CURRENT AFFAIRS — 16 OCTOBER 2026

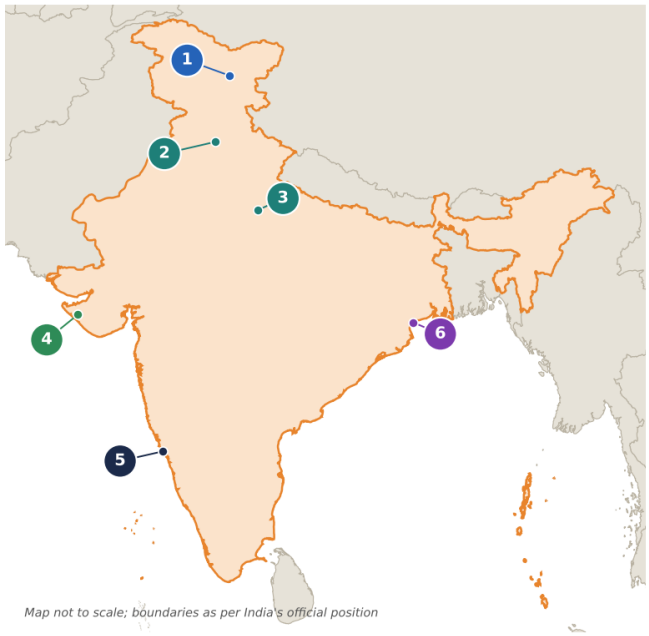
Friday, 16 October 2026 • Asia/Kolkata (IST) • Prelims + Mains GS-wise digest

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC CSE

TODAY AT A GLANCE — 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **INS Samarthak** — first of **4** indigenous **Multi-Purpose Vessels**, commissioned at **Karwar**.
- **DRDO** tested **Quantum Key Distribution** on a live network at **Chandipur (Odisha)**.
- Sept merchandise exports **+23.04%** to **US$ 44.40 bn**; deficit **US$ 30.21 bn**.
- **IDBI Bank**: **60.72%** stake to a **Fairfax** arm for **₹52,878.08 crore**.
- Ramsar sites now **103** — **Sukhna (Chandigarh)** and **Sauj Jheel (UP)** added.
- **Barda WLS (Gujarat)** — second home of **Asiatic lions** after **~144 years**.
- SC: converts **cannot claim Art 16(4)** quota on **pre-conversion caste** alone.
- SC notice on **Section 16** of **CEC & ECs Act, 2023** (lifelong immunity).
- NSAP renamed **PM Samajik Sahayata Yojana**; **₹53,428 crore** for **2026-31**.
- **IBSAMAR IX** at **Simon's Town**; India is **lead nation** with **INS Tarkash**.



INDIA IN NEWS — 16 Oct 2026

1. **Leh (Ladakh)** — 5 projects incl. Nimmu–Padum–Darcha road
2. **Sukhna Wetland, Chandigarh** — Ramsar Site No. 2602
3. **Sauj Jheel, Mainpuri (UP)** — Ramsar Site No. 2603
4. **Barda WLS (Gujarat)** — Asiatic lions' second home
5. **Karwar (Karnataka)** — INS Samarthak commissioned
6. **Chandipur (Odisha)** — DRDO QKD test on live network

SECTION A • GS-III: SCIENCE & TECH | ECONOMY | SECURITY | ENVIRONMENT

INS Samarthak: Navy commissions first indigenous Multi-Purpose Vessel at Karwar

DEFENCE — COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Security challenges; indigenisation of technology. Prelims – naval platforms, defence Make in India.
Context	The Indian Navy commissioned **INS Samarthak** on **16 October 2026** at the **Karwar naval base (Karnataka)**. It is the **first of four Multi-Purpose Vessels (MPVs)** built by **Larsen & Toubro** under **Make in India**.
Key Facts	■ **Over 75% indigenous content**, with indigenous sensors, weapons and electronic systems. ■ Roles: **surveillance and patrol**, **low-intensity maritime operations (LIMO)**, and support for **naval systems trials**. ■ Can act as a **mothership for unmanned systems**, serve as a **limited hospital ship** for **HADR**, and support **salvage**. ■ Motto **'Vijayartham Eknishthata'** (Victory is Our Sole Aim); crest shows an **Indian elephant** rising from the waves. ■ Karwar is home to **INS Kadamba**, being expanded under **Project Seabird**.
Way Fwd	Deliver the remaining **three MPVs** on time, deepen private-shipyard capacity and integrate **unmanned systems** into fleet operations.
Concept	**DAP 2020** 'Buy (Indian-IDDM)' and **Positive Indigenisation Lists** push domestic warship building; multi-role hulls support India's **MAHASAGAR** vision in the IOR.

DRDO tests Quantum Key Distribution on live defence network at Chandipur

SCI-TECH — COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – S&T developments, cyber security. Prelims – quantum technology terms.
Context	On **14 October 2026**, **DRDO** tested its **QKD platform** on the live network of the **Proof & Experimental Establishment (PXE), Chandipur (Odisha)** to secure telemetry from **artillery and armoured-weapon** trials.

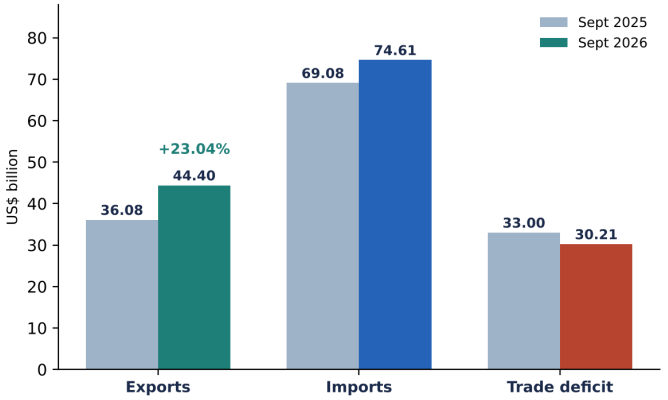
Key Facts	■ Designed under DRDO's **MCC cluster** (Microelectronic Devices, Computational Systems & Cyber Security) with a Bengaluru start-up as production partner. ■ Earlier field trial (**July 2026**): **100-km** fibre link **Prayagraj–Vindhyachal (UP)**, key rate **~5 kbps**, **QBER 6%**. ■ Any **eavesdropping** disturbs quantum states and raises the error rate, so interception is **detectable**. ■ Aims at **quantum-safe** military communication against future code-breaking quantum computers.
Way Fwd	Extend QKD to **satellite links**, create testing and certification standards and align with the **National Quantum Mission (₹6,003.65 crore, 2023-31)**.
Concept	**QKD** rests on the **no-cloning theorem** and **Heisenberg uncertainty**; classic protocol **BB84**. It differs from **post-quantum cryptography**, which is mathematical.

Merchandise exports jump 23% to US$ 44.40 bn in September; deficit narrows

ECONOMY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Indian economy, external sector, BoP. Prelims – trade deficit, CAD terms.
Context	Official data released on **15 October 2026** show **merchandise exports** rose **23.04%** year-on-year to **US$ 44.40 bn** in **September 2026**, and the **merchandise trade deficit** narrowed to **US$ 30.21 bn** from **US$ 33.00 bn**.
Key Facts	■ Imports **US$ 74.61 bn** vs **US$ 69.08 bn** in September 2025. ■ Total exports (goods + services) **US$ 80.75 bn**, up **~11%**; overall deficit **US$ 13.30 bn**. ■ **July–September** total exports **~US$ 242.6 bn** — highest ever for a second quarter. ■ Drivers: **electronics (+70.44%)**, **petroleum products (+31.9%)**, chemicals (+24.21%), engineering goods. ■ Headwind: **Brent above US$ 100/barrel** amid tension near the **Strait of Hormuz**.
Way Fwd	Use recent FTAs and the **Export Promotion Mission** to diversify markets; diversify crude sourcing to contain the import bill.
Concept	**Trade deficit** = goods imports − goods exports. **CAD** adds services, primary income and remittances; India's **services surplus** and remittances cushion the CAD.

Merchandise trade: September 2025 vs 2026

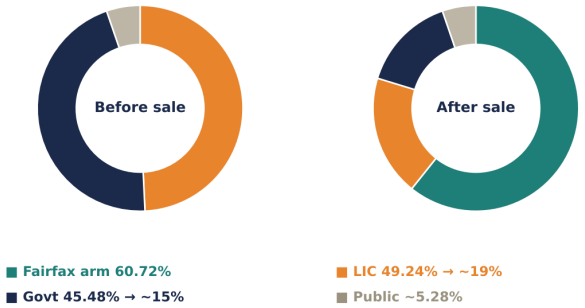


CCEA clears IDBI Bank strategic sale: 60.72% stake for ₹52,878 crore

ECONOMY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Banking sector reforms, disinvestment, FDI. Prelims – PCA framework, DIPAM.
Context	On **14 October 2026**, the **CCEA** approved the strategic disinvestment of **60.72%** of **IDBI Bank** to a subsidiary of **Fairfax Financial Holdings** for **₹52,878.08 crore** — the **largest FDI in India's financial sector**.
Key Facts	■ Sellers: **Government (30.48%)** and **LIC (30.24%)**. ■ After the deal: Fairfax **60.72%**, Government **~15%**, LIC **~19%**. ■ Price **₹81 per share**; completion expected around **March 2027**, subject to **RBI** conditions. ■ IDBI was under RBI's **PCA framework** from **5 May 2017** till **10 March 2021**.
Way Fwd	Rigorous **'fit and proper'** checks, protection of depositors and staff, and use of proceeds for **capital expenditure**.
Concept	**Strategic sale** transfers **management control**, unlike minority disinvestment; run by **DIPAM**. **PCA** triggers: **capital**, **asset quality (NPA)** and **leverage**.

IDBI Bank shareholding: strategic sale (₹52,878.08 crore)



India's Ramsar tally rises to 103: Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel added

ENVIRONMENT COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Conservation, environmental conventions. Prelims – Ramsar sites, wetlands, species.
Context	On **15 October 2026**, the Union Environment Minister announced **Sukhna Wetland (Chandigarh)** and **Sauj Jheel (Mainpuri, UP)** as new **Ramsar sites**, taking India's count from **101 to 103**.
Key Facts	■ **Sukhna** — Site **No. 2602**, **Chandigarh's first**, at the foothills of the **Shivaliks**; hosts **common pochard (VU)** and **Pallas's fish eagle (EN)**. ■ **Sauj Jheel** — Site **No. 2603**, a shallow lake in the **Ganga floodplain**, linked to **Saman Bird Sanctuary**. ■ **Mainpuri** becomes the **only UP district with two Ramsar sites**. ■ Convention signed **1971 at Ramsar (Iran)**, in force **1975**; India joined on **1 February 1982**.
Way Fwd	Notify sites under the **Wetlands Rules, 2017**, prepare integrated management plans and curb **urban runoff and siltation**.
Concept	**Montreux Record** lists threatened Ramsar sites (India: **Keoladeo, Loktak**). India's first sites (1981): **Chilika** and **Keoladeo**. **World Wetlands Day: 2 February**.

Barda emerges as second home of Asiatic lions after ~144 years

ENVIRONMENT COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

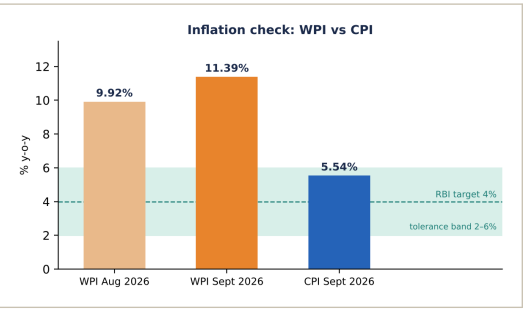
Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Biodiversity conservation. Prelims – protected areas, IUCN status, species.
Context	A **peer-reviewed study** finds **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat)** a potential **second stronghold** for **Asiatic lions**, which returned after an absence of nearly **144 years**.
Key Facts	■ Barda now supports **17 lions**; area **192.31 sq km** in **Porbandar & Devbhumi Dwarka** districts (**Saurashtra**). ■ **6 lions radio-collared**, generating **>1.69 lakh GPS fixes** (Jan 2023–Jul 2025). ■ **441 chital** translocated from Gir in **2025-26** to build the prey base. ■ Asiatic lion: **Endangered (IUCN)**, **Schedule I (WPA 1972)**; **2025 census: 891 lions**.
Way Fwd	Secure **dispersal corridors**, augment prey and win **community support**; keep a second, separate population as genetic insurance.
Concept	Single-population risk (e.g., **2018 canine distemper deaths in Gir**); **Project Lion** announced in **2020**; SC (2013) had ordered translocation to **Kuno**.

SECTION B • ECONOMY DATA POINT OF THE DAY

WPI INFLATION, SEPTEMBER 2026

11.39%

Up from **9.92%** in August; retail **CPI** inflation was **5.54%** — above the **4%** target but inside the **2–6%** band. A wide WPI–CPI gap signals **fuel and commodity cost** pressure.

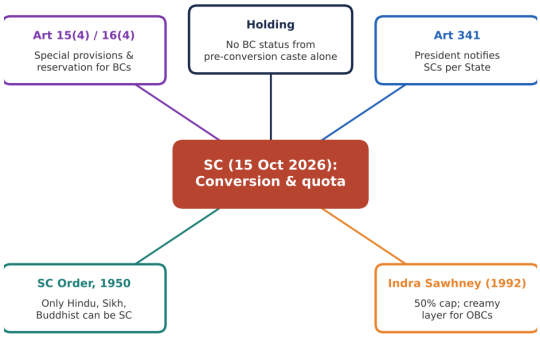


SECTION C • GS-II: GOVERNANCE | POLITY | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SC: Converts can't claim backward-class quota on pre-conversion caste alone

POLITY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Fundamental Rights, reservation, judiciary. Prelims – Articles 15(4), 16(4), 341.
Context	On **15 October 2026**, a bench of **Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Shree Chandrashekhar** dismissed Tamil Nadu's appeal and upheld the **Madras High Court** ruling that struck down a **2024 Government Order** giving BC (Muslim) certificates to converts.
Key Facts	■ Converts to a non-Hindu social order **cannot claim Article 16(4)** benefits solely on **pre-conversion backwardness**. ■ Conversion **alone does not make one a member** of a notified **Backward Class Muslim** group (e.g., **Labbai, Rowther, Marakayar**). ■ Under the **Constitution (SC) Order, 1950**, only **Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists** can be SC members. ■ **Reconversion** to Hinduism requires a **fact-specific inquiry** into revival of caste identity.
Way Fwd	Weigh the findings of the **Justice K.G. Balakrishnan Commission** (constituted **2022**) and frame evidence-based backwardness criteria.
Concept	**Art 15(4)/16(4)** enable special provisions/reservation for backward classes; **Art 341** — President notifies SCs; **Indra Sawhney (1992)** — **50% cap**, creamy layer.



SC issues notice on lifelong immunity to CEC & ECs under 2023 Act

POLITY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Constitutional bodies, Election Commission, separation of powers. Prelims – Articles 324, 361.
Context	On **13 October 2026**, a bench led by **CJI Surya Kant** issued notice to the Centre and the ECI on a plea by the **Association for Democratic Reforms** challenging **Section 16** of the **CEC and Other ECs Act, 2023**.
Key Facts	■ Section 16 bars courts from **civil or criminal proceedings** against **serving and former** CEC/ECs for official acts. ■ Plea: violates **Articles 14 & 21** and the **basic structure**; even the **President/Governors (Art 361)** lack post-tenure immunity. ■ Clause was added as a **late amendment** with little debate; tagged with a similar pending petition. ■ Act's selection panel: **PM, Leader of Opposition, a Union Cabinet Minister** (replacing the **Anoop Baranwal, 2023** arrangement).
Way Fwd	Limit protection to **bona fide acts during tenure**, keep judicial review intact and strengthen the ECI's **functional independence**.

Concept	**Article 324** vests superintendence of elections in the ECI; the **CEC** is removable only like an **SC judge**; ECs only on the CEC's recommendation.

NSAP renamed Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana; ₹53,428 crore for 2026-31

SOCIETY **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

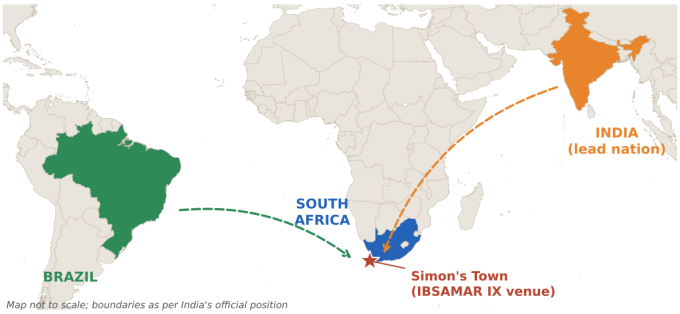
Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; DPSP. Prelims – scheme features, Article 41.
Context	The Union Cabinet approved continuing the **National Social Assistance Programme** for **2026-27 to 2030-31** with **₹53,428 crore**, renaming it **Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana (PMSSY)** and widening disability pension.
Key Facts	■ Covers **~3.20 crore** beneficiaries in all **36 States/UTs**; **100% central assistance**. ■ Disability benchmark cut from **80% to 40%** (aligned with **RPwD Act, 2016**); eligibility **since birth**. ■ Disability pension: **₹375/month (0–79 yrs)**, **₹625/month (80+ yrs)**. ■ Sub-schemes renamed: **PM Vridhavastha**, **PM Vidhawa**, **PM Divyangjan Pension** and **PM Parivar Labh Yojana**. ■ Launched **15 August 1995**; rooted in **Article 41 (DPSP)**.
Way Fwd	Index pensions to **inflation**, encourage **State top-ups** and use **Aadhaar-DBT** for leak-proof delivery; guidelines due within **three months**.
Concept	**Article 41** — right to public assistance in old age, sickness and disablement; the scheme is run by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.

IBSAMAR IX: INS Tarkash in India–Brazil–South Africa naval drill

IR **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Bilateral/regional groupings involving India. Prelims – military exercises, IBSA.
Context	The **9th edition** of **IBSAMAR** is under way at **Simon's Town (South Africa)** from **12 October 2026**, with **India as lead nation**.
Key Facts	■ India: **INS Tarkash** (stealth frigate) with **Chetak** helicopter; Brazil: **BNS Barroso**; South Africa: ships plus submarine **SAS Manthatisi**. ■ Theme: '**Stronger Together Towards a Shared Future in the Maritime Domain**'. ■ Drills: **anti-submarine**, **anti-air**, surface warfare, maritime interdiction, **anti-piracy** and SAR. ■ First held in **2008**; part of the **IBSA Dialogue Forum** (**Brasilia Declaration, 2003**).
Way Fwd	Use IBSA as a **Global South** maritime-security platform and link it with **IORA** and the **Colombo Security Conclave**.
Concept	**IBSA** — trilateral of three large democracies, also in **BRICS and G20**; the **IBSA Fund (2004)** supports development projects via the UN.

IBSAMAR IX: India–Brazil–South Africa maritime exercise

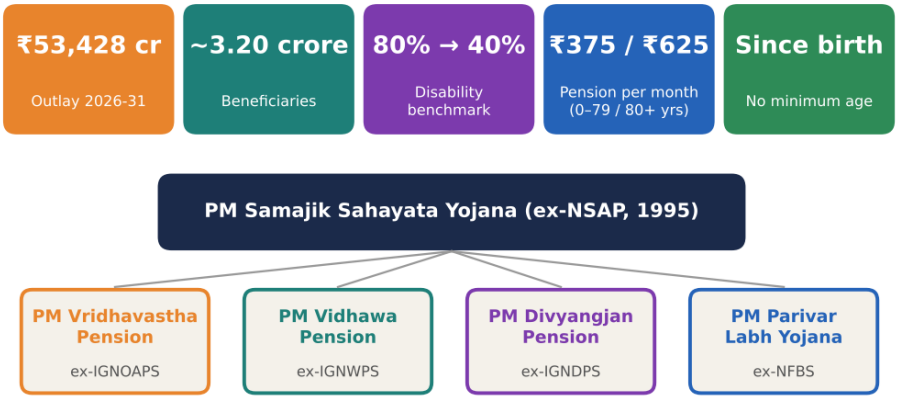


US Secretary of State's India visit (Oct 17–22): energy and trade in focus

IR **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – India and its neighbourhood/major powers; bilateral agreements. GS3 – energy security.
Context	**US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** will visit **Samarkand (Uzbekistan)**, **Mumbai and Jamnagar** from **17–22 October 2026**, with **energy cooperation** and investment on the agenda as the **first tranche** of the India–US trade deal nears.
Key Facts	■ Second India visit since **May 2026**, when he attended the **Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting** in New Delhi. ■ **Jamnagar** hosts the world's largest single-site refinery (**~1.4 million barrels/day**). ■ At Samarkand: **C5+1 Ministerial** with the five Central Asian states. ■ Commerce Minister says the trade deal's **first tranche** is finalised, pending **legal vetting**.
Way Fwd	Lock in long-term **LNG/crude** contracts, close the trade tranche and preserve **strategic autonomy** on energy sourcing.
Concept	**India–US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership**; **Quad** = India, US, Japan, Australia; India runs its own **India–Central Asia Summit** format.

SCHEME IN FOCUS — PM SAMAJIK SAHAYATA YOJANA (revamped NSAP)



SECTION D • PRELIMS RAPID-FIRE

1. **Nagastra-1R**: **450** indigenous **loitering munitions** delivered to the Army (**>80%** indigenous).	2. **World Food Day (16 Oct)** marks the founding of **FAO (1945)**; HQ **Rome**.
3. **Calling Name Presentation**: caller's registered name to show on 4G+ networks from **1 November 2026**.	4. **Ladakh**: **5 projects** incl. **298-km Nimmu–Padum–Darcha road** and a rock-art park at **Sindhu Ghat, Leh**.
5. **UNSC bid**: India seeks a non-permanent seat for **2028-29**; vote in **June 2027**; rival **Tajikistan**.	6. **Railways bonus**: **78 days'** wages for **~11.4 lakh** non-gazetted employees.

SECTION E • PRACTICE CORNER

PRELIMS MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements: 1. Sukhna Wetland is the first Ramsar site of Chandigarh. 2. India became a party to the Ramsar Convention in 1975. 3. Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh now has two Ramsar sites. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — The Convention entered into force in **1975**, but India joined only on **1 February 1982**. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Q2. Under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, a person can be deemed a member of a Scheduled Caste only if he/she professes:

(a) Hinduism only
(b) Hinduism or Sikhism only
(c) Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism
(d) Any religion, if born in a listed caste

Answer: (c) — Para 3 of the Order originally covered Hindus; **Sikhs** were added in **1956** and **Buddhists** in **1990**.

MAINS PRACTICE

Q. Social assistance in India must move from welfare to rights. Discuss in the light of the revamped Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana and Article 41. (150 words, GS2)

Hint: Intro: **Article 41** + NSAP since **1995**. Body: **40%** disability benchmark, **since-birth** eligibility, **RPwD Act 2016**; gaps — low central pension, State variation, exclusion errors. Conclude: inflation indexation, DBT, universal coverage.

ONE-LINE REVISION: Samarthak at **Karwar** | QKD at **Chandipur** | exports **US$ 44.40 bn** | IDBI **60.72%** | Ramsar **103** | Barda **17 lions** | **Art 16(4)** & converts | **Sec 16** CEC Act | PMSSY **₹53,428 cr** | **IBSAMAR IX**

Compiled & simplified by the StudyForGS.com Research Team
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