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DownToEarth
FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

Table of Contents

- 1 Consumer Price Index
- 2 Salem Sago
- 3 Palm Oil
- 4 Nechiphu Tunnel
- 5 Index of Industrial Production(IIP)
- 6 G-7
- 7 NITI Ayog
- 8 Air Quality Index
- 9 New Spider Species
- 10 Section 124A

Consumer Price Index Numbers On Base 2012=100 For Rural, Urban And Combined For The Month Of August 2023

Context: Recently, the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released All India **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** on Base 2012=100.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

- **About:** It measures price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer.
- **Base Year:** 2012
- **Released by:** National Statistical Office (NSO)
- **CPI Formula:**
$$\text{CPI} = \left(\frac{\text{Total cost of basket of goods and services in the current period}}{\text{Total cost of basket of goods and services in the base period}} \right) \times 100$$
- **CPI is calculated** For a fixed list of items including food, housing, apparel, transportation, electronics, medical care, education, etc.
- **Types of CPI:** CPI for Industrial Workers (IW), CPI for Agricultural Labourers (AL), CPI for Rural Labourers (RL) and CPI for Urban Non-Manual Employees (UNME).
- The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** uses CPI data to control inflation.



	<u>WPI</u>	<u>CPI</u>
Released By	Office of Economic Advisor (Ministry of Commerce & Industry)	National Statistics Office (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation)
Measures	Goods only	Both Goods & Services
Items covered	697	448(Rural Basket) 460 (Urban Basket)
Base year	2011-12	2012

The Salem Starch and Sago Manufacturers Service Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd (popularly called as SAGOSERVE) received Geographical indication tag or GI tag for Salem sago recently

Context: Recently, the **Salem Starch and Sago Manufacturers Service Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd.** (popularly called SAGOSERVE) **received a Geographical Indication Tag**, or GI Tag, for Salem sago (Tamil Nadu).

Salem Sago (Sabudana)

- Sago, a product of raw tapioca, originates from the crushed **tapioca roots**.
- It takes the form of small, firm globules or pearls, displaying a pure pearl-white color.
- The **sago production process** utilizes wet starch powder obtained from tapioca roots, while the dry powder finds applications in various industries.

What is Tapioca?

- It is a **prominent horticultural crop covering** approximately 300,000 hectares in Tamil Nadu, yielding an impressive 6 million metric tonnes.
- **Climate and Soil:** Tapioca thrives in well-drained soil, particularly red lateritic loamy soil.
- It flourishes in tropical, warm, and humid climates.
- **Rainfall:** Exceeding 100 cm annually, is essential for its growth.
- Tapioca cultivation can extend up to elevations of 1000 meters.

What is GI Tag?

- It is a symbol used on items that come from a particular geographical area and have qualities or a reputation linked to that place of origin.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Tenure:** 10 Years
- **Regulated By:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.
- The **World Trade Organization's Agreement** on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) also regulates Geographical Indications.
- **India's First GI Product:** Darjeeling Tea (2004-05)



Oil palm plantations proved to be a disaster in Mizoram – is Assam next?

Oil palm plantations must be strictly prohibited in the region to protect its rich biodiversity

Which Countries Produce The Most Palm Oil?

Amount of palm oil produced in selected countries in 2019 (in million metric tons)



Source: United States Department of Agriculture



statista

Palm Oil

- **About:** It is also known as palm fruit oil. Palm oil is produced from the fruit of the oil palm tree (Scientific name: *Elaeis guineensis*).
- **Production:** Indonesia > Malaysia - 84% of the world's palm production
- **Consumption:** India (9.4 million tonnes) > Indonesia (6 million tonnes)
- **Major Oil Palm Production States in India:-** Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Kerala, Gujarat,
- Goa, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Tripura, West Bengal and some areas of Andaman

Context: Recently, Assam Chief Minister revealed that the state government had embarked on a significant **oil palm plantation project** in collaboration with Patanjali Food Limited (PFL).

- The ambitious project is an initiative to **achieve the India's Prime Minister goal** of self-sufficiency in edible oil production.

Oil Palm plantation and adverse impacts

- **GREEN**, a 2009 documentary by Patrick Rouxel, highlighted the impacts of deforestation triggered by **oil palm plantations in Indonesia**.
 - It focussed on the orangutans of the region. A similar scenario is likely to happen in Northeast India as well.
- **Northeast together encompass** two global biodiversity hot spots: **The Eastern Himalayas** and the **Indo-Myanmar region**.
 - These regions flaunt extensively **rich biodiversity in terms of forest tracts**, which are home to several threatened and endemic wildlife species as well as medicinal plants.
- **Impact on National Parks:** Assam, with significant biodiversity and national parks like **Manas and Kaziranga**, should avoid monoculture plantation projects that could harm its rich ecological diversity.
 - The proximity of the **trees planted to optimise** the use of limited available space further impacts soil quality.
- **Fertilisers and pesticides** are frequently used to compensate for the deficiency of nutrients.
- **Amendments to Forest (Conservation) Act:** Recent amendments have implications for the **expansion of oil palm plantations** by allowing non-forest activities in deemed forests, potentially leading to deforestation.

ARUNACHAL TUNNEL TO LADAKH AIRFIELD

LAC focus as Rajnath inaugurates 90 border infrastructure projects

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
& ARUN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SAMBA,
SEPTEMBER 12

AS MANY as 90 border infrastructure projects – from the Nechiphu tunnel that will provide all-weather connectivity to the strategic Tawang region of Arunachal Pradesh to the foundation stone for a key military airfield in eastern Ladakh's Nyoma – across 11 states and Union Territories were inaugurated Tuesday by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Of the 90 projects of the Border Roads Organisation, 64 are in Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Sikkim. These projects will help in faster mobility of troops and equipment to the Line of Actual Control in case of a contingency while also improving overall connectivity for the population.

Inaugurating the projects via virtual mode at assembly in Samba in Jammu, Rajnath Singh said the Nyoma airfield "will act as a staging ground for Indian troops at forward posts in eastern Ladakh... and will be a game-changer for our armed forces".

In the last three years, India has ramped up infrastructure development along the LAC, both in eastern Ladakh and the North-East.

The projects include 11 in Jammu and Kashmir, five in Mizoram, three in Himachal Pradesh, two each in Uttarakhand



J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha receives Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Jammu airport on Tuesday. PTI

Magaland, Rajasthan and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Worth over Rs 2,900 crore, the projects include the Nechiphu tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh, two airfields in West Bengal, two helipads along with 22 roads and 63 bridges.

Once operational, the 500-metre long Nechiphu tunnel on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang Road, along with the Se La tunnel currently under construction, will provide round-the-year connectivity to the strategic Tawang sector along the LAC.

The Tawang region provides the easiest access to the Brahmaputra plains and the shortest route to Tezpur in Assam. The lines of communication from Tawang also stretch to Guwahati and the extended Siliguri Corridor, which makes it

The tunnel will bypass the Nechiphu Pass that has foggy weather conditions, a major hindrance for military convoys and other traffic. It will facilitate faster mobility of troops and equipment to the LAC by cutting short the existing distance by around 5 km. India uses Bomdila, Nechiphu and Se La for deployment of forces.

Singh said the BRO will soon set a record with the construction of the Shinku La tunnel, the world's highest tunnel at an altitude of 15,855 feet. It will connect Lahaul-Spiti in Himachal Pradesh to the Zaskar Valley in Ladakh and provide all-weather connectivity.

Other key projects inaugurated include the Bagdogra and Barrackpore airfields in West Bengal. Reconstructed at a cost of over Rs 500 crore, the airfields

infrastructure in the North-East and will bolster the preparedness of the IAF while facilitating commercial flight operations in the region.

Singh also inaugurated the Devak Bridge on the Bishnah-Kaulpur-Phulpur Road in J&K's Samba district. A statement released by the government said the state-of-the-art 422.9-metre-long Class 70 RCC Devak bridge is of strategic importance as it will "enhance the operational preparedness of the Armed Forces and boost socio-economic development of the region."

The BRO has completed the construction of these strategically important projects in record time, most of them in a single working season using state-of-the-art technology.

In his speech, Singh said the BRO has constructed infrastructure projects in several countries such as Myanmar and Bhutan and helped in strengthening peace and cooperation with them.

Through its infrastructure projects, the BRO, he said, is not only securing India's borders, but also playing a key role in the socio-economic development of far-flung areas. He praised the cooperation of state governments, despite ideological differences, towards securing national interests.

With the inauguration of 90 projects, 295 infrastructure projects of the BRO, at an overall cost of Rs 8,000 crore, have been inaugurated since 2021.

FULL REPORT ON

Context: Recently, Defence Minister of India inaugurated a total of **90 border infrastructure projects** in 11 states and Union Territories.

- These **projects include the Nechiphu tunnel**, which will ensure year-round connectivity to the strategically important **Tawang region in Arunachal Pradesh**, and the laying of the foundation stone for a significant military airfield in Nyoma, located in eastern Ladakh.
- These **projects will help** in faster mobility of troops and equipment to the **Line of Actual Control** in case of a contingency while also improving overall connectivity for the population.

Nechiphu Tunnel

- **About:** It is a unique 500-metre-long "D-shaped, Single Tube Double Lane Tunnel".
- **Located:** Balipara-Charduar-Tawang (BCT) Road in West Kameng District.
- **Dual Traffic Capacity:** This tunnel is designed to facilitate two-way traffic and will be equipped with advanced lighting and safety infrastructure.
- **Objective:** Its primary purpose is to provide an alternative route that circumvents the persistently foggy conditions near Nechiphu Pass, which have historically disrupted both civilian and military traffic.
- **Modern Electro-Mechanical System:** The tunnel will incorporate a cutting-edge electro-mechanical system, inclusive of firefighting mechanisms.

Line of Actual Control

- **About:** The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- **It is segmented into three sectors:** the eastern sector, encompassing Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim; the middle sector, covering Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh; and the western sector, located in Ladakh.
- India considers the **LAC to be 3,488 km** long, while the **Chinese consider** it to be only around **2,000 km**.



INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IIP)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3– Economy)

RBI GETS ROOM TO CONTINUE HOLDING RATES

IIP Growth at 5-mth High, Retail Inflation Below 7%

POSITIVE TRIGGERS

Manufacturing recovery ahead of festive season, lower vegetable prices

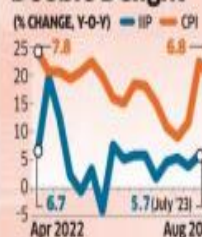
Our Bureau

New Delhi: Industrial growth hit a five-month high in July while consumer inflation eased below 7% in August, giving the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) room to maintain monetary policy stability without worrying about high interest rates denting growth too much.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) printed 5.7% higher in July from a year earlier, accelerating from 3.8% in the preceding month on the back of a recovery in manufacturing ahead of the festive season, data released on Tuesday showed.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), also unveiled Tuesday, showed retail inflation slowed to 6.8% from the 15-month high of 7.4% in July, dropping

Double Delight



Source: MOSPI

OUTLOOK

Food inflation to decline further in September

High-frequency indicators suggest better prospects for IIP in August

Uneven monsoon poses risk to food inflation and growth

Higher fuel prices can upend FY24 inflation math

Prices of cereal and pulses may remain high

le prices trended lower.

"This should provide reassurance to the RBI that demand-side pressures remain contained and support keeping rates on hold at the next meeting in October," Oxford Economics said in a note.

Experts had pegged August retail inflation print at about 7%.

etary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the benchmark unchanged at 6.5% for the third consecutive meeting last month, ignoring the vegetable-led inflation that exceeded its target 2.6% rate.

The next MPC meeting is scheduled for October 4-6.



Context: Recently, industrial growth reached a **five-month peak in July**, and in August, consumer inflation decreased to below 7%, providing the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** with important economic indicators to consider.

- According to data, the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** also increased from preceding month and also compared to last year, suggesting the back of a recovery in manufacturing ahead of the festive season.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

- IIP is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period.
- Published by: National Statistical Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
 - It is a composite indicator that measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
 - Broad sectors:** Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
 - Use-based sectors:** Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.
 - Base Year:** 2011-2012.
 - Significance of IIP:** It is used by government agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for policy-making purposes.
 - IIP remains extremely relevant for the calculation of the quarterly and advance GDP (Gross Domestic Product) estimates.

Eight Core Sectors

- These **comprise 40.30% of the weight** of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- The eight core sector industries:** Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilizers.

G-7 saved G-20 by agreeing to Declaration: German envoy

Ackermann credits Indian negotiators' skill, joint proposal by India, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa for breakthrough; he denies suggestion that West 'compromised' stand on Russia and Ukraine

Subhasini Halder
NEW DELHI

G-7 countries were able to "save" the G-20 from an early demise by agreeing to the draft declaration, German Ambassador Philipp Ackermann said on Tuesday, rejecting statements from several countries, including Ukraine, which suggested that Western countries, comprising the G-7 and the European Union, had totally "compromised" their stand on Russia and Ukraine.

On the contrary, Mr. Ackermann said, the German delegation had left Delhi "highly satisfied" with the outcome.

He credited "skilful Indian negotiations", as well as a joint proposal by Indonesia, India, Brazil and South Africa, presented to the rest of the G-20 as a full accomplishment hours before the Leaders' Summit began, for the breakthrough in talks.

As *The Hindu* reported on Saturday, the joint proposal by the four consecutive hosts of the G-20, all belonging to "emerging economies", contained the eight paragraphs that finally made it into the Summit



Narendra Modi meeting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz during the G-20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

declaration, word for word, without any changes. The paragraphs under the heading "For the Planet, People, Peace and Prosperity", which was also used in the document, had erased language from the Bali G-20 declaration that directly criticised Russia for the war in Ukraine.

"The G-20 is a very important forum. It is one of the last fora that has everyone around the table and a summit without a declaration would have meant death to the G-20," Mr. Ackermann told journalists.

"And it would have made it very difficult for Brazil to pick it up next year."

He said the ultimatum was delivered by the In-

dian G-20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant on September 8 overnight, asking other delegations to "take it or leave it", and if they had a problem with the wording the four emerging economies had come up with, to "have their leader to speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi". The account matches with statements made by Mr. Kant during a number of interviews.

On Monday, Mr. Kant thanked the "Sherpas who helped us clinch the geopolitical paras and arrive at consensus", naming the Sherpas of Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa specifically.

Eventually, all countries agreed to the formulation, the German Ambassador

said, but said it was Russia and China, not the Western bloc, that needed to be convinced.

"Russia was completely, completely isolated," Mr. Ackermann said, countering comments by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who had claimed a diplomatic win as Russia was not named directly for the conflict in the document.

"Yes, Ukraine would have loved to see Russia condemned more explicitly, and for the war 'in' Ukraine to be described as a war 'against' Ukraine, as [Germany] would have liked that, too. But one must see what is feasible. Unlike Bali, where two countries (Russia and China) were unhappy, we now have a text that is agreed to by all the countries," Mr. Ackermann said.

On Sunday, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry had reacted angrily, noting that the New Delhi Declaration was "nothing to be proud of", indicating that the Ukraine government was disappointed that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had not been invited to the G-20 as he had requested in a letter to the Indian Prime Minister.

Context: Recently, German Ambassador Philipp Ackermann emphasized that the G-7 countries' agreement on the draft declaration saved the G-20 from an early demise, despite claims by some countries, like Ukraine, that Western nations had completely compromised their stance on Russia and Ukraine.

G-7

- **About:** It is an intergovernmental organization. The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- **Formation:** 1975.
- **G7 countries:** UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.
 - India is not a part of G7
- **Membership:** Apart from the 7 member countries, the European Union (EU) has also participated fully in the G7 since 1981 as a "non-enumerated" member.
- **Presidency:** It rotates annually among the member countries, with each country hosting the summit and setting the agenda for the year.
- **Meetings:** The G7 holds annual meetings.
- **Informal nature:** The G7 does not have a formal charter or secretariat. Decisions are made through consensus, and there is no formal voting system or legal obligations.
- **Recent summit:** The 49th G7 summit was held in Hiroshima, Japan.



NITI Aayog undertakes Special Campaign 2.0 for disposal of pending matters and Swachhta

Context: NITI Aayog undertakes **Special Campaign 2.0** for disposal of pending matters and Swachhta. The focus of the campaign was to ensure timely and effective disposal of Public Grievances references from Members of Parliament, State Governments, Inter-Ministerial Consultations and Parliamentary Assurances by Ministries / Departments.

NITI Ayog

- It is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Union Government, providing both directional and policy inputs.
- **Establishment:** In 2015 via an executive resolution by replacing the Planning Commission of India
- **Objective:** To develop a common vision for **both the Central and State governments**, recognizing that robust states are the foundation of a robust nation.
- To encourage an ongoing **environment of competitive and cooperative federalism** among the states.
- **Composition of NITI Aayog**
- **Chairperson:** Prime Minister
- **Vice-Chairperson:** To be appointed by Prime-Minister
- **Governing Council:** Chief Ministers of all states and Lt. Governors of Union Territories.
- **Regional Council:** To address specific regional issues, Comprising Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors Chaired by Prime Minister or his nominee.
- **Ex-Officio membership:** Maximum four from Union council of ministers to be nominated by Prime minister.
- **Special Invitees:** Experts, Specialists with domain knowledge nominated by Prime-minister.

Special Campaign 2.0

- **Inaugurating Gandhi's Clean India Vision:** The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) launched a special campaign aimed at addressing pending matters.
- **Evolution from 2021 to 2023:** Originally initiated from October 2nd to 31st, 2021, this campaign's remarkable success led to its extension into 2022 and further into 2023, giving rise to Special Campaign 2.0.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env & Eco)

Diwali Air Pollution Not Just About Firecrackers: Experts

Cutting Pollutants Helps, But Met Conditions Bigger Factor

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New Delhi: Since 2020, Diwali nights have been a tad less loud. Fireworks were banned that year to curb pollution, a ban that environment minister Gopal Rai reiterated for the 2023 festival season on Monday. Indeed, the city saw very clean pre-Diwali and Diwali days in 2020, but experts said it wasn't all due to a check on pyrotechnics.

While the elimination of a source of pollutants had a bearing on the cleanliness of the air, experts learnt that meteorological conditions were as important a factor in the quality of air during the festival and the winter months. The windy conditions during Diwali in the past couple of years had more to do with the better air than people not bursting crackers.

The role of prohibiting fireworks to cut down emission, of course, isn't insignificant. "There is no doubt that air quality depends on meteorological conditions. But alongside, controlling toxic pollutants like dust and gases also helps," said D Saha, former head, air pollution laboratory, Central Pollution Control Board. "We must work to reduce toxicity by curtailing different sources of pollution or emissions at the ground level. Banning fireworks, even if their contribution to pollution is just 1%, is still a good decision from the perspective of people's health."

A research study at the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Panjab University, released in July last year pointed out that air quality across the entire Indo-Gangetic Plains was good on Diwali night, attributable,

WHAT AFFECTS DELHI'S AIR QUALITY



ban in the city but to the prevailing winds, which ventilated the pollutants across the swathe of north India.

In fact, vehicle emissions and stubble burning in the capital's neighbourhood nullified all the gains of the fireworks ban and kept pollution levels fairly high in the capital. As another assessment by Climate Trends discovered, while the pollution level reduced last Diwali, it was still well above the safe limit.

The PGIMER study found that PM2.5 and sulphur dioxide (SO2) were the major pollutants generated by firecrackers. There was no effect on the ozone level, contrary to earlier assumptions. The rate of growth of PM2.5 and SO2 due to crackers dropped dramatically by 42% and 67% on Diwali night in 2020 compared with 2017-19 in the entire

AN EXPERT SAYS

A crucial intervention to be made in winters is to stop the burning of waste and biomass for heating. Delhi government has enough environment funds to provide heaters to the needy

the windy conditions. "For Delhi, it's all about the meteorological conditions," explained Chandna Bhushan, CEO, International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (IFEST). "The good air of recent days is largely because there have been more rainy days. The number of days with better air quality is al-

and windy days. This means that the weather condition is the single most important factor in the pollution level in the city."

While calling the ban on fireworks a "civic duty", Bhushan said that if particle pollutants fell 42% in the past few years as claimed by the state government, it is not due to steps taken such as not allowing crackers for Diwali. "Yes, it is true that the firecracker ban leads to less smoke and less noise. But other measures have to be taken too. A very crucial intervention to be made in winters is to stop the burning of waste and biomass for heating," said Bhushan. "Delhi government has more than adequate environment funds and should be able to provide electric heaters to the people in need. The impact of not allowing biomass

Context: A research study conducted released recently in July last year, highlighted that the air quality throughout the entire **Indo-Gangetic Plains** was favorable on Diwali night. This improvement was attributed not to the city's cracker ban but rather to the prevailing winds that effectively **dispersed pollutants across the northern region of India**.

Key Points of Study

- The **PGIMER study** found that **PM2.5** and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) were the major pollutants generated by firecrackers. There was no effect on the ozone level, contrary to earlier assumptions.
- The **rate of growth of PM2.5 and SO₂ due to crackers dropped** dramatically by 42% and 67% on Diwali night in 2020 compared with 2017-19 in the entire Indo-Gangetic Plain due to the windy conditions.
- **According to study:** The **good air of recent days** is largely because there have been **more rainy days**. The number of days with better air quality is always in proportion to rainy and windy days.
- This means that the **weather condition** is the **single most important factor** in the pollution level

Air Quality Index

- **Air Quality Assessment:** AQI is a tool for assessing the safety of the air you breathe.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Organizations responsible for AQI reporting measure the concentration of **6 diverse air pollutants** - Particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), Ozone (O₃), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Lead (Pb) and Ammonia (NH₃) at various monitoring stations.
- **National Air Quality Index (NAQI):** The widely employed NAQI, issued by the Central Pollution Control Board, provides a 24-hour average.
- **Unit of Measurement:** AQI is measured in micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³).

Air Quality Index - Particulate Matter

301 – 500	Hazardous
201 – 300	Very Unhealthy
151 – 200	Unhealthy
101 – 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
51 – 100	Moderate
0 – 50	Good

Two new 'shy' spider species found, named after Great Indian Bustard

Context: Recently, two new spider species, the **Palpimanus Godawan** and **Palpimanus Maldhok**, have been found in the conservation sites of the **Rajasthan Desert National Park and Solapur**.

New Spider Species

- **Local Names:** These two spider species, Godawan and Maldhok, have been named in tribute to the indigenous name of the **Great Indian Bustard**.
- **Spider Characteristics:** They tend to conceal themselves under rocks or within crevices when disturbed.
 - **Maroon Coloration:** These spiders share their maroon color with the other two known species in the Palpimanidae genus.
 - **Ground-Dwelling:** They primarily inhabit the ground and have robust bodies, limiting their ability to disperse through common spider methods such as ballooning and web-shooting.
 - **Restricted Range:** They tend to stay within a confined area.

Great Indian Bustard

- **Geographic Distribution:** The Great Indian Bustard is primarily found in the Indian subcontinent and holds the status of being India's flagship grassland species.
- **Impressive Bird:** It ranks among the world's largest flying birds and is the heaviest flying bird in India.
- **Population Distribution:** Approximately 95% of the world's Great Indian Bustard population, totaling around 150 individuals, resides in Rajasthan.
 - The majority of these birds are concentrated in the **Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan**, including their natural habitat in the Desert National Park.
 - The species also thrives in the **grasslands of Kutch, Gujarat**, home to the second-largest bustard population in India.
 - Other populations can be found in arid regions of **Maharashtra (Solapur)**, **Karnataka** (Bellary and Haveri), and Andhra Pradesh (Kurnool).
- **State Symbol:** The Great Indian Bustard holds the esteemed position of being the State bird of Rajasthan.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN:** Critically Endangered.
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
- **The Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I



SC rejects govt's plea, bench of 5 to decide on sedition law

Centre Asked Court To Await Parl View On New Penal Code

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New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday referred to a five-judge bench the issue of constitutional validity of the contentious and much misused sedition offence under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code after rejecting the Union government's plea to pause the judicial scrutiny and await Parliament's view on the proposed new code in Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which seeks to do away with the provision.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra backed their decision not to accede to the requests by at-

'CASES PENDING'

► SC says even if Parliament enacts new penal code, prosecutions pending under Sec 124A must be dealt with

► It says in 1962 Kedar Nath verdict, SC upheld sedition law after testing it against Art 19 guaranteeing free speech; since then, SC has expanded ambit of scrutiny to rights under Art 14 (equality), 19 and 21 (protection of life & liberty)

► The judgment did not distinguish between the state and the government

mani and solicitor general Tushar Mehta, for deferment of the judicial scrutiny of sedition provision citing three reasons. First, the bench said, Section 124A continues to exist in the statute book and pending prosecutions under this provision would be valid even if Parliament enacted a new penal code.

SC fumes at lower courts not granting bail

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed its anguish over lower courts and high courts denying bail to accused in cases involving ordinary infractions despite the apex court's various orders exhorting them to be liberal in granting bail when custody is not needed, reports Amit Anand Choudhary.

"Why should everybody come here (Supreme Court) for bail? Despite our orders, bails are not granted by courts...40% of cases (reaching SC) should be dealt at different levels but we are called upon to decide the cases," the bench said. It was hearing the bail plea of an accused who remained in jail due to delay in framing of charges despite the chargesheet being filed 14 months ago.

SC raps Guj for remission delay, orders parole

New Delhi: Days after it raised questions on the remission policy being implemented selectively while hearing the Bilkis Bano case in which 11 lifers convicted of gang rape and murder were granted premature release, the Supreme Court has pulled up the Gujarat government for delay in deciding the remission plea of a prisoner despite the court's order and unanimous recommendation by the Jail Advisory Committee sent a year ago, reports Amit Anand Choudhary.

Noting the delay, the court on August 28 gave the state two weeks to decide on the remission plea but the government failed to comply. As the state sought more time, the bench directed the prisoner's release on parole.

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court referred the issue of the constitutional validity of the controversial **sedition offense**, defined in **Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code**, to a five-judge bench for deliberation.

Section 124A of the IPC

- **Sedition Definition:** It delineates sedition as an act where an individual, through spoken or written words, signs, visible representations, or any other means, endeavors to incite hatred or contempt, or provokes disaffection towards the legally established government in India.
- **Understanding Disaffection:** Disaffection encompasses disloyalty and all forms of enmity. However, it's crucial to note that remarks that do not aim to stir up hatred, contempt, or disaffection will not qualify as an offense under this section.
- **SC's Clarification:** In the case of **Balwant Singh v. State of Punjab (1995)**, the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of considering the true intent behind a speech before classifying it as seditious.
- **Punishment under Section 124A:** Punishment under the law varies from imprisonment up to three years to a life term and fine.

Sedition Law

- **About:** The British government introduced the sedition law, found in Section 124A of the IPC, in 1870 as a means to suppress opposition to colonial rule.
- **Addition by Thomas Babington Macaulay:** The original version of the IPC, established in 1860, did not include this provision; it was added by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1870.

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