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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Hindu & The Indian express

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U.S. trade body moves court over Trump's H-1B fee hike

Lawsuit says \$100,000 fee on new applications overrides existing provisions in current laws that apply to programme; hike will make H-1B cost prohibitive for employers, says body's executive V-P

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

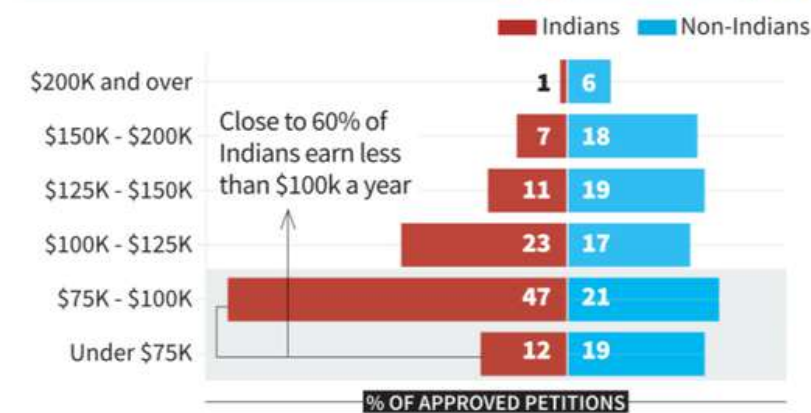
The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has filed a lawsuit challenging the Donald Trump administration's \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visa applications, saying it overrides existing provisions in current laws that apply to the H-1B programme.

The fee hike on fresh H-1B visa applications was aimed at undoing the apparent trend of U.S. employers replacing American workers with cheaper labour from foreign countries.

"The Chamber's litigation argues that the new fee is unlawful because it overrides provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act that govern the H-1B program, including the re-

Counting the cost

Nearly **60% of Indian H-1B workers earned an annual salary of \$100,000 or less in FY2024**. So, for many Indians, the new visa fee would outstrip their actual pay, making them costly hires



The salary figures are drawn from details submitted by employers before the beneficiary begins work under a specific H-1B approval

quirement that fees be based on the costs incurred by the government in processing visas," the business advocacy group said in a statement on

Thursday. The case was filed before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The H-1B programme was designed for high-

skilled jobs for which companies find it difficult to find local talent.

"The new \$100,000 visa fee will make it cost-prohibitive for U.S. employers, especially start-ups and small and midsize businesses, to utilise the H-1B program, which was created by Congress expressly to ensure that American businesses of all sizes can access the global talent they need to grow their operations here in the U.S," Neil Bradley, executive vice-president and chief policy officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said.

The new fee will expire after a year of application, but the U.S. government can extend it.

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Return to mainstream: Maoists holding copies of the Constitution after their surrender in Chhattisgarh on Friday. PTI

210 Maoists lay down arms in Chhattisgarh

Shubhomoy Sikdar
JAGDALPUR

In a mass surrender, 210 Maoist cadres from the Dandakaranya region laid down arms and joined Chhattisgarh's rehabilitation programme on Friday.

This is the first time in the history of the anti-Naxal movement that such a large number of senior Maoist cadres have surrendered together, the State government said in a statement. Rupesh, alias Satish, a Central Committee member of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist),

was the most high-profile participant at the official surrender ceremony.

"The youth who had strayed onto the dark path of violence for years have now laid down their guns and embraced the Constitution. This is not merely a moment of surrender – it marks a new beginning of trust, transformation, and life," Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said. Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said that northwestern Bastar is now Naxal-free.

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U.S. trade body moves court over Trump's H-1B fee hike

Source: The Hindu | Page 1

What changed: Trump's new rule imposes a \$100,000 supplemental fee on new H-1B visa petitions filed on or after September 21, 2025. Exemptions include: renewal petitions (for existing H-1B holders) and petitions filed before the effective date.

Why in News: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has sued, arguing the fee violates existing law. The high cost could cripple employers' ability to hire skilled foreign workers.

210 Maoists lay down arms in Chhattisgarh; Maharashtra surrender too

Source: The Hindu | Page 1

What changed (Maharashtra): On October 14, 2025, Mallojula Venugopal Rao (Bhupati) - a senior Maoist leader - surrendered with 62 cadres in Gadchiroli, handing over weapons and ending the region's last major Naxal stronghold.

Why in News: Alongside the mass surrender of 210 Maoists in Chhattisgarh, the Maharashtra surrender is seen as a symbolic and strategic blow to the Maoist movement across central India.

LAB agrees to talks after Centre orders judicial probe into Sept. 24 Leh violence

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Leh Apex Body (LAB) has agreed to resume stalled talks with the Centre after the Union Home Ministry announced a judicial inquiry into the September 24 violence in Leh on Friday.

The LAB leads a movement that calls for Statehood and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule.

Meanwhile, the LAB and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), which are conglomerations of social, political, and religious bodies, will hold “peaceful protests” in the region on Saturday over the September 24 violence and the subsequent crackdown by security forces.

Justice B.S. Chauhan, a former Supreme Court judge, will conduct the inquiry

The Ministry said Justice B.S. Chauhan, a former judge of the Supreme Court, will conduct the judicial inquiry.

It will look “into the circumstances leading to the serious law and order situation, the police action, and the resultant unfortunate death of the four individuals”, the order stated.

The MHA, in the order, also underlined that the Centre was “always open for dialogue”.

“We continue to welcome the discussions with LAB and KDA through the

High-Powered Committee (HPC) on Ladakh or any such platform,” read the order. It added that the Centre was “confident that continuous dialogue would yield the desired results in the near future.” “The Government stands committed to the aspirations of the people of Ladakh”.

A judicial probe has been among the LAB and KDA’s key demands to resume talks with the Centre. Both the bodies had withdrawn from talks scheduled for October 6 with the HPC led by Union Minister Nityanand Rai following the violence.

“We welcome the judicial probe. We are ready to resume talks with the Centre,” said Chering Dorjay Lakruk, Ladakh Budd-

hist Association president and co-chairman of the LAB.

Mr. Lakruk clarified that other demands, like the release of activist Sonam Wangchuk and compensation to victims, “are not a hurdle to resume talks.”

Silent protest march

The Centre and citizens from Ladakh have held several rounds of talks over the past year to address demands by the LAB and the KDA, including Statehood, inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, an additional Lok Sabha seat, and a Public Service Commission.

The Central government has already notified domicile and reservation rules for Ladakh after consulting with these bodies.

Ahead of Bengal poll, Centre names interlocutor to address political demands of Gorkhas

Parties in Darjeeling hills welcome move, call it a historic step; development assumes significance, especially with ruling Trinamool Cong. consistently opposed to the idea of bifurcation of the State

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Centre has appointed former Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA) Pankaj Kumar Singh as the interlocutor to hold talks with Gorkha representatives to address their political demands, including the call for a separate State comprising areas of Darjeeling hills, officials said on Friday. Lieutenant General (retired) Vijay Madan, who was the last interlocutor to be appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 2009, had quit in 2011.

Mr. Singh, a 1988-batch retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer has also headed the Border Security Force (BSF) as its Director General till December 31, 2022. In 2023, he was appointed the Deputy NSA for a period of two years.

The move coming ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election assumes significance, especially with the ruling Trinamool Congress consistently opposed to the idea of bifurcation of the State.



Supporters of the Gorkhaland movement during a protest at Milanmore village in Darjeeling district. FILE PHOTO

The demand for the creation of a separate State of Gorkhaland has been the fulcrum of politics in the hills since the 1980s.

In 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls had referred to the phrase “permanent political solution” for the region.

The party, however, didn’t mention the phrase in its 2024 manifesto. The Darjeeling hills have been electing BJP MPs and MLAs backed by the party for the past two decades.

On April 3, the MHA resumed dialogue with Gorkha representatives after a gap of more than three years to address the issues concerning the community.

In the meeting chaired by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, the delegation, comprising Darjeeling BJP MP Raju Bista, demanded a permanent solution to the Gorkhaland (separate State for Gorkhas) issue and grant of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to 11 Gorkha sub-communities.

Welcoming the latest move, Mr. Bista, in a social media post, said, “For the first time in the history of our region, we have reached the stage of appointing an interlocutor without any bloodshed, or political unrest... For us, this signifies a remarkable victory for the people of Darjeeling hills, the Terai, and the Dooars.”

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) led by Bimal Gurung, a political party that has been raising the demand for the creation of a separate State of Gorkhaland for the past two decades, also welcomed the development.

‘Permanent solution’

“A permanent solution under the Constitution is not only vital for protecting the rights of the Gorkha community, but also essential for the overall progress and prosperity of the entire region and people who live here,” Mr. Gurung said in a statement.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front, which launched a movement for Gorkhaland in the 1980s, hailed the decision as a “historic step, reflecting the Indian government’s sensitivity, commitment towards resolving the Gorkha community’s issues”.

TMC Darjeeling (Hills) president L.B. Rai, however, called the move a “political gimmick ahead of the upcoming State election”.

(With inputs from Vijaita Singh in New Delhi)

LAB agrees to talks after Centre orders judicial probe into Sept. 24 Leh violence

Source: The Hindu | Page 1

Context: The Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) lead movements demanding Statehood and inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule. Tensions rose after September 24 violence in Leh during protests over these demands.

Why in News: The LAB agreed to resume talks with the Centre after the Union Home Ministry ordered a judicial probe, headed by Justice B.S. Chauhan (former SC judge), into the Leh violence – a key demand of the regional bodies.

Ahead of Bengal poll, Centre names interlocutor to address political demands of Gorkhas

Source: The Hindu | Page 2

Context: The Gorkha community in Darjeeling has long demanded a separate State of Gorkhaland and greater political recognition – a core issue since the 1980s.

Why in News: The Centre appointed Pankaj Kumar Singh, former Deputy NSA, as interlocutor to hold talks with Gorkha representatives and address their political demands, including statehood and Scheduled Tribe status, ahead of the 2026 Bengal Assembly elections.

Rotavirus vaccine effective against gastroenteritis in children: study

Ramya Kannan
CHENNAI

A recent study on the impact of the indigenous rotavirus vaccine in India found marked reductions in rotavirus-based gastroenteritis in sites across the country.

Published in the recent edition of *The Nature Medicine*, the study 'Impact of the indigenous rotavirus vaccine Rotavac in the Universal Immunization Program in India during 2016-2020', is an observational, multi-centre analysis by Nayana P. Nair and Samarasimha N. Reddy, on behalf of the collaborators of the rotavirus vaccine effectiveness and impact assessment network.

The study looked at 31 hospitals in nine States between 2016 and 2020, to compare proportions and trends before and after the



Annually, 128,500 deaths of children under the age of five are attributed to rotavirus.

introduction of Rotavac in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

In 2016, India introduced Rotavac, an indigenous oral rotavirus vaccine, administered at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age, in its UIP. When a vaccine is introduced in the UIP, it is provided free to all eligible beneficiaries.

The authors said, "Evaluating its effectiveness under routine programmatic

conditions is critical, given the variable performance of rotavirus vaccines in low- and middle-income countries."

They noted, "The effectiveness of the routine use of indigenous Rotavac vaccine in the national immunisation program was 54%. This was reassuringly similar to the efficacy of 54%, reported during the phase 3 vaccine trial." Further, the effectiveness was sustained in the first two years of life, when the burden of rotavirus is at its greatest.

They found that the proportion of paediatric rotavirus hospitalisations also declined substantially.

Rotavac was developed as part of a public-private partnership with the Department of Biotechnology, Bharat Biotech, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Preven-

tion, Stanford University, and PATH, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.

Gagandeep Kang, Indian virologist and microbiologist who played a key role in Rotavac's development, stressed the importance of the study in a post on social media. "Rotavirus vaccine effectiveness is similar to efficacy in India! In other words, vaccines work in the real world and not in just controlled clinical trials. [This is] The first data from India from one of the largest- ever rotavirus vaccine effectiveness studies, contributed by collaborators across many States and organisations. It took a really long time to generate the data and publish it, but it was important to conduct this study for the first indigenous oral rotavirus vaccine."

Rotavirus vaccine effective against gastroenteritis in children: study

Source: The Hindu | Page 12 | Category: Science & Technology |
Disease: Gastroenteritis

Why in News: A Nature Medicine study found India's Rotavac vaccine cut gastroenteritis cases by 54% in real-world use, confirming its success under the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

Gastroenteritis (Rotavirus):

- **Cause:** Rotavirus infection via fecal-oral route (contaminated food/water).
- **Affects:** Infants & children under 5.
- **Symptoms:** Watery diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, dehydration.
- **Deaths:** \$approx\$ 1.28 lakh/year in India.
- **Treatment:** ORS, fluids, zinc; no specific drug.
- **Best prevention:** Vaccination.

About Rotavac:

- **Developed by:** Bharat Biotech with DBT, NIH, CDC, PATH, & Gates Foundation.
- **Launched:** 2016 under UIP; oral doses at 6, 10, 14 weeks (free).
- **Significance:** 1st indigenous oral Rotavirus vaccine.

YELLOW METAL'S SHARE IN TOTAL RESERVES ROSE TO 14.7%, HIGHEST SINCE 1996-97: TRADERS

RBI's gold pile tops \$100 bn on surging prices

REUTERS

MUMBAI, OCTOBER 17

INDIA'S GOLD reserves crossed the \$100 billion mark for the first time, according to the Reserve Bank of India's latest foreign exchange reserves data, buoyed by a global price rally even as the central bank's purchases slowed sharply this year.

India's gold holdings rose by \$3.595 billion to \$102.365 billion in the week through October 10, RBI data showed on Friday, while overall foreign exchange reserves declined \$2.18 billion to \$697.784 billion.

The share of gold in India's total reserves climbed to 14.7 per cent, the highest since 1996-97, ac-



India is the world's second-largest consumer of gold. *File*

cording to traders.

Gold's share in India's foreign exchange reserves has almost

doubled over the past decade — from below 7 per cent to nearly 15 per cent — reflecting both

steady central bank accumulation and a surge in global bullion prices.

That's led to the \$100 billion milestone being hit despite a marked slowdown in the RBI's gold purchases this year.

The central bank bought gold in only four of the first nine months of 2025, compared with near-monthly additions in 2024, according to World Gold Council data.

Cumulative buying from January to September stood at just 4 tonnes, sharply lower than 50 tonnes in the same period a year earlier.

The share of gold in India's foreign exchange reserves has increased significantly, largely driven by valuation gains from

the rising gold price, said Kavita Chacko, research head for India at the World Gold Council.

Gold has surged about 65 per cent in 2025, powered by a potent mix of macroeconomic, institutional and psychological drivers.

Global central banks continue to accumulate gold as part of reserve diversification away from the US dollar — a trend spurred by heightened geopolitical risks, sanctions pressures and de-dollarisation.

India is the world's second-largest consumer of gold and relies on imports to meet demand. Buying gold is deeply rooted in Indian culture, driven by tradition and its role as both an investment and a status symbol.

RBI's gold pile tops \$100 bn on surging prices

Source: The Indian Express | Page 21

Why in News: India's gold reserves crossed \$100 billion for the first time, according to RBI's latest foreign exchange data. The milestone was driven by a 65% surge in global gold prices in 2025, even as RBI's gold purchases slowed. Gold now accounts for 14.7% of India's total forex reserves, the highest share since 1996-97.

Key Components of India's Foreign Exchange Reserves:

- **Foreign Currency Assets (FCA):** Around 82–83% – includes major currencies like USD, EUR, GBP, and foreign government bonds.
- **Gold Reserves:** Around 14.7% – physical gold held by the RBI, valued in U.S. dollars.
- **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs):** Around 1.8% – international reserve assets created by the IMF.
- **Reserve Tranche Position (RTP):** Around 0.5% – India's contribution and withdrawal rights with the IMF.

Why RBI and Global Central Banks Are Buying More Gold:

- **Reserve diversification:** To reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar and diversify risk across assets.
- **Safe-haven asset:** Gold provides stability during geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty.
- **Inflation hedge:** Protects reserves when currencies weaken and inflation rises.
- **De-dollarisation:** Global move to build non-dollar reserves due to sanctions and dollar volatility.
- **Intrinsic value:** Gold carries no default risk, retains long-term value, and is highly liquid in crises.



Which one of the following groups of items is included in India's foreign-exchange reserves?

- (a) Foreign-currency assets, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and loans from foreign countries
- (b) Foreign-currency assets, gold holdings of the RBI and SDRs
- (c) Foreign-currency assets, loans from the World Bank and SDRs
- (d) Foreign-currency assets, gold holdings of the RBI and loans from the World Bank

2013

“Gold Tranche” (Reserve Tranche) refers to

- (a) a loan system of the World Bank
- (b) one of the operations of a Central Bank
- (c) a credit system granted by WTO to its members
- (d) a credit system granted by IMF to its members

2020

What is/are the purpose/purposes of Government's 'Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme' and 'Gold Monetization Scheme'?

1. To bring the idle gold lying with Indian households into the economy
2. To promote FDI in the gold and jewellery sector
3. To reduce India's dependence on gold imports

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

2016



Consider the following statements :

Statement-I :

Switzerland is one of the leading exporters of gold in terms of value.

Statement-II :

Switzerland has the second largest gold reserves in the world.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

2023

Consider the following statements :

- 1. In India, State Governments do not have the power to auction non-coal mines.
- 2. Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand do not have gold mines.
- 3. Rajasthan has iron ore mines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 3 only

2018

- 1 B**
- 2 D**
- 3 C**
- 4 C**
- 5 D**