarily **applies to the ISI**, its **governing body, employees, and students.**
- The Act aimed to recognize the ISI's contributions to national development and provide it with the necessary autonomy and support to carry out its functions effectively.
- The ISA Act 1959 **declared the ISI an institution of national importance.**
- This Act falls under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.**

Salient Features of ISI Act, 1959:

- **Empowers the ISI to grant degrees and diplomas** in statistics, mathematics, quantitative economics, computer science, and related subjects.
- Provides for grants, loans, and other **financial assistance from the Central Government.**
- **Mandates the audit of the Institute's accounts** by qualified auditors.
- **Requires prior approval from the Central Government for certain actions** by the Institute, such as **altering its objectives, amending its memorandum, or disposing of certain properties.**
- Provides for the **constitution of committees by the Central Government to prepare the Institute's program of work** and review its activities.
- **Empowers the Central Government to issue directions** to the Institute.
- **Allows the Central Government to assume control** of the Institute **under certain circumstances.**



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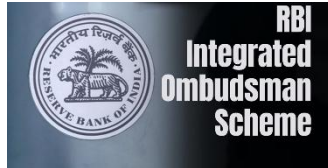
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RBI INTEGRATED OMBUDSMAN SCHEME



According to the RBI's Annual Report, the complaints registered under the Reserve Bank of India's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) were up by 13.55 per cent in FY25.

- It was launched in 2021.
- **Objective:** To provide customers of Regulated Entities (REs) a speedy, cost-effective and expeditious **alternate grievance redress mechanism**.
- It **integrated the erstwhile three Ombudsman schemes** of RBI namely:
 - The Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006, the Ombudsman Scheme for Non-Banking Financial Companies, 2018 and the Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions, 2019.
- It adopted '**One Nation One Ombudsman**' approach by making the RBI Ombudsman mechanism jurisdiction neutral.
- **Features of RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme**
 - It defines '**deficiency in service**' as the ground for filing a complaint, with a specified list of exclusions.
 - **Covered Banks:** It covers all **commercial banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), RRBs, Payment System Participants, most Primary (Urban) Cooperative Banks** with a deposit size of ₹50 crore and Credit Information Companies.
 - A **Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre** has been set up at RBI, Chandigarh, for receipt and initial processing of physical and email complaints in any language.
 - Under this scheme, **compensation** up to Rupees 20 lakh, in addition to, up to 1 lakh for the loss of the complainant's time, expenses incurred and for harassment/mental anguish suffered by the complainant can be awarded.



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RUPEE BREACHES THE 90-MARK

- The rupee slipped below the **psychologically crucial ₹90-per-dollar level**, unsettling markets and intensifying concerns over India's macroeconomic outlook.
 - The ₹90 mark is a critical psychological threshold for the rupee. Once breached, it can trigger buy-stop orders and fuel sharper depreciation, pushing the currency toward ₹91 or beyond.
- The currency has fallen over 5% this year, and the breach reflects a cumulative build-up of pressures, not a single shock.

Strong Domestic Fundamentals Haven't Stopped the Slide

- India's macro indicators appear supportive:
 - **Crude oil prices** have eased
 - **Inflation** has dropped below 1%
 - **GDP growth** hit 8.2% in Q2
- Yet the rupee continues to face sustained downward pressure, revealing a disconnect between strong domestic fundamentals and the currency trend.

Foreign Outflows and Trade Deal Uncertainty Weigh on Sentiment

- Persistent foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outflows, driven by profit booking and shifts to other markets, have drained liquidity and raised demand for the US dollar.
- Meanwhile, delays in concluding the **India-US trade deal** have heightened uncertainty about future trade flows, tariff competitiveness, and the balance-of-payments outlook, dampening market confidence.
- Exports remain under pressure, while a **surge in gold imports** during the festive season has amplified dollar demand.



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Uncertainty Over India–US Trade Deal Adds Pressure on the Rupee

- Markets are increasingly worried as the long-awaited India–US trade agreement remains unresolved.
- Without a deal, analysts say, the rupee may act as a “pressure valve,” gradually weakening to offset tariff disadvantages faced by Indian exporters.

Foreign Investors Continue to Pull Out of Indian Markets

- India’s equity markets have underperformed for over a year, prompting foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to steadily withdraw funds.

RBI Allowing the Rupee to Weaken

- Many economists argue the central bank is not pushing the rupee down, but simply responding to global shifts and India’s current macroeconomic dynamics.
 - They note that RBI has been selling dollars only to curb volatility, not to target a specific exchange rate.
 - **Behavioural Factors Driving Sentiment**
 - According to experts:
 - Importers are buying dollars aggressively
 - Exporters are holding back, waiting for better rates
 - The dollar index is below 100, which should normally support the rupee
 - They note that RBI’s relative silence, combined with IMF criticism of the rupee’s movement, is fueling negative sentiment.
 - **RBI’s Soft-Touch Strategy**
 - RBI appears to be conserving firepower:
 - Its forward book is already substantially drawn down, including in offshore NDF markets
 - It is using a measured approach, intervening only to prevent disorderly volatility, not to defend a specific level
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PUTIN'S VISIT: INDIA–RUSSIA TIES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

- When Putin first visited India in **October 2000**, both countries were navigating turbulent times:
 - Putin was newly elected President.
 - India was under **Western sanctions** for Pokhran-II.
 - Russia was weakened after the **Soviet collapse**.
 - The U.S. dominated a **unipolar world**.
 - India–Pakistan tensions were high after **Kargil** and **IC-814 hijack**.
 - India and Russia were both struggling, albeit for different reasons.
- **Putin's 2025 Visit: Striking Parallels, Changed Realities**
 - Putin's upcoming visit (on December 4–5, 2025) — the 23rd annual summit — is his **first** since the Ukraine invasion (2022).
 - Today:
 - Russia faces sweeping Western sanctions.
 - India faces secondary U.S. sanctions and steep tariffs on Russian oil purchases.
 - India–Pakistan tensions have resurfaced after May 2025 clashes.
 - Delhi again saw a blast near the Red Fort.
 - Despite the parallels, both nations hold stronger positions than 25 years ago.
- **India's Evolving Global Alignments**
 - In the past two decades, India has significantly expanded ties with the West:
 - Deep security and defence cooperation
 - Strong economic partnerships
 - Growing people-to-people engagement
 - Strategic alignment with the U.S. on the Indo-Pacific
 - At the same time, India has retained its defence partnership with Russia, a Soviet-era legacy, while gradually diversifying to other technology providers.



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- **Russia's Changing Global Role**

- Russia is now more isolated due to the Ukraine war but remains strategically important for India:
 - Defence cooperation
 - Energy supplies
 - Diplomatic alignment on some geopolitical issues
- Both countries, though facing external pressure, continue to pursue a relationship shaped by mutual strategic interests.

What to Expect from Putin's India Visit?

- Putin's visit to Delhi will be closely watched as India faces growing U.S. and European pressure over its ties with Russia.
- Substantive outcomes are expected, including:
 - Progress on a **labour mobility pact**
 - Movement on a trade deal with the **Eurasian Economic Union**
 - Potential **new defence purchases**, including additional **S-400 systems** and the latest **Sukhoi aircraft**
 - Expanded market access for Indian goods, from perishables to pharmaceuticals
- Overall, the visit is expected to reinforce strategic cooperation even as geopolitical pressures intensify.

India's Strategic Balancing Between the West and Russia

- India seeks deeper ties with the US and Europe for technology, investment, and ambitious trade agreements.
 - Yet Russia remains indispensable for long-term defence needs.
 - Delhi is also wary of Russia's "no-limits" partnership with China, especially with 50,000 Indian troops deployed along the tense India–China border.
 - Maintaining a careful equilibrium between these major powers remains India's core strategic challenge.
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WHAT IS CALLER NAME PRESENTATION (CNAP)?



- CNAP is a technology that enables mobile users to see an incoming caller's name.
- The system retrieves the caller's name from a telecom operator's database and displays it on the recipient's phone.
- Unlike third-party apps, CNAP will rely on the official Customer Application Form (CAF) details provided during SIM registration.

How Will CNAP Work?

- Each telecom provider will maintain a database of subscriber names linked to mobile numbers.
- When a call is made, the system will fetch the caller's registered name and display it on the recipient's screen.
- Initially, CNAP will work only within the same network, meaning an Airtel-to-Airtel call will display the caller's name, but cross-operator name display, such as Jio-to-Vodafone, will require regulatory approval for data sharing between telecom providers.
- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended the adoption of CNAP for all smartphones, urging telecom operators to introduce the feature.
 - The aim is to reduce customer harassment from unknown or spam callers.

ALAKNANDA GALAXY



- It is located about 12 billion light years away and has textbook spiral structure.
- It is named after a Himalayan river Alaknanda and the Hindi word for the Milky Way.
- It is a powerhouse of stellar birth.



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- It looks remarkably **similar to our own Milky Way**.
- It was discovered through NASA's **James Webb Space Telescope**.

What is Spiral Galaxy?

- Spiral galaxies are **twisted collections of stars and gas**.
 - In a spiral galaxy, the stars, gas, and dust are gathered in spiral arms that spread outward from the galaxy's center.
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DUDHWA TIGER RESERVE



- It is located on the **Indo-Nepal border** in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- It **includes** the **Dudhwa National Park** and two nearby sanctuaries, viz. **Kishanpur and Katerniaghat**, besides forest areas of North Kheri, South Kheri, and Shahjahanpur forest divisions in its buffer.

Topography: It is a typical **Tarai-Bhabar habitat** of the **upper Gangetic plains** biogeographic province.

Rivers: The **Sharda River** flows by the Kishanpur WL Sanctuary, the **Geruwa River** flows through the Katerniaghat WL Sanctuary, and the **Suheli and Mohana streams** flow in the Dudhwa National Park, all of which are **tributaries of the mighty Ghagra River**.

Vegetation: The vegetation is of the **Moist Deciduous type**, with sal forests.

Fauna:

- The main mammals spotted here are **Tiger, leopard, Swamp deer, Rhinoceros, chital, hog deer, barking deer, Sambhar, wild boar, and Ratel**.
 - It hosts various species of birds like: **Floricane and black-necked storks**.
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