

NEXT IAS

DAILY NEWS

ANALYSIS



16th December

Explained

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EXPLAINED

1. FORMER IAS RAJ KUMAR GOYAL SWORN AS THE NEW CIC (PG 5, INDIAN EXPRESS)

WHAT'S IN NEWS?

Former IAS officer Mr. Raj Kumar Goyal was appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner. Along with him, 8 new Information Commissioners were also appointed. The President, Sh. Droupadi Murmu administered oath to the CIC and other ICs. **A full Commission is in place for the first time in nine years.**

Central Information Commission:

- The Central Information Commission shall consist of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than 10 Information Commissioners, as appointed under the Act.
- Section 12(3) of the RTI Act, 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be **appointed by the President on the recommendation of a Committee consisting of:**
 - the Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the Committee;
 - the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha; and
 - a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

1. Term:

- The term of the **CIC shall be three years** and he **shall not be eligible for reappointment.**
- No Chief Information Commissioner or ICs shall hold office as such after he has **attained the age of sixty-five years.**
- The **Information Commissioner shall not be eligible for reappointment as such Information Commissioner.**
- If the Information Commissioner is appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner, **his term of office shall not be more than five years in aggregate as the Information Commissioner and the Chief Information Commissioner.**
- The CIC and ICs shall not be MPs or MLAs, or hold any other office of profit, or connected with any political party or carry on any business or pursue any profession.

- The oath to CIC and ICs is administered by the President, or any other person so nominated by her.**
- The salaries, allowances and terms of conditions of the CIC shall be prescribed by the Central Government.**
- Removal:**
 - The Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner shall be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner, as the case may be, ought on such ground be removed.
 - The President may by order remove from office the Chief Information Commissioner or any Information Commissioner if the Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner:
 - is adjudged an insolvent; or
 - has been convicted of an offence which, in the opinion of the President, involves moral turpitude; or
 - engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office; or
 - is, in the opinion of the President, unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of mind or body; or
 - has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially his functions as the Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner.

2. GOVERNMENT CHANGES NREG: STATES TO PAY, PAUSE FOR FARM WORK (PG 1 AND 16, INDIAN EXPRESS)

WHAT'S IN NEWS?

The Union Government has sent a copy of the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill with the MPs.

VB-RAM-G Bill, 2025:

- The proposed Bill provides for replacement of the NREGA Act, 2005.**

2. **The Bill seeks to increase the number of days for which work can be demanded by rural households in a year to 125 from the current 100.**

3. **One of the major changes the Bill proposes is in the fund-sharing pattern. Under the MGNREGA, the Union Government pays:**

- ♦ The complete wage bill for unskilled manual work;
- ♦ Upto 3/4th of the material cost of the scheme;
- ♦ Such percentage of the administrative costs as determined by the Central Government.

The State Government pays:

- ♦ The cost of unemployment allowance;
- ♦ 1/4th of the material cost;
- ♦ Administrative expenses of the State Council.

1. **Another change is to shift the focus of the Scheme from demand driven to supply driven.**

2. **Another change as proposed by the Bill is the Normative Allocation Approach:**

- ♦ The new normative allocation formula transforms the method of allocation into a purely top-down approach.
- ♦ The Central Government shall determine the State-wise normative allocation for each financial year, on objective parameters as prescribed by the Central Government.
- ♦ The Central will not only set the budget, but also decide where it will be spent. The Section 4 and 5 **empowers the Union to notify rural areas in the State** and any expenditure incurred by the State in excess of normative allocation shall be borne by the State in such manner as prescribed by the Central Government.
- ♦ **Under the current MGNREGA**, the State Governments present their annual work plan and labour budget to the Central Government by January 31 on the basis of anticipated demand for unskilled manual work, on which basis, the Central Government decides allocation.

3. **How much does it change the overall spending?**

- ♦ For example, in 2024-25, the total expenditure of the Scheme was 1.04 lakh crore. Out of that, wages accounted for almost 74 lakh crore, borne by the Centre and 26 crore was the material and administrative cost borne by both the Centre and States in a 3:1 ratio.

- ♦ But, the proposed Bill increases the expenditure to Rs. 1.51 lakh crore, out of which Rs. 96 lakh crore would be borne by the Centre and Rs. 55 crore would be borne by the States.

4. **Pause for work:** The Bill also introduces the provision for pausing the employment guarantee programme for 60 days during the sowing and harvesting seasons to ensure agricultural labour. The States shall notify these 60 days according to the agro-climatic zones, agricultural patterns, etc.

5. **Implementation of work:**

- ♦ All works under the Scheme shall originate from Viksit Gram Panchayat plans consolidated at the village, district and the State level and further aggregated into a National Rural Infrastructure stack.
- ♦ **The Stack shall encompass four focus areas:** water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood-related infrastructure, and work for mitigation of extreme weather conditions.

6. The Bill also proposes for issuance of Gramin Rozgar Guarantee cards to adult members of every household willing for unskilled labour work.

7. There will be distinct special cards for adult single women, PwD above 60 years, released bonded labour, and PVTG members.

8. **States who will face challenge:** The States with high MGNREGA demand like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh shall be the most hit financially.

3. SIR PROCESS IS BASED ON CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CENTRE (PG 13, THE HINDU)

What is SIR?

- The Election Commission of India, **as per the law is empowered for preparation and revision of Electoral Rolls.**
- To maintain the integrity of the electoral roll, the Commission orders revision of electoral roll before every election or as per requirement.
- Now, since many changes have occurred in the existing electoral roll due to frequent migration which has resulted in electors getting registered in more than one place, non removal of dead voters the Election Commission announced the Special Intensive Revision **with the objective that**

no eligible citizen is left out and no ineligible person is included.

Legal Framework around SIR?

- Article 324 provides that the ECI shall be ultimate authority for superintendence, direction, and control over all elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President.
 - Article 326 provides that every adult citizen of India shall be entitled to be registered as the voter in India.
 - Section 21 of the RPA Act, 1950 provides for 4 stages of revision:
 - ♦ before the elections of the Lok Sabha or Assembly (u/s 21(2)(a))
 - ♦ before each bye-election (u/s 21(2)(a))
 - ♦ **on the direction of the ECI in any year** (u/s 21(2)(b))
 - ♦ a special revision for a constituency or part of the constituency with the ECI recording reasons for doing so (u/s 21(3)).
 - All revisions except IV shall be done with reference to a qualifying date, under Section 14, which is the first day of January.
1. **The revisions u/s 21(2)(a) are usually summary revisions done before the elections, while revision u/s 21(2)(b) is often seen as intensive revision. The intensive revision is akin to the preparation of a new roll.**
 2. **The SIR is being conducted under the provisions of Section 21(2)(b) which provides for intensive revision on the direction of ECI with various reference dates, as decided by the ECI (reference date for Bihar SIR was 01.07.2025).**
 3. **Rule 25 of the Registration of Elector Rules, 1960 also provides for summary, intensive or partial intensive revision of electoral rolls as provided by the ECI.**
 4. **Issues around the SIR?**
 - ♦ Genuine voters may be wrongly deleted due to non-availability of documents.
 - ♦ Non-inclusion of Aadhaar as it is not a proof for domicile or citizenship.
 - ♦ SIR cannot be seen as a measure to decide citizenship which is a purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- ♦ Issue of reference date.
- ♦ Timing as intensive revision is being done before scheduled elections instead of summary revision.
- ♦ Lack of public awareness about their names being deleted and limited time (30 days) to apply for correction.

4. SHANTI BILL TO ALLOW PRIVATE PLAYERS TO MAKE AND RUN NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS (PG 12, THE HINDU)

WHAT'S IN NEWS?

The Union Government introduced SHANTI (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) Bill **allowing private participation in India's nuclear power sector.**

SHANTI (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) Bill

1. It replaces the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.
2. The Bill allows any Government company, private company, a JV or any other person approved by the Central Government to establish, operate, build, own, commission or decommission a nuclear power plant.
3. The Bill also allows **"the import, export, acquisition, or possession of nuclear fuel or prescribed substance, the import or export of any technology or software, that may be used for the development, production or use of prescribed substance or prescribed equipment"** with the approval of the Central Government.
4. The Bill elaborates that any **such operator shall be liable for damages except those caused by "a grave natural disaster of an exceptional character, an act of armed conflict, hostility, civil war, and insurrection or terrorism"**.
 - ♦ The maximum amount of liability in respect of each nuclear incident **shall be the rupee equivalent of three hundred million Special Drawing Rights or such higher amount as specified by the Central Government.**
 - ♦ The liabilities shall be graded based on the size of nuclear installation. For example, operators with reactors above 3000 MWe shall have a liability limit of Rs. 3000 crore. From 1500 MWe to 3000 MWe shall have a cap of Rs. 1500 crore, above 750 MWe to

1500 MWe shall have a cap of Rs. 750 crore and upto 750 MWe shall have a cap of Rs. 300 crore. For below 150 MWe shall have a liability of Rs. 100 crore.

- The Bill also establishes an Atomic Energy Regulatory Board and makes its authorization mandatory for manufacture, possession, use, transport, import, export or disposal of radioactive substances as well as establishing, operating, or decommissioning of radiation facilities.
- The Board shall **submit annual reports to the Central Government which shall cause them to be laid before the Parliament.**
- The Bill also provides for creation of new institutional arrangements such as **Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory Council, Claims Commissioner and Nuclear Damage Claims Commissioner for cases involving damage** and Appellate Tribunal for Electricity as the appellate authority (same as Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board).
- WHY SHANTI BILL WAS INTRODUCED?**
 - To improve the overall share of the nuclear civil power sector from the current 3% of total electricity produced.
 - To scale up the installed nuclear power to 100 GW from the current 8.8 GW.
 - To move towards net-zero by 2070.
 - To complement the recently inaugurated 20,000 crore Scheme for development of small modular reactors.

5. TRADE DEFICIT FALLS TO \$ 6.6 BILLION IN NOV. DUE TO MERCHANDISE EXPORT GROWTH (PG 1, THE HINDU)

WHAT'S IN NEWS?

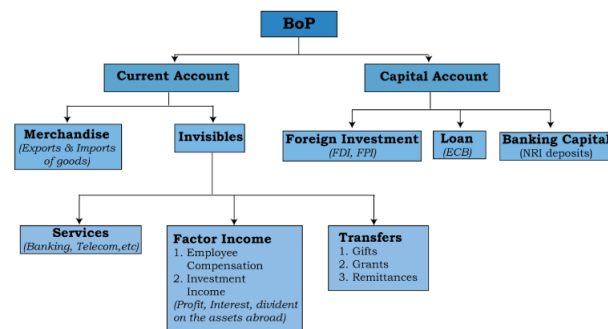
India's trade deficit plummeted by more than 61% in November to \$6.6 billion, due to strong growth in merchandise exports and a fall in merchandise imports.

Trade Deficit:

- The total exports grew 15.5% to \$74 billion in November, while total imports slid 0.6% to \$80.6 billion.
- The merchandise **exports grew 19.4% to \$38.1 billion in November.** In terms of merchandise exports, **November 2025 has seen the highest exports out of any November in the last 10 years.**

- Merchandise **imports fell 1.9% to \$62.7 billion in November.**

Components of Balance of Payments:



The difference between Current and Capital A/c is balanced by the Forex Reserves with the RBI except for errors and omissions (It indicates the country's inability to accurately record all international transactions).

== PRACTICE QUESTION ==

- Which of the following statements with reference to the RTI Act is/are correct?
 - The Chief Information Commissioner and other Information Commissioners are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee headed by the Chief Justice of India. the Chief
 - While Commissioner Information is not eligible for reappointment after completion of the term of five years, other Information Commissioners are eligible for reappointment.

Select the answer using the codes given below:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Among the following who are eligible to benefit from the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act"?
 - Adult members of only the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households
 - Adult members of below poverty line (BPL) households
 - Adult members of households of all backward communities
 - Adult members of any household

3. Consider the following statements :

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

4. Consider the following actions which the Government can take :

1. Devaluing the domestic currency.
2. Reduction in the export subsidy.
3. Adopting suitable policies which attract greater FDI and more funds from FIIS.

Which of the above action/actions can help in reducing the current account deficit ?

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

Answer

1. (d)	2. (d)	3. (d)	4. (c)
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