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## Current Affairs - 17 September 2025

### BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS



• It is the **National Standard Body of India** established under the **BIS Act 2016**.

- **Objective:** It was established for the harmonious development of the activities of **standardization, marking, and quality certification of goods** and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It is the successor of the **Indian Standards Institution (ISI)**, which was created in 1947 to ensure quality control and competitive efficiency in the rapid industrialization era.

#### **Functions of Bureau of Indian Standards**

- BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways by
  - Providing safe, reliable quality goods;
  - Minimizing health hazards to consumers;
  - Promoting exports and imports substitute; control over proliferation of varieties etc. through standardization, certification, and testing.
- It operates **product certification schemes** through which it grants licenses to manufacturers covering practically every industrial discipline, from agriculture and textiles to electronics.
- BIS represents India in **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)** and **International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is functioning under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.
- **Headquarter:** It is **headquartered in New Delhi** and maintains regional and branch offices throughout the country.



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### THE DECADE OF TRANSFORMATION - A GLIMPSE INTO NEW INDIA

- Reflections on over a decade of governance highlight India's transformation through **Vikasvaad** (development-centric governance).
- This has been made possible through **structural reforms, cultural renaissance, social welfare, digital empowerment, and decisive leadership** in domestic and foreign policy.

#### Economic Achievements:

- **Growth trajectory:**
  - India is projected to be the **world's fastest-growing major economy** at 6.3 to 6.8% in 2025–26.
  - India has emerged as the **4th largest economy in the world**, poised to become the 3rd largest sooner than predicted.
- **Digital transactions:** India is the world leader in digital transactions today, with UPI processing 172 billion transactions in 2024 alone.

#### Infrastructure and Connectivity:

- **Highways and roads:** Construction of 4 lakh km of rural roads and 40,000 km highways.
- **Northeast integration:** A significant number of development projects were launched in the Northeast, integrating much-neglected parts of the country into the mainstream.
- **Housing (a priority since 2014):** Over 4 crore houses have been built under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), including 92.72 lakh under PMAY-Urban (90 lakh owned by women) and 2.77 crore under PMAY-Grameen.

#### Social Welfare and Inclusion:

- **JAM trinity:** Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile has revolutionized welfare schemes like DBT.
- **Jan Dhan Yojana:** 55.17 crore accounts (as of March 2025); ₹2.61 lakh crore deposits; 30.80 crore women account holders.
- **Saubhagya Scheme:** 2.86 crore households electrified.
- **PM Ujjwala Yojana:** 10.33 crore LPG connections distributed with 32.94 crore active users as of March 2025.



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- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** A staggering 15.59 crore rural households have tap water with 100% coverage in eight states and three UTs.
- **Food security:** In what is known as the world's largest food security scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana delivers free rations to 81 crore people.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** A sanitation revolution has transformed rural areas, with more than 12 crore toilets built across the country, with more than 6 lakh villages ODF.

### Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment:

- **Budgetary support:** Agriculture budget increased nearly 5 times from ₹27,663 cr in 2013–14 to ₹1,37,664.35 cr in 2024–25.
- **PM-KISAN:** Rs 3.7 lakh crore were transferred to 11 crore farmers, as of May 2025.
- **Kisan Credit Card (KCC):** Rs 10 lakh crore credit was provided to 7.71 crore farmers, and the loan limit was increased to Rs 5 lakh for 2025-26.
- **Foodgrain output:** As a result, foodgrain production grew from 265.05 million tonnes (2014–15) to 347.44 million tonnes (2024–25).

### Landmark Legislation and Social Justice:

- **Abrogation of Article 370 (August 2019):** Full integration of J&K.
- **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019:** Banned instant triple talaq.

### Science, Technology and Space:

- **ISRO's milestones:** For instance, Chandrayaan-3 success in 2023.
- **Digital India:** Financial and digital inclusion at unprecedented scale.

### Cultural Renaissance and National Pride:

- **Redevelopment** of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Ram Lalla Mandir in Ayodhya, and other pilgrimage sites. **Rise** of civilizational consciousness and cultural pride.

### Poverty Alleviation and Human Development:

- **Poverty reduction:** As per the World Bank, India's extreme poverty rate declined sharply to **5.3% in 2022-23** from 27.1% in 2011-12.
- **Empowerment metrics:** Women-led PMAY houses, women-centric Jan Dhan accounts.



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### GST 2.0 — SHORT-TERM PAIN, POSSIBLE LONG-TERM GAIN

- The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, introduced with the objective of creating a destination-based tax system, sought to improve efficiency by ensuring that the incidence of taxation fell on final consumers while input taxes were rebated.
- Despite its transformative intent, **the GST system initially suffered from multiple rates**, inverted duty structures, and high compliance costs.
- **The new rate structure, effective from September 22, 2025, represents a significant overhaul, with implications** for consumption, production, government revenue, and macroeconomic stability.

### Evolution of the New GST Structure and Its Revenue Implications

- **Evolution of the New GST Structure**
  - The 2025 reform **eliminated the 12% and 28% slabs**, consolidating most goods and services under 0%, 5%, and 18%, while introducing a **40% demerit rate** for luxury and sin goods.
  - Out of 546 goods subjected to revision, **80% experienced rate reductions, reflecting a pro-consumer and pro-growth stance.**
- **Revenue Implications**
  - **Rate reductions lower post-tax prices**, encouraging higher demand, but the increase in quantity demanded is not proportionate to the fall in tax rates. As a result, overall revenue tends to decline.
  - Estimates of revenue loss vary, with the Ministry of Finance projecting ₹48,000 crore annually, while other assessments suggest higher figures.

### Macroeconomic and Fiscal Challenges

- The reforms also intersect with India's broader fiscal position.
- Nominal GDP growth in the first quarter of 2025-26 stood at 8.8%, below the budgeted 10.1%. With inflation subdued, **achieving revenue targets becomes harder.**



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- **Direct taxes contracted by 4.3% in the early months of the year, contrasting sharply with robust growth in the previous period.**
- **The Union Budget had already anticipated a revenue forgone figure of ₹1 lakh crore, largely due to personal income tax reforms.**
- **Additional GST revenue losses could push gross tax receipts significantly below projections.**
- **While higher Reserve Bank of India dividends may provide partial relief, the government faces the difficult choice between curbing expenditure and widening the fiscal deficit.**

### Growth Prospects and Structural Limits

- **Although tax rate reductions may temporarily stimulate demand, this strategy cannot sustainably drive long-term growth.**
- **India's potential growth rate ultimately depends on investment and savings, alongside the efficiency of capital use (incremental capital-output ratio).**
- **Thus, while GST reforms may provide short-term relief to consumers and production sectors, enduring growth requires structural improvements in investment capacity and productivity.**

### Conclusion

- **The 2025 GST reforms represent a bold attempt to simplify the tax structure and stimulate economic activity.**
  - **They promise lower prices, higher disposable incomes, and sectoral gains, particularly in employment-intensive industries, however, the fiscal cost is substantial, with immediate revenue shortfalls threatening both central and state budgets.**
  - **Moreover, unresolved inefficiencies such as cascading and ITC bottlenecks continue to limit the system's effectiveness.**
  - **Ultimately, GST reforms can complement but not substitute for broader strategies centred on savings, investments, and productivity growth.**
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### FRONTIER 50 INITIATIVE



- It will support **50 Aspirational Districts / Blocks** to pick use cases from the Repository and deploy those **frontier technologies** that have potential to **accelerate saturation of services across ADP/ABP themes.**

- **Launched by:** NITI Aayog under its **Frontier Tech Hub.**
- The Frontier Tech Repository showcases 200+ impact stories from across India in four sectors – **Agriculture, Healthcare, Education, and National Security.**
- It brings to life how states and startups are deploying technology with the purpose to transform livelihoods.

### **What is NITI Frontier Tech Hub?**

- It has been established to **anticipate mega technology shifts** and chart India's readiness to unlock their potential for inclusive growth, supply chain resilience, and national security.
  - It convenes leading experts across government, industry, and academia to assess frontier technologies—such as **AI, quantum, and biotechnology.**
  - It evaluates **AI, quantum, and biotechnology** opportunities and risks for India, and designs strategies to **harness them for Viksit Bharat@2047.**
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### NPS TO UPS: GOVT EXTENDS ONE-TIME OPTION

- The government has allowed central employees who joined between April 1 and August 31, 2025, under NPS to migrate to the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).
- This one-time option, available until September 30, 2025, aligns with the existing cut-off for other eligible categories.
- Employees opting for UPS will also retain the right to later switch back to NPS, ensuring flexibility in planning post-retirement financial security.



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- **Switch Option from UPS to NPS**
  - UPS subscribers have a **one-time option to switch to NPS, but cannot return to UPS.**
  - The switch must be exercised at least one year before retirement or three months before VRS, and is barred in cases of dismissal, removal, compulsory retirement, or pending disciplinary proceedings.
  - Those not opting will remain under UPS.

### Key Differences Between UPS and NPS

- The **NPS is mandatory, while the UPS is optional**, with employees given a one-time chance to switch back to NPS before retirement or VRS.
- Under the NPS, through the Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN), employees contribute 10% and the employer 14% of basic pay plus dearness allowance (DA), with **pension benefits entirely dependent on the accumulated corpus.**
- In contrast, the UPS requires 10% contributions each from employee and employer, with an additional 8.5% contribution by the government to create a pool corpus.
- This pool funds an assured pension of 50% of the employee's average basic pay over the last 12 months, provided a minimum of 25 years of service is completed.
- Unlike NPS, UPS guarantees a minimum monthly payout of ₹10,000 after 10 years of service, ensuring greater financial security.
- UPS also offers a lump sum equal to one-tenth of the last basic pay plus DA for every six months of service, whereas NPS has no such provision.
- Employees dismissed from service are ineligible for the assured UPS payout.

### Why the Unified Pension Scheme Is Slow to Take Off?

- Although the government extended the deadline to September 30 for employees to opt into the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), uptake remains low.
- The Department of Pension is holding awareness drives, but many employees still prefer the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), which required no employee contribution and guaranteed 50% of the last drawn basic pay plus DA as pension.



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### INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION



- It is a **specialized agency of the United Nations (UN)** dedicated to improving labour conditions and living standards throughout the world.
- It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together **governments, employers and workers' representatives** of 187-member States.
- **History of International Labour Organisation:**
- It was created in 1919, as **part of the Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I
- **In 1946**, the ILO became a **specialized agency of the newly formed UN**.
- It is also a member of the **United Nations Development Group (UNDP)**, a coalition of UN organizations aimed at helping meet the **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **Member countries:** It has **187 member states**: 186 out of 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands.

#### **Functions of International Labour Organisation:**

- **Policy Formulation:** It forms international **policies and programmes to promote basic human rights**, improve working and living conditions, and enhance employment opportunities
- Creation of international labour standards backed by a unique system to supervise their application
- An extensive programme of international technical cooperation formulated and implemented in an active partnership with constituents, to help countries put these policies into practice in an effective manner
- Training, education, and research activities to help advance all of these efforts.
- In recognition of its activities, the ILO was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Peace in 1969**.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.



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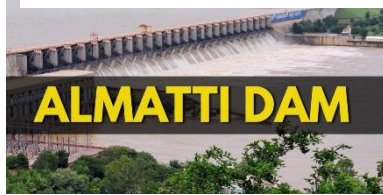


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### ALMATTI DAM



- It is a **hydroelectric project** on the **Krishna River** in **North Karnataka**.
- The dam was **completed** in **July 2005**.
- It was built with the **primary objectives of supplying irrigation and potable water** to adjacent regions, **generating hydroelectric energy**, and **managing flood risks** in the area.
- The annual electric output of the dam is **713,000,000 kilowatts (KW)**.
- The dam holds a gross water storage capacity of **123.08 TMC** at **519 meters MSL**.

Standing at a height of **52.5 meters** and extending **3.5 kilometers** in length, Almatti Dam serves as the **principal reservoir of the Upper Krishna Irrigation Project**; the **290 MW power station** is located on the right side of the Almatti Dam.

- The facility uses vertical Kaplan turbines: **five 55 MW generators** and **one 15 MW generator**.
- Two separate facilities, namely, **Almatti 1 Powerhouse** and **Almatti II Powerhouse**, each separated by distance, do provide power generation capabilities.
- **After generating power, water is released into the Narayanpur reservoir** to meet the irrigation requirements downstream.

**77 acres surrounding Almatti Dam** have been developed into meticulously maintained gardens, including the **Japanese Garden, Rock Garden, Mughal Garden, Gopal Krishna Garden, and Lavakush Garden**.

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