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Headlines:

- Special Summary Revision (SSR) of Electoral Rolls: Towards Inclusive and Transparent Elections
- India's Merchandise Exports Surge 23.04% in September 2026
- Supreme Court on Religious Conversion and Reservation Benefits
- India's UNSC Candidature: A Test of Diplomacy and Global South Leadership
- World Food Day 2026: Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow



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1. Special Summary Revision (SSR) of Electoral Rolls: Towards Inclusive and Transparent Elections

GS Paper II – Polity and Governance | Electoral Reforms | Election Commission of India

Why in News?

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls in 17 States and Union Territories, including poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand.
- The annual exercise aims to enrol eligible voters and update electoral rolls. It was stalled in the previous year following the launch of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

SSR vs SIR

- **Special Summary Revision (SSR):** Focuses on enrolling new voters, correcting errors and updating existing electoral rolls through the prescribed claims-and-objections process.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** Involves intensive enumeration and verification of electors under the ECI's prescribed procedures.
- As reported, SSR does not require applicants to submit citizenship documents or establish a mapping with earlier electoral rolls as a condition of enrolment, unlike the process described for SIR.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 324:** Vests the ECI with the superintendence, direction and control of elections.
- **Article 326:** Provides for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage, subject to constitutional and legal qualifications.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Provides the statutory framework for electoral rolls.
- **Section 21:** Deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls.

Key Features of the Exercise

- **Voter enrolment:** Form 6 facilitates new voter registration; Form 7 is used for objections to inclusion and requests for deletion on prescribed grounds.
- **Re-enrolment drive:** A separate ECI initiative seeks to restore eligible voters left out during SIR.
- **Transparency:** The ECI will provide readable PDF versions of electoral rolls to recognised political parties and contesting candidates. However, readable PDFs are not necessarily fully machine-readable, searchable datasets.

Significance

- **Electoral inclusion:** Enables first-time voters and eligible omitted electors to register.
- **Accountability:** Improved access to voter lists facilitates scrutiny of additions, deletions and corrections.
- **Democratic legitimacy:** Accurate electoral rolls strengthen universal adult suffrage under Article 326.

Challenges

- **Wrongful exclusion:** Identification errors may disenfranchise eligible voters.
- **Transparency gaps:** Readable PDFs may not provide the full analytical benefits of machine-readable data.
- **Procedural fairness:** Accessible appeals, timely grievance redressal and adequate opportunities to contest errors are essential.

Way Forward

- Strengthen voter awareness, accessible registration and time-bound grievance redressal.
- Ensure transparent verification, reasoned deletion decisions and effective appeals.
- Balance electoral-roll accuracy with the protection of eligible voters' democratic rights.

2. India's Merchandise Exports Surge 23.04% in September 2026

GS Paper III – Indian Economy | External Sector | International Trade

Why in News?

- India's merchandise exports increased 23.04% year-on-year to \$44.4 billion in September 2026, supported by petroleum products, electronic goods and chemicals.
- The merchandise trade deficit narrowed to \$30.21 billion, compared with \$33 billion in September 2025, but widened from \$26.86 billion in August 2026.

Key Trends in India's Foreign Trade

- **Export performance:** Petroleum products grew 31.9% to \$6.2 billion, electronic goods 70.44% to \$5.3 billion, and chemicals 24.21% to \$3 billion.
- **Import dynamics:** Merchandise imports rose 8% year-on-year to \$74.61 billion.
- **Commodity trends:** Gold and silver imports declined sharply, while crude oil imports increased 30.76% to \$18.34 billion.

- **Cumulative trade:** During April–September 2026, exports reached \$259.89 billion and imports stood at \$437.53 billion, widening the merchandise trade deficit to \$177.64 billion.

Significance for the Indian Economy

- **Growth and employment:** Export expansion can support manufacturing, job creation and industrial development.
- **Electronics and global value chains:** Rising electronics exports create opportunities to deepen domestic manufacturing, increase local value addition and integrate Indian firms into global production networks.
- **Export realisations:** Higher petroleum export values may partly reflect global oil prices and refining margins; value growth alone does not establish an equivalent rise in export volumes.
- **External-sector stability:** Export earnings generate foreign exchange, helping finance imports and support the balance of payments.

Challenges

- **Import dependence:** Rising crude oil imports expose India to geopolitical disruptions and international price volatility.
- **Persistent trade deficit:** Merchandise imports continue to exceed merchandise exports.
- **Global uncertainties:** Weak demand, tariff barriers and supply-chain disruptions may constrain export growth.
- **Important distinction:** The merchandise trade deficit covers goods alone. The Current Account Deficit (CAD) also accounts for services, primary income and transfers; therefore, the two are not equivalent.

Way Forward

- Diversify export products and destinations while improving trade facilitation and reducing logistics costs.
- Support MSME exporters through accessible credit, technology adoption and simpler export procedures.
- Promote competitive domestic manufacturing, higher value addition and resilient supply chains.

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3. Supreme Court on Religious Conversion and Reservation Benefits

GS Paper II – Polity and Governance | Social Justice | Constitutional Provisions | Reservation Policy

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court dismissed the Tamil Nadu government's appeal concerning reservation benefits for a person who converted from Hinduism to Islam and was denied a certificate under a notified Muslim Backward Class category.
- The Court clarified that religious conversion alone does not automatically establish membership of a specific notified Backward Class community. Eligibility must be determined under the applicable legal framework.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15(4):** Enables special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes and Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- **Article 16(4):** Permits reservation in public employment for backward classes inadequately represented in State services.
- **Article 341:** Empowers the President to specify Scheduled Castes, subject to the constitutional procedure for subsequent modifications.
- **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950:** Restricts SC recognition to persons professing the religions specified in the Order. This framework is distinct from the eligibility rules governing OBC/Backward Class reservations.

Significance

- **Legal clarity:** Distinguishes conversion from recognition as a member of a particular notified Backward Class community.
- **Reservation integrity:** Reinforces the importance of verifying community membership and eligibility under applicable laws.
- **Constitutional governance:** Highlights the role of legal criteria in implementing affirmative-action policies.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Continuing disadvantage:** Religious conversion does not necessarily eliminate historical or socio-economic disadvantage.
- **Eligibility versus equity:** Legal entitlement to a particular reservation category and the broader question of continuing social disadvantage are distinct issues.
- **Administrative fairness:** Community-certificate decisions require transparent procedures, consistent verification and effective appeals.

Way Forward

- Apply category-specific eligibility criteria consistently and transparently.
- Ensure accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms against wrongful denial of community certificates.
- Evaluate social disadvantage through credible evidence while respecting constitutional provisions and the applicable legal framework.

4. India's UNSC Candidature: A Test of Diplomacy and Global South Leadership

GS Paper II – International Relations | United Nations | Global Governance

Why in News?

- India is seeking a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028–29 term, with elections reportedly scheduled for June 2027.
- India's reported contest with Tajikistan highlights the challenges of regional consensus, diplomatic negotiations and equitable representation in multilateral institutions.

UNSC Election: Key Provisions

- **Composition:** The UNSC has 15 members—five permanent members (P5) and ten non-permanent members.
- **Election:** The UN General Assembly (UNGA) elects non-permanent members for two-year terms.
- **Voting requirement:** A candidate must secure a two-thirds majority of members present and voting. The required number therefore depends on actual participation and abstentions.
- **Regional representation:** Seats are allocated among regional groups, including the Asia-Pacific States group. Regional endorsement or consensus does not itself elect a candidate; the formal election takes place in the UNGA.

Significance for India

- **Global leadership:** Membership offers India a platform to influence discussions on international peace, security and counter-terrorism.
- **Permanent membership aspirations:** A non-permanent seat can strengthen India's diplomatic influence but cannot substitute for comprehensive UNSC reform.
- **Global South representation:** India must balance its own ambitions with the demand for fair representation of smaller and underrepresented states.
- **Strategic autonomy:** Building support across diverse geopolitical blocs will test India's ability to maintain independent foreign-policy positions.

Challenges and Strategic Options

- **Diplomatic competition:** Tajikistan's candidature challenges India's expectation of regional consensus.
- **Representation concerns:** Some countries may favour first-time members to improve geographical and political inclusivity.
- **Strategic choices:** India can contest the election, negotiate a mutually acceptable withdrawal, or step aside to preserve regional goodwill.

Way Forward

- **Build coalitions:** Strengthen diplomatic outreach through the G77, African partners and Latin American countries.
- **Engage smaller states:** Deepen cooperation with small island developing states and other underrepresented countries on climate change, development finance and maritime security.
- **Advance UNSC reform:** Support credible proposals to expand representation and improve the Council's legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability.
- **Demonstrate contribution:** Highlight India's record in UN peacekeeping, development partnerships and multilateral problem-solving.

5. World Food Day 2026: Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow

GS Paper III – Agriculture and Food Security | GS Paper II – Social Justice and International Cooperation

Why in News?

- World Food Day, observed annually on October 16, carries the 2026 theme “Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.”
- Globally, hunger, unaffordable healthy diets, conflicts, economic shocks and climate risks continue to threaten food security. Innovation must improve both food production and access to nutritious food.

India's Food Security Architecture

- **Green Revolution:** High-yielding varieties, irrigation and assured prices helped India transition from food scarcity towards foodgrain self-sufficiency.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** Provides subsidised foodgrain entitlements to up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population.
- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):** Provides free foodgrains to eligible beneficiaries, distinct from the NFSA's broader statutory entitlement framework.
- **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC):** Enables portability of ration entitlements, particularly benefiting migrant workers.

Innovation and Nutrition Security

- **Digital agriculture:** Data-driven advisories, improved seeds and livestock-management tools can enhance productivity and resource efficiency.
- **Food distribution:** Digitisation, grain ATMs and supply-chain optimisation can improve delivery and reduce leakages.
- **Food security vs nutrition security:** Food security concerns the availability, access and stability of food; nutrition security additionally requires adequate nutrients, dietary diversity, food safety and good health outcomes.
- **International cooperation:** FAO supports food and agriculture, IFAD promotes rural development and investment, while WFP provides food assistance and humanitarian support.

Key Challenges

- **Climate change:** Extreme weather threatens agricultural productivity.
- **Implementation gaps:** Exclusion errors, leakages, authentication failures and portability difficulties can prevent eligible beneficiaries from receiving food entitlements.
- **Food loss and malnutrition:** Inadequate storage and transport, alongside poor dietary diversity, undermine nutrition outcomes.

Way Forward

- Promote climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable irrigation and digital extension services.
- Strengthen storage, cold chains and market access for smallholders.
- Improve grievance redressal and last-mile delivery while promoting diverse, nutritious diets.

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