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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Hindu & The Indian express

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Modi, Trump speak; U.S., India call accounts differ

Leaders extend Deepavali greetings over phone; while U.S. President says Modi conveyed decision to stop buying Russian oil and discussed India-Pak. peace, India denies Pakistan was discussed

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Days ahead of a possible meeting in Kuala Lumpur, and amidst intense ongoing trade negotiations, U.S. President Donald Trump called Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday to extend Deepavali greetings, the leaders said. However, the two sides differed vastly in their comments following the call.

Mr. Modi referred to a united stance on terrorism, while Mr. Trump said the conversation focused on the trade deal, Russian oil, and ensuring “no war with Pakistan”. However, government sources insisted that Pakistan was not discussed during the call.

For the fourth time in a

On this festival of lights, may our two great democracies continue to illuminate the world with hope and stand united against terrorism in all its forms

NARENDRA MODI



We had a great conversation. We talked about trade. We talked about a lot of things, but mostly the world of trade. He's very interested in that

DONALD TRUMP



week, Mr. Trump said that Mr. Modi had conveyed the government's decision to cut its imports of Russian oil in an effort to end the Ukraine conflict, a claim he asserted in the presence of Indian Ambassador to Washington Vinay Kwatra, which was not refuted.

“I just spoke to your Prime Minister today,” Mr.

Trump said on Tuesday, addressing the “people of India” directly in comments at the White House where he held a special Deepavali celebration for prominent Indian-Americans and Indian Embassy officials. “We had a great conversation. We talked about trade. We talked about a lot of things, but

mostly the world of trade. He's very interested in that,” he added.

A few hours later, the Prime Minister thanked the U.S. President for his phone call and “warm Diwali greetings”. “On this festival of lights, may our two great democracies continue to illuminate the world with hope and stand united against terrorism in all its forms,” Mr. Modi said, without offering any further details.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not comment on the discussion between the two leaders, who are both due to travel to Malaysia this weekend to attend ASEAN-related summits, including the East Asia Summit together.

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Modi, Trump speak; U.S., India call accounts differ

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 | Category: International Relations

Why in News:

- PM Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump held a phone conversation ahead of ASEAN and East Asia Summits in Malaysia.
- Discussions covered trade issues, Russian oil imports, terrorism, and regional peace.
- U.S. claimed Modi promised to stop Russian oil imports and discussed Pakistan; India denied discussing Pakistan.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):

- **Founded:** 1967 (Bangkok Declaration)
- **Members:** 10 (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)
- **Headquarters:** Jakarta, Indonesia
- **Objective:** Promote political, economic, and security cooperation in Southeast Asia; ensure regional stability and economic growth.
- **India's Association:** India is not a member but a dialogue partner since 1992; part of ASEAN-led forums like EAS, ARF, and ADMM+.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- **Established:** 2005
- **Members:** 18 (10 ASEAN + India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, U.S., Russia)
- **Purpose:** Platform for strategic dialogue on political, security, and economic issues in the Indo-Pacific region.

• Significance for India:

- Promotes Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific engagement.
- Forum for discussing terrorism, trade, maritime security, and regional connectivity.



Ladakh talks: MHA offers key provisions under Article 371

Deadly standoff

A timeline of the protest and unrest in Leh city, Ladakh

Sept. 10: LAB, KDA launch hunger strike in Leh

Sept. 24: Violence erupts in Leh; four killed, over 100 injured



Sept. 26: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, leading the strike, detained under NSA

Sept. 29: LAB and KDA cancel September 30 talks, demand judicial probe into killings

Oct. 17: MHA announces judicial enquiry

Oct. 19: Ladakh groups announce resumption of talks with MHA

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A month after four persons, including a Kargil war veteran, were killed in police action against protesters seeking Ladakhi Statehood, civil society groups resumed talks on the region's status with Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officials on Wednesday.

The MHA officials indicated to the two groups – the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic

Alliance (KDA) – that special provisions guaranteed under Article 371 of the Constitution can be considered for Ladakh, people who attended the meeting told *The Hindu*.

However, both groups said they continued to demand inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which recognises tribal status and provides a measure of autonomy and self-governance.

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Ladakh talks: MHA offers key provisions under Article 371

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 | Category: Polity & Governance / Internal Security

Why in news:

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) held talks with Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) on Ladakh's demand for statehood and constitutional safeguards.
- MHA indicated that special provisions under Article 371 could be considered for Ladakh.
- However, local groups continued to demand inclusion under the Sixth Schedule for greater autonomy and tribal self-governance.

Article 371 (Special Provisions for States)

- Applies to: Specific individual states (e.g., Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim, etc.)
- Objective: Protect local customs, culture, and economic interests.
- Nature: State-specific constitutional safeguards – administrative, political, or developmental.
 - Authority: Governor/State Govt given special powers.
 - Example: Nagaland – local laws and land ownership protected; Mizoram – safeguard for religious/social practices.



Sixth Schedule (Tribal Areas – NE States)

- **Applies to:** Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura.
- **Objective:** Grant autonomy and self-governance to tribal areas.
- **Nature:** Establishes Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with legislative, judicial, and financial powers.
 - **Authority:** Elected local councils make laws on land, forest, and culture.
 - **Example:** Khasi Hills ADC (Meghalaya).

Come November 1, Kerala will officially be first State 'free of extreme poverty'

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will officially declare the State free from extreme poverty at a function to be held at Central Stadium in the capital on November 1.

Actors Mohanlal, Mammootty and Kamal Haasan will be special guests at the event to which all State Ministers as well as Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan will be invited, Minister for Local Self-Governments M.B. Rajesh said at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday.

Mr. Rajesh said the extreme poverty eradication programme began in 2021 as one of the first Cabinet

Securing future

Through the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project launched in 2021, the Kerala government prepared micro-plans for every family

■ **1,03,099** individuals from 64,006 families identified as extremely poor

■ **21,263** families received essential documents

■ **3,913** families were provided new houses

■ **1,338** families were allotted land



■ **5,651** families received up to ₹2 lakh each for house renovation

■ **3,822** families got livelihood assistance

decisions of the Left Democratic Front government.

"According to the NITI Aayog's study in 2021, Kerala is the State with the lowest poverty rate in the country with a poverty rate of 0.7% of the total population. The government took

the lead in reaching out to this small population and meeting their needs. Kerala will become the first State in the country to achieve this landmark," the Minister said.

After ground-level surveys, 64,006 families were

identified as extremely poor, based on factors such as food, health, livelihood, and shelter.

Many marginalised people, whose names were not even on the voters' list and who did not even have a ration card or Aadhaar, were on this list. Micro-plans on the immediate and long-term needs were prepared for each of the families. Essential documents were given to 21,263 individuals lacking these.

He added that 3,913 families were provided houses and 1,338 families land, while 5,651 families received up to ₹2 lakh for renovating their houses.

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Come November 1, Kerala will officially be first State 'free of extreme poverty'

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 | GS Paper 2 – Governance & Welfare Schemes | GS Paper 3 – Poverty Alleviation

Why in News:

- Kerala will officially declare itself free from extreme poverty on November 1, 2025.
- The achievement comes under the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (2021)
- Based on NITI Aayog's 2021 study, Kerala already had the lowest poverty rate in India (0.7%).
- Around 64,006 families were identified as extremely poor (based on food, health, livelihood, and shelter) and supported with housing, land, livelihood, and financial aid.

Definition of Extreme Poverty

Global Definition (World Bank):

- People living on less than \$3 per day (PPP).
- Focuses on minimum income needed for survival – food, shelter, clothing, basic health, and education.

Indian Context:

- No fixed "extreme poverty" definition, but national poverty lines are based on Tendulkar (2009) or Rangarajan (2014) Committees.
- Tendulkar line (2009):
 - ₹33/day (urban), ₹27/day (rural) – basic food, clothing, housing, fuel, education, health.
- NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI):
- Considers deprivation in health, education, and living standards (aligned with UNDP's global MPI).

Govt. proposes mandatory labelling of AI-generated content on social media

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Electronics and Information Technology Ministry on Wednesday proposed mandatory disclosure and labelling of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated “synthetic” content on social media platforms.

The Ministry released a draft amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, that requires social media companies to allow users to self-declare if the content they upload is AI-generated. In cases where users fail to make such declarations, platforms must proactively de-

Disclosure mandate

The draft amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, outlines the Ministry’s proposed approach to **regulating synthetic content**

■ All synthetic content — whether video, photo, audio, or text — **must carry a disclosure**

■ The disclosure should cover **at least 10% of the surface area** in all AI-generated audiovisual posts



■ Users must be given the option to self-declare AI-generated posts

tect and label AI-generated content.

The declaration must cover 10% of the content’s area, and applies to all types of synthetic content, including text, video, and audio, and is not limited to photorealistic content, ac-

cording to officials and the draft text.

“In Parliament as well as many other fora, people have demanded that something should be done about the deepfakes which are harming society,” IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

told presspersons.

“People are using some prominent persons’ image and creating deepfakes, which are then affecting their personal lives, privacy as well as [creating] various misconceptions in society. So the step we have taken is making sure that users get to know whether something is synthetic or real. Once users know, they can take a call. But it’s important that users know what is real. That distinction will be led through mandatory data labelling.”

The proposal marks a shift in the Ministry’s approach to synthetic content.

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Govt proposes mandatory labelling of AI content

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 | Category: Science & Tech / Governance

Why in News:

- IT Ministry plans to amend IT Rules 2021 to make AI-generated (synthetic) content disclosure mandatory on social media.
- Move aims to curb deepfakes and misinformation using AI-created images, videos, or audio.

"Mandatory Labelling"

- All AI-made synthetic content must carry a clear tag saying it's AI-generated.
- Label must cover at least 10% of content area (for visuals).

Key Changes:

1. **Self-declaration: Users must disclose AI use.**
2. **Platform duty: Detect & label undeclared AI posts.**
3. **Applies to: Text, photo, video, audio.**
4. **Goal: Counter fake content, protect privacy, build trust.**

Officers issuing content notice to be made more 'accountable'

Notices under Rule 3(1)(d) must clarify that the nature of the communication is a warning that safe harbour does not apply to the content being flagged; orders will be passed at Joint Secretary level

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) will amend social media takedown rules to make officers sending notices to social media companies over content on their platforms more "accountable", officials said on Wednesday. The new safeguards will be introduced by way of an amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 within this week itself, senior officials briefing the press said.

"The accountability of the government increases with this change," IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told presspersons.

As a part of these new rules, the government "will be giving a reasoned intimation whenever any such order is passed, and orders will be passed at a fairly senior level, Joint Secretary and above for the Central government, and Deputy Inspector-General at the State level", the Minister said.

Boosting transparency

The amended rules on social media takedown notices seek to build clarity in government communication and reduce arbitrary or unclear takedown action. The amendment will be notified within a week and is expected to take effect from November 15

■ What is Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology Rules, 2021?

This rule allows government officials to flag online content that may violate Indian laws or pose risks. When flagged under Rule 3(1)(d), social media companies lose "safe harbour" protection, meaning they can be held legally responsible for the content — like publishers, not just intermediaries



■ What is changing?

Notices under these rules will now: Include a clear explanation ("reasoned intimation")

■ Each notice must now:

- ✓ Clearly state it is a "warning", not a takedown order
- ✓ Explain why safe harbour does not apply
- ✓ Be issued only by authorised senior officers

Be issued only by Joint Secretary & above (Central level) and Deputy Inspector General & above (State level)

The safeguards specifically pertain to Rule 3(1)(d) of the IT Rules, under which government officials are empowered to flag content in such a way that social media firms would not be able to claim "safe harbour" from legal liability for content users post. Such notices will force social media firms to defend content as though they were publishers, and not just an intermediary for such content. The amendment has not yet been not-

ified in the Gazette, but officials said it would be done within the week, and would go into effect on November 15.

The social media platform X had challenged the use of Rule 3(1)(d) as an unconstitutional and arbitrary way for police officers to issue "censorship" orders from around the country. A single judge Bench of the Karnataka High Court upheld the government's right to empower officials to issue

such notices. Officials briefing the media denied there was any connection between this court case and these safeguards.

Officials will now have to make notices under Rule 3(1)(d) more clear, a senior official said.

These notices must clarify that the nature of the communication is a warning that safe harbour does not apply to the content being flagged, and is not an immediately enforceable takedown order *per se*.

Officers issuing content notices to be made more accountable under amended IT Rules

Source: The Hindu | Page: 14 | Subject: Science & Technology / Governance

Why in News:

The IT Ministry will amend the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 to make officers issuing content notices more transparent, accountable, and senior-level authorized. The step follows misuse of notice powers under Rule 3(1)(d) and a Karnataka High Court directive for stronger safeguards.

What is "Safe Harbour" under Rule 3(1)(d)

"Safe Harbour" gives legal immunity to social media intermediaries (like X, YouTube, Meta) from user-posted content – meaning they are not liable for what users upload, as long as they follow due diligence under the IT Rules.

However, under Rule 3(1)(d), if the government flags content as illegal and the platform fails to act, the platform loses this protection, and can be legally prosecuted as if it published the content itself.

Earlier: Under Rule 3(1)(d), even junior officers could issue content notices without explanation. Such notices were treated as takedown orders, not warnings. Platforms automatically lost Safe Harbour, even if the notice lacked justification. There was no rule for written reasoning or officer accountability. This led to arbitrary and opaque enforcement.

Now (Post Amendment): Only Joint Secretary (Centre) or DIG (State) and above can issue notices. Each notice must clearly say it's a "warning," not an order. Officers must give a written, reasoned justification explaining why Safe Harbour doesn't apply. A "reasoned intimation" must accompany every notice for transparency. Officials will be personally accountable for all actions. Effective from November 15, 2025.



OpenAI unveils AI powered search browser 'Atlas' in a challenge to Google

Agence France-Presse
SAN FRANCISCO, U.S.

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI announced an "Atlas" search browser, leveraging its artificial intelligence prowess in a direct challenge to Google Chrome.

"This is an AI-powered web browser built around ChatGPT," OpenAI chief Sam Altman said in a streamed presentation.

OpenAI has ramped up its challenge to Google, which has responded by rapidly building more AI capabilities into search and across its platform.

Mr. Altman and a team of executives demonstrat-



Agent mode will only be available to users of paid Plus or Pro versions of ChatGPT.

ed an "agent" mode that has a chatbot to conduct searches on a user's behalf.

Mr. Altman said that in agent mode, ChatGPT uses the web browser indepen-

dently, returning with what it finds. "It's got all your stuff and is clicking around," Mr. Altman said.

"You can watch it or not, you don't have to, but it's using the Internet for you." Atlas will go live on computers powered by Apple's operating system free of charge, but agent mode will only be available to users of paid Plus or Pro versions of ChatGPT, according to Mr. Altman.

"We want to bring this to Windows and to mobile devices as quickly as we can," Mr. Altman said, without providing a timeline. "This is still early days for this project."

OpenAI unveils AI-powered search browser 'Atlas' in a challenge to Google

Source: The Hindu | Page: 15 | Category: Science & Technology

Why in News:

- OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT, announced the launch of an AI-powered web browser named "Atlas."
- The browser integrates ChatGPT's AI to perform autonomous web searches on behalf of users, making it a direct competitor to Google Chrome.

When a parasitic wasp saved South India's tapioca crops

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

Two years after scientists from the National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (NBAIR), under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), released a tiny parasitic wasp into South India's tapioca fields, the crop that once faced near devastation from an invasive pest is now thriving again. Farmers in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry report that their tapioca harvests have returned to pre-outbreak levels. This marks a rare success in controlling a major agricultural pest without chemicals.

Cassava, better known as tapioca, is grown on about 1.73 lakh hectares in India, with Tamil Nadu and Kerala together contributing more than 90% of total production. Before the outbreak, yields averaged 35 tonnes per hectare, far above the global average of 10.76 tonnes, and India exported value-added tapioca products worth nearly ₹200 million annually, according to NBAIR officials.

However, the mealybug's arrival in Thrissur, Kerala, in April 2020 changed this landscape. By 2021, nearly 1.43 lakh hectares were infested, and some areas of Tamil Nadu saw yields collapse to 5-12 tonnes per hectare. The pest fed on the plant sap, causing leaf curling, stunted growth, and poor tuber formation. With no effective local predators, the infestation escalated quickly and posed a serious economic threat to farmers, they said.

Chemical sprays were considered, but repeated pesticide use was costly,



By 2024, ICAR-NBAIR scientists brought the pest under control, eliminating the need for chemical spray. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

harmful to the environment, and unsustainable for small farmers. ICAR-NBAIR scientists instead turned to classical biological control, a strategy that introduces a natural enemy from the pest's native region to restore ecological balance. "Scientists identified a tiny parasitic wasp, *Anagyrus lopezi*, that specifically targets the cassava mealybug. The wasp lays its eggs inside the pest, and the developing larvae consumes it from within, naturally reducing mealybug numbers without harming other crops," S.N. Sushil, Director, ICAR-NBAIR said.

The institute imported a shipment from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, West Africa.

ICAR-NBAIR set up three satellite mass-production centres, distributed over 2,00,000 parasitoids, and conducted 25 awareness programmes and multiple training sessions. By 2023-24, they had achieved remarkable results. Across the previously infested 1.43 lakh hectares, the mealybug is now under natural control and has eliminated the need for chemical sprays.

When a parasitic wasp saved South India's tapioca crops

Source: The Hindu | Page: 7 | GS Paper 3 – Agriculture & Environment

Why in News:

Scientists from ICAR-NBAIR controlled the devastating cassava mealybug attack in South India's tapioca fields by introducing a parasitic wasp (*Anagyrus lopezi***), eliminating the need for chemical pesticides.

Cassava/tapioca in India:

- Native to South America (Brazil-Paraguay region); introduced to India centuries ago.
- Grown on 1.73 lakh ha, mainly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala (90% output).
- India's yield (~35 t/ha) far exceeds the global average (10.76 t/ha).



‘\$100-bn investment target under trade deal to be met well before 15-year goal’

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The four countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) will meet the target of investing \$100 billion in India well before the 15-year deadline set out in the trade deal signed between India and the grouping, Iceland's Ambassador to India Benedikt Höskuldsson told *The Hindu*.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and the four EFTA nations – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland – was signed in March 2024 and came into force on October 1, 2025.

"I think we will achieve this amount before 15 years, I'll tell you that," Mr. Höskuldsson said in an interview. I'm so optimistic. If I were to predict, I would say in 10 years we would be there, if not sooner."

Investment confidence
To illustrate his confidence about the investment prospects, the Ambassador gave the example of the Icelandic company Hamþjójan, which is a world leader in making fishing gear for deep sea fisheries.

"It had been sourcing high-quality nylon bands from a company, Kohinoor, in Maharashtra," Mr. Höskuldsson explained. "Based on the TEPA, they turned that around and actually bought a 75.1% stake in Kohinoor in Maharashtra."

"Now, the Icelandic company is bringing its production from Lithuania, Poland and different places, into India, using In-



Benedikt Höskuldsson

dia as the manufacturing hub for its products," he said. Hamþjójan had announced its purchase of Kohinoor in February.

"This illustrates how it is almost natural for a company in my country to come to India, having known that company for a long time as a supply source, and then coming in and investing," he said.

Regulatory reforms

The factor that encouraged foreign firms, including those from Iceland, to invest in India are the regulatory reforms and the facilitation measures brought in by the Indian government.

"India will need to go through policy reforms and regulatory reforms, and I think we see that happening," Mr. Höskuldsson said. "That would need to continue, of course, but the main thing is what you're doing is you're strengthening domestically the markets. So, the foreigners, who are looking into it as a potential, they see all the right signs for this to happen, that's why they come."

In particular, the Ambassador highlighted the dedicated EFTA desk set

up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry aimed at reducing regulatory friction faced by companies in the four EFTA countries.

"One of the criticisms that has been issued many times especially by companies from countries like Iceland that are very small, and have limited human resources, is against the bureaucratic procedures that you have here."

"We have seen examples of these being addressed," he added. "I think there are so many positive signs that issues that have been problematic will be and are being addressed."

TEPA in India

The Ambassador also said the government of Iceland has reached an agreement with the government of Norway and the EFTA desk to promote the TEPA inside India.

"We are going to be promoting TEPA through different sectors over the next 18 months," he said. "That's how we want to use the time that we now have ahead of others [other countries in talks with India for a trade deal] to actually be in a better position when the other agreements materialise, which they will."

He explained Iceland would be bringing in businesses, helping different businesses to work closer together and supporting its exporters and investors to look into India. The sectors Iceland is looking to promote are clean energy, green technology, energy efficiency, fisheries, and medical equipment, the ambassador explained.

\$100-bn investment target under trade deal to be met well before 15-year goal'

Source: The Hindu | Page: 15 | Category: Economics / Geoeconomics

European Free Trade Association:

- **Founded:** 1960 (via Stockholm Convention)
- **Members:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.
- **Purpose:** Promote free trade and economic integration among members and with other global partners.
- **Nature:** A parallel grouping to the European Union, focusing on trade, not political union.

Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement:

- **Full Name:** India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement
- **Signed:** March 2024 | **Effective:** October 1, 2025
- **Aim:** Strengthen trade, investment, and regulatory cooperation between India and EFTA nations.
- **Investment Goal:** \$100 billion in India and 1 million direct jobs over 15 years.
- **Focus Sectors:** Clean energy, green tech, fisheries, medical equipment, and efficiency-based industries.
- **Mechanism:** Establishes an EFTA Desk in India to coordinate investment, resolve trade issues, and deepen ties.