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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS-

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1.US Suspension of Indian IT Firms from the PERM Green Card Programme

Source: The Hindu

Context:

Reports dated 8–9 October 2026 indicate that the US administration has suspended several technology companies, including Indian IT firms, from participating in the PERM employment-based green card process, citing alleged misuse of the system and protection of American jobs.

What is PERM?

- The **Permanent Labor Certification (PERM)** programme is administered by the US Department of Labor.
- It generally requires employers to demonstrate that qualified, available US workers are not available for the relevant position and that hiring a foreign worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed American workers.
- PERM is usually a preliminary step in employer-sponsored EB-2 and EB-3 green card cases, followed by an I-140 petition and other immigration requirements.



Key Developments

- Companies named in media reports include TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Cognizant, Microsoft and Adobe.
- US officials have alleged misuse of the programme and displacement of American workers. However, these allegations should not be treated as proven corporate wrongdoing without supporting evidence and appropriate proceedings.
- The reported action concerns specified employers' participation in PERM; it does **not automatically amount to a blanket ban on Indian nationals, all green card categories or H-1B visas**.
- PERM and H-1B are distinct immigration mechanisms. Moreover, PERM certification does not itself guarantee permanent residency.

Implications for India

- **Indian IT industry:** Greater uncertainty in long-term employee mobility, recruitment, retention and workforce planning for companies dependent on US-based skilled professionals.
- **Indian professionals:** Potential delays in initiating employment-based green card applications, affecting long-term settlement plans and family stability.

- **Economic impact:** Changes in talent mobility could influence the global deployment of Indian professionals and the competitiveness of India's IT services exports. The actual impact will depend on the scope and duration of the restrictions and each company's exposure.
- **India–US relations:** Immigration restrictions may create friction in bilateral economic engagement, even as both countries cooperate in technology, trade, defence and strategic affairs.
- **Brain drain and brain gain:** Returning skilled professionals could strengthen India's innovation ecosystem if supported by quality employment, research opportunities and entrepreneurship.

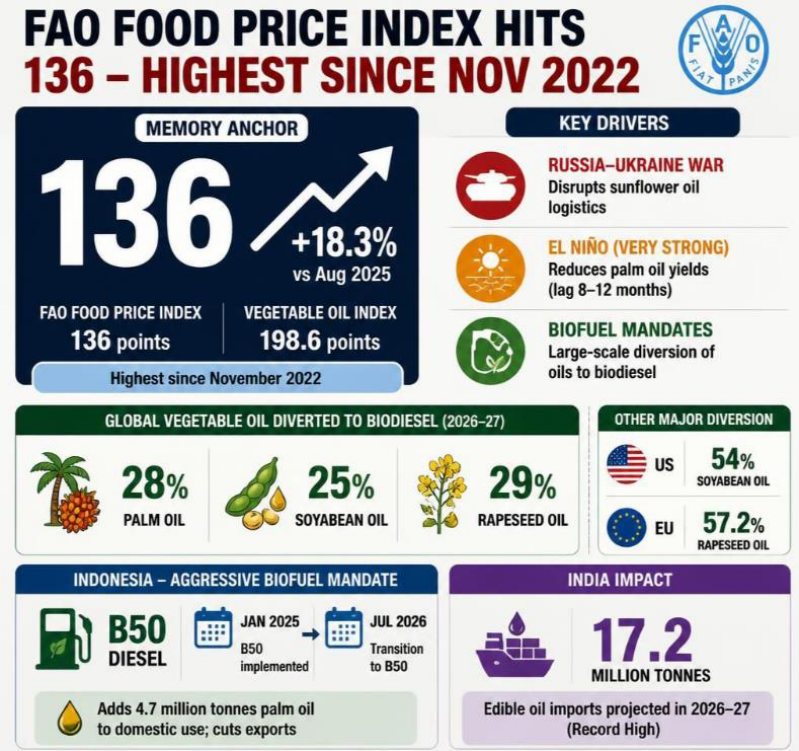
Way Forward

India should pursue diplomatic engagement with Washington to seek clarity on the legal basis, scope and duration of the reported restrictions. A transparent, rules-based immigration system should balance the protection of domestic workers with legitimate demand for global talent. India should also strengthen domestic R&D, deep-tech industries, startup ecosystems and high-skilled employment to reduce excessive dependence on overseas opportunities.

2.Why Edible Oils Are Worst Affected by Food Inflation?

- Global edible oil prices have risen due to weather-related supply concerns, geopolitical disruptions and growing demand for biofuels.
- According to the FAO, the Food Price Index reached 136.0 points in September 2026, while the Vegetable Oil Price Index stood at 198.6 points, 18.3% higher than a year earlier. However, the latest monthly increase in vegetable oil prices was 0.9%, driven mainly by palm oil; sunflower oil prices declined.

Major Causes: Edible oils are particularly vulnerable to global supply-demand imbalances because production is concentrated in a few regions and international trade is sensitive to weather and policy changes. **El Niño-related dry conditions** can reduce oil-palm yields with a time lag. The Russia–Ukraine conflict has affected Black Sea trade routes and sunflower oil logistics, although recent expectations of ample supplies have moderated sunflower oil prices. **Biofuel mandates** add another source of demand by diverting palm, soybean and rapeseed oils towards biodiesel production.



- **Indonesia's B50 Policy:** Indonesia implemented its mandatory B50 biodiesel programme in July 2026, requiring a blend of 50% palm-based biodiesel and 50% conventional diesel.
- While this supports energy security and reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels, it can increase domestic palm oil consumption and potentially constrain export availability. The net impact on global prices depends on production, domestic demand and export policy.

Implications for India:

- India is a major importer of edible oils, particularly palm, soybean and sunflower oils.
- Its high import dependence exposes domestic prices to international commodity prices, exchange-rate movements, shipping costs and export restrictions.
- Rising import bills can widen the trade deficit, increase household expenditure and contribute to food inflation, disproportionately affecting low-income households.

Way Forward:

India should improve domestic oilseed productivity through better seeds, irrigation, research and extension services; diversify imports across suppliers; strengthen storage and supply-chain infrastructure; and promote sustainable oilseed cultivation. Trade-policy measures should remain calibrated to balance consumer affordability with farmers' interests. Biofuel policies globally should also account for the food-versus-fuel trade-off, environmental sustainability and energy security.

Key Takeaway: Edible oil inflation reflects the interaction of climate risks, geopolitical disruptions, biofuel demand and India's import dependence. Building domestic productivity and resilient supply chains is essential for food security and price stability.

3.JOSH (Joint Squad for Health) Teams

Source: PIB

Why in News?

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will launch JOSH Teams across 55 districts in 11 states to strengthen youth-led community mobilisation for tuberculosis (TB) elimination.

About JOSH Teams

- JOSH stands for Joint Squad for Health and aims to channel the energy and reach of India's youth into organised community action for TB elimination.
- The initiative is being undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Ministry of Defence.
- The teams will bring together Class-I officers, MY Bharat volunteers and National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets.
- In the first phase, the teams will engage with communities at the block, ward and local levels.

Key Activities

- The teams will spread awareness about TB symptoms, prevention, timely diagnosis and completion of treatment.
- They will address myths and misconceptions, reduce stigma associated with TB and encourage individuals, families and communities to participate in the national TB elimination movement.

4.Canine Distemper

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- A tigress being treated for symptoms of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) infection died recently in Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

About Canine Distemper

- Canine distemper is a contagious and serious disease caused by the canine distemper virus (CDV).

- The virus attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems and can have a high mortality rate.
- Dogs are particularly vulnerable, especially puppies younger than four months and unvaccinated dogs.
- CDV can also infect ferrets and several other mammals, particularly carnivores.

Transmission, Symptoms and Prevention

- CDV spreads mainly through direct contact with infected respiratory secretions, including saliva, nasal discharge and droplets from sneezing.
- It can also spread through contaminated surfaces, objects and shared food or water bowls. Infected dogs may shed the virus for weeks, even before symptoms appear.
- Early symptoms include fever, nasal and eye discharge, loss of appetite, coughing and pneumonia.
- In advanced cases, the infection may cause vomiting, diarrhoea, thickened paw pads, seizures, muscle twitching, limb weakness, stiffness and loss of coordination.
- There is no specific cure or approved antiviral treatment; management mainly involves supportive care.
- Vaccination is the primary preventive measure.

5.To Combat Pollution, We Need to Cast a Wider Net: Go Beyond the City

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- Delhi faces the threat of severe winter air pollution due to vehicular emissions, stubble burning, firecrackers and unfavourable weather conditions.
- The possibility of a strong El Niño event raises concerns about meteorological conditions that could worsen pollution accumulation.
- The article calls for a shift from city-centric pollution control to **airshed-based management**, covering the wider Indo-Gangetic region.

Major Sources and Types of Air Pollution

- **Particulate Matter (PM):**

- **PM10:** Particles with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less; sources include road dust, construction and combustion.
- **PM2.5:** Particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less; sources include vehicle exhaust, industries, biomass burning and secondary particle formation.
- PM2.5 can penetrate deep into the lungs and is associated with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

- **Gaseous pollutants and their effects:**
  - **SO_2 (Sulphur dioxide):** Coal combustion and industrial emissions; contributes to sulphate particles and acid deposition.
  - **NO_x (Nitrogen oxides):** Vehicles and power plants; contributes to secondary particulate matter and ground-level ozone formation.
  - **NH_3 (Ammonia):** Fertilisers and livestock; reacts with other pollutants to form secondary PM2.5.
  - **VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds):** Fuels, solvents and industries; contribute to ground-level ozone and secondary organic aerosols.
  - **CO (Carbon monoxide):** Incomplete combustion; reduces the blood's oxygen-carrying capacity.
  - **Ground-level O_3 (Ozone):** A secondary pollutant formed through sunlight-driven reactions involving NO_x and VOCs; harms the respiratory system.

Role of Meteorology and Climate

- **Low wind speed:** Reduces the dispersion of pollutants and allows them to accumulate.
- **Temperature inversion:** Warm air above cooler surface air suppresses vertical mixing, trapping pollutants near the ground.
- **El Niño:** A warming of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean that influences global atmospheric circulation. Its effects on Delhi's winter pollution depend on regional weather patterns; a severe pollution episode cannot be attributed to El Niño alone.
- **Stubble burning and firecrackers:** Their possible coincidence during the festive season can increase emissions during an already unfavourable pollution period.

Limitations of Existing Pollution-Control Measures

- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** Uses reductions in PM10 concentration as a key performance indicator; effective management must also address PM2.5 and gaseous precursors.
- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** Provides graded emergency measures in Delhi-NCR based on air-quality conditions.
- **Source-attribution challenge:** Pollution comes from multiple sources and can travel across administrative boundaries. City-level restrictions alone cannot control emissions originating in neighbouring states.
- **Monitoring gaps:** Satellite-based fire detection depends on observation timing and detection capabilities; some burning events may be missed.

Airshed-Based Management and Way Forward

- **Meaning:** An airshed is a geographical region in which emissions, atmospheric movement and meteorological conditions interact to influence air quality.
- **Institutional framework:** The National Air Quality Resource Framework of India (NARFI), developed by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) under the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, promotes a scientific approach to air-quality management.
- **Regional coordination:** Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and other relevant jurisdictions must coordinate emission-reduction measures.
- **Scientific interventions:** Strengthen source apportionment, continuous monitoring, forecasting and satellite-based detection.
- **Long-term solutions:** Promote public transport, cleaner fuels, industrial emission control and practical alternatives to crop-residue burning.

Conclusion:

Delhi's air pollution is a regional problem requiring coordinated, science-based action across the Indo-Gangetic airshed. Effective policy must control both particulate matter and gaseous precursors rather than relying only on temporary emergency measures.

6.Recommendations of the 57th Meeting of the GST Council

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Ministry of Finance, 8 October 2026.

Why in News?

- The 57th GST Council meeting was held on **8 October 2026**, under the chairpersonship of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- The Council recommended reforms in GST registration, return filing, refunds, Input Tax Credit (ITC), penalties and dispute resolution.
- The objective is to simplify compliance, reduce unnecessary litigation and improve the ease of doing business, particularly for small businesses and exporters.
- **Important distinction:** These are Council recommendations; changes requiring legal amendments or notifications take effect through the prescribed legal process. <Cite refs={["turn291607search0"]}/>

Major Reforms in Registration, Returns and Refunds

- **GST registration:** Simplification of application processing and faster acceptance of eligible amendments to registration details.
- **Small e-commerce sellers:** Simplified registration arrangements for eligible suppliers selling through Electronic Commerce Operators (ECOs), subject to prescribed conditions.
- **Return filing:** Improvements in GSTR-1, GSTR-1A and GSTR-3B to improve reporting and reconciliation of tax liabilities and ITC.
- **Automated refunds:** System-based processing of eligible refunds, including:
    - Automatic sanction of eligible refunds of excess balance in the electronic cash ledger.
    - 90% provisional refunds for eligible zero-rated supplies and inverted duty structure claims.
    - Reduction of the time limit for issuing an acknowledgement or deficiency memo to 10 days.
- **Small taxpayers:** An optional scheme for eligible businesses with turnover up to ₹5 crore making B2C supplies was approved in principle for quarterly payment of tax and annual return filing. <Cite refs={["turn291607search0"]}/>

Input Tax Credit (ITC) and Trade Facilitation

- **Wider refund eligibility:** The Council recommended allowing refunds of accumulated ITC on capital goods for zero-rated supplies and on input services and capital goods for inverted duty structure cases, subject to prescribed conditions and timelines.
- **Blocked ITC:** Changes to Section 17(5) of the CGST Act were recommended to broaden credit eligibility for specified goods and services.
- **Exports:** Measures were recommended to facilitate exports of services and certain supplies connected with Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Free Trade Warehousing Zones (FTWZs).
- **E-way Bills:** Interception of goods in transit is to be restricted through safeguards involving specific intelligence and authorised officers, reducing unnecessary disruption of transportation.
- **Reverse Charge Mechanism (RCM):** Clarifications and changes were recommended for specified supplies, including certain waste and scrap transactions. <Cite refs={["turn291607search0"]}/>

Arrest, Prosecution and Penalty Reforms

- **Arrest powers:** The Council recommended omitting Section 69 of the CGST Act, 2017, which provides for arrest in specified GST offences.
- **Prosecution threshold:** Recommended increase from **₹1 crore to ₹5 crore**, reducing criminal prosecution exposure for lower-value cases, subject to the revised legal provisions.
- **General penalty:** Recommended reduction in the maximum general penalty under Section 125 from ₹25,000 to ₹10,000.
- **Non-fraud cases:** A reduced penalty of 5% was recommended in specified cases where tax and interest are paid within the prescribed period.
- **Appeals:** A cap of ₹40 crore was recommended for pre-deposits in appeals involving only penalties.
- **Purpose:** To promote proportionate enforcement and a trust-based tax system while retaining deterrence against fraud and evasion. <Cite refs={["turn291607search0"]}/>

Significance

- **Ease of doing business:** Lower compliance costs and simpler procedures can benefit MSMEs, traders and exporters.
- **Working capital:** Faster refunds can improve business liquidity and support export competitiveness.

- **Digital governance:** Automated processing can reduce manual intervention and improve transparency.
- **Cooperative federalism:** The GST Council is a constitutional body under **Article 279A**, bringing the Centre and States together to make recommendations on GST.
- **Decision-making:** A decision requires at least three-fourths of the weighted votes of members present and voting; the Centre has one-third weight and the States collectively have two-thirds.
- **Prelims caution:** Distinguish between a GST Council recommendation and an amendment or notification that has actually come into force. Not every recommendation becomes immediately applicable law.

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