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1. India's Ramsar Site Tally Reaches 103

Source: PIB | GS Paper 3: Environment, Biodiversity and Wetland Conservation.

2. Special Summary Revision (SSR) of Electoral Rolls

Source: The Hindu | GS Paper 2: Indian Polity, Election Commission and Electoral Reforms.

3. India's Crude Oil Imports: Rising Dependence on Three Countries

Source: The Hindu | GS Papers 2 & 3: International Relations, Energy Security and Indian Economy.

4. Government's Powers over Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Cardholders

Source: The Indian Express | GS Paper 2: Citizenship, Immigration, Fundamental Rights and Judicial Review.

5. Conversion Does Not Automatically Confer Reservation Benefits: Supreme Court

Source: The Hindu | GS Paper 2: Reservation, Equality, Social Justice and Constitutional Provisions.

6. India's Merchandise Exports Rise 23.04% in September

Source: The Hindu | GS Paper 3: Indian Economy, External Trade and Trade Deficit.

7. Diabetes Prevention Must Begin in Schools

Source: The Indian Express | GS Papers 2 & 3: Health, Education, Nutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases.

India's Ramsar site tally reaches 103 🇮🇳



India continues to strengthen its commitment to wetland conservation, with Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh and Sauj Jheel in Uttar Pradesh becoming the latest additions to the list of Ramsar Sites.

This milestone highlights the importance [Show more](#)



1. **India's Ramsar Site Tally Reaches 103**

GS Paper 3: Environment, Biodiversity and Wetland Conservation

Context: India's Ramsar network increased from 101 to 103 sites in October 2026 with the addition of Sukhna Wetland in Chandigarh and Sauj Jheel in Uttar Pradesh.

1. **Ramsar Convention: Basic Facts**

Adopted: 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.

Entered into force: 1975.

India became a contracting party: 1982.

Objective: Conservation and wise use of wetlands through national action and international cooperation.

Ramsar site: A wetland designated as internationally important under the Convention.

2. **Latest Additions: Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel**

A. **Sukhna Wetland**

Location: Chandigarh, at the foothills of the Shivalik range.

Nature: Reservoir near an urban area, with a catchment extending into the surrounding hills.

Biodiversity: Supports resident and migratory waterbirds along the Central Asian Flyway.

Important species: Common Pochard (Vulnerable) and Pallas's Fish Eagle (Endangered).

Environmental concerns: Siltation, catchment erosion, invasive vegetation and urban pressures.

B. **Sauj Jheel**

Location: Uttar Pradesh.

Nature: Shallow lake situated in the Ganga floodplain.

Biodiversity: Supports more than 30,000 waterbirds, including the vulnerable Sarus Crane and Greater Spotted Eagle.

Ecological role: Provides feeding, breeding and resting habitats for birds and supports floodplain biodiversity.

3. Ramsar Sites: 96th to 103rd Milestones

96-site milestone: Siliserh Lake (Rajasthan) and Kopra Jalashay (Chhattisgarh), added together in December 2025.

97th — Patna Bird Sanctuary: Uttar Pradesh.

98th — Chhari-Dhand: Gujarat.

99th — Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary: Uttar Pradesh.

100th — Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal): Uttar Pradesh.

101st — Glaw Lake: Arunachal Pradesh; the state's first Ramsar site.

102nd — Sukhna Wetland: Chandigarh.

103rd — Sauj Jheel: Uttar Pradesh.

4. Five Water and Wetland Terminologies

Catchment area: Land from which rainfall and runoff drain into a lake, river or reservoir.

Groundwater recharge: The process by which water infiltrates the ground and replenishes underground aquifers.

Hydrological regime: The pattern of water levels, inflows, outflows and seasonal flooding in an ecosystem.

Eutrophication: Excessive nutrient enrichment of water, often leading to algal blooms and reduced dissolved oxygen.

Siltation: Accumulation of sediments in a water body, reducing its depth and potentially its water-storage capacity.

5. Ecological and Economic Significance of Wetlands

Biodiversity conservation: Provide habitats for aquatic organisms, migratory birds and threatened species.

Water security: Store water, support groundwater recharge and help filter certain pollutants.

Flood management: Retain excess water and help reduce downstream flood peaks.

Climate regulation: Store carbon and contribute to climate resilience.

Livelihoods: Support fisheries, agriculture, tourism and local communities.

6. Threats to Wetlands

Encroachment: Construction, drainage and conversion of wetlands into agricultural or urban land.

Water pollution: Untreated sewage, industrial effluents and agricultural runoff.

Hydrological alteration: Dams, excessive water extraction and changes in natural inflows.

Siltation: Sediment accumulation caused by soil erosion in catchment areas.

Invasive species: Displacement of native species and disruption of ecological balance.

Climate change: Changing rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and prolonged droughts.

7. Way Forward

Protect catchment areas and prevent wetland encroachment.

Improve sewage treatment and control pollution at the source.

Restore natural water flows and degraded wetland habitats.

Monitor water quality, sedimentation and biodiversity.

Involve local communities in conservation and sustainable wetland use.

Enforce wetland protection regulations and integrate conservation into urban planning.

Special summary revision of voter lists to begin soon

Annual exercise to enrol new voters and update electoral rolls was stalled last year due to launch of SIR; it will be done in 17 States and U.Ts, including poll-bound Uttarakhand, U.P. and Punjab

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Amid protests against the special intensive revision and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday announced the special summary revision (SSR) of electoral rolls in 17 States and Union Territories, including poll-bound Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab.

The SSR seeks to enrol new voters and update electoral rolls. The annual exercise was stalled last year due to the launch of the now-controversial SIR. Election Commissioners S. S. Sandhu and Vivek Joshi are understood to have raised this as an anomaly among other issues.

Roll reboot

The Election Commission has ordered voter roll revisions across 17 States and Union Territories

- Voters **need no citizenship proof** under the standard SSR process

- Candidates will **receive searchable and readable PDF** electoral rolls electronically

- Revision process **skips home visits by booth officers** and lists will be displayed locally

- ECI **limits Form 7 applications** to prevent bulk voter deletions



Unlike the SIR, applicants do not have to submit documents to prove citizenship or be mapped with earlier electoral rolls when enrolling through the SSR.

Following protests against the 13 crore SIR deletions, the ECI announced on September 29 a special drive to re-enlist voters who were left out. This re-enrolment through special camps and house-to-house

visits by booth-level officers (BLOs) is being done using the original Form 6, without the declaration appended during the SIR. The commission has also capped the number of Form 7s, used for voter deletions, that an individual can submit amid reports of such applications being filed in bulk. The SSR is over and above this special re-enrolment drive.

Among the firsts in this

year's SSR, the ECI said that it will provide a "readable PDF" of the alphabetically arranged electoral rolls to contesting candidates and recognised political parties during elections. Opposition parties have been demanding machine-readable electoral rolls rather than image-based PDFs so that they are digitally searchable, indexable, and verifiable.

Political parties will get supplementary voter lists that were earlier kept only for record and future use.

The SSR process will not include house-to-house visits by BLOs. Instead, draft and final lists will be put up at polling booths.

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2. Special Summary Revision (SSR) of Electoral Rolls

GS Paper 2: Polity and Governance — Election Commission and Electoral Reforms

Context: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced a Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls across 17 States and Union Territories to enrol eligible voters and update electoral records.

1. Constitutional and Legal Basis

Article 324: Empowers the ECI with the superintendence, direction and control of elections.

Article 326: Establishes adult suffrage as the basis for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, subject to constitutional conditions.

Article 327: Empowers Parliament to make laws relating to elections, including electoral rolls.

Representation of the People Act, 1950 — Section 21: Provides the statutory basis for the preparation and revision of electoral rolls.

Registration of Electors Rules, 1960: Prescribes procedures for preparing, revising and correcting electoral rolls.

2. Key Features of SSR

Coverage: 17 States and Union Territories, including poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab.

Objective: Enrol eligible voters, correct existing entries and update electoral rolls.

No house-to-house visits: Draft and final rolls will be displayed locally instead of conducting house-to-house visits by Booth-Level Officers under this exercise.

Digital accessibility: Searchable and readable PDF electoral rolls will facilitate verification.

Safeguards against wrongful deletion: Limits on Form 7 applications aim to prevent bulk voter deletions.

Re-enrolment: Special camps will assist eligible voters who were left out.

3. SSR vs SIR

Special Summary Revision (SSR): A routine process to update electoral rolls and enrol eligible voters.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR): A more extensive exercise involving intensive enumeration and verification.

4. Significance and Challenges

Electoral inclusion: Helps eligible citizens exercise their voting rights.

Accuracy: Corrects errors, outdated entries and omissions.

Transparency: Searchable electoral rolls improve public access and verification.

Risk of exclusion: Lack of awareness, documentation difficulties or administrative errors may leave eligible voters out.

Public trust: Transparent procedures for additions and deletions strengthen confidence in elections.

5. Way Forward

Conduct voter-awareness campaigns and enrolment camps.

Ensure transparent procedures for adding, correcting and deleting entries.

Provide accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms.

Regularly publish searchable electoral rolls and strengthen safeguards against wrongful exclusion.

Two-thirds oil imports from just 3 nations

While Russia's share in India's oil imports fell to 44%, from a historic high in July, share of both the U.S. and UAE surged, resulting in cumulative shares of the three countries reaching an all-time high; American oil came at a substantial premium compared with the average price India paid

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

In a sign of increasing concentration of India's oil supplies and its limited options to source from, latest data shows that more than two-thirds of the country's oil imports came from just three countries – Russia, the U.S., and the UAE – marking a record high share.

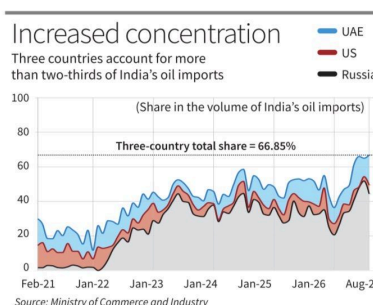
Notably, Russia's share in India's oil imports fell to around 44% in August 2026, the latest month for which official data is available, from a historic high of 51% in July.

Data shows that India's

oil imports from both the U.S. and the UAE surged in August, with the American oil coming at a substantial premium compared with the average price India paid for oil imports.

India's total oil imports stood at 191.2 lakh tonnes in August 2026, which was 10.3% lower than in July, but 3.4% higher than in August last year. However, the elevated price of oil has meant that India's oil import bill was nearly 25% higher in August this year than in the same month last year.

Within this, Russian oil accounted for 84.8 lakh tonnes of Indian oil imports, or 44.3% of the total.



In terms of India's oil import bill of \$12.2 billion in August 2026, payments to Russia accounted for 44.5%. That said, India im-

ported 23% less oil from Russia in August 2026 than in July, although this figure was still 22.5% higher than in August last year.

India's elevated oil imports from Russia have been a sore point in its relations with the U.S. and its President Donald Trump, who in September signed into law an Act that could see tariffs of up to 100% being levied on countries that import large amounts of Russian oil and gas, as India does.

On the other hand, India's oil imports from the U.S. once again surged in August 2026 to 9.7 lakh tonnes, making up 5.1% of India's total oil imports that month. In terms of quantity, this was nearly 82% higher than in July, and more than 130% higher than in August last year.

The data also shows that India paid an average of \$810.6 per tonne of oil to the U.S., much higher than the average price of \$640 per tonne it paid across all its oil imports in August. Oil from the U.S. has been costlier than average since June 2026.

Notably, India's oil imports from the UAE also jumped in August 2026 as the two countries established alternate supply routes through ports relatively unimpacted by the war in West Asia.

Oil imports from the UAE, at 33 lakh tonnes, made up 17.4% of India's total oil imports and 16.9% of its oil import bill.

3. India's Crude Oil Imports: Rising Dependence on Three Countries

GS Paper 2: International Relations

GS Paper 3: Indian Economy, Energy Security and External Sector

Context: In August 2026, Russia, the United States and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) together supplied approximately 66.85% of India's crude oil imports, highlighting increasing concentration in its energy supply.

1. Key Data and Trends

Total imports: India imported 191.2 lakh tonnes of oil in August 2026, 10.3% lower than July but 3.4% higher than August 2025.

Russia: Supplied 84.8 lakh tonnes, accounting for 44.3% of India's oil imports. Its share declined from a record 51% in July.

United States: Supplied 9.7 lakh tonnes, accounting for 5.1% of imports. The volume was nearly 82% higher than in July.

United Arab Emirates: Supplied 33 lakh tonnes, accounting for 17.4% of imports.

Combined concentration: Russia, the UAE and the US accounted for 66.85% of India's oil imports.

Import bill: India's oil import bill reached \$12.2 billion in August 2026, nearly 25% higher than in August 2025.

2. Price and Cost Implications

Costlier US oil: India paid an average of \$810.6 per tonne for US oil, compared with the overall import average of \$640 per tonne.

Russian oil: Imports declined by 23% compared with July, although they remained 22.5% higher than in August 2025.

UAE oil: Its share increased as the UAE provided an alternative supply route amid disruptions and conflict in West Asia.

Economic impact: Higher crude prices increase the import bill, potentially widening the current account deficit and adding to domestic inflationary pressure.

3. Geopolitical Significance

India–Russia relations: Russian oil remains a major component of India's energy supplies, but its high share creates exposure to Western sanctions and tariff-related pressure.

India–US relations: Increased imports from the US may support bilateral trade ties, but the higher purchase price raises costs for Indian refiners.

UAE partnership: The UAE provides an important alternative source and helps diversify supply routes.

Supply concentration risk: Dependence on just three suppliers can expose India to price shocks, sanctions and geopolitical disruptions.

4. Challenges for India

Heavy dependence on imported crude oil.

Volatility in international oil prices and freight costs.

Exposure to conflicts and disruptions in West Asia.

Trade-balance and currency pressures when oil prices rise.

The challenge of balancing affordable energy, strategic autonomy and international trade relationships.

5. Way Forward

Diversify suppliers: Expand sourcing from multiple regions to reduce dependence on a few countries.

Strengthen strategic reserves: Expand and effectively manage strategic petroleum reserves to cushion supply disruptions.

Promote alternative energy: Accelerate renewable energy, electric mobility and biofuels to reduce oil dependence.

Improve energy efficiency: Reduce fuel consumption in transport, industry and other major sectors.

Maintain strategic autonomy: Balance commercial interests with geopolitical considerations while ensuring reliable and affordable energy supplies.

• LAW

Govt's sweeping powers over OCI cardholders



DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

ACTOR IMRAN KHAN, a US citizen and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, has been asked by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) to leave India by October 28, days after he joined a protest in Mumbai demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

Khan was detained along with other protesters at August Kranti Maidan on October 10. Subsequently, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya complained to police that Khan, being a foreign national, had violated the law by participating in the demonstration. The complaint was forwarded to the FRRO, which issued the Leave India notice. According to police, the notice says Khan had violated immigration law by joining the protest.

Who is an OCI, and what rights does the status carry?

The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 for certain categories of foreign nationals of Indian origin. India does not permit dual citizenship, and an OCI remains a foreign national holding the passport of another country.

The status nevertheless gives privileges unavailable to ordinary foreign nationals, most importantly a multiple-entry lifelong visa and exemption from registration with the FRRO irrespective of the duration of stay. OCI cardholders also receive parity with Indian citizens or NRIs in certain areas, including some property, educational and professional rights.

But there are restrictions. A March 2021 government notification requires OCI cardholders to obtain special permission before undertaking research; missionary or Tablighi work; mountaineering; journalistic activity; certain employment or internships in foreign diplomatic establishments; or entering protected, restricted or prohibited areas.

Significantly in Khan's case, the notification does not expressly list participation in political protests or demonstrations as an activity requiring prior permission.

OCIs also do not possess the political rights of Indian citizens. Under Section 7B of the Citizenship Act, they cannot vote or contest elections, and Article 19 rights —

• WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS OCI CASES?

AATISH TASEER

The writer, during the 2019 polls, wrote the controversial 'TIME' cover article describing PM Narendra Modi as India's 'Divider in Chief'. Months later, the government cancelled his OCI status, saying he had concealed in his application that his father, Salman Taseer, was a Pakistani national. Taseer linked the action to his writing; the Centre denied that connection.

ASHOK SWAIN

The Sweden-based academic, a sharp critic of the government, was served a notice alleging "anti-India activities" in 2020; his OCI registration was eventually cancelled. A later government order said his tweets, writings and speeches spread "detrimental propaganda". The Delhi High Court first set aside the cancellation order and, in March 2025, struck down the subsequent one because the tweets



Khan is detained at the protest in Mumbai on Oct 10. AKASH PATIL

and writings had not been supplied to Swain. The government was left free to proceed afresh.

CHRISTO THOMAS PHILIP

Philip, a US citizen and doctor working in Bihar, ran into trouble over alleged missionary activity. He

was prevented from entering India and his OCI registration was subsequently cancelled. The Delhi High Court in January 2019 found that the government had not established the statutory basis for treating missionary activity as threatening sovereignty, security or public interest, and ordered his OCI restored and his entry facilitated. In 2021, the government explicitly restricted missionary activity through an OCI notification.

KHALID JAHANGIR QAZI

The US citizen of Kashmiri origin faced allegations of separatist activity. His OCI registration was cancelled in 2023 and he was separately blacklisted under the then Foreigners Act. The Delhi High Court in November 2024 set both actions aside, holding that the allegations were vague; it allowed the government to start proceedings afresh with specific allegations.

including the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and peaceful assembly — are guaranteed specifically to citizens.

Can an OCI be asked to leave India for joining a protest?

The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which came into force in September 2025 and replaced the Foreigners Act, 1946, gives the government wide powers over foreign nationals — and an OCI remains a foreign national for this purpose.

There is no provision in the Act that expressly says that a foreign national cannot attend a political rally or demonstration. However, the law gives the government considerable discretion to regulate the presence, activities and conduct of foreigners in India. The FRRO notice to Khan invokes Section 7(2)(c), read with Section 29, of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025.

Section 7 empowers the government to issue orders regulating or restricting the entry, departure or continued presence of foreigners in India. Clause (c) of subsection (2), invoked against Khan, allows the government to direct that a foreigner "shall not remain in India or in any specified area

OCIs are not citizens

The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 for certain categories of foreign nationals of Indian origin.

India does not permit dual citizenship, and an OCI remains a foreign national holding the passport of another country.

therein". Section 29 goes further. It empowers the government to order the removal of a foreigner for contravention of the Act, its rules or orders made under it, or on the basis of an "adverse security report". The provision also authorises government officers to exercise reasonable powers necessary to enforce such directions.

The significance is that the statute itself does not designate "political protest" as prohibited conduct. But it gives the executive latitude to prohibit particular categories of activity through an order or direction.

Section 7 separately empowers the government to restrict a foreigner's association with specified persons, prohibit activities of a specified description and regulate conduct. However, the notice invokes the power to direct a foreigner not to remain in India, rather than the provision specifically concerning restrictions on activities.

And these are not powers exercisable only by the Union Home Ministry. A September 2025 notification delegated powers under Section 7(2) and Section 29 to FRROs and Foreigners Registration Officers.

In 2020, the Calcutta High Court quashed a Leave India Notice issued to

Polish student Kamil Siedczynski, who had participated in an anti-CAA rally in Kolkata. The government had invoked the then Foreigners Act. The court found the notice deficient and held, on the law then before it, that mere participation in a political rally was not by itself sufficient to sustain the action. The 2025 Act has since replaced that law, although it retains similarly broad executive powers over foreigners.

When can OCI registration itself be cancelled?

This is a different process governed by Section 7D of the Citizenship Act.

The government may cancel OCI registration if it was obtained through fraud, false representation or concealment of a material fact; if the person has shown "disaffection" towards the Constitution; helped an enemy during war; or, in specified circumstances, has been convicted of serious crime.

The widest ground is Section 7D(e), which permits cancellation where the government considers it necessary in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of India, friendly relations with foreign countries, or "the general public".

The law has since been expanded to cover specified legal violations as well as certain cases involving OCI status obtained through marriage. But unlike a straightforward immigration direction, cancellation now carries an express procedural safeguard: an OCI must be given a reasonable opportunity of being heard. Courts have repeatedly examined how much latitude the broad cancellation provisions give the government.

So what can Khan do now?

Khan can make a representation to the FRRO or the Centre seeking withdrawal or reconsideration of the notice. But unlike cancellation of OCI registration under Section 7D of the Citizenship Act, where the statute expressly guarantees a reasonable opportunity of being heard, there is no comparable appeal procedure spelt out in Section 7 of the 2025 immigration law.

His other remedy is to approach the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution, challenging the legality of the Leave India Notice and seeking interim protection against its operation. Khan's lawyers have already approached the Bombay High Court.

The notice requires him to leave India by October 28. Unless the court grants protection, or modifies it, or the court grants protection, the direction remains operative and he would be required to leave by that deadline.

4. Government's Sweeping Powers over Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Cardholders

GS Paper 2: Polity and Governance — Citizenship, Fundamental Rights and Executive Discretion

Context: Actor Imran Khan, a United States citizen and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, received a Leave India Notice after participating in a protest in Mumbai, raising concerns about the government's powers over foreign nationals of Indian origin.

1. Overseas Citizen of India (OCI): Meaning and Status

Introduction: The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 for eligible foreign nationals of Indian origin.

Legal status: OCI is a special immigration status, not Indian citizenship or dual citizenship.

Privileges: Lifelong multiple-entry visa and specified economic, educational and other benefits under applicable rules.

Restrictions: OCI cardholders cannot vote, contest elections or hold constitutional offices reserved for Indian citizens.

Key distinction: OCI cardholders remain foreign nationals and are subject to Indian immigration laws.

2. Legal Framework and Government Powers

Citizenship Act, 1955 — Section 7A: Governs registration as an OCI cardholder.

Section 7B: Defines the rights and privileges available to OCI cardholders and excludes specified rights reserved for Indian citizens.

Section 7D: Provides statutory grounds for cancellation of OCI registration, subject to applicable conditions and procedures.

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 — Section 7: Empowers the Central Government to regulate or restrict the entry, departure or continued presence of foreign nationals.

Section 29: Addresses removal of foreigners in specified circumstances, including violations of the Act, rules or orders and adverse security reports.

Administrative delegation: Specified powers may be exercised by designated immigration officials under applicable government notifications.

3. Leave India Notice vs Cancellation of OCI Status

Leave India Notice: Requires a foreign national to leave India under applicable immigration powers.

OCI cancellation: Terminates OCI registration under Section 7D of the Citizenship Act, 1955, where a statutory ground is established.

Participation in protests: The law does not impose a blanket prohibition on foreign nationals attending protests, but the government has powers to regulate their activities and continued presence.

Legal distinction: A departure notice does not automatically mean that OCI registration has been cancelled.

4. Constitutional Dimensions

Article 14 — Equality before law: Protects citizens and non-citizens against arbitrary state action.

Article 19 — Freedom of speech and peaceful assembly: These fundamental rights are guaranteed to Indian citizens, not foreign nationals as such.

Article 21 — Life and personal liberty: Applies to all persons, including foreign nationals, and requires state action affecting liberty to follow the procedure established by law.

Article 226 — Judicial review: High Courts can examine the legality of government action through writ jurisdiction.

Rule of law: Executive discretion must operate within statutory and constitutional boundaries.

5. Previous OCI Cases

Aatish Taseer: OCI registration was cancelled in 2019 over alleged omissions in his application.

Ashok Swain: The Delhi High Court set aside a cancellation order linked to his public statements, as reported.

Christo Thomas Philip: The Delhi High Court set aside relevant actions in 2024, allowing fresh proceedings based on specific allegations.

Khalid Jahangir Qazi: The Delhi High Court reportedly allowed fresh proceedings after setting aside earlier actions.

6. Key Concerns

Broad executive discretion: Wide immigration powers may create uncertainty for OCI cardholders.

Freedom of expression: Fear of immigration consequences may discourage legitimate public participation.

Procedural fairness: Unclear reasons or inadequate review mechanisms can make decisions difficult to challenge.

Proportionality: Restrictions should be justified by law and relevant circumstances.

Public confidence: Transparent and consistent decisions strengthen trust in immigration administration.

7. Way Forward

Establish clear criteria for departure notices and OCI cancellation.

Provide reasons and an opportunity to respond wherever required by law.

Ensure evidence-based and proportionate executive action.

Maintain accessible judicial review and grievance-redressal mechanisms.

Balance national security and immigration control with the rule of law.

SC says conversion does not automatically grant benefits of reservation

T.N. govt. appeal seeking confirmation of order issued by State in 2024 dismissed; caste identity cannot be treated as an immutable personal attribute, irrespective of a change in religious affiliation: court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declared that a Hindu belonging to a Backward order cannot claim the same reservation benefits as a Muslim Backward Class member merely on conversion to Islam or other religions.

“A person who converts from a Hindu social order to a non-Hindu social order cannot claim affirmative action under Article 16 (4) of the Constitution merely on the basis of the social backwardness associated with his pre-conversion status,” it held.

The court clarified the law while dismissing a Tamil Nadu government appeal seeking confirmation of an order issued by the State government in March 2024 to provide reservation benefits to members of the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, De-notified communities, and Scheduled



Castes who had embraced Islam. The policy of the State was intended to create a level-playing field by preserving affirmative action despite the change of religion.

A Bench headed by Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra held that a member of a Backward Hindu community does not automatically become a member of a notified Backward Muslim community merely through conversion.

It said a caste identity cannot be treated as an immutable personal attribute, irrespective of a change in religious affilia-

tion. It said the constitutional benefits of reservation under Article 16(4) cannot be made to travel from the religion in which the backwardness arose to a religion of which the basic theological structure did not recognise caste as its foundational basis.

“No statutory benefit, protection, reservation or other entitlement under Article 16(4) of the Constitution, the enjoyment of which is predicated upon a particular Hindu social order, can be claimed or extended merely on the basis of such antecedent membership after the person has converted to Islam, Christianity or any other non-Hindu social order. Conversion severs the legal foundation of an entitlement specifically conditioned upon membership of that Hindu social order,” the court held.

The State’s appeal was based on a Madras High Court decision to reject the petition of Sameer Ahamed, a convert to Is-

lam. The Thoothukudi resident, born to Hindu parents, changed his faith to Islam in 2015. He was issued a certificate of conversion by the Sunnath Jamath. He subsequently applied for a community certificate certifying him as ‘Muslim Lebbai’, but the request was declined by the Tahsildar.

HC decision upheld

Confirming the High Court’s decision to deny him quota benefits, the Supreme Court explained that the identity of a Backward Class Muslim community was historically constituted by social membership. A mere declaration of conversion cannot be treated as proof of such membership.

“A Jamath may certify that a person has embraced Islam. However, it cannot, merely by issuing a testimonial, conclusively determine a statutory Backward Class status,” Justice Mishra, who authored the judgment, held.

5. Supreme Court: Conversion Does Not Automatically Confer Reservation Benefits

GS Paper 2: Polity and Governance — Reservation, Equality and Social Justice

Context: In *The Secretary to Government v. Sameer Ahamed N. & Others* (15 October 2026), the Supreme Court upheld the rejection of a Tamil Nadu applicant's request for a Backward Class (Muslim Lebbai) certificate after he converted from Hinduism to Islam. The Court held that conversion alone does not automatically confer membership of a particular notified backward-class community or entitlement to its reservation benefits.

1. Legal and Constitutional Basis

Article 14: Equality before the law and protection against arbitrary state action.

Article 15(4): Enables special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16(4): Enables reservation in public employment for backward classes that are inadequately represented in State services.

Article 341 and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950: Govern Scheduled Caste identification and eligibility, including specified religion-related conditions.

Key distinction: Eligibility for a particular reservation category depends on the relevant constitutional and statutory framework, not simply on a person's earlier caste identity.

2. Major Supreme Court Judgments on Reservation

A. State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan (1951)

The Court struck down communal allocation of seats in educational institutions as unconstitutional.

Impact: Led to the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, which inserted Article 15(4), enabling special provisions for backward classes.

B. Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992) — Mandal Commission Case

Upheld 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in central government employment.

Established the exclusion of the creamy layer among OBCs.

Generally set a 50% ceiling on reservations, subject to exceptional circumstances.

Held that Article 16(4), as it then stood, did not permit reservation in promotions.

C. M. Nagaraj v. Union of India (2006)

Upheld the constitutional amendments enabling reservation in promotions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Required States to consider relevant quantifiable data on inadequate representation and ensure compliance with Article 335.

Emphasised that reservation in promotions is enabling, not automatic.

D. Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta (2018)

Modified the M. Nagaraj framework by removing the requirement to collect quantifiable data to prove the backwardness of SCs and STs.

Retained the requirement to assess inadequate representation for reservation in promotions.

Held that the creamy-layer principle can be applied to exclude advanced sections from reservation benefits.

E. Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India (2022) — EWS Reservation Case

Upheld the 103rd Constitutional Amendment by a 3:2 majority.

Validated up to 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) under Articles 15(6) and 16(6).

Held that excluding SCs, STs and non-creamy-layer OBCs from the EWS category did not invalidate the amendment.

F. State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh (2024)

Held that States may sub-classify Scheduled Castes within the Presidential List for more equitable distribution of reservation benefits, based on evidence.

Recognised that some groups within a broad reserved category may remain more disadvantaged than others.

Clarified that States cannot add or remove communities from the Presidential List; that power remains with Parliament under Article 341.

3. How the Sameer Ahamed Judgment Fits In

Case: The Secretary to Government v. Sameer Ahamed N. & Others (2026).

Issue: Whether a person who converted from Hinduism to Islam could claim a Backward Class Muslim certificate merely on the basis of their earlier caste status and conversion.

Ruling: The Court held that conversion alone did not establish membership of the specific notified Muslim backward-class community claimed.

Significance: A person must satisfy the legal criteria for the particular reserved category. A conversion certificate by itself does not establish eligibility.

Important nuance: This ruling should not be read as a blanket denial of reservation to all Muslims. Notified Muslim communities may qualify for OBC or State backward-class benefits under the applicable lists and legal criteria.

Goods exports jump 23.04% in Sept.; trade deficit narrows

Press Trust of India

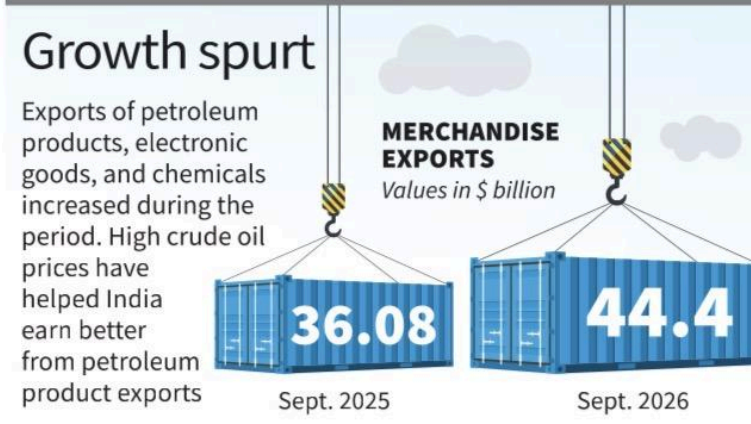
NEW DELHI

Healthy growth in shipments of petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals helped India's merchandise exports rise 23.04% in September, while the trade deficit narrowed to \$30.21 billion year-on-year due to a dip in imports of precious metals. In September 2025, it was \$33 billion.

The country's exports rose from \$36.08 billion to \$44.4 billion in September 2025, government data released on Thursday said. However, the deficit widened when compared to \$26.86 billion recorded during August 2026.

Exports of petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals grew by 31.9% (\$6.2 billion), 70.44% (\$5.3 billion) and 24.21% (\$3 billion) respectively, during the month.

High crude oil prices amid the West Asia crisis have helped India earn bet-



ter realisations from petroleum product exports.

Imports rose by 8% year-on-year to \$74.61 billion in September.

Gold and silver imports declined by 81.27% and 49.11%, respectively, to \$1.8 billion and \$665 million during the month. In-bound shipments of crude oil, on the other hand, rose by 30.76% to \$18.34 billion.

Brent crude oil prices have been hovering over \$100 per barrel during the last few weeks.

Cumulatively, during April-September this fiscal, exports jumped 18.51% to \$259.89 billion, and im-

ports climbed 16.31% to \$437.53 billion. The deficit during the first half of 2026-27 widened to \$177.64 billion as compared to \$156.88 billion during April-September 2025-26.

Exports are maintaining their growth trend, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said in a press briefing on trade data.

He expressed the hope that if the trend continued, the country's merchandise exports would cross \$500 billion. They were at \$442 billion in 2025-26.

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GS Paper 3: Economy — External Trade, Balance of Trade and Export Competitiveness

Context: India's merchandise exports recorded strong year-on-year growth in September 2026, while the monthly trade deficit narrowed despite rising crude oil imports.

1. Export Performance

Merchandise exports: Increased 23.04% to \$44.4 billion, compared with September 2025.

Electronic goods: Exports rose 70.44% to \$5.3 billion, reflecting the growing role of electronics in India's export basket.

Petroleum products: Increased 31.9% to \$6.2 billion.

Chemicals: Exports grew 24.21% to \$3 billion.

2. Imports and Trade Deficit

Merchandise imports: Rose 8% to \$74.61 billion.

Trade deficit: Narrowed to \$30.21 billion from \$33 billion in September 2025.

Gold and silver: Imports declined sharply by 81.27% and 49.11%, respectively, helping moderate the deficit.

Crude oil: Imports increased 30.76% to \$18.34 billion, highlighting India's vulnerability to international oil prices and geopolitical disruptions.

3. Cumulative Trade Trends

During April–September 2026, merchandise exports grew 18.51% to \$259.89 billion.

Imports reached \$437.53 billion, up 16.31%.

The cumulative trade deficit widened to \$177.64 billion, compared with \$156.88 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

India's merchandise exports stood at \$442 billion in FY 2025–26, with the government aiming to cross \$500 billion.

4. Challenges and Way Forward

Import dependence: High crude oil imports expose India to global price volatility and external shocks.

Export sustainability: Strong monthly growth must translate into sustained competitiveness across manufacturing and services.

Diversification: Expand export destinations and higher-value products, strengthen domestic supply chains, and improve logistics and trade facilitation.

• WORLD FOOD DAY 2024

Diabetes is a disease of childhood habits; the fight against it must start from school



EXPERT EXPLAINS
DR SHASHANK JOSHI
MUMBAI-BASED ENDOCRINOLOGIST

IN MY clinic in Mumbai last month, I met a 13-year-old boy with Type 2 diabetes, fatty liver and a Body Mass Index of 32. His mother told me: "He hardly eats home food, doctor. Only chips, fast food, biscuits and cola." For 35 years, I have treated diabetes as a disease of adults. Today, I am treating it as a disease of habits formed in childhood. That child is no exception. Rather, he is an early warning.

This year, on World Food Day, the world has chosen a powerful theme: "Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow." The core goal is to harness science, technology, data and traditional knowledge to build resilient, sustainable agrifood systems and fight global hunger. It is a timely theme. But as a doctor who sees the end of the food chain in the form of diabetes and obesity, I want to add: We cannot nourish tomorrow if we do not innovate in our classrooms today.

Our Vedas answered this 3,000 years ago: "Annam hi bhootanam jyeshtham, tasmat sarvaushadham ickyate (food is the eldest of all beings, therefore it is called the medicine for all)"; and: "Aahar shuddhai sattva shuddhi (When food is pure, the mind becomes pure)".

Modern science is now catching up with this traditional knowledge. That is exactly what this year's World Food Day calls for—blending science, technology and tradition.

The numbers should concern us. The ICMR-INDIAB study estimates that India now has 101 million people living with diabetes and 136 million with pre-diabetes.

The National Family Health Survey shows one in four children between five and nine years is overweight. More than half of what urban adolescents eat is ultra-processed, and 70% of adult non-communicable diseases have roots in habits formed before age 15.

We once worried about children not getting enough to eat. Now, we must fight both hunger and hidden hunger caused by eating too much of the wrong kind, too early.

This is where innovation must begin—not just in labs and farms, but in schools. A child spends nearly 8,000 hours in school between ages five and 15.

More than with a doctor, a playground, or even the family dining table, it is in these hours that taste is formed, that the palate is programmed, that the brain learns what "normal" food looks like. Yet, our education system, even after National Education Policy 2020's welcome focus on foundational literacy and numeracy, has no foundation for wellbeing.

In four decades of treating metabolic disease, I have come to believe five simple school habits predict fifty years of health. They are the perfect example of this year's theme in action, using science, data and traditional wisdom together.

FIRST, the breakfast habit. Data shows nearly a third of urban Indian children skip breakfast. Science shows a child who skips breakfast is 40% more likely to be overweight and performs poorly in attention and mathematics. Our traditional wisdom offers the solution: ragi, peanut, sattu or eggs—local, seasonal brain food.

SECOND, the water habit. India has recorded the fastest growth in sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among adolescents—over 300% in a decade. One cola has many spoons of sugar. Innovation here requires policy: Water bells, safe drinking water stations and no-sugar drink zones, as schools in Kerala and Maharashtra have pioneered.

THIRD, the millet and fruit habit. Millets are low glycemic, high fibre and climate-resilient—the ultimate answer to sustainable agrifood systems. If we can make Millet Mondays and Rainbow Tiffin Tuesdays aspirational, we can build both health and resilience.

FOURTH, the movement habit. Data shows only 18% of Indian adolescents meet the 60-minute daily activity norm, according to a study in The Lancet. We have steadily replaced PT periods with extra maths tuition. We are building sharper brains but sicker bodies.

FIFTH, the sleep habit. Research shows average sleep in 12 to 15-year-olds is now 6.5 hours against the required 8-9 hours. Sleep deprivation increases the levels of ghrelin, the hunger hormone, and drives insulin resistance. A 10 pm lights-off rule is more powerful than any vitamin supplement.

All this just requires a new lens—the World Food Day lens of innovation. Seven low-cost, innovative nudges can transform a school tomorrow: fruit birthdays instead of chocolate birthdays; five minutes of mindful eating at lunchtime; teaching children to read food labels using mobile apps and data; a 10x10 feet kitchen garden using traditional knowledge; a monthly parent tiffin workshop; a safe playground hour; and an annual wellbeing report card alongside the marks card.

There is also an economic reason to act. The direct economic burden of diabetes alone will cross \$90 billion by 2033. One rupee invested in school health and nutrition returns 16 rupees in healthcare savings and productivity, according to WHO.

Some argue diet is a family matter, not a school matter. In reality, it is both. A child cannot say no to junk if the canteen sells it and the food environment is stacked against him/her. If we truly want to "innovate today to nourish tomorrow," we must start with the tiffin today. A resilient, sustainable agrifood system will mean little if the next generation has lost the ability and desire to eat from it.

7. Preventing Childhood Diabetes Through School-Based Interventions

GS Paper 2: Health and Education | GS Paper 3: Nutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases

Context: Rising childhood obesity and diabetes highlight the need to integrate preventive healthcare, nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices into school education.

1. Magnitude of the Problem

101 million Indians have diabetes and 136 million have prediabetes, according to the ICMR–INDIAB study.

1 in 4 children aged 5–9 years is reported to be overweight, according to data cited in the article.

Over 50% of urban adolescents reportedly consume ultra-processed foods.

Only 18% of Indian adolescents meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Adolescents aged 12–15 years reportedly sleep an average of 6.5 hours, below the recommended 8–9 hours.

India's direct economic burden of diabetes could exceed \$90 billion by 2033, as projected in the article.

2. Key School-Based Preventive Measures

Healthy breakfast: Encourage nutritious meals using millets, peanuts, sattu and other locally available foods.

Healthy hydration: Provide safe drinking water and discourage sugar-sweetened beverages.

Nutritious food choices: Promote fruits, millets and high-fibre foods instead of sugar-rich snacks.

Physical activity: Ensure at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity and reduce sedentary screen time.

Adequate sleep: Promote age-appropriate sleep to support metabolism, appetite regulation and learning.

3. Way Forward

Nutrition-integrated education: Include food literacy, healthy eating and disease prevention in school curricula.

Healthier school environments: Improve canteen menus and limit the availability of unhealthy ultra-processed foods.

Family–school collaboration: Involve parents and teachers in reinforcing healthy habits at home and school.

Preventive health programmes: Introduce regular wellbeing assessments, kitchen gardens and healthy-tiffin initiatives.

Evidence-based monitoring: Track dietary habits, physical activity and student wellbeing to evaluate interventions.

4. Policy and Economic Significance

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Offers scope to integrate health and wellbeing into holistic education.

Economic returns: The article cites a World Health Organization estimate that every ₹1 invested in school health and nutrition can yield ₹16 in healthcare savings and productivity gains.

World Food Day 2026 theme: “Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.”