● POLITY   ● ECONOMICS   ● TECHNOLOGY   ● ECOLOGY

INTERNAL SECURITY

CENTRE PLANS TO RECALL RAF FROM MANIPUR

CONTEXT: The Union government is considering a phased withdrawal of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) from violence-hit Manipur.

The Rapid Action Force (RAF), a specialised anti-riot Central armed police force was raised in 1992 to deal with riots. At present, 10 companies of the RAF are deployed in Manipur — 8 in the valley districts and 2 in the hills. The RAF has minimal firepower and focuses on quick response with minimal lethality. A continuous exposure to the anti-insurgency theatre may not be suitable for a force trained for crowd control and law-and-order duties, including agitation and communal incidents.

The Rapid Action Force (RAF) is not structured and equipped to counter any insurgency situation. Use of Tear Gas Smoke Shells [TSMS] by RAF in such situations may be met with firing from within the mob which may result in loss of precious lives. Other than the police, 6,000 paramilitary force or Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) troops, including Indian Army personnel, are deployed in the State. The injudicious use and inappropriate deployment of the RAF in high-risk areas, with the absence of senior police officers and magistrates at the scene of the incidents is a major concern.

The deployment in districts covered by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) presents a significant risk, and as the current trend in Manipur indicates, the "crowd composition consists mainly of women and civilians, while the latter has been observed to resort to firing weapons. This poses a threat to security forces, particularly the RAF whose primary responsibility is dealing with riots arising from agitations, bandhs and strikes of religious and communal nature and shall not be deployed in anti-terrorist counter-insurgency operations.

"EDUCATING THE MIND WITHOUT EDUCATING THE HEART IS NO EDUCATION AT ALL." -ARISTOTLE

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

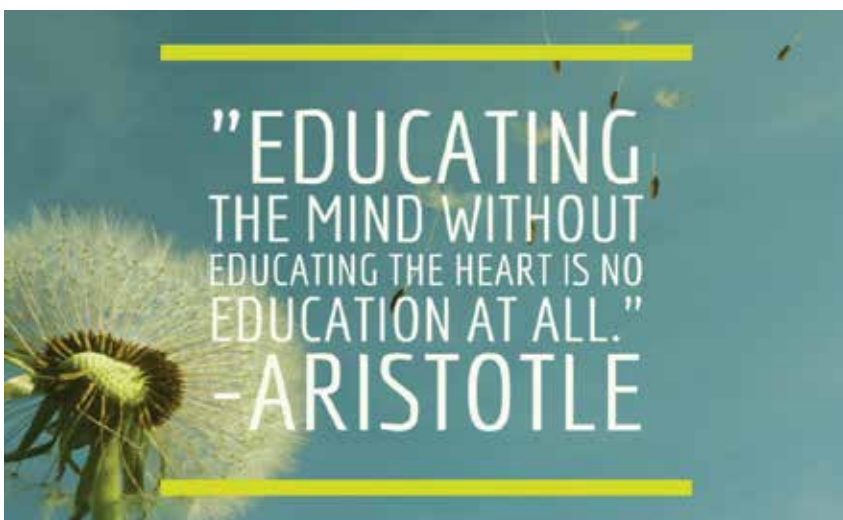## ARMY LIKELY TO INDUCT 114 DHANUSH GUNS BY 2026, SAY OFFICIALS

CONTEXT: The Army which has ordered 114 Dhanush artillery guns, and has one regiment operational already, is expecting to receive all the guns by 2026.

The Army is also looking at vastly increasing the range of the Pinaka Multi-Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS) with focus on long-range and augmented firepower. The Army currently has four Pinaka regiments and six more on order. The range of the original Pinaka rockets was 37 km which was enhanced to 45 km with the upgraded Mk-1, while the guided Pinaka has a range of 75 km which the Defence Acquisition Council has already cleared for procurement. A Pinaka Area Denial Munition rocket system has also been developed. Pinaka with a range of 120 km is under development.

One regiment that was equipped with Dhanush was operationalised only last year. Dhanush is a 155-mm, 45-calibre towed artillery gun with a range of 36 km, and it has demonstrated a range of 38 km with specialised ammunition. It is an upgrade of the existing 155-mm, 39-calibre Bofors FH 77 gun. The Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Ltd., carved after corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, that is now manufacturing the Dhanush guns has a team on site and is working with the Army.

SANTINIKETAN FINDS ITS PLACE ON UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE LIST

CONTEXT: Santiniketan, the town in West Bengal, was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list during the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

More details

India had been long striving to get a UNESCO tag for this cultural site located in the Birbhum district.

A couple of months ago, the landmark Shantiniketan site was recommended for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List by international advisory body ICOMOS.

In 2010, the Centre had first tried to get the World Heritage tag for Santiniketan and mounted its campaign again in 2021.

About Shantiniketan:

Santiniketan is a town in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. Visva Bharati University lies in Santiniketan.

Established in 1901 by poet and philosopher and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan was a residential school and centre for art based on ancient Indian traditions and a vision of the unity of humanity transcending religious and cultural boundaries.

In 1921, a 'world university' was established at Santiniketan, recognising the unity of humanity, later recognised as 'Visva Bharati'.

Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan is Bengal's only central university whose chancellor is the Prime Minister.

Distinct from the prevailing British colonial architectural orientations of the early 20th century and of European modernism, Santiniketan represents approaches toward pan-Asian modernity, drawing on ancient, medieval and folk traditions from across the region.

World Heritage Site

- A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- World Heritage Sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific or other forms of significance.
- The sites are judged to contain "cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity".
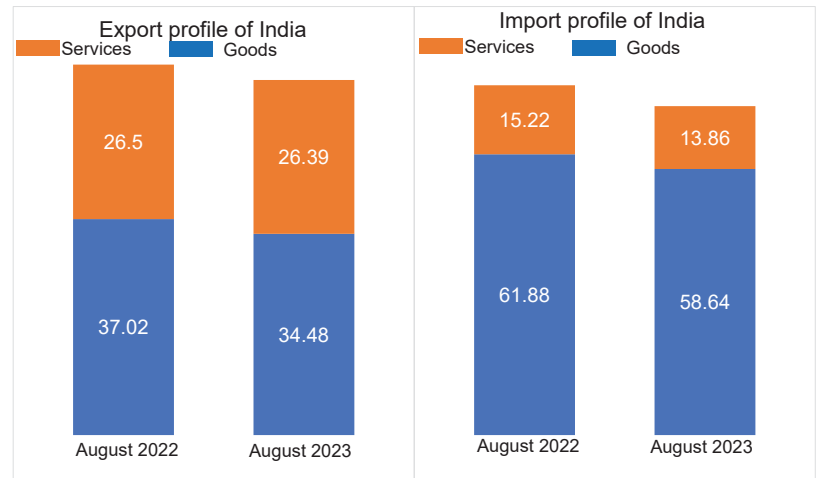
TESTING TIMES

FIGURE: Bar chart representation of the (a) Export profile of India (b) Import profile of India.

CONTEXT: India's goods exports for August 2023 shrank for the seventh consecutive time and the ninth time in 11 months.

Goods exports are now down 11.9 % so far this year and imports have dropped 12.1 %. At $58.6 billion, inbound shipments were still 5.2 % below last August's levels, but exports fell by a relatively steeper 6.9 %, leading to a $24.2 billion trade deficit — the widest since October 2022.

Services exports in August dropped 0.4 %. However, shrinking services exports imply that their ability to bridge the goods trade deficits that were up sharply last year, will be restricted, thus raising the possibility of wider current account deficits from this quarter.

With global commodity prices rising around 12% from June levels to hit a 15-month high this month, the pressure on the goods trade deficit is likely to escalate, especially as oil and gems and jewellery imports have fallen less than their exports so far in 2023-24. Export volumes of as many as 13 major items rose between April and July, but their value had declined owing to lower prices. The petroleum prices fell 27 %, despite volumes rising 6 % in the first four months of this fiscal. About half the decline in outgoing shipments has been fuelled by petroleum. This may change if global oil prices, which crossed $90 per barrel over the past week for the first time since November 2022, stay elevated.

The demand in the European Union markets are dampened with a persisting scenario of sticky inflation. Inflation reheated in the United States last month, but not enough yet to dent festive demand that may lift order books in coming months. Engineering goods, which account for a quarter of India's exports, clocked their first uptick after eight months in August, with half of the 14 key segments of exports growing.

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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS — Page 02

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SANCTIONS FOR CHANGE

CONTEXT: U.S. sanctions on Iran haven't improved the people's lives much. Anti-government protests triggered by human rights issues, like the death of Mahsa Amini, lost momentum. The ongoing protests indicate growing discontent, and if economic problems and lack of reforms persist, Iran may face bigger challenges in the future.

- Anti-government protests in Iran, triggered by events like the death of Mahsa Amini, have demanded reforms and regime change.
- American sanctions have hit Iran's economy but haven't significantly changed the regime's behavior.
- The U.S. has engaged with Iran on various fronts despite its human rights rhetoric.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution, also known as the Islamic Revolution, was a major political and social upheaval in Iran that led to the overthrow of Iran's monarchy under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the establishment of an Islamic republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Key Facts:

Fall of the Monarchy: As the protests intensified, the Shah's regime began to crumble. The Shah was forced into exile in January 1979, and Khomeini returned to Iran to a hero's welcome.

Establishment of an Islamic Republic: Following the Shah's departure, a referendum in April 1979 approved the establishment of an Islamic republic, and Iran officially became the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini became the Supreme Leader, with significant powers over all branches of government.

- We need a more consistent policy of engagement and pressure to address Iran's issues. The ongoing protests show growing discontent, and without reforms, the situation could escalate.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FINAL MEET OF G-20 FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP FROM TODAY

- The final meeting of the G-20 Framework Working Group (FWG) under India's G-20 Presidency will take place in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
- Over 65 delegates from G-20 member and invitee countries, along with international organizations, will attend.
- The meeting, chaired by advisers from India and the UK, discusses global economic issues and has already concluded its deliverables for 2023.
- RBI will host various events related to financial inclusion, literacy, and awareness, along with cultural activities in Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel will attend the program.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

INDIA IS AT A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN ITS HEALTH-CARE JOURNEY

GIST: A reimagination of its health-care model can lead the country to becoming a powerhouse in AI-driven health-care solutions and a leader in combating non- communicable diseases

India is facing a critical health challenge despite its global leadership in various areas. The rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases threatens the nation's development and could lead to significant economic costs.

- It's essential for the healthcare industry to increase awareness, promote healthier lifestyles, and provide comprehensive health checks.
- While India has made progress in healthcare, it still faces NCD-related issues. The country has world-class healthcare infrastructure and clinical talent, making it a destination for medical value travel (MVT). India excels in areas like organ transplants, cardiology, and oncology, offering high-quality care at a fraction of global prices.
- To further develop MVT, collaboration between the public and private sectors is crucial. Public-private partnerships can enhance infrastructure, promote medical tourism, and establish international healthcare accreditation bodies.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionize healthcare, with India possessing a talent pool for AI-driven solutions. AI can improve diagnostics, predict disease outbreaks, optimize treatment plans, and enhance drug discovery.
- India must prioritize community health, public-private partnerships, and innovation to become a global destination for medical value travel, a leader in AI-driven healthcare, and effectively combat non-communicable diseases. With concerted efforts, India can build a healthier and more prosperous future.

ASSESSING OUTCOMES OF G-20 SUMMIT

GIST: The 18th G-20 Summit, which produced the 'New Delhi Leaders' Declaration,' was a success as it achieved complete consensus among its members. The summit also included the African Union (AU) as a member, emphasizing inclusivity. The declaration focused on unity, shared goals, and harmonizing development with the environment.

It outlined commitments to inclusive growth, sustainable development, debt vulnerability, and more.

- The G-20 leaders addressed geopolitical issues with a balanced approach to satisfy both Russia and the G7, particularly concerning Ukraine. While the outcome may not have a significant impact on the conflict, it prevented the summit's failure.

- The expansion of G-20 membership to include the AU marked an important step towards inclusivity, and the commitment to strengthen ties with the AU under Agenda 2063 is noteworthy.

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework developed by the African Union (AU) to guide the continent's development over a 50-year period, from 2013 to 2063. It serves as a long-term vision for Africa's transformation, with the aim of achieving a prosperous, peaceful, and integrated continent.

The Agenda includes 15 flagship projects, which have been identified are.

1. A high-speed train network
2. The formulation of a strategy for transforming the African economy
3. The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area
4. The introduction of the African Union Passport
5. Ending all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence
6. The construction of a third Inga Dam
7. The establishment of the Single African Air-Transport Market
8. The establishment of an Annual African Economic Forum
9. The establishment of African Investment Bank
10. A pan-African digital data network
11. The development of outer-space technology
12. The establishment open, digital, distance-learning university
13. Cooperation on cyber security
14. The foundation of a Great African Museum
15. The compilation of an African Encyclopaedia

- The G-20's agenda covered a wide range of topics, including economic and financial sectors, climate action, SDGs, technological transformation, trade, taxation, and gender equality. Its ambitious goals will require additional financial resources, which were not clearly outlined in the declaration.

- The declaration emphasized the importance of reinvigorated multilateralism and called for UN institutions to be more responsive and global governance to be more representative and transparent.

Overall, the G-20 Summit was a political and diplomatic success, backed by consensus and setting new goals. The true measure of success will be seen in the degree of implementation of its decisions in the medium term.

EXPORT BANS AND STOCKING LIMITS: ARE THEY WORKING?

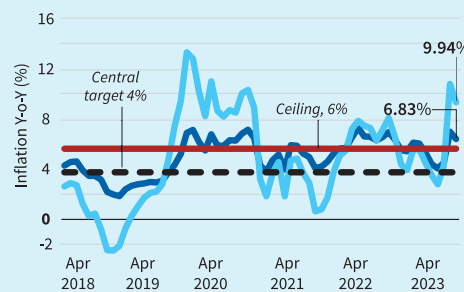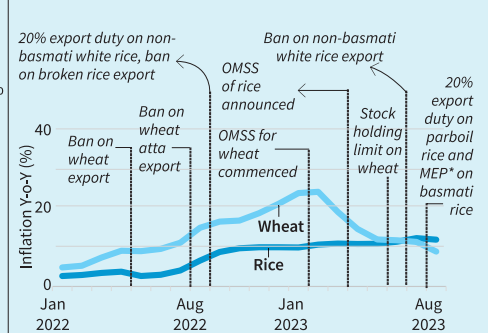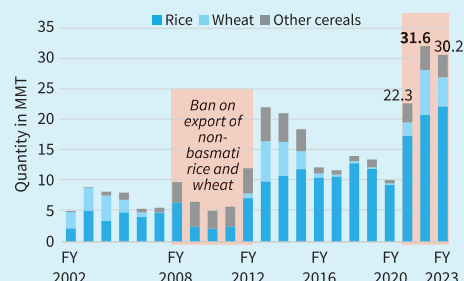**Chart 1 |** The chart shows the trend of retail inflation (●) and food inflation (●) over time. Since food and beverages carry a 57% weightage in India's retail inflation calculation, rapid acceleration in the segment has a severe impact on the latter
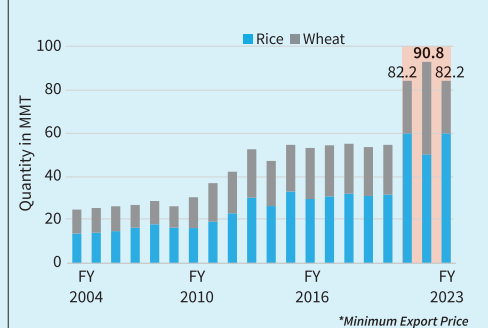

Chart 2 | The chart shows the chronology of trade and domestic stock policy to tame inflation of rice and wheat

Chart 3 | The chart shows the trends in cereal exports in India. Non-basmati exports increased from 1.38 MMT in FY20 to 6.40 MMT in FY23, by 363%

Chart 4 | The chart shows offtake of rice and wheat under NFSA and PMGKY from the central pool

Minimum Export Price

PROJECT CHEETAH, A YEAR ON

- Project Cheetah in India, which aims to reintroduce African cheetahs, has faced challenges in its first year:

- **Cheetah Arrival:** The project began in September 2022, bringing in 20 adult African cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa.

- **Release Delays:** Only 12 of the 20 cheetahs have been released into the wild after delays. Some were brought back to captivity due to perceived risks in their release areas.

- **Cheetah Deaths:** Six cheetahs have died, with various reasons cited, including renal issues, mating attempts, heatwaves, and cardio-pulmonary failure. The cause of some deaths remains unclear.

- **Impact on Conservation:** Project Cheetah has drawn attention and resources away from other endangered species' conservation efforts, potentially affecting projects like the Great Indian Bustard and Asiatic lion translocation.

- **Habitat Concerns:** The project's success depends on creating suitable habitats covering at least 5,000 square kilometers before introducing more cheetahs, rather than relying solely on importing more animals.

- **Transparency:** There has been criticism regarding the lack of wider consultation and transparency in the project.

- The lessons learned include the need for adequate habitats, improved transparency, and a focus on habitat quality over importing more cheetahs. Simply creating safari parks is not a viable solution.

- Unfortunately, the very high-profile cheetah project has definitely distracted attention and probably also diverted financial resources from much needed conservation projects like the ones for the Great Indian Bustard and the translocation of Asiatic lions, to mention a few.

- Project Cheetah has also been called upon as a means to save grasslands and other open natural ecosystems. However, given the challenges that the cheetahs have faced in surviving even in captivity and the lack of sufficient suitable habitats for them, using African cheetahs to conserve grasslands and grassland-dependent species is clearly a faulty strategy.

Govt. Report

India's cheetah reintroduction program, which aims to bring back cheetahs after their extinction in the country, is showing promising progress after its first year, according to a government report. Four out of the six short-term success criteria established for the program have already been met. These criteria include the survival of 50% of introduced cheetahs in the first year, establishing home ranges in Kuno National Park, successful reproduction in the wild, and contributions to local communities through cheetah-related activities. The report suggests that the project is on track to become a successful conservation and population-establishment effort for cheetahs in India.

GOVERNMENT PUSHES REGULATORY MECHANISMS FOR OTT SERVICES

CONTEXT: On July 7, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) invited responses to a consultation paper it released on a regulatory mechanism for over-the-top (OTT) communication services. The paper also mentions selective banning of these services.

The background

The discussion on the selective banning of OTT services came after a Parliamentary Standing Committee issued a notice to the Department of Telecom (DoT) to explore this option due to the unrest caused by these platforms which have mass reach and impact.

It is important to note that only OTT communication services like WhatsApp, Signal, Meta, Google Meet, Zoom, X, etc. were discussed in the consultation paper and not the 'content' OTTs such as Netflix, Amazon Prime etc.

Content regulation is an altogether different subject and it comes under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) and not the TRAI.

The TRAI has also asked stake holders to define OTT, and a proposal on cost-sharing mechanisms between Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and OTT services.

What is the conflict between TSPs and OTTs?

Telecom Service Providers are of the opinion that OTTs should be regulated and charged because they use and thrive on the infrastructure built by operators over the years. Currently, they aren't.

OTT communications services have led to erosion of revenues for the telcos. These platforms offer users an array of services, sending Multimedia Messaging Services (MMS), instant messaging to voice and video calls, delivered over the internet. This circumvents the need for traditional telecom services, particularly voice calls and text messages, leading to a significant reduction in the revenue streams of telecom companies.

What is the demand?

There should be a policy framework to enable fair share contribution from large OTT service providers to telecommunication network operators based on assessable criteria like number of subscribers or data usage. To ensure fairness and compensate for the increased data demands, it is justifiable for OTTs to pay a fair and reasonable fair share charge to TSPs.

Similarly, according to the Internet Service Providers Association of India, if OTT services are a substitutable service offered by licenced service providers, then such OTT services should be considered as the same services offered under the telecom licence granted by the Government.

That is, all such OTT services should be governed by the same set of rules irrespective of whether they are provided by an operator on its own network or through the internet.

What is the argument for banning OTT services?

Broadband India Forum (BIF) firmly opposed any selective ban on OTT services as they are adequately regulated under the existing IT Act, 2000, Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and other associated Acts and Rules.

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