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Current Affairs - 07 September 2025

COWIN PORTAL



- The COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN) portal was launched on January 16, 2021, as a digital platform for the administration of COVID-19 vaccination in India.
- Citizens can locate nearby vaccination centers, check slot availability, and book appointments
- It also provides access to vaccination certificates and updates on vaccination drives.
- The CoWIN platform is owned by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and was earlier the platform used for conducting Pulse Polio and other crucial immunisation programmes across the country.
 - The same platform has been expanded for doling out Covid-19 vaccines and the Ministry of Electronics and IT, along with the National Informatics Center are handling the backend and the tech infrastructure for it.
- This platform assists the program managers across all levels through automated session allocation for pre-registered beneficiaries, their verification, and for generating a digital certificate upon successful completion of the vaccine schedule.
- The system allows for creation of users (admins, supervisors, vaccinators), registration of beneficiaries (bulk upload and individual registration), facilities/planning unit and session sites followed by planning and scheduling sessions, and implementation of the vaccination process.
- The CoWIN system on a real-time basis will track not only the beneficiaries but also the vaccines at the national, state and the district levels.
- This will allow the system to monitor the utilization, wastage, and coverage of COVID-19 vaccination at National, State, District and Sub-District level.
- The key features of the CoWIN platform are



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- **Blended registration-** Beneficiaries can register online or on-site (walk-in) at the Vaccination Centre
- Beneficiaries can book online appointments based on convenience of time and choice of location
- **Track Vaccination Schedule**
- **Instant Digital vaccination Certificate** with certificate correction utility
- **Multilingual portal** with 12 languages.
- Mobile application for their ease of use for vaccinator
- **Vaccine Stock Management**
- Publishing of **Vaccine Schedules** in advance
- **Real-Time Dashboards (x) tracking** of Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI).
- **Digital Covid-19 vaccination Certificate tracking**
- Facility-wise coverage.

CORBETT TIGER RESERVE



- It is located on the foothills of the **Himalayas in Uttarakhand**.
- It was originally established as **Hailey National Park in 1936**.
- It is not only the first national park in India, but also the first to come under the **Project Tiger initiative**.
- **Terrain:** The terrain is undulating with several valleys. The rivers **Ramganga, Pallaen,** and **Sonanadi** flow through the valleys.
- It is spread over **the Bhabar and lower Shivalik regions** with a deep-water table.
- The tract is porous with boulders and sand deposits.
- **Vegetation:** North Indian tropical moist deciduous forests and tropical dry deciduous forests:



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- In general, the vegetation comprises **sal and mixed forests**, interspersed with **grass lands and riparian vegetation**.
- The grasslands are **locally known as 'Chaur'**, which are an outcome of abandoned settlements or past clearings.
- **Flora:** Evergreen Sal and its combined trees, the **Sheesham, and the Kanju** are found extensively on the ridges.
- **Fauna:** Tigers and elephants, leopards, sambar, hog deer, spotted deer etc.

BEAS RIVER



- It was **known as Vipas** in the past, meaning the **"Unfettered" river**.
- It is a river in **Himachal Pradesh and Punjab states**, northwestern India.
- It is one of the five rivers that give Punjab ("Five Rivers") its name.
- **Origin:** It rises 4,361 metres (14,308 ft.) above sea-level on the southern face of **Rohtang Pass in Kullu at Beas Kund**.
- **Course:** It traverses 470 kilometres before joining **Sutlej at Harike, Punjab**.
- **Major Tributaries:** The major tributaries of the Beas River are **Bain, Banganga, Luni, and Uhal**, along with Banner, Chakki, Gaj, Harla, Mamuni, Parvati, Patlikuhlal, Sainj, Suketi, and Tirthan.
- The Beas forms the world-famous valleys of **Kullu and Kangra**.
- The Beas catchment is under the **influence of western disturbances** that bring snowfall to the upper sub-catchment during winter and the monsoon provides around **70% of the annual rainfall during June - September**.
- **Dams:** The **Pong Dam**, also known as **the Beas Dam**, is an earth-fill embankment dam constructed on the river Beas in the Kangra district of **Himachal Pradesh**.



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THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

- The 10-nation SCO summit in Tianjin showcased China's growing influence, with leaders from Turkey, Nepal, Maldives, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Indonesia, and Malaysia in attendance.
- The focus then shifted to Beijing, where President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin led a grand military parade marking 80 years since World War II's end, joined by North Korea's Kim Jong Un and others.
- The summit's declarations criticized "**coercive, unilateral**" economic measures, targeting U.S. tariffs and European sanctions.
- China promoted a "Global Governance Initiative," while PM Modi called for "civilisational dialogue" among SCO members.

Modi–Xi Bilateral: Steps Toward Normalisation

- PM Modi's first China visit since 2018, and first direct meeting with President Xi since the 2020 Galwan clashes, marked a cautious thaw in ties.
- Xi called India and China "**partners, not rivals**," while India softened its earlier stance of linking broader ties strictly to border normalisation.
- Both sides agreed that Special Representatives — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and India's NSA Ajit Doval — would continue talks on the boundary issue.
- Besides revival of flights, visa facilitation and the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, they agreed to resolve the trade issues between them.

U.S. Reaction to India's SCO Engagements

- In Washington, images of the Tianjin "troika" with Modi, Xi, and Putin — alongside other leaders from Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan — were viewed as **India drifting away from the West**.
- Former U.S. President Donald Trump posted that America had "lost India and Russia to deepest, darkest China," while Trade Adviser Peter Navarro criticized India for aligning with Russia and China.



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- Some even dubbed the Ukraine conflict “Modi’s war,” a claim India’s MEA rejected.
- Despite tensions over tariffs, visas, and trade, Trump later softened his stance, calling India–U.S. ties a “special relationship” and praising his friendship with Modi, who in turn welcomed Trump’s positive remarks.

The Road Ahead for India’s Foreign Policy

- Despite perceptions of India swinging between East and West, its approach continues to reflect its **long-standing policy of strategic autonomy and balance**.
- PM Modi’s China visit for the SCO, following the Xi-Modi meeting in Kazan in 2024, was aimed at normalising ties after years of tension, though the Modi-Xi-Putin interaction carried limited weight without a revival of formal RIC talks.
- India–U.S. ties remain strained over tariffs, Russian oil imports, and market access, but military cooperation and official exchanges continue.
- The upcoming UNGA visit by External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and discussions on the Quad summit, with Trump expected in India later this year, will be key in shaping the trajectory of India–U.S. relations.

ANGIKAAR 2025 CAMPAIGN



- It is a **last-mile outreach campaign** to create awareness about **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0)**.
- It will accelerate the implementation of PMAY-U 2.0 by creating **widespread awareness** about the scheme across the country.
- It is also designed to **fast-track verification of applications** under the scheme and expedite the completion of already sanctioned houses under PMAY-U.
- **Duration:** It will run for a **period of two months** across 5,000+ Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the country.
- **Focus:** It mainly focuses on **vulnerable sections of society** to provide benefits of the housing scheme.



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- It involves **door-to-door awareness** activity and other outreach mediums and community mobilisation.

Key facts about Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0

- It is one of the **major flagship programmes** being implemented by Government of India to provide **all-weather pucca houses** to all Eligibility beneficiaries in the **urban areas**.
- The Government assistance under PMAY-U 2.0 will be **upto 2.50 lakh per unit**.

BLOOD MOON



- A blood moon is the dramatic **red glow of the moon** during a **total lunar eclipse**.

• Occurrence of Blood Moon

- A blood moon occurs when **Earth comes directly between the Sun and the moon**.
- A process called **Rayleigh scattering** causes the moon to appear red instead of dark.
- This happens because **shorter-wavelength light** (blue) is scattered, while **longer-wavelength red light** passes through the Earth's atmosphere, making the moon appear red.
- During totality, "the entire Moon falls within the darkest part of **Earth's shadow, called the umbra**."
- When the Moon is within the umbra, it appears red-orange." This colour shift is what earns the event its nickname, the "blood moon."
- Depending on external factors such as atmospheric conditions and **light pollution, the moon, during a blood moon phase, may appear red, orange, or copper-coloured**.

What is Rayleigh scattering?

- It was explained by the British Nobel laureate John William Strutt (Lord Rayleigh) in the 19th century.



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- When light interacts with particles smaller than its wavelength, the intensity of the scattered light is inversely proportional to its wavelength.
- This is the reason the earth sky appears blue: it has the shortest wavelength in visible light.

GST RATE CUTS 2025: IMPACT ON ECONOMY AND REVENUE

- Govt of India has undertaken one of the most significant overhauls of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime since its introduction in 2017.
- In September 2025, the GST Council announced major rate rationalisation, reducing the number of slabs and cutting taxes on a wide range of items.
- This reform, projected as a "next-generation" step, is expected to spur demand, ease compliance, and stimulate growth at a time when India faces external shocks such as steep U.S. tariffs on Indian exports.
- However, it also raises questions on revenue sustainability and uneven sectoral impacts.

GST Rationalisation: A Long-Pending Reform

- The idea of simplifying GST has been under discussion for years. Initially, GST featured multiple rates: 0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%, along with compensation cess.
- Critics argued that this complicated structure undermined the "one nation, one tax" principle.
- In 2021, a Group of Ministers (GoM) was formed to suggest rationalisation, but progress was slow until the Union government revived the proposal in 2025.
- The reforms introduced now reduce the slabs to 0%, 5%, 18%, and 40%, with the compensation cess retained only temporarily for tobacco products.
- Over 91% of items that underwent rate changes witnessed cuts, signalling a clear pro-consumer approach.

Key Changes Announced

- **Wider Tax Reductions:** Of 453 items reviewed, 413 saw rate cuts, particularly shifting goods from the 12% to the 5% slab.



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- **Luxury Items:** While 17 goods moved from 28% to 40%, the effective tax incidence on items like luxury cars fell, since the cess was subsumed.
- **Healthcare and Renewable Energy:** Rates on medical products and renewable energy components dropped from 12% to 5%, benefiting patients and clean energy expansion.
- **Construction Materials:** Cement moved from 28% to 18%, providing relief to the real estate sector.
- **Automobiles:** Cars and non-luxury two-wheelers moved from 28% to 18%, boosting the auto sector.

Need for the Reforms

Two factors added urgency to these changes:

- **End of Compensation Cess:** With cess repayment to States nearing completion, the government sought a new rate structure to prevent “sin goods” like tobacco from becoming artificially cheap.
- **U.S. Tariffs Impact:** With 50% tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Indian imports, India anticipated stress on exports and private investment. By rationalising GST, the government aimed to boost domestic consumption to offset external shocks.

Beneficiary Sectors

- **Healthcare:** Cheaper medical devices and equipment promise direct consumer benefits.
 - **Renewable Energy:** Lower tax on solar, wind, and related equipment supports India’s 2030 clean energy targets.
 - **Real Estate and Construction:** Lower GST on cement and slabs reduces costs, likely stimulating housing demand.
 - **Consumer Goods and Appliances:** Reduced costs could accelerate sales during the festive season.
 - **Automobile Sector:** Car manufacturers expect a stronger demand revival.
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REPRESENTATION IN THE RAJYA SABHA/UPPER HOUSE OF THE PARLIAMENT

Why in News?

- The Union Law and Justice Ministry recently **rejected** the Election Commission's (EC) **proposal** for a presidential order to **stagger the terms of Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K) four Rajya Sabha seats**.
- This has **left the Union Territory (UT) without representation** in the Upper House since 2021.

Background:

- **Vacancy of seats:** J&K's four Rajya Sabha seats became vacant in 2021 when MPs completed their terms during President's Rule.
- **Elections 2024:** Despite Assembly elections being held in Sept–Oct 2024, Rajya Sabha elections are yet to be conducted.
- **Political concern:** The current Chief Minister of the UT of J&K has raised questions about the delay.

EC's Proposal:

- **Proposal:** A presidential order to curtail the terms of some of the Rajya Sabha seats of J&K.
 - **Objective:** Ensure staggered retirement of J&K's Rajya Sabha members, **preventing simultaneous vacancy**.
 - **Reference:** A similar presidential order was issued in **1952** after the first Rajya Sabha election to create a staggered cycle.
 - **Article 83:** Provides that one-third of Rajya Sabha members retire every two years, ensuring continuity. It is a **permanent** House as opposed to the Lok Sabha that has a fixed five-year term.
 - **Disturbance in cycle:** In J&K (since the 1990s) and in Delhi (post-1991 NCT of Delhi Act), terms have become concurrent due to President's Rule or institutional changes.
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