

## ● POLITY

## ● ECONOMICS

## ● TECHNOLOGY

## ● ECOLOGY

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## UNSC SEEKS 'HUMANITARIAN PAUSES, CORRIDORS' IN GAZA

**CONTEXT:** UN calls for Gaza humanitarian pauses; Israel links to hostage release, hindering immediate agreement.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Malta proposed a UN resolution urging humanitarian pauses in Gaza for aid delivery, with 12 votes in favor. The U.S., U.K., and Russia abstained. The resolution seeks a sufficient duration for aid mobilization and emphasizes compliance with humanitarian obligations. It calls for the release of hostages held by Hamas but doesn't condemn their October attack, leaving around 1,200 dead according to Israeli authorities.



## WHAT IS IN NEWS?

- **Horrorified Ambassador:** U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, expresses horror at the Security Council's hesitation to condemn barbaric attacks by a terrorist organization targeting Jews.
- **Israeli Call for Condemnation:** Israel's Foreign Ministry urges an unequivocal condemnation of Hamas, insisting on swift action without prolonged humanitarian pauses until hostages are released.
- **Delayed Vote:** Security Council members delay scheduling a vote until confident of success; resolutions are legally binding but not always adhered to by some members.
- **Tangled Negotiations:** Attempts to adopt a resolution during the conflict stall over wording, with the U.S. opposing "ceasefire"; alternative terms like "truce" or "pause" are considered.
- **Persistent Conflict:** Despite multiple attempts, the Security Council struggles to reach a resolution to halt the fighting, highlighting challenges in navigating diplomatic complexities during the crisis.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## BIDEN, XI RESTORE MILITARY TIES BUT REMAIN APART ON WIDER FLASHPOINT OF TAIWAN

**CONTEXT:** Biden, Xi restore military communication; Biden off-script calls Xi a "dictator" during California summit.

**BACKGROUND:** During a four-hour meeting in California, leaders of the U.S. and China discussed preventing tensions from escalating. They agreed on China cracking down on fentanyl production to address the U.S. opioid crisis. However, differences persisted on Taiwan, with President Xi urging the U.S. to stop arming the island, asserting reunification as "unstoppable."



## WHAT IS IN NEWS?

- **Positive Talks:** President Biden describes discussions with President Xi as "constructive and productive," emphasizing vigorous but responsible competition to prevent conflict, with direct communication channels agreed upon.
- **Military Communication Restoration:** Both leaders agree to restore military-to-military communications, deemed crucial to avoid conflicts; severed by China after Nancy Pelosi's Taiwan visit in 2022.
- **Broadened Cooperation:** Agreement to hold talks on Artificial Intelligence and deepen collaboration on climate change before COP28; signals efforts to engage on global challenges beyond bilateral concerns.
- **Undiplomatic Remark:** Despite positive talks, President Biden reaffirms his earlier characterization of Xi as a dictator, citing differences in government systems; Xi responds with a focus on growing U.S.-China ties.

- **Taiwan Standoff:** President Xi urges the U.S. to stop arming Taiwan and support China's reunification, asserting it as unstoppable. The day involves carefully arranged diplomacy, symbolized by red carpet handshakes and extensive discussions, including on Gaza and Ukraine.

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

# T.N. ASSEMBLY TO READOPT BILLS THAT GOVERNOR

**CONTEXT:** A special session of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has been convened on Saturday to readopt certain Bills returned to the government by Governor R.N. Ravi.

**BACKGROUND:** Tamil Nadu recently moved the Supreme Court accusing Mr. Ravi of creating a “constitutional deadlock” by inexplicably delaying or even failing to consider and give assent to crucial Bills passed by the legislature and stymieing day-to-day governance in a way that is threatening to bring administration in the State to a grinding halt. In its affidavit, the government had listed out 12 Bills (including two adopted during the erstwhile AIADMK regime) that were pending before the Governor, as on October 26. All the 12 Bills listed out by Tamil Nadu in the Supreme Court were over empowering the State government to control the affairs of the university and replacing the Governor as Chancellor of State-run universities.

## ASSENT OF THE GOVERNOR OF STATE

Every ordinary bill passed by State Legislature is presented to the Governor of State for the assent. There are 3 alternatives before the Governor of State:

1. **GIVE ASSENT TO THE BILL:** The Governor of State can assent the ordinary bill duly passed by both Houses of the bicameral State Legislature. The bill becomes an Act.
2. **SUSPENSORY VETO:** The Governor of State can return ordinary legislative bills duly passed by State Legislature for its reconsideration. The State Legislature can override the “suspensory” veto powers enjoyed by the Governor of State in the first instance with re-passage of the bill by a simple majority with or without amendments. Hence, the Governor of State enjoys only suspensory veto powers in the first instance. The Governor of State can reserve the bill for consideration of the President of India. The President can assent, withhold assent or return the non-Money bill reserved by the State Governor for reconsideration of the State Legislature.
3. **RESERVE THE BILL FOR THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA:** The Governor of State can reserve an ordinary Bill towards the President of India under Article 201 of the Indian Constitution. The role of the Governor of the State is extinguished thereafter. The President of India enjoys the following options over an ordinary bill reserved by the State Governor under Article 201 of the Indian Constitution.

- a. **GIVE HIS ASSENT TO THE BILL:** The President of India can assent the ordinary bill duly passed by both Houses of the bicameral State Legislature. The bill becomes an Act. Such a law overrides over the laws enacted by the Parliament of India in event of inconsistency between laws enacted between the Parliament of India and State Legislature.
- b. **SUSPENSORY VETO:** The President of India can return ordinary legislative bills duly passed by State Legislature for its reconsideration via the Governor of State. However, the State Legislature cannot override the “suspensory” veto power of the President of India in the first instance with re-passage of the bill by a simple majority with or without amendments. In other words, the President can still return such an ordinary bill passed by the State Legislature by a simple majority with or without amendments. Unlike the Governor of State, who enjoys suspensory veto powers only in the first instance with regard to an ordinary bill passed by the State Legislature, the President of India enjoy suspensory veto rights indefinitely.
- c. **POCKET VETO:** The President of India can withhold the assent of an ordinary bill indefinitely.
- d. **POCKET VETO:** The Governor of State can withhold the assent of an ordinary bill indefinitely.



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## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## UGC TO BRING OUT A NEW CURRICULUM FOR PG PROGRAMMES, OFFERS FLEXIBILITY TO STUDENTS

**CONTEXT:** UGC approves draft for new postgraduate curriculum, emphasizes flexibility aligned with National Education Policy.

**BACKGROUND:** The proposed education framework allows flexibility, enabling students to exit with a postgraduate diploma after one year or complete a one-year program after a four-year degree. Those with three-year degrees can pursue a two-year program, including research. A five-year integrated bachelor's/master's program is suggested, emphasizing core areas like Machine Learning and interdisciplinary fields.

### WHAT IS IN NEWS?

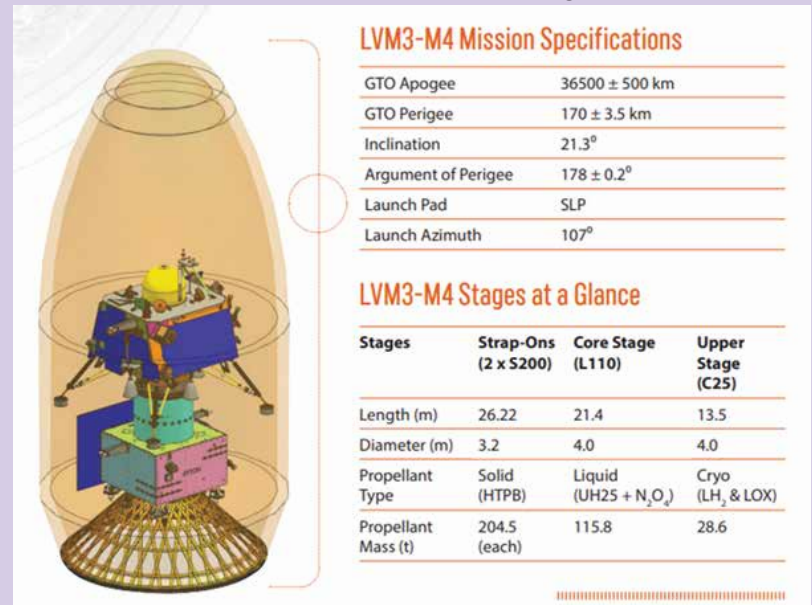
- **Harmonized Framework:** The postgraduate framework aligns with the National Credit Framework (NCrF), facilitating credit-based learning, assignment, accumulation, and transfer, allowing for flexibility and assessments.
- **Disciplinary Mobility:** Students gain flexibility to transition between disciplines, opt for double majors, and choose major or minor subjects from their undergraduate studies in their Master's program.
- **Course Customization:** Learners can select courses aligned with their interests, with the option to switch between various modes of learning, including offline, online, open and distance learning, and hybrid methods.
- **Exit Options:** The framework supports multiple entry and a single exit approach, enabling students exiting after the first year to receive a PG diploma. Institutions can design diverse Master's programs.
- **Adaptability:** The proposed framework reflects a comprehensive approach to higher education, fostering adaptability and individualized learning paths for students within a credit-based system.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## CRYOGENIC UPPER STAGE OF LVM3 MAKES A RE-ENTRY

**CONTEXT:** ISRO reports uncontrolled re-entry of Chandrayaan-3's launch vehicle cryogenic stage, with no impact on India.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The rocket body (NORAD id 57321) that launched Chandrayaan-3 successfully re-entered Earth's atmosphere within 124 days of its July 14, 2023 launch, according to the space agency. The body played a crucial role in placing the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft into its designated orbit of 133 km x 35823 km with a 21.3-degree inclination.



### About LVM3

- **Chandrayaan-3 Mission:** India's third lunar exploration mission, Chandrayaan-3, is set for launch in the fourth operational mission (M4) using the LVM3 launcher, demonstrating ISRO's commitment to lunar exploration.
- **Soft Landing and Roving:** ISRO aims to achieve a soft landing on the lunar surface with its lunar module and showcase rover mobility on the lunar terrain, marking a significant advancement in lunar exploration capabilities.
- **Support for Future Missions:** Chandrayaan-3 is anticipated to play a crucial role in supporting ISRO's future interplanetary missions, showcasing India's commitment to advancing space exploration technologies.
- **Rover Deployment:** The mission includes the deployment of a rover and in-situ scientific experiments, representing a milestone in lunar expeditions and allowing for close-up exploration of the Moon's surface.
- **Bringing the Moon Closer:** Through Chandrayaan-3, ISRO endeavors to bring the Moon closer to humanity, contributing to scientific knowledge and paving the way for further exploration beyond Earth's orbit.

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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## UNIMPEDED FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION VITAL: RAJNATH

**CONTEXT:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed the 10th meeting of Defence Ministers from countries belonging to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its dialogue partners in Indonesia.



India is committed to the freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce in international waters, and supports the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), reaffirming ASEAN's centrality and appreciated its role in promoting dialogue and consensus in the region.

The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) is a platform to strengthen security and defence cooperation for the 10 ASEAN member States and their eight dialogue partners — India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States — which are collectively known as the Plus countries. India became an ASEAN dialogue partner in 1992, and the inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in 2010.

### Security collaboration

The Defence Minister called for regional security initiatives that are consultative and development-oriented to reflect the larger consensus among various stakeholders. He expressed commitment towards nurturing practical, forward-looking and result-oriented cooperation with ADMM-Plus for enhancing maritime security in the region.

Mr. Singh called for active collaboration among ASEAN and Plus countries. The conflicts extract a terrible toll in terms of human lives lost and livelihoods destroyed, apart from disturbing regional and global stability, and affecting food and energy security, reiterating India's commitment to work with ASEAN and Plus countries to ensure peace, prosperity, and security, which is an apt theme for this year's ADMM-Plus.

### Counter-terror group

The Defence Minister appreciated ASEAN members' enthusiastic participation in India-ASEAN activities, particularly initiatives for women in UN peacekeeping operations, and for a marine plastic pollution response. The maiden ASEAN-India maritime exercise was held in May.

India and Indonesia are co-chairs of ASEAN's expert working group on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities in the 2020-2023 cycle. Recognising that terrorism is a serious threat to international peace and security, including in the ASEAN region, India proposed to co-chair the expert working group on counter-terrorism. This proposal was endorsed by ADMM-Plus, as terrorism remains a serious concern to countries in the region.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## SECOND ANTI-PIRACY PATROL IN GULF OF GUINEA OVER: NAVY

**CONTEXT:** The Indian Navy has completed its second anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) in the Atlantic Ocean. The offshore patrol vessel INS Sumedha, which is on an extended range operational deployment and is currently operating in the Atlantic Ocean along the west coast of Africa, undertook a 31-day anti-piracy patrol.



The Gulf of Guinea is critical for India's national interests as it is an important source for India's energy requirements. The maiden Gulf of Guinea anti-piracy patrol was undertaken by INS Tarkash in September-October 2022.

INS Sumedha's operational deployment to a crucial geographical region of immense relevance to India has ensured our national interests are further bolstered. INS Sumedha's deployment also ensured enhancing Navy-to-Navy connect with regional Navies, including Senegal, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Angola and Namibia. Another highlight of the deployment was the ship's participation in the maiden India-EU Joint Exercise.



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## ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

## FOOD PRICES POSE RISK TO ALIGNING INFLATION TO 4% TARGET: RBI OFFICIALS

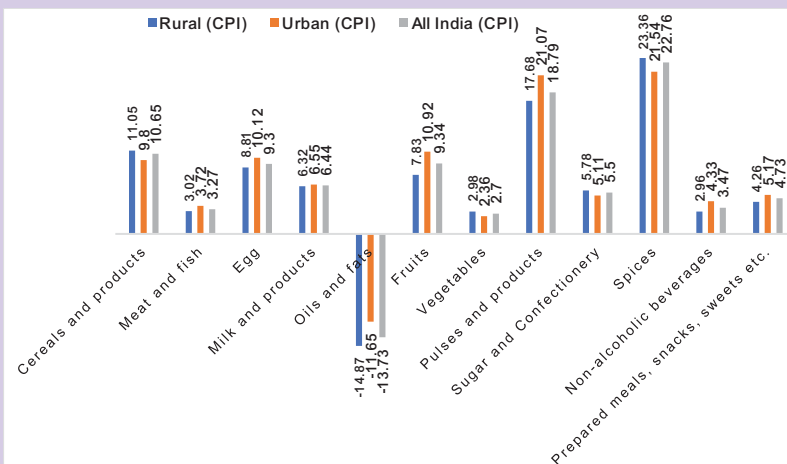
**CONTEXT:** High frequency data show the prices of several food items already firming up this month. Several constituent prices are already firming up – onions; tomatoes; cereals; pulses; and sugar – with the potential to disrupt the gains made in the last two months.

### Volatile food prices

RBI officials flag the risk that food prices pose to the RBI's resolve to align headline inflation to the 4% target



- Rising food prices have the potential to disrupt gains made in the last two months
- Officials caution that economy 'not out of the woods yet' on inflation
- Investment demand appears to be resilient with govt. Infra spending lending a boost



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the rural, urban and All-India year-on-year inflation rates (%) for General, Group and Sub-group level CPI and CFPI numbers for October 2023 (Provisional) for Rural, Urban and Combined (Base: 2012=100)

## ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

## 'TRADE DEFICIT TO NARROW FROM OCT. PEAK, BUT STILL EXCEED H1 AVERAGE OF \$20 BN.'

**CONTEXT:** India's goods import bill and trade deficit are likely to moderate this month from October's record highs, but the trade balance is likely to stay adverse in the coming months on account of higher prices for key imports like oil and gold, weaker demand for exports and continuing curbs on wheat and rice.



Imports jumped 20.2 % from September's levels to hit \$ 65.03 billion last month, led by oil imports surging to a seven-month high of \$ 17.7 billion, gold imports rising 95.4 % and silver almost 125 %. With exports of \$ 33.6 billion, this resulted in an all-time high deficit of \$31.5 billion.

October's deficit is sharply above the \$ 20 billion average deficit recorded in April-September 2023 as both imports and exports lost momentum from a year ago. With oil prices, which had crossed \$ 93 a barrel in September, easing a bit last month, taking the lag time in redrawing oil contracts, and some of the festive import demand cooling into account.

### MERCHANDISE AND SERVICE TRADE

India's goods exports grew only for the second time in 2023-24 in October, albeit on a low base, rising 6.2% to \$33.6 billion, but imports jumped to a record high of \$ 65.03 billion, 12.3% over last year, fuelled by higher gold inflows.

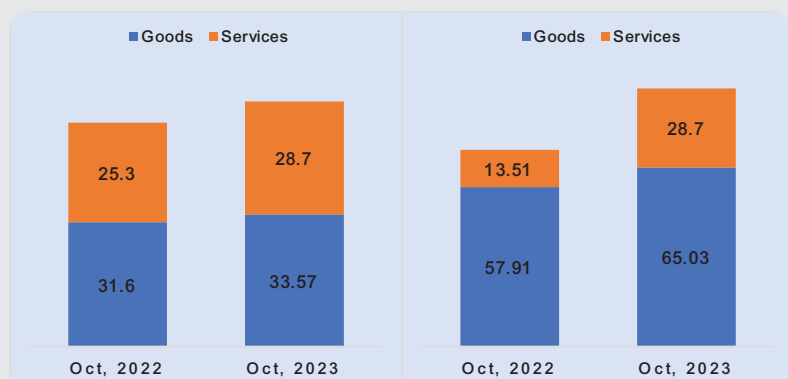
Consequently, India's monthly goods trade deficit widened to an all-time high of \$31.46 billion, eclipsing the previous record of \$29.23 billion in September 2022. October's outbound shipments' value was also the lowest since last November, and 2.5% below September's.

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**FIGURE:** (L) Column chart representation of monthly value of exports of goods and services. (R) Column chart representation of monthly value of imports of goods and services.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

### WIDENING DIVIDE

**CONTEXT:** The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), which represents Kuki-Zo groups, pursuing “self-rule” with a separate “chief minister” in districts dominated by the tribal community, just a week after an Intelligence Bureau team and Ministry of Home Affairs officials held meetings in Churachandpur.

The Government has tried to keep a tenuous peace going by not enacting any change in the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led State government even after its failures in maintaining law and order. A leadership change has been a key demand by the Kuki-Zo community representatives besides others. The Union government has meanwhile relied upon paramilitary forces to quell the violence in areas adjoining the Imphal valley and the hill areas. It has taken a recourse to provisions of Article 355 to maintain peace, despite denying its imposition in the State.

This ploy has ostensibly been undertaken to retain the support of Meitei partisans who have refused to allow any change of leadership in the State government and also to address the Kuki-Zo people’s distrust of the State police. Yet, the outcome has been a sharpening of the divide with partisans on either side raging against these half-measures. In the absence of a clear détente and the beginning of a dialogue process to rebuild an enduring peace and fraternal relations between the communities that would facilitate the return of people, even sporadic incidents have exacerbated the situation, making peace-building daunting.

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### CHALLENGING THE ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME

**CONTEXT:** The United Progressive Alliance government had devised the Electoral Trusts Scheme (2013) to create a smokescreen between political parties and their corporate donors. The National Democratic Alliance, the succeeding government, came up with a far more ambitious and ingenious Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS).

#### BACKGROUND:

1. The Finance Act, 2016 retrospectively amended Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) to permit Indian subsidiaries of foreign companies to donate to political parties.
2. The Finance Act, 2017 amended Representation of the People Act (RPA), the Companies Act, the Income Tax Act and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act to overhaul the regulatory framework. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Common Cause filed a PIL to challenge the constitutionality of the amendments made in the legal framework of corporate donations by the Finance Act of 2017. The petition contended that these amendments infringed the citizen’s fundamental ‘Right to know’ under Article 19(1)(a), and were not saved by any of the permissible restrictions under Article 19(2).

#### Bonds, the favoured mode

Electoral bonds worth ₹13,791 crore have been sold in 27 tranches until July 2023. The electoral bonds accounted for 55.9 % of the donations totalling ₹ 9,188 crore received by 31 political parties. Over 94% of the electoral bond sales are in the denomination of one crore rupees — a sum beyond the capacity of individual donors. BJP received 74.5 % of electoral bonds redeemed until 2020-2021, while INC received 11 %, followed by the Biju Janata Dal, the YSR Congress Party and the Trinamool Congress.

The expenditure on the last general election to the Lok Sabha has been estimated at between ₹55,000 to ₹60,000 crore. Most dealings of political parties continue to be in cash, but the receipts from electoral bonds enable them to meet their transactions with the formal economy, such as the costs of infrastructure expansion, equipment and publicity in the print, electronic and digital media.

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