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1. The Central Government has issued guidelines for the Samudra Manthan project, which aims to explore Oil and Natural Gas resources beneath the seabed at a cost of ₹84,084 crore.

(i) In July, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Samudra Manthan project to explore offshore oil and natural gas resources. The Cabinet also approved an allocation of ₹84,084 crore to implement the project until the financial year 2030–31. It is India's largest offshore oil and gas exploration project.

(ii) Subsequently, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas issued a 148-page set of guidelines for implementing the project.

(iii) The project is expected to add oil and natural gas resources equivalent to more than 600 million tonnes of energy to India's reserves.

(iv) Under the project, the Central Government will provide financial assistance for drilling 56 wells to discover oil and natural gas resources in deepwater and ultra-deepwater areas, as well as four wells to conduct geological surveys.

(v) Areas with a water depth exceeding 400 metres are classified as deepwater areas, while those with a depth exceeding 1,500 metres are classified as ultra-deepwater areas.

2. India has stated that tensions arise along the India–China border when Chinese troops deviate from established patrolling routes and procedures.

(i) Recently, Shatrujeet Kapoor, Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), stated that confrontational situations between Indian and Chinese troops continued at several locations along the India–China border in Arunachal Pradesh.

(ii) Commenting on the issue, Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, told reporters in New Delhi:

"As stated earlier, tensions arise along the India–China border when Chinese troops

deviate from established patrolling routes and procedures."

3. The Kremlin, the office of the Russian President, announced that the first ship carrying Russian diesel fuel to the United States under a new import agreement had departed amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

(i) The move follows a recent agreement between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, aimed at controlling rising fuel prices in the United States.

(ii) A vessel named Agioi Fanentes, sailing under the Maltese flag, departed from Primorsk, a Russian Baltic Sea port, carrying approximately 40,000 tonnes of diesel, equivalent to around 300,000 barrels.

- The vessel is expected to arrive in New York on November 7. It is the first ship carrying Russian diesel to travel to the United States since July 2023.
- Ukraine has expressed strong dissatisfaction and concern over the sudden relaxation of US economic sanctions against Russia.

4. Students in Indonesia have launched continuous protests condemning the Government for failing to control severe haze that has engulfed the country and affected Southeast Asia. They are demanding the immediate declaration of a disaster emergency.

(i) More than 500 people gathered outside the Central Kalimantan Governor's Office in Palangka Raya to stage a protest.

- Students, wearing face masks, demonstrated on the city's streets, which had turned orange due to air pollution.
- The protests, which have merged with demonstrations against the economic downturn, have spread to several cities, including those on the island of Borneo.

(ii) Forest fires caused by the practice of cutting down and burning trees for agricultural purposes are the primary reason for the severe haze.

- Although such fires commonly occur during the dry season, which usually begins in April, the intensity of the fires has reached unprecedented levels this year because of climate change, the El Niño phenomenon and below-average rainfall.

(iii) The toxic haze has spread beyond Indonesia to neighbouring countries, including Singapore and Malaysia, creating a major public health threat.

- During the month, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, were listed among the world's most polluted cities.
- Schools have been closed in Timor-Leste, and the effects of the haze have also been felt in the Philippines.

(iv) In response to the worst air pollution in a decade, Singaporean authorities have initiated legal proceedings against seven Indonesian companies allegedly responsible for the fires.

5. On Friday, the fifth day of the Asian Para Games, Indian athletes won 26 medals: nine gold, nine silver and eight bronze.

(i) India continued to hold fourth place in the overall standings, with a total of 114 medals comprising 30 gold, 35 silver and 49 bronze. This is India's highest-ever overall medal tally in the history of the competition.

- Previously, India's best performance had been at the 2023 Asian Para Games, where Indian athletes won 108 medals, comprising 27 gold, 32 silver and 49 bronze. The current tally has surpassed that record.

6. In the men's T64 category, Sandeep won the gold medal by finishing first in 52.28 seconds, setting a world record.
   - In the same category, Ajay Kumar won the bronze medal after completing the race in 53.61 seconds, setting a competition record.
7. Indian billiards player Pankaj Advani won his 29th championship title at the World Billiards Championship.

8. India has constructed another 24 houses in Sri Lanka under a housing assistance programme. In 2017, the Governments of India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement a model village housing scheme with financial assistance from India.

(i) Under this initiative, 24 new houses are being constructed in each of Sri Lanka's 25 districts through the model village programme. A total of 600 low-income families in Sri Lanka have been selected to receive these houses.

(ii) So far, 24 houses each have been constructed and inaugurated in 21 districts, including Batticaloa, Vavuniya, Jaffna, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Colombo, Trincomalee, Kilinochchi, Mannar and Mullaitivu. Most recently, the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka inaugurated 24 newly constructed houses in Galle and handed them over to the beneficiaries.

(iii) Under the scheme, 98.6% of the houses have already been completed and inaugurated. Construction is still underway in three more villages, with 24 new houses being built in each. These houses are expected to be inaugurated and handed over to the beneficiaries soon.

9. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Azerbaijan for a one-day trip and held discussions on bilateral relations with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov. In a statement issued after the meeting, Jaishankar said:

"The bilateral discussions with Jeyhun Bayramov in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, were constructive. We discussed taking relations between our two countries to the next level.

"Particular emphasis was placed on economic cooperation, including trade and investment, as well as cooperation in the energy sector. Regional and international issues were also discussed during the meeting. During discussions on connectivity between countries, Azerbaijan agreed to extend stronger cooperation in the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project."

(ii) The International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a 7,200-kilometre

multimodal transportation network being developed to facilitate the seamless movement of goods between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe. India has been supporting the implementation of this project.

10. EU invites disaster with carbon tax on steel

(i) Conference Context & Critique of EU Trade Policies

- Speaking at the annual 'Berlin Global Dialogue' international business summit in Berlin, Germany, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal criticized the European Union's (EU) restrictive trade policies.
- Goyal argued that the EU is damaging its own economy by continuously imposing internal regulations, emphasizing that opening borders to trade is what historically allowed developed nations to prosper.
- The EU is enforcing a carbon tax (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism), imposing a 50% tariff on imported steel, and attempting to introduce unacceptable standards and protectionist safety benchmarks.
- The EU is also subjecting rubber exporters to strict anti-deforestation compliance measures.

(ii) Economic Fallout & Impact on Exports

- Goyal warned that these heavy controls will backfire on the EU, driving up domestic prices, escalating inflation, and leaving European businesses uncompetitive in global markets.
- In an interconnected global economy, blocking trade with new regulations will prompt other countries to enact reciprocal restrictions, ultimately harming European businesses.
- EU carbon taxes and regulations are expected to levy a 20% to 35% tax burden on Indian exports of steel, aluminum, and cement.

(iii) Global Emissions Comparison & India's Clean Energy Record

- Despite representing 17% of the world's population, India contributes only 3% to

3.5% of global carbon emissions. In contrast, the EU accounts for 20% of global carbon emissions.

- On a per-capita basis, India's impact on carbon emissions and ozone depletion is 7 to 8 times lower than that of Western nations.
- India operates the world's fastest-growing clean energy program and is actively transitioning its steel production to be environmentally friendly.

(iv) Strategic Trade Alignment & Call for Global Investment

- India is enhancing its competitiveness by forging fair, mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreements with nations like Singapore that do not impose carbon taxes or deforestation regulations.
- Goyal invited global investors to invest in India, highlighting its stable and predictable business environment free from external uncertainties, and guaranteeing equal, fair opportunities for all investors.

11. The Central Government has extended the deadline for importing raw sugar without customs duty until December 31.

(i) Earlier, on August 20, the Central Government permitted the duty-free import of 1 million metric tonnes of raw sugar. At that time, it was announced that the permission would remain valid until October 31. The deadline has now been extended. The Union Ministry of Finance has issued an official notification regarding this decision.

12. Heat and steam alone are not enough !

(i) Climate Pressures & Surging Power Demand

- Extended summer heat and lower-than-usual monsoon rainfall have placed severe pressure on both agricultural food production and electricity generation.
- High temperatures driven by El Niño, increased daily electricity consumption, and reduced hydro power output have placed intense operational pressure on thermal power plants.

- October electricity demand surged by 45 to 50 GW compared to the same month last year.
- In September, the gap between total power generation and consumer demand reached 560 million kWh.

(ii) Critical Hydro Output Decline vs. Thermal Dependency

- Deficit monsoon rainfall severely hampered hydroelectric generation, causing hydro output to drop by 20% compared to October last year.
- Extreme heat and rainfall deficits simultaneously raised daily domestic electricity consumption and agricultural irrigation demand.
- To offset hydro deficits, thermal power generation increased by 13.3% compared to the previous year.
- Although non-fossil sources account for 55% of India's energy capacity, the lack of sufficient battery energy storage systems prevents renewables from meeting peak-hour electricity demand.

(iii) Coal Stock Depletion & Thermal Plant Vulnerabilities

- Central Electricity Authority (CEA) figures indicate that as of October 19, 96 out of 191 thermal power plants in India held less than 3 days' worth of coal reserves, despite a 36% increase in daily domestic coal production in September.
- Thermal power plant coal stocks began declining by 5% starting in October.

(iv) Global Supply Chain Bottlenecks & Import Unviability

- Geopolitical conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war and ongoing Middle East hostilities, drove international coal prices to 3-year highs.
- Depreciation of the Indian Rupee further escalated the cost of imported coal, rendering international coal imports economically unfeasible and unreliable.

(v) Government Interventions & Emergency Coal Logistics

- The Central Government instructed state-run Coal India to operate at full capacity to boost generation.
- Over 100 small thermal power plants were ordered to operate at maximum

capacity from October through the end of the year.

- The Ministry of Coal increased coal allocation to thermal plants by 36% compared to September, dispatching an average of 475 coal freight rake wagons daily in October to prevent plant shutdowns.

(vi) Institutional Reforms & Future Demand Projections

- More than 20 years after the Electricity Act 2003 came into effect, structural deficiencies and power deficits have been partially mitigated, enabling power distribution companies (discoms) to operate with modest profits rather than heavy losses.
- The CEA projects that India's peak electricity demand will grow at an average annual rate of 5.58% between 2024–25 and 2035–36.
- Meeting future energy requirements will require uninterrupted, affordable power delivery and substantial expansion beyond traditional thermal and hydroelectric power sources.