CURRENT AFFAIRS — 21 OCTOBER 2026

Wednesday, 21 October 2026 • Asia/Kolkata (IST) • Prelims + Mains GS-wise digest

StudyForGS.com
DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC CSE

TODAY AT A GLANCE — 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Rubio–Jaishankar** talks in **Mumbai (20 Oct)**: trade deal 'very close'; energy, defence, tech on table.
- First **India–US–UAE trilateral** of FMs focused on **regional energy security** amid West Asia disruption.
- **India–NZ FTA** in force from **20 Oct 2026**; **100% Indian exports duty-free**; **dairy excluded**.
- NZ to facilitate **USD 20 bn** investment in India; **5,000** TEE visas + **1,000** Working Holiday visas/yr.
- **Rajnath Singh** at **25th SCO CHG, Dushanbe**: 'no double standards' in dealing with terrorism.
- India to host the **inaugural SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum** by end-2026.
- **Police Commemoration Day (21 Oct)** marks the **1959 Hot Springs (Ladakh)** ambush — **10** CRPF men killed.
- Polish PM **Donald Tusk** in India **21–23 Oct**; ties are a **Strategic Partnership** since **Aug 2024**.
- **WPI inflation** jumps to **11.39%** in Sept 2026 (Aug **9.92%**); **Fuel & Power 25.85%**.
- **Perseverance** rover drives **45.22 km** — farthest by any vehicle on another world, beating **Opportunity**.

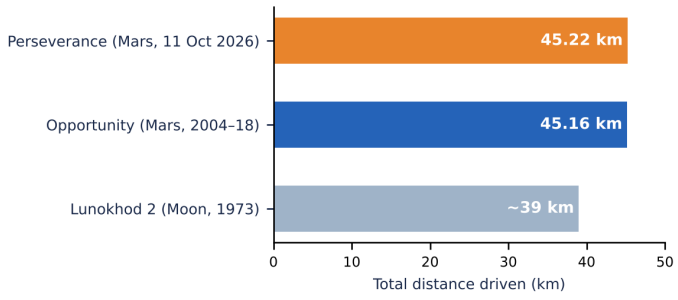
SECTION A • GS-III: SCIENCE & TECH | ENVIRONMENT | AGRICULTURE & NUTRITION | SECURITY

Perseverance becomes the farthest-travelling vehicle on another world

SCI-TECH COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Space technology, achievements in S&T; Prelims – Mars missions, planetary geography
Context	NASA's **Perseverance** rover crossed **45.22 km (28.1 miles)** on **11 Oct 2026 (Sol 2,006)**, overtaking **Opportunity's 45.16 km** to set the record for the longest drive on another world.
Key Facts	■ Part of **Mars 2020** mission; explores **Jezero crater**, an ancient **river delta–lake** site. ■ Previous holder **Opportunity** operated **2004–2018** on Mars. ■ Next targets: **Idubi** (west of Jezero rim) and **Rainbow Falls**, a block of uplifted ancient crust. ■ Mission extension approved till about **end-2028**; collects **rock-core samples** for future return. ■ Carried **Ingenuity**, the first helicopter to fly on another planet.
Way Fwd	India should leverage such benchmarks for its own **Mars Lander Mission** plans — autonomous navigation and sample science are key capability gaps.
Concept	**Sol** = one Martian solar day (~**24 h 39 min**). **Jezero** was chosen because deltas preserve **biosignatures**. India's **Mangalyaan (MOM, 2013)** was an orbiter, not a rover.

OFF-WORLD DRIVING RECORD

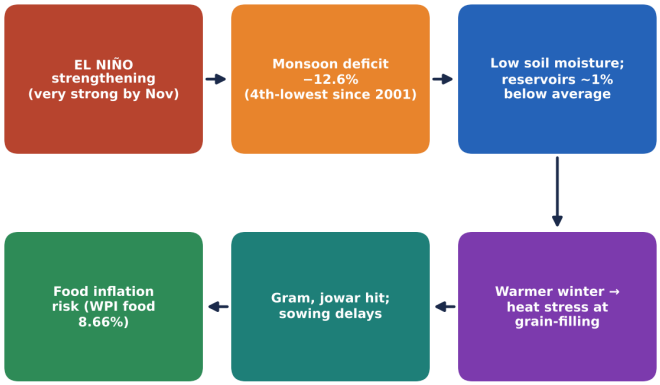


Strengthening El Niño raises risk for rabi sowing after weak monsoon

ENVIRONMENT COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS1/GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS1 – Climatology, monsoon; GS3 – Agriculture, food security, disaster management; Prelims – ENSO, IOD
Context	After a **12.6%-deficient monsoon** (4th-lowest since 2001), El Niño is expected to turn **very strong by November 2026**, bringing a **warmer winter** that could hurt **rabi** crops and food prices.
Key Facts	■ Reservoir storage about **1% below average**; stress in **TN, AP, Rajasthan, Karnataka**. ■ **Wheat** is **>95% irrigated** — less exposed; rainfed **gram and jowar** more vulnerable. ■ Warm **Feb–Mar** spells risk **terminal heat stress** at wheat grain-filling. ■ **RBI** flagged climate risk to food inflation while raising FY27 GDP forecast to **7.1%**.
Way Fwd	Promote **heat-tolerant, early-sown varieties**, micro-irrigation and contingency crop plans; keep buffer stocks and **OMSS** ready to cool prices.
Concept	**El Niño** = abnormal warming of the **central–eastern equatorial Pacific**; weakens **Walker circulation** and the Indian monsoon. A **positive IOD** can offset it. Monitored by **Niño 3.4** index (≥ **+0.5°C**).

EL NIÑO → RABI RISK CHAIN



Buffer: wheat >95% irrigated

Kufri Jamunia: biofortified purple potato against hidden hunger

HEALTH COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Agri-biotech, food processing & nutrition security; GS2 – Health; Prelims – biofortified crop varieties
Context	An official backgrounder highlighted **ICAR-CPRI, Shimla's Kufri Jamunia** (released **2024**) — a **conventionally bred (non-GM)** potato with purple skin and flesh rich in **anthocyanins, vitamin C and carotenoids**.
Key Facts	■ Per 100 g flesh: **vitamin C 42.75 mg**, **anthocyanins 42.05 mg**; iron **32.23 ppm**, zinc **22.77 ppm**. ■ Yield **32–35 t/ha**; medium-maturing; recommended for **12 states** (Punjab to Assam). ■ Lineage: **Kufri Neelkanth (2018) → Kufri Manik (2021) → Kufri Jamunia (2024)**. ■ **NFHS-5**: anaemia in **57.0%** women (15–49) and **67.1%** children (6–59 months).

Way Fwd	Scale quality **seed supply**, link with **PDS/PM POSHAN** menus, and pair with **dietary diversity** since cooking losses and low bioavailability limit gains.
Concept	**Biofortification** = raising nutrient density in crops via breeding/biotech (vs **fortification** = adding nutrients during processing). **Hidden hunger** = micronutrient deficiency. **CPRI** est. **1949** at Patna, shifted to **Shimla (1956)**.

AUSTRAHIND 2026: India–Australia drill for island & coastal operations

DEFENCE COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

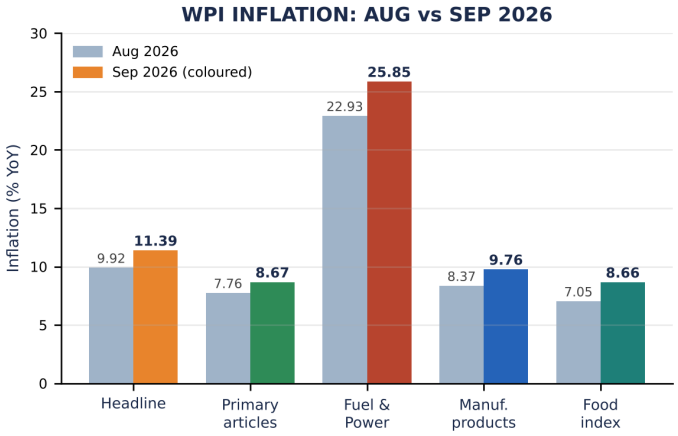
Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Security; GS2 – India–Australia relations, Quad; Prelims – military exercises
Context	The **5th edition** of the India–Australia joint **army** exercise opened at the **Foreign Training Node, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)**, running **19 Oct – 1 Nov 2026**.
Key Facts	■ Theme: joint **sub-conventional ops** in island/coastal terrain under a **UN Chapter VII** mandate. ■ About **120 troops each**; India from **Garhwal Rifles**, Australia from **13 Brigade**. ■ **New Zealand** joins as an **observer** for the first time. ■ Began in **2016**; 4th edition held at **Irwin Barracks, Perth (Oct 2025)**.
Way Fwd	Build on **MLSA (2020)** for logistics interoperability and extend HADR drills to Indian Ocean island partners.
Concept	**Other India–Australia exercises**: **AUSINDEX** (navy), **Pitch Black** (multilateral air, hosted by Australia), **Malabar** (Australia rejoined **2020**). Ties: **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020)**; **ECTA** in force **29 Dec 2022**.

SECTION B • ECONOMY DATA POINT OF THE DAY

WPI INFLATION, SEPTEMBER 2026

11.39%

Up from **9.92%** in August; **Fuel & Power** at **25.85%** is the main driver, while retail **CPI** stood at **5.54%**.

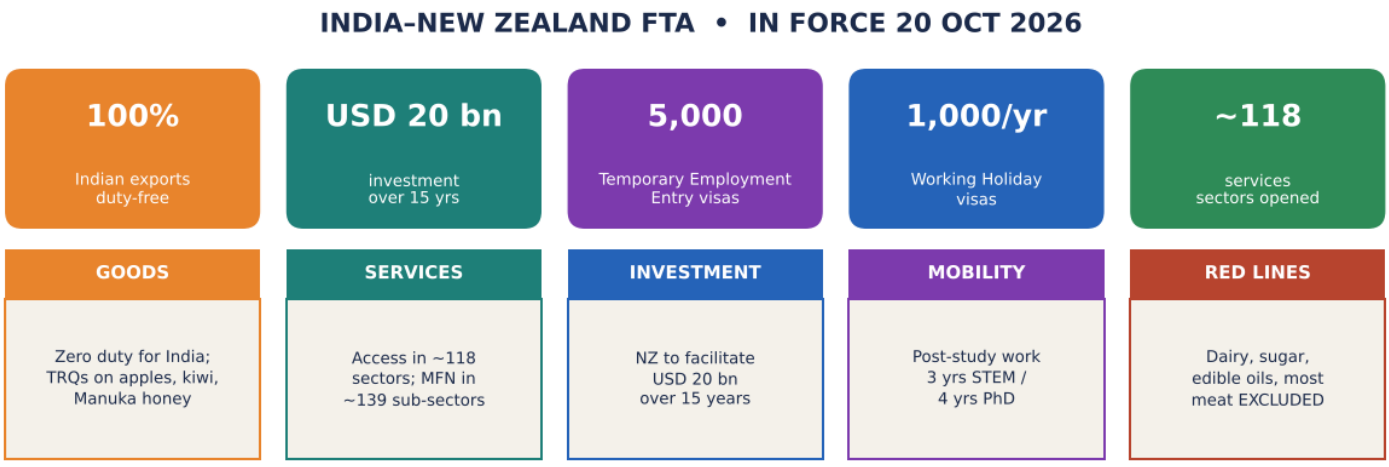


WPI inflation climbs to 11.39% as fuel & power prices surge

ECONOMY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS3 – Inflation, monetary policy, energy security; Prelims – WPI vs CPI
Context	Wholesale inflation rose to **11.39%** in **September 2026** from **9.92%** in August, driven by **mineral oils, crude & natural gas, coal** and **food articles** amid West Asia supply shocks.
Key Facts	■ **Fuel & Power 25.85%** (Aug 22.93%) — sharpest rise. ■ **Primary articles 8.67%**; **Manufactured products 9.76%**. ■ **WPI Food Index 8.66%** (Aug 7.05%). ■ Retail **CPI (base 2024=100)** inflation at **5.54%** in Sept — above RBI's **4% ± 2%** band's upper edge.
Way Fwd	Diversify crude sourcing, calibrate **excise/duty buffers** on fuel, and watch pass-through from WPI to CPI before policy moves.
Concept	**WPI** is released by the **Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT** (base **2011-12**; no services). **CPI** by **NSO, MoSPI**; **RBI's MPC** targets **CPI** under **flexible inflation targeting (2016)**.

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



Rubio–Jaishankar talks: trade deal 'very close'; first India–US–UAE trilateral on energy

IR COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Bilateral & regional groupings, effect of policies of developed countries on India; GS3 – Energy security
Context	US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** met EAM **S. Jaishankar** in **Mumbai (20 Oct)** and said the two sides are 'about as close as you can be without having executed the agreement'. A trilateral with UAE FM **Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed** followed.
Key Facts	■ Agenda: **trade, energy, defence, critical & emerging tech**, people-to-people ties. ■ Trilateral focused on **regional energy security**, trade, **AI** and **connectivity** amid West Asia disruption. ■ Rubio called India a **'refining superpower'**; discussed **Venezuelan crude** with an Indian refiner (**Jamnagar** visit). ■ Feb 2026 framework had cut US tariffs on most Indian goods from **50% to 18%**. ■ Leaders paid tribute to **26/11 (2008)** victims at Mumbai's Taj hotel.
Way Fwd	Close the **BTA** with safeguards for agriculture and dairy; institutionalise the trilateral alongside **I2U2** and **IMEC** for supply-chain resilience.
Concept	**India–US**: **Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership**; foundational pacts **LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), BECA (2020)**. **I2U2** = India, Israel, UAE, US (2021). **IMEC** announced at **G20 New Delhi (2023)**.



India–New Zealand FTA enters into force: duty-free access, dairy shielded

ECONOMY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2/GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Bilateral agreements; GS3 – External sector, trade policy; Prelims – India's FTAs
Context	Signed on **27 April 2026** in New Delhi, the **India–NZ FTA** came into force on **20 October 2026**, opening the New Zealand market fully to Indian goods from day one.
Key Facts	■ **All Indian exports duty-free**; NZ removes tariffs of up to **10%** (textiles, leather, gems, engineering). ■ NZ to facilitate **USD 20 bn** investment in India over **15 years**. ■ **Dairy, sugar, edible oils** and key farm items kept out; apples, kiwifruit, Manuka honey via **TRQs**. ■ Mobility: **5,000 TEE visas**; **1,000 Working Holiday visas/yr**; post-study work up to **3 yrs (STEM)**. ■ Services access in about **118 sectors**; bilateral goods trade about **USD 1.1 bn** (2025-26).
Way Fwd	Help MSMEs use **rules-of-origin** benefits and build an India–Pacific processed-food and pharma export push to scale up a small trade base.
Concept	**TRQ (Tariff Rate Quota)** = lower duty up to a fixed import volume, higher beyond it. India's recent FTAs: **UAE CEPA (2022)**, **Australia ECTA (2022)**, **EFTA TEPA**, **UK CETA**. India exited **RCEP (2019)** over dairy and China concerns.

SCO Heads of Government meet in Dushanbe: India calls for 'no double standards' on terror

IR COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Regional groupings, India's extended neighbourhood (Central Asia); GS3 – Terrorism
Context	Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** represented India at the **25th SCO Council of Heads of Government** in **Dushanbe, Tajikistan (19–20 Oct)**, in the presence of Pakistan's Deputy PM **Ishaq Dar**.
Key Facts	■ **'No double standards'**; the entire **ecosystem of terrorism** must be collectively dismantled. ■ India to host the **inaugural SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum** by end-2026. ■ Backed an **Action Plan** for the **Programme of Multilateral Trade & Economic Cooperation**. ■ Sideline meetings with Tajik PM **Qohir Rasulzoda** and Iran's First VP **Mohammad Reza Aref**.
Way Fwd	Use SCO-**RATS** for intelligence sharing while pushing connectivity via **Chabahar–INSTC** that respects sovereignty (unlike CPEC).
Concept	**SCO** founded **2001** (Shanghai); HQ **Beijing**; **RATS** HQ **Tashkent**. India & Pakistan full members **2017**, Iran **2023**, Belarus **2024**. **CHG** handles economic/budget matters; **CHS** is the apex body. **2026** = SCO's **25th anniversary**.

Polish PM Donald Tusk begins India visit to deepen Strategic Partnership

IR COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – India–Europe relations, India–EU FTA; Prelims – places & partnerships in news
Context	Poland's PM **Donald Tusk** is on an official visit **21–23 Oct 2026** — his second as PM (first in **2010**) — with talks with PM Modi in **New Delhi (22 Oct)** and a business leg in **Bengaluru (23 Oct)**.
Key Facts	■ Ties elevated to **Strategic Partnership** during PM Modi's **Aug 2024** Warsaw visit. ■ **Joint Action Plan 2024–28** covers defence, space, AI, semiconductors, energy, mining. ■ Large business delegation; **India–Poland Business Forum** in Delhi and Bengaluru. ■ Visit also seen as boosting the **India–EU strategic partnership** and FTA implementation.
Way Fwd	Leverage Poland as a **Central European gateway** for defence co-production and IT investment.
Concept	**'Good Maharaja' (Jam Sahib of Nawanagar)** sheltered **~1,000 Polish children** in WWII at **Balachadi, Jamnagar** — a key soft-power link. Poland is an EU & **NATO** member; part of the **Visegrad Group**.

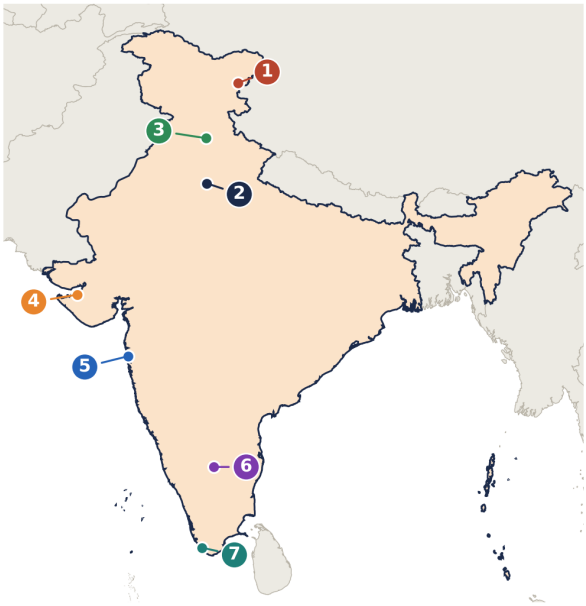
Police Commemoration Day: nation honours personnel killed on duty

POLITY COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2/GS3

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Police reforms, federalism (Police = State List); GS3 – Internal security; Prelims – memorials & days
Context	Union Home Minister paid homage at the **National Police Memorial, Chanakyapuri (New Delhi)** on **21 Oct**, marking the **1959 Hot Springs (Ladakh)** ambush by Chinese troops in which **10 CRPF** personnel were killed.
Key Facts	■ Memorial dedicated by PM in **2018**; **30-ft granite cenotaph**, **Wall of Valour** and museum. ■ About **90** police riders flagged off on a **'Fight Against Drugs'** rally to **Ekta Nagar** for **31 Oct**. ■ Joint parade of **CAPFs** and **Delhi Police**; week-long events from **22–30 Oct**. ■ Three new criminal laws (**BNS, BNSS, BSA**) in force since **1 July 2024**.
Way Fwd	Implement the **Prakash Singh (2006)** directions — State Security Commissions, fixed tenure, separation of investigation from law & order — and fill vacancies.

Concept	**'Police' and 'Public order'** are in the **State List (Entries 1–2, Seventh Schedule)**. **Hot Springs** lies near **Kongka La** in the **Chang Chenmo** valley, eastern Ladakh. **Model Police Act, 2006** drafted by Soli Sorabjee committee.

INDIA IN NEWS — 21 OCT 2026



Map not to scale; boundaries as per India's official position

1. **Hot Springs (Ladakh)** — Police Comm. Day – 1959 ambush
2. **New Delhi** — Police Memorial; Modi–Tusk talks
3. **Shimla** — ICAR-CPRI – Kufri Jamunia
4. **Jamnagar** — Rubio visit; Balachadi link
5. **Mumbai** — Rubio–Jaishankar; India–US–UAE
6. **Bengaluru** — India–Poland Business Forum
7. **Thiruvananthapuram** — AUSTRAHIND 2026

Global IDD Prevention Day: iodised salt remains India's first line of defence

HEALTH **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

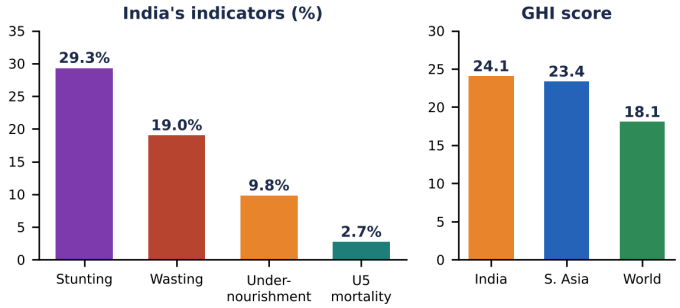
Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Health, government programmes; Prelims – micronutrients, NIDDCP, food fortification standards
Context	**21 October** is observed as **Global Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) Prevention Day**, renewing focus on **universal salt iodisation** as a cheap, proven public-health tool.
Key Facts	■ Iodine is needed for thyroid hormones **T3 and T4**; deficiency causes **goitre, cretinism, hypothyroidism**. ■ India's **National Goitre Control Programme (1962)** renamed **NIDDCP in 1992**. ■ Standard: **≥30 ppm** iodine at manufacture, **≥15 ppm** at consumer level. ■ Adult requirement about **150 µg/day**; higher in **pregnancy** (foetal brain development).
Way Fwd	Plug last-mile gaps via **salt-quality testing kits**, curb sale of **non-iodised loose salt**, and monitor **urinary iodine** in pregnant women.
Concept	**Double-fortified salt (DFS)** = iodine + **iron**. Iodine deficiency is the world's leading **preventable cause of intellectual disability**. Fortification standards are set by **FSSAI** under the **FSS Act, 2006**.

Global Hunger Index 2026: India 100th of 122, child wasting highest in South Asia

REPORT **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

Syllabus Linkage	GS2 – Issues relating to poverty & hunger, health; Prelims – indices & their indicators
Context	The **GHI 2026** (theme: 'No security without food security') ranks India **100th of 122** (up from 102nd of 123) with a score of **24.1** — **'serious'** category, where India has stayed since 2012.
Key Facts	■ **Undernourishment 9.8%** (down from 10.5%). ■ **Child wasting 19.0%** — **highest** among ranked countries for 2021–25. ■ **Child stunting 29.3%**; **under-5 mortality 2.7%**. ■ South Asia score **23.4**; world **18.1**; Pakistan **25.5** (below India).
Way Fwd	Focus on **first 1,000 days** — maternal nutrition, IYCF counselling, **Poshan Tracker**-based growth monitoring and WASH; contest methodology with better national data.
Concept	**GHI** indicators: **undernourishment (1/3)**, **child stunting (1/6)**, **child wasting (1/6)**, **child mortality (1/3)**. Published by **Welthungerhilfe & Concern Worldwide**. **Wasting** = low weight-for-height; **stunting** = low height-for-age.

GHI 2026 — INDIA 100th / 122 ('SERIOUS')



SECTION D • PRELIMS RAPID-FIRE

1. **Azad Hind Government** proclaimed by **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** in **Singapore** on **21 Oct 1943** — 83rd anniversary today.
2. **IDBI Bank**: CCEA cleared sale of **60.72%** to a **Fairfax** subsidiary for **₹52,878 crore**; govt keeps **15%**, LIC **19%**.
3. **GSAT-7C**: **₹2,563 crore** contract with **NSIL** for the **IAF's** first dedicated communication satellite.
4. **INS Samarthak** commissioned at **Karwar** (16 Oct); Navy's **SWAVLAMBAN 2026** seminar on **26–27 Oct**.
5. **Asian Para Games, Aichi-Nagoya**: India crosses **47 medals (12 G)**; best-ever haul remains **111 at Hangzhou 2023**.
6. **India–Canada CEPA** targeted by **end-2026**; next negotiating round in **New Delhi** in early November.

SECTION E • PRACTICE CORNER

PRELIMS MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements about the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement: 1. It entered into force on 20 October 2026. 2. Dairy products are excluded from tariff concessions. 3. New Zealand has committed to facilitate USD 20 billion of investment in India. Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d) — All three are correct: the FTA (signed 27 April 2026) came into force on 20 Oct 2026, shields dairy, sugar and edible oils, and carries a USD 20 bn investment commitment over 15 years.

Q2. 'Hot Springs', associated with the observance of Police Commemoration Day on 21 October, is located in:

(a) Arunachal Pradesh
(b) Sikkim
(c) Ladakh
(d) Himachal Pradesh

Answer: (c) — On 21 Oct 1959, 10 CRPF personnel were killed in an ambush by Chinese troops at Hot Springs near Kongka La in eastern Ladakh; the day has been observed since.

MAINS PRACTICE (GS-II)

Energy security is emerging as the new organising principle of India's minilateral diplomacy. Examine in the context of the India–US–UAE trilateral and the volatility in West Asia. (15 marks, 250 words)

Hint / Approach: Intro: WPI fuel inflation 25.85% and supply disruptions. Body: India's import dependence (~85% crude), trilateral agenda (energy, AI, connectivity), links to I2U2, IMEC, strategic reserves, diversification (US/Venezuelan crude); limits — sanctions, Russia factor, strategic autonomy. Conclude: issue-based coalitions with autonomy.

ONE-LINE REVISION: **21 Oct 2026** in one line: **Rubio–Jaishankar + India–US–UAE** on energy, **India–NZ FTA live (20 Oct)**, **SCO CHG Dushanbe** – no double standards on terror, **Hot Springs 1959** remembered, **WPI 11.39%**.

Compiled & simplified by the StudyForGS.com Research Team
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