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22ND OCTOBER 2026

Headlines:

- Index of Eight Core Industries Records 7.9% Growth in September 2026
- Saudi Arabia Faces a Dual Maritime Chokepoint Crisis
- SCO: Linking Regional Security with Economic Cooperation
- FSSAI Proposal to Restrict Added Sugars in Infant Foods
- Manipur Crisis: Demand for Reimposition of President's Rule



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WWW.VISHNUIAS.COM

https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor

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1. Index of Eight Core Industries Records 7.9% Growth in September 2026

GS Paper III – Indian Economy | Infrastructure | Industrial Growth | Energy Security

Why in News?

- India's Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) recorded 7.9% growth in September 2026, the highest since the new data series began in April 2024, according to the reported data.

What is the Index of Core Industries?

- Released by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Tracks the performance of eight major infrastructure-related industries.
- These industries account for 40.27% of the weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), making the ICI an important indicator of industrial activity.

Key Highlights

- **Iron ore:** Grew by 18.4%, continuing its strong growth trend.
- **Electricity:** Expanded by 11.4%, reflecting sustained power-sector activity.
- **Coal:** Grew by 10.7%, partly due to a favourable base effect and increased output.
- **Petroleum refinery products:** Growth accelerated to 10.3%.
- **Cement and steel:** Expanded by 9.8% and 4.9%, respectively, indicating continued activity in construction-related sectors.
- **Crude oil and natural gas:** Contracted by 1.4% and 4.6%, respectively.
- **Fertilisers:** Contracted by 11.7% for the seventh consecutive month.

Significance for the Indian Economy

- **Industrial momentum:** Indicates stronger activity in key infrastructure-linked sectors.
- **Infrastructure development:** Cement and steel production support construction and capital formation.
- **Energy security:** Coal and electricity output are important for meeting domestic energy demand.
- **Economic assessment:** Core-sector data provide an early indication of industrial performance, although they do not represent the entire economy.

Key Concerns

- **Uneven growth:** Contraction in fertilisers, crude oil and natural gas highlights sectoral weaknesses.

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- **Base effect:** High year-on-year growth may partly reflect a low base in the corresponding period.
- **Import dependence:** Weak domestic oil and gas production can increase exposure to global price volatility.
- **Growth limitations:** Strong core-sector performance does not necessarily translate into equivalent growth in overall industrial production or GDP.

Way Forward

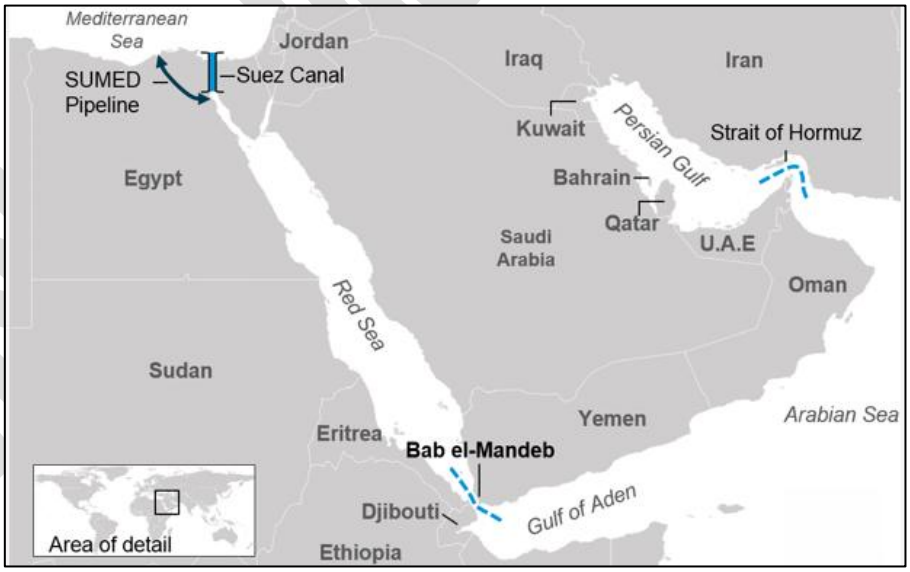
- Strengthen domestic exploration and production of oil and natural gas.
- Improve fertiliser production efficiency and supply-chain resilience.
- Promote renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable industrial expansion.

2. Saudi Arabia Faces a Dual Maritime Chokepoint Crisis

GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Indian Economy, Energy Security and Infrastructure

Why in News?

- Escalating tensions involving Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen's Houthi movement highlight the vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb Strait, two strategically important maritime chokepoints.



Background and Key Developments

- **Saudi–Houthi conflict:** The prolonged Yemen conflict involves Saudi Arabia's support for Yemen's internationally recognised government and the Houthis' opposition to it.

- **Iran–Saudi rivalry:** Iran maintains links with the Houthis, but their relationship also reflects local Yemeni political interests.
- **Strategic chokepoints:** The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, while Bab al-Mandeb connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. Disruptions can affect energy shipments and international trade.

Implications for India

- **Energy security:** Higher crude oil and natural gas prices can increase India's import bill and domestic inflation.
- **Trade and logistics:** Shipping disruptions may raise freight costs, insurance premiums and delivery times.
- **Indian diaspora:** Protecting Indian nationals in Gulf countries and maintaining evacuation preparedness become important priorities.
- **Agriculture:** Higher energy and fertiliser prices can raise agricultural input costs and fiscal pressures.

Key Challenges

- **Military escalation:** Instability across both maritime corridors can intensify regional insecurity.
- **Economic vulnerability:** Oil-price volatility can widen India's current account deficit and put pressure on the rupee.
- **Diplomatic balancing:** India must maintain constructive relations with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel and the United States while safeguarding its strategic autonomy.

Way Forward

- Promote diplomatic de-escalation and peaceful dispute resolution under international law.
- Diversify energy imports, strengthen strategic petroleum reserves and accelerate renewable energy adoption.
- Enhance maritime-domain awareness, commercial shipping protection and evacuation preparedness.

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3. SCO: Linking Regional Security with Economic Cooperation

GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Internal Security

Why in News?

- At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government meeting in Tajikistan, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasised that regional cooperation requires a consistent approach to terrorism, including cross-border terrorism.

About the SCO

- **Established:** 15 June 2001, in Shanghai, China.
- **Headquarters:** Beijing, China.
- **Founding members:** China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- **Current membership:** 10 countries—China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- **Expansion:** India and Pakistan joined in 2017, Iran in 2023 and Belarus in 2024.
- **Official languages:** Chinese and Russian.
- **Objectives:** Promote regional security, counterterrorism, economic cooperation, connectivity and cultural exchanges.
- Its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, facilitates cooperation against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Key Issues

- **Counterterrorism:** India called for dismantling terrorist networks, disrupting terror financing and denying safe havens to terrorist groups.
- **India–Pakistan tensions:** Differences over cross-border terrorism complicate consensus within the organisation.
- **Institutional limitations:** Divergent strategic interests constrain collective responses to regional security threats.

Significance of the SCO

- **Regional security:** Provides a platform for cooperation against terrorism and extremism.
- **Economic integration:** Offers opportunities to expand trade, investment and transport connectivity.
- **Strategic engagement:** Enables India to strengthen ties with Central Asian countries, Russia and other regional stakeholders.

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Connectivity and India's Interests

- **International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** A multimodal network intended to improve connectivity between India, Iran, Russia and wider Eurasian markets.
- **Chabahar Port:** Offers India an important route towards Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, although connectivity remains subject to logistical and geopolitical constraints.
- **Security–development nexus:** Regional trade and investment require stable security conditions and respect for sovereignty.

Challenges

- **Geopolitical rivalry:** Conflicting national interests weaken collective action.
- **Selective responses to terrorism:** Inconsistent approaches undermine institutional credibility.
- **Connectivity constraints:** Regional tensions, sanctions and infrastructure gaps impede trade.

Way Forward

- Strengthen intelligence-sharing and cooperation against terrorist financing and recruitment.
- Combine firm counterterrorism principles with practical diplomatic engagement.
- Expand cooperation in trade, transport, energy and people-to-people exchanges.

4. FSSAI Proposal to Restrict Added Sugars in Infant Foods

GS Paper II – Health, Government Policies and Regulatory Bodies | GS Paper III – Food Processing and Nutrition

Why in News?

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has proposed removing the existing allowance for adding sucrose and fructose to foods intended for infants aged 0–6 months, strengthening safeguards against added sugars.

Key Provisions and Background

- **Existing regulation:** The Food Safety and Standards (Foods for Infant Nutrition) Regulations, 2020, permit sucrose and fructose within specified limits for certain infant foods.
- **Proposed change:** The draft seeks to eliminate this allowance for the specified category of infant foods.

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- **WHO recommendation:** Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, followed by nutritionally adequate complementary foods alongside continued breastfeeding.
- **ICMR–NIN guidelines (2024):** Recommend avoiding added sugars in foods for children below two years.

About FSSAI

- **Established under:** Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- **Administrative Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Mandate:** Prescribes science-based food standards and regulates the manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import of food to ensure food safety.

Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

- **Objective:** Consolidates food-related laws and establishes a single regulatory framework for food safety.
- **Section 4:** Provides for the establishment of FSSAI.
- **Section 16:** Specifies the functions and duties of the Authority, including laying down food standards.
- **Significance:** Promotes safe food, protects consumers and supports science-based regulation.

Significance

- **Child health:** Reducing early exposure to added sugars may help prevent unhealthy dietary preferences and support better nutrition.
- **Consumer protection:** Stronger standards can improve food quality and protect vulnerable consumers.
- **Regulatory accountability:** Encourages manufacturers to prioritise nutritional value over sweetness and commercial appeal.
- **Public health:** Supports broader efforts to address unhealthy diets and the long-term burden of non-communicable diseases.

Key Concerns

- **Regulatory loopholes:** Restricting only sucrose and fructose may encourage substitution with other sweetening ingredients.
- **Nutritional transparency:** Parents may struggle to assess product composition without clear, standardised labelling.
- **Commercial influence:** Industry interests may conflict with public health objectives.

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Way Forward

- Extend appropriate restrictions to all forms of added sugars in infant foods, consistent with scientific evidence.
- Strengthen ingredient standards and introduce clear, interpretative front-of-pack nutrition labelling.
- Improve enforcement, independent monitoring and public awareness of appropriate infant feeding practices.

5. Manipur Crisis: Demand for Reimposition of President's Rule

GS Paper II – Polity, Governance and Federalism | GS Paper III – Internal Security

Why in News?

- Kuki-Zo groups have demanded the reimposition of President's Rule in Manipur, citing continuing violence and reiterating their demand for a separate Union Territory with a legislature.

Background

- Ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities erupted on May 3, 2023, resulting in deaths, displacement and destruction of property.
- President's Rule was imposed on February 13, 2025, and revoked on February 4, 2026.
- The Kuki-Zo Women's Forum alleged that 32 community members were killed and around 55 houses burnt since March 2026. These figures represent the organisation's claims.

President's Rule: Constitutional Basics

- **Article 356:** Enables the President to impose President's Rule when a State government cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution, based on the Governor's report or otherwise.
- **Parliamentary approval:** Both Houses must approve the proclamation within two months.
- **Duration:** After approval, it operates for six months at a time. The maximum duration is three years, subject to additional constitutional conditions for extensions beyond one year.
- **Article 357:** Provides for the exercise of State legislative powers during President's Rule.
- **Judicial safeguard:** In S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994), the Supreme Court affirmed judicial review of Article 356 proclamations and placed limits on arbitrary use.

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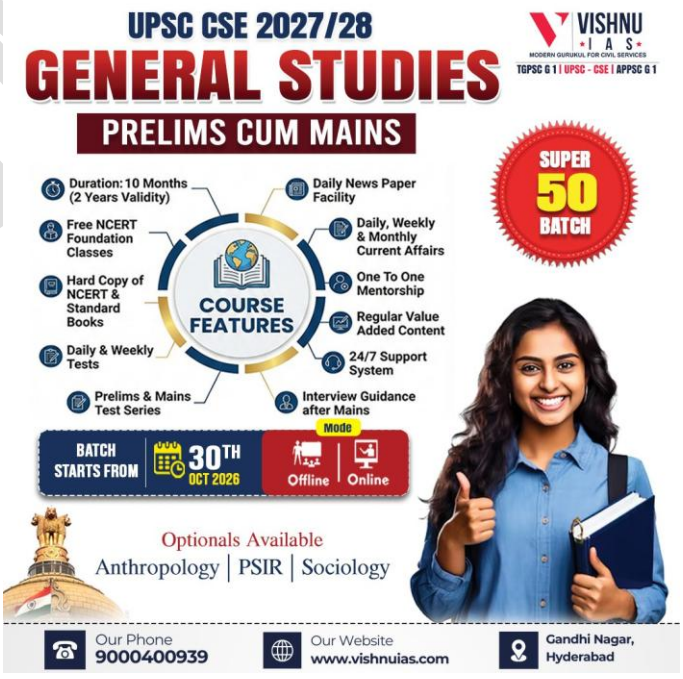
Key Issues

- **Federalism and autonomy:** Balancing territorial integrity with demands for political representation.
- **Internal security:** Persistent ethnic tensions and challenges in restoring public order.
- **Humanitarian concerns:** Reported attacks and supply disruptions affecting livelihoods and essential commodities.
- **Political resolution:** Security measures alone may not resolve deep-rooted ethnic mistrust.

Way Forward

- Ensure impartial investigations, civilian protection and rehabilitation.
- Facilitate inclusive dialogue among Meitei, Kuki-Zo and Naga representatives.
- Restore essential supplies and build inter-community trust.
- Any invocation of Article 356 must satisfy constitutional requirements, not merely political demands.





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