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Current Affairs - 23 September 2025

INDIA'S GROWING NOISE CRISIS

- According to the Central Pollution Control Board, noise is defined as unwanted sound.
- While sound that pleases is considered music, any sound that causes pain, irritation, or annoyance qualifies as noise.
- **Legal Provisions**
 - Under Section 2(a) of the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**, noise is classified as an air pollutant.
 - Noise regulation is governed by the **Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000**, framed under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
 - These rules outline permissible noise levels, designate silence zones, and impose restrictions on loudspeakers, horns, construction equipment, and firecrackers.
 - They also assign enforcement responsibilities to authorities.
- **Permissible Noise Limits**
 - The Rules define acceptable noise levels by area and time:
 - Industrial Areas: 75 dB during the day, 70 dB at night.
 - Commercial Areas: 65 dB during the day, 55 dB at night.
 - Residential Areas: 55 dB during the day, 45 dB at night.
 - Silence Zones (100 metres around hospitals, schools, and courts): 50 dB during the day, 40 dB at night.
 - Daytime is defined as 6 am to 10 pm, and nighttime as 10 pm to 6 am. These thresholds aim to protect health and ensure civic order.

The Heavy Toll of Urban Noise

- Indian towns and cities regularly face noise levels well above safe limits.
- While the WHO recommends **daytime exposure below 55 dB** and India's rules set similar thresholds, traffic corridors often cross 70 dB.
- Because noise intensity rises tenfold with every 10 dB increase, this exposure is far more damaging than it appears.



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- The worst impact is borne by vulnerable groups such as street vendors, delivery workers, traffic police, and residents of informal settlements.
- For these groups, constant urban noise is not just an irritation but a daily occupational hazard that undermines health and well-being.

Why Noise Pollution Remains Unchecked?

- India's noise crisis persists due to three systemic failures.
- First, **inadequate monitoring leaves policymakers blind**, as noise data remains sporadic and incomplete compared to air quality tracking.
- Second, **weak enforcement and cultural acceptance** of noisy practices prevent meaningful action.
- Third, **fragmented governance** — split between pollution boards, municipalities, and police — dilutes responsibility and limits accountability.
- As a result, symbolic steps like honking bans or festival crackdowns fail to address the deeper structural causes, leaving noise pollution an unaddressed public health crisis.

Tackling Noise Pollution: The Way Forward

- Addressing noise pollution requires **treating it on par with air and water pollution** through evidence-based, public-health-focused interventions.
 - **Monitoring must be expanded with real-time sensors** and machine learning to identify sources like traffic, construction, and industry.
 - Health studies should track noise exposure near schools, hospitals, and low-income areas.
 - Urban planning must **integrate noise mitigation with green buffers, zoning, and sustainable mobility** measures such as electric buses and cycling.
 - Governance reforms should **strengthen enforcement, ensure inter-agency coordination**, and enhance accountability.
 - Finally, **community engagement is vital**—awareness campaigns and partnerships with local leaders can help shift cultural norms while ensuring inclusive solutions.
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RIVER POLLUTION IN INDIA - CPCB REPORT SHOWS MARGINAL REDUCTION

- Rivers are the lifelines of India, sustaining agriculture, industry, and millions of people.
- However, unchecked urbanisation, untreated sewage, and industrial effluents have turned several rivers into highly polluted water bodies.
- The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** regularly monitors river health, measuring **biological oxygen demand (BOD)** levels to identify polluted stretches.
 - BOD measures the oxygen consumed by microorganisms to decompose organic matter in water, serving as a key indicator of organic pollution in aquatic ecosystems.
- Its latest report indicates a marginal reduction in the number of polluted river stretches across India, though concerns remain about severely contaminated segments.

River Pollution in India

- River pollution in India has been a persistent challenge, with most urban centres discharging untreated sewage directly into rivers.
- Industrial units, despite regulations, contribute chemical pollutants, while agricultural runoff adds pesticides and fertilisers.
- According to CPCB, a **polluted river stretch is defined as two or more consecutive locations on a river where BOD levels exceed 3 mg/L**, rendering water unfit for bathing.
- **Major Causes**
 - **Untreated sewage** - Cities generate over 72,000 MLD of sewage, of which only about 30% is treated.
 - **Industrial effluents** - Chemical and textile hubs like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu release toxic waste.
 - **Agricultural runoff** - Fertilisers and pesticides flow into rivers during monsoons.
 - **Encroachments and sand mining** - These degrade river ecosystems and floodplains.



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Impact

- Decline in aquatic biodiversity.
- Unsafe drinking and bathing water, leading to waterborne diseases.
- Economic loss to fisheries and agriculture.
- Social unrest, as seen in protests around rivers like the Yamuna and Ganga.
- The Ganga, Yamuna, Sabarmati, Godavari, and Musi are among India's most polluted rivers, with stretches frequently falling into the CPCB's "Priority I" category, meaning they require immediate remediation.

Challenges in River Rejuvenation

- **Infrastructure gaps** - Sewage treatment plants (STPs) are under-capacity or non-functional in many cities.
- **Coordination failures** - Overlapping jurisdictions between CPCB, State Boards, and local authorities hinder accountability.
- **Funding and monitoring** - Many state-level action plans lack financial backing and robust evaluation.
- **Urbanisation pressures** - Continuous encroachments and waste generation outpace clean-up efforts.

Future Outlook

- While the marginal reduction in polluted stretches offers cautious optimism, India's river rejuvenation efforts must scale up significantly.
 - Initiatives like the **Namami Gange Mission**, **Jal Jeevan Mission**, and the push for decentralised sewage treatment are steps in the right direction.
 - However, tackling agricultural runoff, enforcing industrial compliance, and engaging communities will be crucial for sustainable outcomes.
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GST 2.0 - RATE RATIONALISATION AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS

- The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, India's landmark **indirect tax reform** launched in July 2017, has **undergone multiple tweaks**.
- The latest round of reforms, effective September 22, 2025, termed “**GST Bachat Utsav**” by the Prime Minister of India, aims at **simplifying the rate structure**.
- This will resolve classification disputes, correct inverted duty structures, and boost household consumption.

Key Features of GST 2.0:

- **Rate rationalisation:**
 - Transition from a 4-slab system (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) to a 2-slab system -
 - **Merit rate:** 5% (516 items, mostly food items, agricultural machinery, medical devices).
 - **Standard rate:** 18% (640 items, industrial goods, small cars, bikes).
 - **Special slabs:**
 - 0.25% for rough diamonds, semi-precious stones.
 - 1.5% for cut and polished diamonds.
 - 3% for precious metals like gold, silver, pearls.
 - 40% for sin/de-merit goods like pan masala, tobacco, aerated beverages, yachts, luxury cars.
 - **12% slab abolished**, except for bricks (retained under special composition scheme).
- **Services covered:** Exemptions and cuts -
 - **Life and health insurance** – exempted from GST (earlier 18%).
 - **Hotels** with per day tariff rate of below or equal to Rs 7,500 have seen a cut in GST rate to 5% without ITC (input tax credit) from 12% with ITC earlier.
 - **Salons, spas, wellness services** – reduced from 18% to 5%.



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- **Passing benefits to consumers:**
 - The Finance Ministry has asked its officers in the field to **compile monthly data reports** on price change of commodities pre and post-GST rate rationalisation.
 - These reports will be compiled by the Ministry **for the next six months** in a bid to ensure that **the benefits get passed on to the consumers**.
- **Boost to household consumption:**
 - Lower GST rates are expected to **increase disposable income, spur demand, and incentivise investments**.
 - The government aims to offset revenue loss from cuts on over 375 items through higher consumption.

Implementation and Compliance Reforms:

- **Simplified registration** – more technology-driven and time-bound.
- **Pre-filled returns** to minimise manual errors and mismatches.
- **Automated refund process** for exporters and IDS cases.
- **Amendment to CGST Act 2017 (Section 54(6)):** This will provide for 90% provisional refund for IDS cases, similar to zero-rated supplies.

Challenges:

- **Revenue concerns:** For Centre and States despite expected consumption boost.
- **IDS issues:** Persist in bicycles, tractors, fertilisers, textiles, corrugated boxes, etc.
- **Enforcement gap:** No legal provision to prevent profiteering, reliance on monitoring only.

Conclusion:

- **GST 2.0 marks a major restructuring** of India's indirect tax regime, focusing on simplification, boosting consumption, and improving compliance.
 - While it promises relief to households and businesses, addressing challenges will **determine the long-term success of these reforms**.
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THE GROWING RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

- **Traditional medicine constitutes one of the oldest and most enduring health-care systems in human history.**
- **According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it is practised in 170 of its 194 member states, representing 88% of the global population (WHO, 2023).**

India's Ayurvedic Transformation

- **India has emerged as a global leader in the revival and promotion of traditional medicine, particularly Ayurveda.**
- **The AYUSH sector, comprising over 92,000 micro, small, and medium enterprises, has expanded nearly eight-fold within a decade.**
- **Manufacturing revenues increased from ₹21,697 crore in 2014–15 to over ₹1.37 lakh crore in recent years, while service sector contributions exceeded ₹1.67 lakh crore (Government of India, 2023).**
- **Furthermore, India exports AYUSH and herbal products worth \$1.54 billion to more than 150 countries, enhancing its economic competitiveness and soft power.**
- **India has invested heavily in institutions such as the All India Institute of Ayurveda, the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, and the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences.**

Conclusion

- **Traditional medicine is experiencing a renaissance, driven by global demand for preventive, sustainable, and culturally rooted health systems.**
 - **India's Ayurvedic transformation exemplifies how traditional knowledge can be revitalised through scientific validation, institutional investment, and international cooperation.**
 - **By aligning with modern science and technology, Ayurveda is not only strengthening its credibility but also positioning itself as a vital component of global health architecture.**
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LOGISTICS EASE ACROSS DIFFERENT STATES (LEADS) 2025



- It represents a significant milestone in **benchmarking logistics performance across States and Union Territories.**

- It was conceived on the lines of the **Logistics Performance**

Index of World Bank in 2018

- It is prepared by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- **LEADS 2025 Framework is as follows**
 - **Objective Indicator:** It consists of **regulatory and institutional support and logistics enablers.**
 - **Perception indicators:** It consists of **Logistics Infrastructure, Logistics Services, Operating and Regulatory Environment, introduced Sustainable Logistics.**
 - **Two major features of LEADS 2025:**
 - **Performance assessment** of 5–7 key corridors based on journey time, truck speed, and waiting periods.
 - **API-enabled evaluation** of section-wise speeds on major road corridors
 - **Significance:** It supports India’s vision of a globally competitive and future-ready logistics ecosystem.



INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

- It was established by an international agreement, the **Rome Statute, on 17 July 1998.**

- The Rome Statute sets out the Court’s **jurisdiction, structures, and functions.**
- The Statute **entered into force on 1 July 2002.**
- It is the only **permanent international criminal tribunal.**
- **Members:** There are **125 member countries, (China, India, Israel, Russia, and the United States are not ICC parties).**



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- **Mandate:** ICC investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the **gravest crimes** of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.
- **Funding:** The Court is funded by **contributions from the States Parties** and by **voluntary contributions from Governments**, international organizations, individuals, corporations, and other entities.
- **Jurisdiction of International Criminal Court**
 - Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which hears disputes between states, the ICC **handles prosecutions of individuals.**



PARADIP PORT

PARADIP PORT

- It is **one of the major ports** of India.
- It is the **only major port** in the State of **Odisha**, situated **210 nautical miles south of Kolkata** and **260 nautical miles north of Visakhapatnam.**
- It is situated on the **Bay of Bengal on the delta of the Mahanadi River** at the mouth of one of its branches.
- It is strategically situated so as to **serve a vast hinterland spreading** over the states of **Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal.**
- The Port of Paradip, an **autonomous body** under the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963, functioning **under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways**, is **administered by a Board of Trustees set up by the Government of India headed by the Chairman.**
 - The **Trustees** of the Trust Board are **nominated by the Government of India** from various users of the Port such as shippers, ship owners, Government Departments concerned and also port labour.
- Paradip Port achieved a milestone by joining the 150 million metric tonne (MMT) club and maintaining its **top position in cargo handling among India's major ports** by recording **150.41 MMT cargo in 2024-25.**