



P.L. RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

7. Short News

1. Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

The newly reconstituted Public Accounts Committee (PAC) held its first meeting under its new chairman, K. C. Venugopal.

Historical Roots – It is one of the oldest financial committees of the Indian Parliament, first set up in 1921 under the British-era Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

Composition – It features 22 members in total—15 elected from the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and 7 from the Rajya Sabha (Upper House).

Leadership Rule – By long-standing parliamentary convention, the chairperson of the PAC is always appointed from the Opposition party.

Core Function – It scrutinizes the money spent by the government to ensure that public funds voted by Parliament were utilized properly and legally.

Audit Ally – It works hand-in-hand with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) by thoroughly examining the official audit reports submitted by the CAG.

Independent Power – The committee has the authority to investigate any financial irregularities or waste in public accounts, even if the CAG has not officially audited them yet.

2. India Backs Ethiopia's WTO Entry

India and Ethiopia signed a crucial bilateral pact in Geneva to fast-track Ethiopia's ongoing entry process into the World Trade Organization.

What is Accession? It is the formal, multi-step process a non-member country must complete to align its trade policies and legally join the WTO.

The Process Steps – It requires an official application, the setting up of a special Working Party to check domestic policies, rewriting national trade laws to match global rules, and negotiating access with existing members.

Ethiopia's Status – The East African nation first applied to join back in 2003 and has reached the final, advanced stages of negotiation.

WTO Identity – Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the WTO is run by its 166 members as the premier global body setting the rules of cross-border trade.

History & Motto – Born on January 1, 1995, via the Marrakesh Agreement (replacing the old GATT system), its ultimate treaty goal prioritizes global development and free trade.

3. Myopia Pandemic

Global health forecasts indicate that by 2050, nearly half the world's population (around 4.75 billion people) will suffer from nearsightedness (myopia).

The Problem – In a myopic eye, the eyeball grows too long from front to back. This causes light to focus just in front of the retina instead of directly on it, blurring distant images.

The Indian Crisis – Urban numbers in India have spiked drastically—rising from a small 4.44% in 1999 to 21.15% in 2019, on a track to touch 48% by 2050.

Correction Method – Standard treatment involves concave lenses (via glasses or contacts) that manually push the light focus back onto the retina surface.

Severe Risks – Severe stretching and thinning of eye tissues can cause permanent issues like retinal detachment, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and early cataracts.

High Myopia Alert – A refractive error tracking at -6 dioptres or worse is classified as high myopia, which can lead to irreversible blindness.

The Preventative – Increasing daily outdoor time for school-aged children has been shown to slow down the structural lengthening of the eye.

4. Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect

Severe, intense heatwaves baking northern and central India have brought immediate focus to the growing dangers of the Urban Heat Island effect.

The Core Definition – An Urban Heat Island is a localized city zone where temperatures read significantly higher than surrounding rural fields due to concrete infrastructure and human activity.

Built Environment Trap – Modern construction materials like asphalt and concrete act as giant thermal sponges, soaking up sunlight during the day and radiating it at night.

Missing Greenery – Cities lack the natural tree canopies and vegetation that cool rural zones through shade and the moisture-releasing process of plant transpiration.

Anthropogenic Heat – Massive energy waste from heavy traffic, running air conditioners, and industrial factories continually pumps extra heat directly into the lower atmosphere.

Albedo Alteration – Replacing soil and plants with dark, artificial surfaces lowers the ground albedo (reflectivity), meaning the earth absorbs solar heat instead of bouncing it away.

Dangerous Outcomes – It spikes local temperatures by up to 6°C, increases deadly heatstrokes, inflates power grids due to AC demands, and heavily disrupts local water evaporation cycles.

5. Cyprus-India Strategic Partnership

During a 4-day state visit to India by Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, the two nations elevated their diplomatic ties to a "Strategic Partnership."

Defense Roadmap – The two countries rolled out a fresh 5-year defense cooperation framework designed to guide military ties from 2026 through 2031.

The Six Pacts – Diplomatic teams inked six separate cross-border agreements spanning counter-terrorism, diplomatic training, technology innovation, Search and Rescue (SAR) missions, higher education, and cultural exchanges.

Diaspora Care – They pushed forward a new Migration and Mobility Partnership along with a Social Security Agreement to safeguard the rights of Indian students and professionals working in Cyprus.

Geographic Identity – Cyprus is an eastern Mediterranean island country sitting south of Turkey and west of Syria, globally recognized for its unique blend of cultures.

Geopolitical Profile – While it has been an active European Union (EU) member state since 2004, it is deliberately not a member of the NATO alliance.

The Split Status – The island has remained divided since 1974. The southern half is the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, while the northern chunk is recognized only by Turkey, separated by a UN-patrolled "Green Line" buffer zone.

6. Kanha National Park & Tiger Virus Threat

Wildlife officials in Madhya Pradesh have placed over 100 wild tigers under emergency medical monitoring following 6 tiger deaths caused by Canine Distemper Virus (CDV).

The Killer Virus – CDV is a highly contagious, dangerous viral infection that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems of carnivores like dogs, wolves, and big cats.

Transmission Mode – The virus passes rapidly from animal to animal via airborne respiratory droplets, direct body contact, or eating contaminated food and water sources.

Symptom Tracker – Stricken big cats display high fevers, physical lethargy, severe respiratory distress, visible weakness, and uncoordinated, abnormal neurological movements.

No Known Cure – There is zero specific antiviral cure available for an infected animal; proactive vaccination of surrounding domestic and wild populations is the only line of defense.

The Sanctuary Profile – Located in the Mandla and Balaghat districts, Kanha is the largest national park in Madhya Pradesh and was among the original nine reserves chosen for Project Tiger in 1973.

Tribal & Ecological Heritage – The park is nestled deep in the historic Gondwana region, traditionally cared for by the indigenous Gond and Baiga tribes.

The Mascot Star – It is globally famed for bringing the "Hard Ground Barasingha" (Swamp Deer) back from the brink of extinction and is the first reserve in India to feature a custom wildlife mascot—"Bhoorsingh the Barasingha."

7. Indian War Memorial in Seoul

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and South Korean Minister Kwon Oh-eul jointly inaugurated the Indian War Memorial in Seoul to mark the 75th anniversary of the Korean War.

Honoring Non-Combat Sacrifice – Built at Imjingak Park by India's Ministry of Defence, this 25-square-meter monument honors India's unique humanitarian and medical contributions during the conflict (1950–1953).

The "Maroon Angels" – While India did not deploy combat troops, it dispatched the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance. This 627-man medical unit earned the revered nickname from locals for its relentless life-saving work in intense battle zones.

Custodian Force of India (CFI) – India deployed this neutral military force to handle the highly sensitive and volatile task of managing prisoners of war (POWs) after the ceasefire.

Hind Nagar History – The CFI established a specialized, temporary camp named "Hind Nagar" in 1954 to securely house, counsel, and process roughly 22,000 POWs before their official repatriation.

Geopolitical Legacy – The initiative highlights India's historic role as a neutral, trusted peace mediator on the global stage, helping navigate the deep ideological division of the Korean Peninsula along the DMZ.

8. Vayu Astra-1 Loitering Munition

Pune-based private defense technology firm Nibe Limited successfully completed high-altitude and desert demonstration trials of its indigenous "Vayu Astra-1" drone system for the Indian Army.

Smart "Kamikaze" Drone – The Vayu Astra-1 is an indigenous loitering munition, meaning it can launch into the air, hover (loiter) over a battlefield for extended periods to scout, and dive-bomb a target once identified.

Extreme Environment Testing – The system proved its rugged operational versatility by successfully passing demanding performance trials at both the Pokhran desert ranges in Rajasthan and the mountainous terrain of Joshimath–Malari in Uttarakhand.

Pinpoint Accuracy – It achieved a remarkably tight Circular Error Probable (CEP)—striking within less than one meter of its target during anti-personnel tests and within two meters during anti-armor night trials.

Tactical Flexibility – A standout design feature is its "abort and reattack" capability, allowing ground operators to safely cancel a strike mid-dive if conditions change, pull the drone back up, and look for a new target.

Impressive Range & Control – It successfully struck targets up to 100 km away carrying a 10 kg explosive warhead, and demonstrated a seamless handoff of flight control from a base station to a forward control team 70 km away.