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ATHENS

Greece passes legislation banning social media for children under 15



REUTERS

Greece's Parliament passed a law on Friday banning children under 15 from social media, joining a growing number of countries imposing curbs on young people's use of the apps. The Bill, set to take effect on January 1, will require age verification on social networks and impose penalties if companies fail to comply. AFP

1. Greece Bans Social Media for Children Under 15

GS Paper II: Governance, Child Rights and Fundamental Rights

Context: Greece passed legislation on 23 October 2026 banning social media access for children under 15, effective 1 January 2027, amid concerns over mental health and online safety.

1. Countries Restricting Children's Social Media Access

1. **Australia:** Banned social media accounts for children under 16, effective December 2025.
2. **Indonesia:** Introduced restrictions in March 2026 for under-16s on designated high-risk platforms.
3. **France:** Parliament approved an under-15 restriction in 2026; the Constitutional Council blocked it in August.
4. **Turkey:** Passed legislation restricting social media access for children under 15.
5. **Greece:** Passed an under-15 ban in October 2026, effective January 2027.

2. Why Are Countries Introducing These Restrictions?

1. **Mental health:** Reduce anxiety, sleep deprivation and excessive screen time.
2. **Online safety:** Prevent cyberbullying, grooming, sexual exploitation and exposure to harmful content.
3. **Privacy protection:** Prevent misuse of children's personal data and commercial profiling.
4. **Healthy development:** Encourage physical activity, offline relationships and better concentration.
5. **Platform accountability:** Require companies to strengthen age verification and child-safety mechanisms.

3. Issues with Blanket Restrictions

1. **Fundamental rights:** May restrict freedom of expression and access to information.
2. **Digital exclusion:** Can limit educational resources and support networks.

3. **Enforcement difficulties:** Children may bypass age checks or migrate to less regulated platforms.
4. **Privacy risks:** Age verification may increase personal-data collection and surveillance.

4. Indian Supreme Court: Balancing Safety and Digital Rights

Case: *Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish and Others*

1. **Fundamental rights:** Articles 21 and 19(1)(a) protect life and personal liberty, and freedom of speech and expression, respectively.
2. **Balanced approach:** Child protection should target harmful content and exploitation without unnecessarily denying children internet access.
3. **Safeguards:** Parental guidance, child-friendly account settings, privacy protection and restrictions on contact from unknown adults.

5. Way Forward

1. Adopt proportionate, risk-based regulation rather than relying solely on blanket bans.
2. Strengthen platform accountability and mechanisms for reporting harmful content.
3. Use privacy-preserving age verification.
4. Promote digital literacy among children and parents.
5. Balance child safety with privacy, freedom of expression and access to information.

The debates around Legislative Councils, their functions today

Rishika Singh

New Delhi, October 23

ELECTIONS TO 28 seats across the Legislative Councils of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka were held on Friday, with results to be declared next week.

Unlike state polls, not every adult citizen can vote for Members of Legislative Councils (MLCs). Not all states have Legislative Councils, either.

What are Legislative Councils?

Just as the Indian Union has a bicameral legislature, comprising the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, some states have a Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council. Six states — the four mentioned earlier plus Telangana and Andhra Pradesh — have them.

Chakshu Roy, head of outreach at PRS Legislative Research, earlier wrote for *The Indian Express* that the colonial history traces back to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, which led to the formation of the

Council of State at the national level in 1919. "Then the Government of India Act of 1935 set up bicameral legislatures in Indian provinces... a Legislative Council first started functioning in Bengal in 1937," he wrote.

Similar to Rajya Sabha, the Legislative Council serves as a second layer of the law-making process. The two share similarities — Bills need their approval to become law; only those aged above 30 can contest for a seat, and members are chosen for six-year terms through indirect elections. One-third of the members retire every two years.

During the Constituent Assembly debates, members disagreed about its need. Congress leader Brajeshwar Prasad argued that, "With the inauguration of the new Constitution on the basis of adult franchise, it is risky to vest all powers in the hands of the Lower House... I believe that power must be vested in the hands of those... not only literate but wise too... who have got a sense of justice... People in India are not only illiterate, but narrow-minded."

Political barometer

● Legislative Council elections are seen as a political barometer by parties, indicating support among educated groups and professionals, or their position before key elections, as in the case of UP now.

● They are not fought on party symbols, but parties still back candidates.

Others criticised the elevated position enjoyed by the Legislative Assembly. For instance, the Legislative Council cannot reject the Assembly's suggestions on a Money Bill. Roy wrote that today, whether states are to have a Council is a political issue: "For example, in Tamil Nadu, creating a Council has been a contentious issue... The AIADMK-led government in 1986 abolished the state's second chamber. Since then, DMK has made attempts to re-establish the Council."

Legislative Council elections are seen as a political barometer, indicating support among educated groups and professionals, or their position before key elections, as in the case of UP now. They are not fought on party symbols, but parties still back candidates.

How are MLCs elected?

Article 169 of the Constitution says that Parliament can pass a law to create or abolish a Legislative Council, "if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total mem-

bership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting."

Article 171 says the total number of MLCs cannot be more than one-third of the total MLAs in a state, and not less than 40.

The polls are held through proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. In general, one-third of all MLCs shall be elected by "electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and such other local authorities..." Then, "One-twelfth shall be elected by electorates consisting of persons residing in the State who have been for at least three years graduates of any university" or equivalent qualifications. Those who want to vote in these seats must fill forms that require proof of qualifications. One-twelfth of the seats is to be elected by those teaching in at least a secondary school for three years in the state. The Governor also nominates some people having "special knowledge" in fields such as literature and science.

2. State Legislative Councils: Composition, Powers and Relevance

GS Paper II | Indian Polity and Governance

Context: Elections to 28 Legislative Council seats across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka have renewed debate over the relevance, functioning and democratic value of state upper houses.

1. Constitutional Framework and Composition

- Article 168:** Provides for bicameral legislatures in states having both a Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) and a Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad).
- Article 169:** Parliament may create or abolish a Legislative Council following a State Assembly resolution passed by a majority of its total membership and a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.
- Article 171:** A Council must have at least 40 members and cannot exceed one-third of the Assembly's strength. Its composition is:
 - One-third elected by local authorities.
 - One-twelfth elected by graduates.
 - One-twelfth elected by teachers.
 - One-third elected by Assembly members.

- E. One-sixth nominated by the Governor from fields such as literature, science, art, the cooperative movement and social service.
4. **Article 172:** A Legislative Council is a permanent body; one-third of its members retire every two years. Members serve six-year terms.
 5. **Eligibility:** The minimum age for membership is 30 years.

2. Powers and Functions

1. **Legislative scrutiny:** Reviews Bills, suggests amendments and provides an additional forum for informed debate.
2. **Ordinary Bills:** Can delay legislation and recommend changes but cannot permanently block a Bill passed by the Assembly.
3. **Money Bills:** Can recommend amendments within 14 days; the Assembly may accept or reject them.
4. **Executive accountability:** Cannot remove the state government through a no-confidence motion.
5. **Expert representation:** Provides a platform for teachers, graduates, local representatives and nominated experts to contribute to policymaking.

3. Major Concerns

1. **Political patronage:** Councils may be used to accommodate party loyalists or defeated candidates, weakening their role as independent reviewing chambers.
2. **Limited legislative authority:** Their inability to permanently block ordinary Bills or reject Money Bills can restrict their influence over policymaking.
3. **Financial burden:** Salaries, allowances, staff and administrative infrastructure create additional expenditure for state governments.
4. **Democratic representation:** Indirect elections and special electorates for graduates and teachers may not adequately reflect the wider population.
5. **Politicisation:** Decisions to create or abolish Councils may reflect partisan interests rather than objective assessments of legislative needs.

4. Way Forward

1. **Strengthen scrutiny:** Provide research support, expert assistance and effective legislative committees.
2. **Improve representation:** Ensure nominated members contribute genuine expertise and public service.
3. **Enhance transparency:** Publish debates, committee reports, attendance records and legislative assessments.
4. **Ensure institutional accountability:** Evaluate Councils on the quality of scrutiny, contribution to policymaking and cost-effectiveness.
5. **Preserve their constitutional purpose:** Make Councils forums for constructive review and deliberation rather than political accommodation.

Govt. to revise labour survey to track gig, household work

Periodic Labour Force Survey to identify households with at least one digital platform worker; it will also have questions to capture engagement in caregiving activities and unpaid trainee work

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has decided to change the design and structure of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) to track digital platform workers and capture engagement in unpaid household, caregiving, volunteer, and trainee work. The PLFS will also include additional questions to measure labour underutilisation.

According to a press release and concept note issued here on Friday, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), has proposed modifications to the PLFS sampling design starting January 2027. The survey schedule will also change.

The Ministry has invited comments and suggestions from policymakers, researchers, academic insti-



Hidden labour: The revised labour survey aims to better capture the economic contribution of women's unpaid work. IMRAN NISSAR

tutions, and the public within 15 days from Friday.

A separate Second Stage Stratum (SSS) will be introduced in the PLFS to identify households with at least one digital platform worker. An additional entry will be added to the questionnaire to determine whether any member of the household has engaged in digital platform work during the specified reference period. "There will be four SSSs in rural areas and five in urban

areas, with 14 households canvassed in each selected First Stage Unit (FSU). This revision in SSS formation is expected to improve the coverage of digital platform workers and facilitate more comprehensive data collection on this emerging segment of the labour market," the press release said.

Concept note

According to the concept note, a large proportion of women in India spend considerable time on unpaid

household and caregiving activities, such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and caring for elderly, sick, or disabled family members.

"While such activities contribute significantly to household well-being and facilitate the participation of other household members in paid employment, they have not been measured separately in PLFS until now," it noted, adding that specific questions will be incorporated to capture engagement in own-use production of goods, and unpaid household and caregiving activities.

Additionally, the criteria for sample allocation and stratification have been updated.

"These revisions are expected to improve the efficiency of sample allocation and ensure better representation of population variations, which in turn will minimise operational difficulties during sample selection," the release said.

3. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS): Tracking Gig Work and Unpaid Household Labour

GS Paper III | Indian Economy, Employment and Labour Force

Context: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has proposed changes to the Periodic Labour Force Survey

(PLFS) from January 2027 to improve measurement of digital platform work, unpaid household activities and labour underutilisation.

1. Major Changes in PLFS

1. **Digital platform workers:** A separate sampling stratum will identify households with at least one digital platform worker, improving coverage of gig employment.
2. **Unpaid household work:** New questions will capture cooking, cleaning, childcare and care for elderly, sick or disabled family members.
3. **Unpaid work and training:** The survey will record engagement in unpaid trainee work, volunteering and household production of goods.
4. **Labour underutilisation:** Additional questions will help assess the extent to which available labour is not fully utilised.
5. **Sampling improvements:** Revised sample allocation, stratification and survey schedules aim to improve population representation and data quality.

2. About the PLFS

1. **Conducted by:** National Statistical Office (NSO), under MoSPI.
2. **Purpose:** Provides estimates of employment, unemployment, labour force participation and working conditions in India.
3. **Key indicators:** Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR).
4. **Proposed timeline:** Revised sampling design is expected to begin in January 2027; the Ministry has invited comments from stakeholders.

3. Significance

1. **Gig economy:** Better data on platform workers can support evidence-based labour policies and social-security planning.
2. **Women's work:** Recording unpaid care and domestic work makes women's economic contribution more visible.

3. **Employment policy:** Improved measurement of underemployment and unpaid work can strengthen job-creation strategies.
4. **Evidence-based governance:** Better sampling and wider coverage can improve the reliability of labour-market estimates.

4. Challenges

1. **Underreporting:** Household and care work may remain poorly recorded because it is unpaid or socially undervalued.
2. **Changing work patterns:** Platform workers may combine multiple jobs or move frequently between employment categories.
3. **Measurement difficulties:** Distinguishing unpaid household production, caregiving, volunteering and leisure requires clear definitions.
4. **Survey implementation:** Revised sampling and questionnaires require trained enumerators and consistent data collection.

5. Way Forward

1. Use clear definitions for gig work, unpaid work and labour underutilisation.
2. Train enumerators to capture women's unpaid work and multiple employment activities accurately.
3. Maintain consistent methods to allow comparisons across survey rounds.
4. Use improved labour data to design targeted employment, skill-development and social-security policies.

Jaishankar visits Azerbaijan to ease strain in ties over Operation Sindoor

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday met Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku and said the visit charted a “pathway” for the future of bilateral ties. The meeting comes more than a year after relations between India and Azerbaijan deteriorated over the latter’s opposition to India’s Operation Sindoor against Pakistan.

Mr. Jaishankar also met his counterpart Jayhun Bayramov, who said the two countries had “different view points on different issues” earlier, but highlighted new areas of cooperation such as energy, and tourism after what he described as a “fruitful discussion”.

“We have common interest in really promoting peace and progress and prosperity. And threats like terrorism, conflict, and instability are our common enemies,” Mr. Jaishankar said in his remarks to the media after the meeting with Mr. Bayramov.

“Delighted to welcome



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on Friday. AFP

the External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar, to exchange views on the current state and prospects of Azerbaijan-India relations, including political dialogue, trade and investment, energy, tourism and cultural ties,” said Mr. Bayramov, emphasising “continued dialogue and exploration of opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest”.

Way forward

“Our talks charted a pathway forward for our relationship. Agreed to deepen political consultations, exchange visits, enhance eco-

nomic activities, build connectivity and foster people-to-people ties,” Mr. Jaishankar said. He also extended India’s support to the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The statement is the first major conciliatory step from the Indian side since Azerbaijan had expressed concern over the India-initiated Operation Sindoor of May 2025.

Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry had, on May 7, 2025, condemned the Indian strikes against Pakistan-based terror targets. “We condemn military attacks against the Islamic Repu-

blic of Pakistan that killed and injured several civilians,” the Azerbaijani Ministry had said.

Kashmir issue

Azerbaijan has also been vocal on the Kashmir issue at the international level, often calling for its “resolution”. Mr. Bayramov in his remarks on Friday downplayed the differences between the two sides. “We have touched upon a number of issues. I believe Azerbaijan-India relations are on their way to developing to a higher level,” said Mr. Bayramov.

Mr. Jaishankar’s visit to Baku is the first bilateral visit by an Indian External Affairs Minister in eight years. The late External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had visited Azerbaijan in April 2018 for a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial meeting.

Official sources here described the remarks from both sides on Friday as a sign of “diplomatic reset” as India expects to exert pressure on Türkiye and Pakistan by drawing Azerbaijan close.



4. India–Azerbaijan Relations: Historical Ties and Diplomatic Reset

GS Paper II – International Relations

Context: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Azerbaijan on 23 October 2026 to ease diplomatic tensions and strengthen bilateral cooperation.

1. Historical Background and Bilateral Ties

1. **Diplomatic Relations:** India recognised Azerbaijan's independence in December 1991, and diplomatic relations were established on 28 February 1992.
2. **Historical Links:** Indian traders historically maintained links with Baku. The Ateshgah Fire Temple contains inscriptions in Devanagari and Gurmukhi.
3. **Trade:** Bilateral trade reached **US\$401 million in 2025**.
 - Indian exports: US\$226 million, including pharmaceuticals and machinery.
 - Indian imports: US\$175 million, mainly crude oil.
4. **Energy Cooperation:** ONGC Videsh has invested over **US\$1.2 billion** in Azerbaijan's energy sector, including the Azeri–Chirag–Gunashli oil fields and the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline.
5. **People-to-People Ties:** Tourism, air connectivity, educational exchanges and cultural cooperation support bilateral relations.

2. Major Causes of Tension

1. **Operation Sindoor (2025):** Azerbaijan criticised India's strikes against terrorist targets in Pakistan.
2. **Pakistan Factor:** Azerbaijan's close relations with Pakistan and its position on Kashmir have complicated bilateral ties.
3. **Armenia Factor:** India's defence cooperation with Armenia represents a strategic difference between New Delhi and Baku.

3. Outcomes of Jaishankar's Visit

1. **Diplomatic Reset:** Meetings with President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov renewed high-level engagement.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** Discussions covered trade, investment, energy and tourism.
3. **Connectivity:** Cooperation through the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) could improve India's access to Eurasian markets.

4. **Regional Peace:** India welcomed progress in the Armenia–Azerbaijan peace process.

4. Way Forward

1. **Sustained Dialogue:** Prevent geopolitical differences from obstructing bilateral cooperation.
2. **Trade Diversification:** Expand cooperation in pharmaceuticals, technology and other non-energy sectors.
3. **Connectivity:** Strengthen transport and trade links through the INSTC.
4. **People-to-People Engagement:** Expand educational, cultural and tourism exchanges to rebuild mutual trust.

LAC 'disturbed' by PLA's behaviour, admits MEA

India, China are in touch to improve border management along the LAC, says Ministry; response comes after ITBP chief's remarks on the situation in Arunachal Pradesh; Congress slams Centre

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The Line of Actual Control (LAC) has been "disturbed" by the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) patrolling behaviour, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday in response to questions about a report in *The Hindu* on skirmishes along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.

The report, which had quoted the outgoing Director-General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Forces (ITBP), Shatrughat Kapur, expressing concern over "face-offs" underway since July 2026, led to the Congress criticising the Centre.

Despite the Ministry's confirmation, the video of Mr. Kapur's speech, delivered at an event in Alwar

Both sides [India and China] continue to use existing diplomatic and military mechanisms to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the Line of Actual Control

RANDHIR JAISWAL
Ministry of External Affairs
spokesperson



on Thursday, was deleted from the ITBP's official YouTube channel. This was the first time the government has officially accepted that, more than two years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a détente between their militaries, the border areas remain tense and "get disturbed" over patrolling routes.

"As we have noted in the past, the situation in the India-China border areas gets disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns," Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told journalists at a briefing here, blaming the PLA for the divergences.

"Both sides continue to use existing diplomatic and military mechanisms

to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the Line of Actual Control," he added.

He reiterated the government's position since the beginning of the four-year military standoff at the LAC, including the Galwan clashes in 2020, that the "maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations", and said that both sides were in touch about improving their understanding of the LAC for "better border management". The response came after the Opposition demanded a clarification on the situation in Arunachal Pradesh.

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5. India–China Border Tensions: PLA Patrols and the LAC

GS Paper II – International Relations

Context: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acknowledged continuing tensions over Chinese patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), following reports of face-offs in Arunachal Pradesh.

1. Key Developments

1. **Face-offs in Arunachal Pradesh:** Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) chief Shatrueet Kapoor reported face-offs at several locations, including Taksing in Upper Subansiri district.
2. **Patrolling Disputes:** Differences over established patrolling patterns contribute to tensions along the LAC.
3. **Military Dialogue:** India and China held Corps Commander-level talks at the Wacha–Damai border meeting point in Arunachal Pradesh.
4. **India's Position:** India maintains that peace and tranquillity along the border are essential for stable bilateral relations.

2. Major Concerns

1. **Unresolved Boundary:** Competing territorial perceptions increase the risk of confrontations.
2. **Escalation Risk:** Localised face-offs could trigger wider military tensions, as seen during the 2020 Galwan clashes.
3. **Trust Deficit:** Repeated disputes undermine confidence despite ongoing dialogue.
4. **Difficult Terrain:** The Himalayan landscape complicates surveillance, troop deployment and logistics.
5. **Bilateral Relations:** Persistent tensions hinder broader cooperation between India and China.

3. Way Forward

1. **Clarify the LAC:** Develop a common understanding of disputed stretches to minimise confrontations.
2. **Strengthen Border Protocols:** Ensure compliance with existing agreements and improve procedures for managing face-offs.
3. **Maintain Communication:** Continue military talks and strengthen communication channels to prevent escalation.
4. **Improve Infrastructure:** Enhance surveillance, connectivity and logistical support in sensitive border areas.
5. **Sustain Diplomatic Engagement:** Prioritise peace and tranquillity along the border to support stable bilateral relations.

• HEALTH

The signs and science of the Shamonda virus

Abhinav Chakraborty

New Delhi, October 23

FRANCE HAS confirmed the first known human case of Shamonda virus in a patient who died at a Lyon hospital earlier in October. In a joint statement, the country's health and agriculture ministries said that there was "no health risk to the general public identified at this time". The reported infection appeared to be "an exceptional case involving a severely immunocompromised patient" hospitalised for a serious medical condition, the statement added.

The Shamonda virus

The Shamonda virus is a vector-borne virus belonging to the genus *Orthobunyavirus* in the family *Peribunyaviridae*. It is part of the Simbu group of viruses.

First isolated in cattle in Nigeria in 1965 and since identified in parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe, the virus is understood to spread through bites from *Culicoides* midges (small fly-like insects). Although recent reports have primarily concerned cattle, cases have also been reported in sheep, goats, horses, and even alpacas.

Fever, diarrhoea, reduced milk production, and reproductive disorders are some of the signs

reported in animals — neurological signs are less common. Since these can often resemble other

SEASONAL CYCLE

• The long-term impact in Europe is still unclear. Outbreaks

6. Shamonda Virus: First Known Human Case

GS Paper III – Science and Technology

Context: France reported the first known human case of Shamonda virus in a patient who died in Lyon.

Key Facts

1. **Virus Type:** A vector-borne virus belonging to the genus *Orthobunyavirus* and the Simbu group.
2. **Transmission:** Primarily spread through bites of *Culicoides* midges.
3. **Animal Hosts:** Mainly affects cattle; infections have also been reported in sheep, goats, horses and alpacas.
4. **First Human Case:** A severely immunocompromised patient in France was infected with the SHAV-EU1 variant, confirmed through laboratory testing and genome sequencing.
5. **Symptoms in Animals:** Fever, diarrhoea, reduced milk production and reproductive disorders.

Oil prices extend rally to a near six-month high

Brent crude futures touched intra-day high of \$117 a barrel on Friday, a day after Houthi attacks on Saudi's civilian and energy infra; India's crude basket has averaged \$120.08 so far this month

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Oil prices extended their rally from Thursday, inching closer to a six-month high and the \$120 per barrel mark, a day after the Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia's civilian and energy infrastructure.

The latest attacks have renewed tensions over disruptions to global oil supplies. At the time of writing this report on Friday evening, benchmark Brent crude futures for December delivery had accelerated about 3.8% from its previous close to an intra-day high of \$117.42 per barrel.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was also up 3.64% at \$103.09 per barrel. India's crude oil basket



averaged \$119.99 per barrel on Friday, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC). The Indian basket has averaged \$120.08 per barrel till date in the ongoing month.

The latest benchmark prices are much higher than the Reserve Bank of India's projections of

crude oil prices being at \$95 per barrel in the second half of the fiscal year.

An increase in crude oil prices elevates concerns of persisting inflation.

According to estimates by Vipul Jindal and Tanay Dalal, economists at private sector lender Axis Bank, public sector support of approximately 1.7%

of GDP would cushion shocks when average oil prices stay at \$100 per barrel this year.

"Every \$10 per barrel increase in crude [but pump prices steady], will raise support by 20 bps," the economists estimate.

Adani raises CNG prices
Amid higher input gas pressures, Adani Total Gas on Friday increased the prices of compressed natural gas (CNG) at its retail stations by ₹4.45 per kg.

CNG at its outlets in Gujarat's Ahmedabad is now priced at ₹98.47 per kg, ₹102.6 per kg in Haryana's Faridabad and ₹106.4 per kg in Rajasthan's Udaipur.

On a standalone basis, the company operates 723 refuelling outlets across the country.

7. Rising Crude Oil Prices: Causes and Implications for India

GS Paper III – Indian Economy and Energy Security

Context: Global crude oil prices approached \$117 per barrel amid renewed geopolitical tensions and concerns over disruptions to oil supplies, increasing economic pressure on India.

1. Reasons for Rising Crude Oil Prices

1. **Houthi Attacks:** Attacks on Saudi Arabia's civilian and energy infrastructure heightened fears of supply disruptions.

2. **Geopolitical Instability:** Escalating tensions in West Asia increase uncertainty over global oil production and transportation.
3. **Supply Disruptions:** Threats to energy infrastructure and shipping routes raise concerns about the availability of crude oil.
4. **Market Uncertainty:** Fears of prolonged disruptions can push benchmark prices higher as traders anticipate tighter supply.

2. Key Developments

1. **Brent Crude:** Reached approximately \$117.42 per barrel.
2. **WTI Crude:** Rose to around \$103.09 per barrel.
3. **India's Crude Oil Basket:** Averaged approximately \$120.08 per barrel during the ongoing month.
4. **CNG Prices:** Adani Total Gas increased prices by ₹4.45 per kg amid higher input costs.

3. Implications for India

1. **Import Bill:** Higher crude prices increase foreign exchange expenditure and may widen the current account deficit.
2. **Inflation:** Rising fuel, transport and production costs can increase prices across the economy.
3. **Rupee Pressure:** Higher import payments can increase demand for foreign currency and put pressure on the rupee.
4. **Fiscal Burden:** The government may face pressure to adjust fuel taxes or provide relief to consumers.
5. **Economic Growth:** Persistent energy price increases can reduce household purchasing power and raise business costs.

4. Way Forward

1. Diversify crude oil imports and strengthen strategic petroleum reserves.
2. Accelerate renewable energy, electric mobility and biofuel adoption.
3. Improve energy efficiency and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.

4. Use calibrated fiscal measures to limit inflationary pressure without creating excessive fiscal costs.