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With new Bill, demand-led job scheme set to turn supply-driven

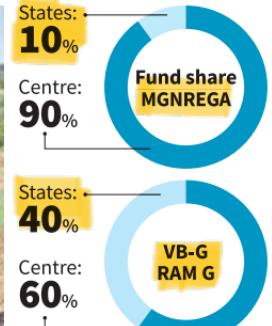
- The **Viksit Bharat Guarantee For Rozgar And Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill** proposes to increase **guaranteed workdays** from **100 to 125**, but **raises the financial burden on States and dismantles the demand-driven structure of the MGNREGA**.
- Under the new system, **allocations will be capped at a fixed budget** determined by the **Union government** based on **parameters not yet specified**.
- Employment** will be provided only in **rural areas notified by the Centre**.

Framework change

The government has circulated the VB-G RAM G Bill to MPs, framing it as legislation to 'establish a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047'

Shifts from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G Bill

- Rights-based employment guarantee → **Supply-driven employment and livelihood scheme**
- 100 days of wage employment → **125 days**
- Flexible budget → **Budget cap**
- Year-round → **Seasonal pause allowed**



The Oman visit is more than a routine diplomatic trip

- The visit of **PM Modi to Oman** comes at a crucial time amid **regional uncertainties, tariff wars, conflicts, energy transitions, and emerging connectivity corridors**. The visit marks **70 years of diplomatic relations between India and Oman**.

Geopolitical Context

- The Oman visit takes place amid **tremendous geopolitical flux in the region**, especially the **uncertain peace after the Gaza ceasefire**.
- Both nations are seeking to **strengthen their partnership** in the evolving regional environment.

Strategic Partnership

- India signed a strategic partnership agreement **with Oman in 2008**.
- Oman was invited as a guest nation during India's G-20 Presidency in 2023.

Defence and Security Cooperation

- Defence and security engagement are governed by a **memorandum of understanding on military cooperation signed in 2005**.
- Oman is the first Gulf country** with which all three wings of India's defence forces hold joint exercises.
- Since 2012–13, an **Indian naval ship** has remained on duty in the **Gulf of Oman** for anti-piracy operations.
- Oman was the first Gulf country to purchase the INSAS assault rifle in 2010**.
- The **logistics agreement on Duqm Port**, signed during Mr. Modi's visit in 2018, provides **basing facilities, operational turnaround and logistics facilities** to the Indian Navy.
- Oman's **strategic location** overlooking the **Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea** allows India to keep a **discreet watch** on growing Chinese PLA Naval activity.

Economic and Commercial Relations

- Bilateral trade has increased to **\$10.613 billion for FY 2024–25**.
- Cumulative FDI equity inflow from Oman to India from **2000 to 2025** stands at **\$605.57 million**.

Investment Cooperation

- The **Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF)** is a 50-50 joint venture between the **State Bank of India** and the **Oman Investment Authority**.
- OIJIF has invested **\$600 million in India**, including a **third tranche worth \$300 million** announced in **2023**.

Fintech and Digital Payments

- In **2022**, the **Central Bank of Oman** signed a MoU with **NPCI** to link payment systems.
- The **Rupay debit card** was launched in **Oman**.

Trade Agreement

- The **India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** is likely to be signed.
- Oman would become the **second country in the region** after the UAE to sign such an agreement with India.

A broad-based development model

- According to the **Reserve Bank of India**, **Tamil Nadu (T.N.)** is the **second largest economy**.

- T.N. recorded double-digit growth of 11.2% in 2024-25 (constant prices), making it the **fastest-growing State**.
- This growth **outpaces the national average of 6.5%**.
- The **secondary sector**, particularly **manufacturing**, has been the **principal driver** of growth.
- T.N. is a **major industrial powerhouse**.
- T.N. has the **largest number of technical institutions** in India (955 in 2024-25).
- While India's FDI equity inflows declined, T.N.'s FDI inflows rose.
- T.N. ranks first in **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education at 47%, compared to **national average** of 28.4%. T.N. ranks third in female GER at 47.3%. T.N. ranks first in the **Export Preparedness Index**.

One in six people exposed to conflict worldwide in 2025

- According to a **new report** from ACLED, an estimated **831 million people**, or **10% of the world's population**, were **exposed to conflict** this year. **Nearly three out of four** such events directly involved state forces.
- **Europe recorded the greatest increase in violence**, largely driven by the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**, affecting the **highest number of people** since 2022.
- While conflicts persisted in **West Asia**, the **end of Syria's civil war** and **ceasefires in Lebanon and Gaza** reduced **violent events**.
- **Israel and Russia** were responsible for about **90% of violent incidents** targeting **civilians outside their borders**.
- The **Myanmar military** accounted for **nearly a third of violence** by state forces against civilians.
- In terms of **fatalities**, about **60%** were caused by **non-state armed groups and mobs**.
- The **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**, **Sudan's paramilitary group**, were a major contributor.
- The **Allied Democratic Forces**, linked to the **Islamic State**, were responsible for at least **1,370 civilian fatalities**.
- The **March 23 Movement (M23)** was also cited.

Why were IndiGo operations disrupted?

- Planning gaps in pilot rostering and **misjudgement of pilot availability** emerged under **new DGCA rules** on pilot rest and duty hours.
- These issues were compounded by **technical glitches**, **winter schedule changes**, **adverse weather**, and **aviation system congestion**.
- The issue relates to **Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL)** governing **pilot rest and duty hours**.
- In **2019**, the **DGCA** introduced **new rules** reversing some **pilot-friendly provisions** of the **2011 rules**.
- The **2011 Nasim Zaidi Committee report** had recommended safeguards on **FDTL**.
- The **2019 rules** allowed **up to two consecutive nights of duty** and used **vague definitions** for **night flying hours** and **duty hours**.
- After **pilot bodies** approached the **Delhi High Court**, **revised norms** were notified in **2024**.
- The revised norms increased **weekly rest** from **36 to 48 hours**. They **restricted night flying** by capping **landings to two, maximum flying time to eight hours, and duty time to 10 hours**.
- The rollout was **paused** following **airline warnings of cancellations** and the need for **more pilots**.
- In **2025**, the **Delhi High Court** ordered **phased enforcement**.
- The **government** should strengthen the **Passenger Charter of Rights** on **cancellations and delays**.
- The **regulator's website** should transparently list **delay, cancellation, and baggage policies** in **simple formats**.
- **Fostering market competition** and addressing **operational costs** of airlines is **essential**.

Does India need to upgrade its biosecurity measures?

- New age **biotechnologies** endow powers to **understand biology better** and **harness biological agents** to target **humans**, making it necessary that **biosecurity measures** need to be **upgraded**.

What is Biosecurity

- **Biosecurity** refers to the set of practices and systems designed to deter the **intentional misuse of biological agents, toxins or technologies**.
- It covers everything from **safeguarding labs handling dangerous pathogens** to **detecting and containing an intentional outbreak of a pathogen**.
- Biosecurity is not only about **protecting human health**, but extends to **agricultural and animal health**.
- **Biosecurity** differs slightly from **biosafety**, which prevents the **accidental leakage of pathogens**. A **robust biosafety protocol** feeds into **biosecurity**.
- After instances of **bioweapons development**, the **Biological Weapons Convention (1975)** came into existence. It prohibited the **use and development of biological weapons of mass destruction** and asked signatories to **destroy existing stockpiles**.

Why India Needs Biosecurity

- India's **geography and ecology** make it vulnerable to **cross-border bio-risks**.
- **Dependence on agriculture** and a **large population** make the threat more dangerous.
- There have been reports of alleged preparation of the toxin Ricin for potential use in a **terror attack**. This underscores how **non-state actors are pursuing biological tools**.
- The rapid spread of **biotechnologies** has increased **control over biology**, raising chances of **malicious experimentation with bioweapons**.

India's Institutional and Legal Framework

- The **Department of Biotechnology** oversees **research governance and safety frameworks**.
- The **National Centre for Disease Control** manages **outbreak surveillance and response**.
- The **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying** monitors **livestock biosecurity and transboundary diseases**.
- The **Plant Quarantine Organisation of India** regulates **agricultural imports and exports**.
- Laws include the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** governing **hazardous microorganisms and GMOs**.
- The **Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, 2005** criminalises **biological weapons**.
- **Biosafety Rules (1989)** and **guidelines released in 2017** cover **Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment**.
- The **National Disaster Management Authority** has guidelines on **management of biological disasters**.
- India is part of international platforms such as the **Biological Weapons Convention** and the **Australia Group**.

Gaps and Global Standing

- Despite multiple agencies, a **unified national biosecurity framework** is still evolving.
- India is ranked **66 on the Global Health Security Index**.
- While the score for **detecting biothreats** has increased, the score for **effective response** has reduced.

Risks Ahead

- An inadequate biosecurity apparatus **jeopardises the lives of billions of Indians**. It is necessary to develop a **national biosecurity framework** that coordinates actions across government agencies.

SHANTI Bill to allow private sector to make, run nuclear power plants

- The **Centre** introduced the **SHANTI Bill** in the **Lok Sabha** to incentivise private sector participation, both **Indian and foreign**, in **nuclear power production**.
- The Bill replaces the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** and the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act, 2010**.
- It introduces the **Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025**.
- It creates an **atomic energy regulatory structure** answerable to **Parliament**, removes **NPCIL's monopoly** over operating **nuclear plants**, and restricts **operator compensation claims** from **equipment suppliers** in case of an **accident**.
- It also **buffers operators** by introducing **limits on liability** based on **plant size** and caps the **maximum penalty** at **₹1 crore** even for a "**severe breach**".
- The Bill proposes a **revised civil liability framework**, confers **statutory status** on the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)**, and strengthens **safety, security, safeguards, quality assurance, and emergency preparedness**.
- **Privatising the nuclear power sector**, which accounts for 1.5% of **installed capacity** and 3% of **electricity produced**, aims to boost **clean energy**, improve **grid stability**, and move towards **2070 net-zero targets**.
- The plan includes **scaling installed nuclear power to 100 GW by 2047** from **8.8 GW**.
- It includes a **₹20,000 crore mission** to develop **small modular reactors**.
- It also includes **customised 220 MW pressurised heavy water reactors**.

Unemployment rate dips to 4.7% in November: PLFS

- The **PLFS**, conducted by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under **MoSPI**, stated that the **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** increased to **55.8%** in **November**, the **highest since April**.
- According to a **MoSPI statement**, the rise in LFPR was primarily driven by **rural areas**.
- The **female LFPR** showed a **steady rise** from **June 2025 to November 2025**.
- The **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** for persons aged **15 years and above** in **rural areas** increased.

India, Mexico in talks to mitigate tariff hike impact, says Agrawal

- India and Mexico are discussing ways to **mitigate the impact of Mexico's proposed tariff increases** on countries **without a free trade agreement**, including India.
- A quick solution could be a **Preferential Trade Agreement**.
- The proposed **tariffs** would impact about **\$2 billion worth of Indian exports to Mexico**.

- The **Mexican government** re-submitted a proposal to hike **tariffs to 50%** on imports from countries with **Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status** but **no trade agreement**.
- Tariffs have been increased on an **MFN basis** within the **World Trade Organization (WTO) framework**.
- An increase in **MFN tariffs** impacts **non-Free Trade Agreement** and **non-Bilateral Trade Agreement** partners, affecting **India**.

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