The Tamil Nadu government has removed the Minimum Educational Qualification required for drivers while applying for driving licences.

- The change was aimed to boost employment opportunities in the transportation sector.
- It was effected on October 29 in the state, based on an order issued by the Union road transport ministry last month.
- Earlier, a pass in Class VIII was considered as the minimum education qualification needed for operating commercial vehicles like trucks, buses and taxis in Tamil Nadu.
- The rule was included in the original TN Motor Vehicles Rule, 1989, to ensure that drivers, travelling to other states on long routes, were able to read the names of places and warning messages on route/sign boards and record details on consignments or travel log sheets.
- There are over 6 lakh goods carriages and buses operating in Tamil Nadu but only 4 lakh regular drivers for these vehicles are available.
M S Swaminathan Research Foundation – to launch a mobile app ‘PANNAI’ (Pest-disease Advance Notification and Need-based Agriculture Information) on November 5
- The App will benefit around 10,000 farmers in Vedaranyam block in Nagapattinam
- It will provide alerts regarding the various agriculture based inputs and the details about the pest-diseases for the crops.

The state government – announced to provide grant to Project Puthri, an initiative by AVTAR Human Capital Trust
- The project aims to launch career intentionality programme in 1,000 schools across the state with the help of private partnerships using CSR funds.
- It develops career intentionality among girl students studying in corporation and government-run schools in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.
- As part of the project, young girls are trained in more than 40 skills under the intervention program, enabling them to pursue their dreams and ambitions

The state government – to train 824 women from Self-Help groups in 22 districts to take care of the people with mental illness
- The mission, Manam Inidhu, will be coordinated by Institute of Mental Health, Chennai and the Schizophrenia Research Foundation.
- These women will be trained as a first line of defence in rural areas to take care of mentally ill people

![Mind in Unrest](image-url)
✓ These counsellors will be sent to villages not only to offer guidance, but also to direct the ‘mentally ill’ patients who need medical care to the nearby treatment centres
✓ The National Mental Health Survey, 2015-16 recorded that 12% of the population of Tamil Nadu had a mental health problem
✓ As part of the state initiative, a mental health detection app — MAIN for Manam Inidhu — was also launched on October 31, to guide counsellors for the needy patients.

➢ A district-level examination committee - will be set up to oversee the conduct of the Class V and VIII Public Exams at the end of the academic year.
✓ This committee will ensure smooth conduct of the exam by means of regular monitoring
✓ It will carry out surprise inspections of examination centres, according to the guidelines issued by the Directorate of Elementary Education
✓ The committee will be headed by the Chief Educational Officer (CEO) of the educational district.
✓ Officials from the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Directorate of Government Examinations (DGE), the heads of a higher secondary school and high school, a block development supervisor will be among those who will be part of the committee.
✓ Students of Class V will have three papers in the final exam — English, Tamil and Mathematics.
✓ Students of Class VII will have five papers in the final exam — English, Tamil, Mathematics, Science and Social Science.
✓ The public exam for these classes will have the written exam, which will be a summative assessment for 60 marks seeking to evaluate basic concepts, practices and learning outcomes.
✓ The remaining 40 marks will be allocated after a formative assessment, which will be calculated across the entire three terms.

➢ The state government – has decided to digitize and store patient data in cloud environment in all Government hospitals under the Hospital Management Information System for future reference and research purposes.
✓ The Department of Health and Family Welfare now follows an old policy by destroying records after three years due to space constraints
✓ However, in case of medico-legal cases, patient records were being maintained for eight years
✓ The move will be implemented as part of the e-office policy of the Government
For the first time in the country, the Uttarakhand forest department - has decided to identify and radio-collar rogue elephants in Haridwar

- The step has been taken due to the rising cases of man-elephant conflict, and also to ensure the safety of pilgrims who are expected to arrive in Haridwar in large numbers for Maha Kumbh 2021
- The department will utilise 10 radio-collars that have been provided by German development agency Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to counter the problem elephants.
- Earlier, scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India had conducted a similar ‘pilot’ experiment successfully in Chhattisgarh sometime ago.

The country’s first-of-its-kind four-deck transport structure - has been planned as part of Nagpur Metro near Kamptee Road

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has allocated ₹535 crore for the 5.3 kilometre flyover project, which includes the four-deck structure, that will be built below the Metro viaduct
- In this four-deck structure, the first level is the Kamptee Road, second is Nagpur-Bhopal railway line, third is the flyover, and fourth is the Metro viaduct.

Odisha government - has proposed to come up with a Social Registry for the welfare schemes

- The registry will create a single source of authenticated family details for all the welfare programmes of the Government
- The registry is expected to identify target beneficiaries and to remove ghost and ineligible beneficiaries.
The move assumes importance as 3.41 lakh fake beneficiaries were provided ₹170 crore recently under the State’s flagship ‘KALIA’ scheme for farmers.

The West Bengal government - has imposed a complete ban on the production and sale of gutka, pan masala in the state for one year with effect from 7 November.

The move aims to control the adverse effects of using tobacco in both minors and adults

Earlier, the government of West Bengal had imposed a similar ban in May 2013 for a year.

Bengal's neighbouring state, Bihar also banned the sale of gutka and pan masala in August this year.

As per the data of the cancer society of India, about 48% male and 20% of women consume tobacco products in the country.

The use of tobacco can cause cancer in various parts of the body including the mouth, throat, brain, goitre, lungs, gall bladder, kidneys and breast.

About 45% of all cancers in men and 17% in women have oral cancer and more than 80% of oral cancer happens due to the use of tobacco.

NATIONAL

Chennai-based NIOT – to collaborate with Isro to develop a manned underwater submersible by 2022

Once the submersible is successfully launched, India will join an elite league of six countries having an underwater manned submersible.

Isro has developed the design for the crew module capsule, which has to be certified by an agency in Germany, following which the fabrication of design will commence.
Titanium was the chosen metal as it will be able to withstand pressure under water.
NIOT, which is designing and developing the basic structure of the submersible, will also develop the electronics, safety and navigation systems.
The development of the underwater submersible is part of the ₹6,500 crore ‘Deep Ocean Mission’.
Once the vehicle is ready, it will be able to carry two scientists and an operator and dive as deep as 6km to explore metals and minerals as well as marine life.
NIOT will develop ocean mining systems and technology for offshore energy as part of this mission.
Other research labs, including INCOIS in Hyderabad, CMLRE in Kochi and NCPOR in Goa, will also be involved in the mission conducting various studies on climate change, marine life and ocean surveys and exploration.

About 500 passenger locomotives of the South Central Railway (SCR) – to be fitted with the newly developed Real-time Train Information System (RTIS)
The system will monitor the precise speeds and movement throughout the journey of the train.
It has been developed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems with the help of ISRO-Airports Authority of India’s GAGAN-GPS aided geo-augmented navigation.

The Government – to set up women help desks in all police stations and anti-human trafficking units in all districts across India using the NIRBHAYA Fund
The announcement was made by Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani.
This is the first-ever initiative to be implemented using NIRBHAYA Fund.
The move aims at addressing the safety issues of women and children.
Currently, the anti-human trafficking units are functional in 146 districts of the nation.
The Nirbhaya Fund was set up by the Union Government in 2013 after the tragic fatal assault case on December 16, 2012 in New Delhi.
The Government contribution to the Nirbhaya fund included Rs 1000 crores for the empowerment, safety and security of women and girl children.

Eritrea and Saint Kitts and Nevis - have become the latest members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
The two nations signed the ISA Framework Agreement during its second assembly held in New Delhi on October 31, 2019.
With this, the total membership of the International Solar Alliance has increased to 83 nations.
The assembly saw the participation of delegations from 78 countries.
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier announced at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019 to increase the renewable energy capacity of India to 175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022.
Currently, the country has over 82 GW renewable capacity on the ground and around 70 GW at various stages of completion.
The International Solar Alliance was jointly launched by India and France.
It was officially launched by PM Narendra Modi at the India Africa Summit, ahead of the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in November 2015.
The role of the International Solar Alliance plays a major part in fulfilling the 2030 SDG goals and objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

**INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES**

- India and Uzbekistan - signed three memorandums of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in military medicine and military education during the visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
The MoUs were signed on the sidelines of the Council of Heads and Governments (CHGs) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Apart from the signing of MoU on military medicine, two institution-to-institution MoUs on training and capacity building between institutes of higher military learning of the two countries were also signed.

Mr. Singh and his Uzbekistan counterpart, Major General Bakhodir Nizamovich Kurbanov jointly presided over the curtain raiser of the first India-Uzbekistan bilateral Joint Exercise, “Dustlik 2019”.

The bilateral exercise will be conducted from November 4 to 13 at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent and will be focused on counter-terrorism.

India has offered a concessional line of credit of $40 million for procurement of goods and services by Uzbekistan from India.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was attending the SCO meeting as a special envoy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan from November 1-3, 2019.

This was the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Uzbekistan in about 15 years.

COMMITTEES

The Government — sets up two parliamentary standing committees — on home affairs and science & technology — to examine the WhatsApp snooping issue.

The home committee panel is headed by deputy leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma and the S&T panel by Shashi Tharoor.

The committees will seek details from top government officials including the home secretary to examine the hacking allegations.

Facebook-owned WhatsApp announced on October 31 that Indian journalists and human rights activists were among those globally spied upon by unnamed ‘operators’ using an Israeli spyware Pegasus.
CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi – participated with leaders of other Asean countries at the 16th Asean-India Summit in Bangkok, Thailand on November 3
  - During the Summit, the PM stated that India's Act East Policy is an important part of its Indo-Pacific vision and ASEAN is the core of the Act East Policy

- According to the PM, India was committed to work with Indonesia to strengthen ties in the areas of defence, security, connectivity, trade and investment
- In the contemporary context, India’s act east policy is complimented by Thailand’s look west policy which has made the relationship deep, robust and multifaceted
- PM Narendra Modi met the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo and Myanmar’s State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on the sidelines of the India-ASEAN and East Asia Summit 2019 at Bangkok on November 3 and 4, 2019
- ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization that comprises 10 south-east Asian countries as member nations.
- Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam are the member countries of ASEAN
- ASEAN was created on August 8, 1947 after the foreign ministers of 5 nations- Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia signed the ASEAN declaration.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) - to commercialise India’s regional navigation satellite system, NavIC by means of its commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd
Antrix recently announced two separate tenders to identify industries that can develop dedicated NavIC-based hardware and systems.

NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation) is the Indian system of seven satellites that identifies the location of business and individual users, or how their products and services are moving.

The indigenous positioning or location based service (LBS) works just like the popular U.S. Global Positioning System or GPS, but only within a 1,500-km radius over the sub-continent.

Last year, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways mandated that all national-permit vehicles must have such location tracking devices.

As a pilot study, many fishing boats have been fitted with these devices that have a unique texting facility.

In mid-October, ISRO announced that Qualcomm Technologies Inc., a leading producer of semiconductor chips, had developed and tested NavIC-friendly chipsets across its instruments and that it would add NavIC to them.

Another important development for NavIC was the certification of the Indian system by the 3GPP (The 3rd Generation Partnership Project), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.

The specifications will be available in March 2020 and the Telecommunications Standards Development Society, India has already announced that it would adopt them as a national standard.

**DEFENCE**

- The Army will have the first regiment of the indigenously upgraded Dhanush artillery guns in place by March 2020 and all 114 guns by 2022.
The first regiment of 18 guns will be in place by March 2020 followed by another 36 guns by March 2021 and the last 40 by March 2022.

Earlier in April, the Ordnance Factory Board had handed over the first batch of six Dhanush guns.

The Gun Carriage Factory, Jabalpur, received the Bulk Production Clearance from the Army on February 18, 2019.

**SPORTS**

- The Indian dragon boat team created history by winning a bronze medal in the International Canoe Federation Dragon Boat World Cup at Ningbo, China on November 3.

- India got the bronze in the mixed team event in the 500m race.
- The gold medal was won by Chinese Taipei, while the hosts China had to settle for the silver medal.
- India’s Lakshya Sen - bagged his second successive BWF World Tour Super 100 title with a win over China’s Weng Hong Yang in the SaarLorLux Open

- Lakshya had earlier clinched the Belgian International challenge and Dutch Open Super Tour 100 in his last two outings.