SC proposes electoral trusts.

While scrapping the electoral bonds scheme, the Supreme Court has proposed the existing scheme of electoral trusts be a suitable alternative for being the least restrictive of the rights of citizens to know and as an effective means to curb black money.

Electoral trusts allow for pooling of money from multiple entities, with the decision of whom these donations go to taken by the trust's management, helping put a distance between contributors to such a trust and the political recipient.

Discussing the pros and cons of electoral bonds, the five-judge Constitution bench noted that for contributions above Rs 20,000, the law provides for electoral trusts set up by companies for political contributions.

The Centre had argued that the electoral bonds scheme was best suited to curb black money. Dealing with this argument, the Supreme Court has said that if the argument of Centre is accepted --- that contributors would resort to cash donations in the absence of bonds due to the fear of consequences, electoral trusts are an effective alternative.

The electoral trust scheme was introduced in 2013 to ensure secrecy of contributors. Contributions could be made by a person or body corporate to the trust, which would thereafter transfer the amount to more than one political party equally or unequally.

On electoral trusts, the court said: “There will be less ‘political consequences’ for contributions made to the electoral trust because the information about which of the contributors contributed to which of the parties will not be disclosed.”

It is only where an electoral trust contributes to one political party would there be a possibility of political consequences and witch-hunting. However, in that case, it is a choice expressly made by the contributors, the bench added.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who penned a separate but concurring judgment, said, “The electoral trust scheme is in force and is a result of the legislative process. In a comparison of limited alternatives, it is a measure that best realises the objective of the Union of India in a real and substantial manner without significantly impacting the fundamental right of the voter to know.”

As the Election Commission had in June 2014 issued guidelines on who can start a trust, how its payments are to reach political parties, justice Khanna said the EC could consider suitably modifying these guidelines following the electoral bonds being declared unconstitutional.

As an illustration, the Court produced the contents of one such report submitted by Prudent Electoral Trust for the year 2021-22. This trust received a total of ₹464.83 crore from 70 contributors that included individuals and companies.

These contributions were unequally distributed to the Aam Aadmi Party, All India Congress Committee, Bharatiya Janata Party, Goa Congress Committee, Goa Forward Party, Indian National Congress, Punjab Lok Congress, Samajwadi Party, Shiromani Akali Dal, Telangana Rashtra Samiti, and YSR Congress.

Contributions to the electoral trust can only be made through cheque, bank draft and electronic transfer as no cash donations are accepted, as per EC guidelines.

Tax sharing by centre and the states- latest issue.

Currently, based on the 15th Finance Commission's suggestion, 41% of the Centre's divisible tax pool is yearly allocated to the states in 14 installments over the span of 2021-22 to 2025-26. The contentious issue, though, is the formula used to distribute this amount among different states.

COMPOSITION OF REVENUE FOR SOUTHERN STATES (%)

States	OWN TAX REVENUE	OWN NON-TAX REVENUE	DEVOLUTION	GRANT IN AID
Andhra Pradesh	50	7	20	23
Karnataka	73	5	16	6
Kerala	60	16	13	12
Tamil Nadu	67	7	15	10
Telangana	61	11	10	19

Among the different criteria used by the Commission, high weightage is given to income distance, the distance of the state's income from the state with the highest income, and population.

This means that poor and highly populated states of UP (18%) and Bihar (10%) together receive 28% of the devolved tax amount meant for all states. This leaves developed and lowly

populated states like Tamil Nadu (4.2%), Karnataka (3.65%), Telangana (2.13%), Andhra Pradesh (4.11%) and Kerala (1.96%) with smaller share of funds received from the Centre.

The states have raised the issue of higher tax collection by the Centre through Cess and Surcharge. It must be noted here that the Centre collects nearly 25% of its tax revenue in Cesses and Surcharges, which are not shared with the states. However, the Centre has argued that a large part of the Cess collection comprises GST Compensation Cess, which go entirely to the states.

It is opined that while the problem is not Finance Commission devolution, which allows 41% devolution to states, the problem is states are not getting even the 41% as recommended by the Finance Commission because Centre collects a substantial part of its tax revenue through cess and surcharge, which are not shared with the states. Centre is notional and states are real. But states are only getting 32-33% of the taxes collected by the Centre.

Key points

41%: The percentage of Centre's tax pool transferred to states

25%: Proportion of Cess and Surcharge in Centre's tax collection

45%: Weightage given to Income distance for deciding the devolution proportion to states

15%: Weightage given to states' population

US passes Quad bill

The US House of Representatives has passed the Quad bill which instructs the Biden administration to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer cooperation between the US, Australia, India and Japan.

It directs the State Department to submit to Congress, within 180 days of the bill's enactment, a strategy to increase engagement and cooperation with the Quad, and within 60 days of its enactment, to enter into negotiations with Japan, Australia and India to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer cooperation.

It also would establish a US group, which would have a maximum of 24 members of Congress, to represent the US in the working group. It also would establish guidelines for annual meetings and group leadership. Under the bill, the group would be required to submit an annual report to the congressional foreign affairs committees.

The strategy shall address cooperation on issues including (1) preparing for the next pandemic, (2) co-developing new innovative technologies, and (3) deepening economic engagement and integration.

INSAT 3DS

INSAT-3DS Satellite is a follow-on mission of Third Generation Meteorological Satellite from Geostationary Orbit. GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). It is designed for enhanced meteorological observations and monitoring of land and ocean surfaces for weather forecasting and disaster warning. The satellite will augment the Meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR satellites. Indian Industries have significantly contributed to the making of the Satellite.

Various departments of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) such as the India Meteorology Department (IMD), National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) and various other agencies and institutes will be using the INSAT-3DS Satellite data to provide improved weather forecasts and meteorological services.

The primary objectives of the mission are:

- To monitor Earth's surface, carry out Oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels of meteorological importance.

- To provide the vertical profile of various meteorological parameters of the Atmosphere.
- To provide the Data Collection and Data Dissemination capabilities from the Data Collection Platforms (DCPs).
- To provide Satellite Aided Search and Rescue services.

Satellite salient features

Mission	Meteorological services Data relay and Satellite Aided Search & Rescue services
Payloads	6 channel Imager 19 channel Sounder Data Relay Transponder (DRT) Satellite Aided Search & Rescue transponder (SAS&R)
Orbit	Geostationary orbit
Structure	I-2k platform
Thermal	6 channel Imager Passive and active thermal control system Bi-annual yaw flip to reduce the thermal load on the passive coolers
Power generation	42 V Sunlit regulated single bus Power generation 1505W (Equinox) I-2k Solar panels and Li-Ion 100Ah Battery for eclipse support
Launch vehicle	GSLV with 4 m diameter. Ogive Payload Fairing Standard 937mm diameter. interface

Triple Dip La Nina

“Triple-dip” La Niña events take the name from the seasonal dips that show up in charts of La Niña’s strength. Dips typically occur around December when water reaches its coolest. The Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) chart above is a three-month running mean of sea surface temperature anomalies in a patch of the topical Pacific used for monitoring La Niña (and El Niño) conditions.

This phenomenon, influenced by climate change, impacted the large-scale wind pattern, playing a decisive role in preventing stagnation conditions in north Indian cities and thus improving air quality. In contrast, it led to calmer conditions in peninsular Indian cities, accelerating transboundary pollution and significantly deteriorating air quality.

Much like El Niño, La Niña events affect weather across the globe. Their strongest impacts are on either side of the Pacific Ocean. Floods in northern Australia, Indonesia and southeast Asia are common in La Niña years, as is drought in the American southwest. Meteorologists have linked the current La Niña to a variety of natural disasters, including drought and food security problems in the Horn of Africa, flooding in Australia, and drought in the U.S. Southwest.

Part of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation cycle, La Niña appears when energized easterly trade winds intensify the upwelling of cooler water from the depths of the eastern tropical Pacific, causing a large-scale cooling of the eastern and central Pacific ocean surface near the Equator. These stronger-than-usual trade winds also push the warm equatorial surface waters westward toward Asia and Australia.

The cooling of the ocean's surface layers during La Niña affects the atmosphere by modifying the moisture content across the Pacific. It alters global atmospheric circulation and can cause shifts in the path of mid-latitude jet streams in ways that intensify rainfall in some regions and bring drought to others.

La Niña tends to change in sync with the seasons. Both El Niño and La Niña tend to be at their strongest in December.

7th round discussion FTA – India-EU

India and the European Union (EU) started the seventh round of negotiations in New Delhi concerning the free trade agreement (FTA). These discussions also encompassed talks on an investment protection agreement (IPA) and a pact regarding geographical indications (GIs).

In the previous round, discussions primarily revolved around policy areas concerning goods and government procurement offers. The seventh round is anticipated to include services and investment as well. Additionally, during the sixth round, efforts were concentrated on accelerating work on the text presented by both sides. Some headway was achieved on technical matters during this phase.

To be sure, the proposed India-EU FTA is among the most comprehensive deals that is being negotiated and could accrue tangible market access gain for India in services and labour intensive sectors such as leather, textiles and engineering among others.

The report indicated that India and EU continue to different on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) which is a major pain point for Indian exporters and has resulted in slow export growth during the last few years. TBT largely results from legal requirements that countries

enact to ensure that products are safe, to protect the environment, and to inform consumers, or for reasons of "national security".

Indian tea exports for instance have suffered from stiff maximum residue level (MRL) requirements in the EU. Tea exports to the EU dipped 6 per cent from $176.47 million in FY18 to $166.08 million in FY23. Moreover, India's agriculture exports to the EU have also declined in the last five years to $3.12 billion in FY23 from $3.36 billion in FY18.

Tea exporters have also expressed concern over Indian organic tea being put by the EU in the high-risk category that triggers increased testing and certification requirements. Indian rice exports to EU have also declined after EU in 2017 reduced the MRL limit for a fungicide used in rice cultivation.

In the case of pharma exports, exporters complained that Indian pharmaceutical exports face market access barriers as registration of drugs is taking enormous time in the European Union because of the huge influence the multinational drug companies have. Moreover, in the case of electrical products, the EU imposes standards different from what is globally followed.

Green textiles – Indian response to carbon tax

The textile industry is moving to shed its polluter tag by adopting a 'circular economy' to avoid being snared by future climate change tax regimes such as the European Union's proposed CBAM.

CBAM will tax the ‘embedded carbon’ in imports from select emission intensive sectors—steel, aluminium, cement, hydrogen, electricity and fertilizers. It is expected to be implemented in 2026.

Although textiles isn’t mentioned by CBAM, promoting a circular economy in the sector, one of the biggest polluters, will be a key topic of proposed consultations.

A circular economy approach refers to a mechanism to extend the life of products through reuse and repair and to keep end-of-life material in the economy through recycling.

In the textile industry, much of this is about limiting water use. Textile manufacturing is a water-intensive sector, consuming roughly 1.6 million litres of water in India to produce 8,000 kg/day of fabric. Globally, 4% of all freshwater is used up in making textile products.

The demand for circularity in textiles comes from both the government and corporate groups seeking to address climate change, save natural resources, and reduce carbon emissions without disrupting the supply chain. Apparel production has doubled, but the number of times a garment is worn before being discarded has come down by 36% in the past 15 years. The production of synthetic fibres, mainly made from crude oil, has grown from less than 20% of global fibre production in 2018 to 62% now, as stated in a report prepared by the Centre for Environment Education.

India is the world’s sixth-largest exporter of textiles and apparel. The domestic industry contributes 2.3% to the GDP, 13% to industrial production, and 12% to exports.

India’s exports of worn clothing and rags in 2022-23 amounted to $134.7 million, while imports were $381.71 million.

2026 onwards CBAM will tax ‘embedded carbon’ in imports

The recent WTO summit in Abu Dhabi served as a platform for India to voice its concerns regarding the growing trend of protectionist measures under the guise of environmental protection and climate change mitigation measures. Among the hot topics discussed was the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which drew attention due to its potential impact on global trade. India’s apprehensions were further compounded by announcements from other key players such as the UK and Japan regarding their own carbon pricing initiatives. These developments set the stage for a deeper analysis of the implications of CBAM and its ramifications for Indian industries and policymakers.

The transition period from October 2023 to December 2025, has commenced. Domestic industries exporting to the EU are now obligated to report their embedded emissions in accordance with CBAM guidelines. However, both the Indian industry and government have raised apprehensions about sharing sensitive and confidential data with customers to comply with EU CBAM reporting requirements. Nonetheless, it appears that CBAM is set to become a permanent fixture.

The actual EU carbon levy, scheduled to take effect in January 2026, will apply to six key sectors: cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity, and hydrogen. These sectors collectively represent around 12% of India’s exports to the EU, totaling $8.5 billion.

CBAM is a pivotal component of the EU’s Fit for 55 package, launched in 2021 as part of its green transition programme. The objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% below 1990 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. CBAM imposes a carbon

price on imported products (cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity, and hydrogen) entering EU markets based on their embedded carbon emissions. The aim is to prevent carbon leakage, whereby businesses relocate production to countries with less stringent climate regulations to evade stricter norms. These six sectors under CBAM account for 50% of the emissions within the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) sectors.

Currently, the EU's Emission Trading Scheme operates on a cap-and-trade system, compelling polluters to pay for their greenhouse gas emissions. The revenue generated supports the EU's green transition efforts. However, to protect energy-intensive industries, the EU initially granted certain industries free emission allowances under the ETS to maintain competitiveness against non-EU producers.

From 2026 onwards, these free allowances will be gradually phased out over an eight-year period until 2034. During this transition, importers will also face a carbon price on their emissions, in addition to the EU's free emission allowance. This levy will increase as the free allowances are phased out until 2034, leading to a significant rise in carbon costs for EU industries. Importers will also be subject to CBAM during this period.

Automatic route open in space sector

The Union cabinet has approved the amendment to the foreign direct investment policy for the space sector, allowing up to 100 per cent investment through three categories of liberalised entry routes.

The amended policy will allow up to 100 per cent investment under automatic route for the manufacturing of components, systems and subsystems for satellites, ground segments and user segments.

For manufacturing and operating an entire satellite, up to 74 per cent investment will be allowed under the automatic route. Anything beyond the limit will have to go through a government approval process. Under the current policy, any foreign investment in manufacturing and operating satellites is allowed only with government approval.

Space activities largely encompass the launch vehicle and launch service, the satellite, ground stations that can detect the signals, and user products where the data from satellites is utilised.

The policy also clearly states that this 49 per cent cap is applicable to building of new spaceports in the country. At present, there is only one spaceport, the one operated by ISRO in Sriharikota.

The current changes to the FDI policy approved by the cabinet are in line with the Indian Space Policy of 2023. India aims to capture a larger chunk of the global space market. While India is a major space-faring nation, it accounts for only 2 per cent of the international commercial market.

India’s Ai market

India's AI market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25-35% to $17 billion by 2027, according to a report by Nasscom.

This growth will be fuelled by multiple factors, including increasing enterprise tech spending, India’s growing AI talent base and a significant increase in AI investments, according to the report titled "AI Powered Tech Services: A Roadmap for Future Ready Firms; AI & GenAI's Role in Turbocharging the Industry."

Globally, investments in AI have grown at a compounded annual growth rate of 24% since 2019, with $83 billion invested in 2023. The majority of these investments have been channeled to AI applications in data analytics, GenAI, machine learning algorithms, and platforms.

India is among the top five nations with 14 times growth in individuals skilled with AI in the last seven years and has the second-highest installed talent base, with 420,000 employees working in various AI job functions.

Odeysseus lander

The Odysseus mission was endorsed by NASA to collect scientific data from the moon's surface. The lander, known internally as the Nova-C lander — and fondly to Intuitive employees as "Odie" — is about the size of a phone booth.

It's the first time an American vehicle has been on the surface of the moon since Apollo 17 in 1972. But unlike the Apollo missions, which were entirely operated by NASA, this time the space agency hired the private company to send a lander to the moon.

The United States is the only country to ever put humans on the moon, but its focus shifted away from the lunar surface in the 1970s. In recent years, though, NASA has been planning a return, through its Artemis mission, which right now is scheduled to put boots back on the moon no earlier than September 2026 (several years after the original target date). Meanwhile, the space agency has been working with private companies like Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Horizon on a variety of missions, including through its Commercial Lunar Payload Services initiative. The Odysseus mission was under CLPS auspices.

The launch and landing part of the mission lasted seven days. Odysseus carried several instruments for learning more about the moon and space.

En route to the moon, NASA instruments aboard the craft measured its consumption of cryogenic fuel, and while Odysseus was touching down, another instrument tested the dust the lander kicked up.

Once Odysseus was on the moon, additional technologies were used to evaluate the lunar surface. One, called the Lunar Node 1 Demonstrator, focused on autonomous navigation to show how future landers could traverse the surface. A Laser Retroflector Array conducted range-finding and distance measurements. And a radio wave instrument analyzed the moon's surface radio waves to determine how'd they'd affect the work of humans conducting science there. Also, four cameras captured images of the lander's environment

Surrogacy – latest updates

Following a series of litigation, the Union government has changed the surrogacy rules, permitting the use of donor gamete if the wife or husband suffer from a medical condition that blocks production of egg or sperm.

The use of donor gamete will be allowed once the District Medical Board certifies that one of the partners in the intending couple “suffers from medical condition necessitating use of donor gamete”.

The amendment will change the 2022 surrogacy rules that were challenged last year before the Supreme Court by a woman suffering from Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome - a condition that prevented her from producing eggs.

The new amendment says that surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple.

This, however, means if both the partners have medical problems or are unable to have their own gametes they cannot opt for surrogacy.

India’s surrogacy landscape has undergone significant regulatory changes in recent years

with the aim of safeguarding the interests of intending couples, surrogate mothers, and the children born through surrogacy.

India -key issues at WTO ministerial 13

Members adopted the Abu Dhabi Ministerial Declaration, where they committed to preserve and strengthen the ability of the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, to respond to current trade challenges.

The Ministerial Declaration underlines the centrality of the development dimension in the work of the WTO, recognizing the role that the multilateral trading system can play in contributing towards the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. It also recognized the contribution of women's economic empowerment and women's participation in trade to economic growth and sustainable development.

Members recognised the role and importance of services to the global economy as it generates more than two-thirds of global economic output and accounts for over half of all jobs. They encouraged the relevant WTO bodies to continue their work to review and build on all the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and to build effective solutions in case of future pandemics in an expeditious manner.

On dispute settlement reform, members adopted a Ministerial Decision recognizing the progress made with the view to having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all members by 2024.

Ministers adopted a Ministerial Decision that responds to a 23-year-old mandate to review special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions for developing and least developed countries (LDCs) with a view to making them more precise, effective and operational.

In another first, ministers engaged in conversations on how trade relates to two pressing issues that go to the heart of current political, economic and environmental challenges, namely sustainable development and socioeconomic inclusion.

Earlier in the conference, ministers formally approved the WTO membership terms of Comoros and Timor-Leste, the first new members in almost eight years. Members also agreed on a Ministerial Decision on concrete measures to ease the path to graduation from the category of least-developed countries.

On electronic commerce, ministers adopted a Ministerial Decision instructing the General Council to hold periodic reviews on the E-commerce Work Programme with a view to presenting recommendations for action to the Ministerial Conference. Members also agreed to maintain the current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the 14th Session of the Ministerial Conference (MC14) or 31 March 2026, whichever is earlier.

On agriculture, despite the intense negotiations during MC13, members were not able to find convergence. Divergences remained on public stockholding (PSH) for food security purposes and in respect of timelines, expected outcomes and the scope of the flexibility to be provided to food imports by the most vulnerable countries from export restrictions.

MC13 also saw the entry into force of new disciplines on services domestic regulation, which is expected to lower trade costs by over USD 125 billion worldwide. Supported by 72 WTO members, this joint initiative is designed to facilitate services trade by streamlining and simplifying regulatory procedures.

Ministers adopted a Ministerial Declaration on strengthening regulatory cooperation to reduce technical barriers to trade (TBT). The Declaration affirms that cooperation assists members in meeting cross border and global challenges, and builds confidence between trading partners through mutual understanding and dialogue.

Additionally, ministers representing 123 WTO members issued on 25 February a Joint Ministerial Declaration marking the finalization of the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement and made it available to the public. Participants represent three-quarters of the WTO membership, including close to 90 developing economies and 26 least-developed economies.

Dip in MGNREGA work since pandemic

In the three years since the pandemic, the amount of work in the rural jobs guarantee programme has declined every financial year from 38.9 million person days in 2020-21 to 28 million in the year so far, according to data available with the rural development ministry.

During the same period, the total number of households who got full 100 days of work in a financial year has fallen by a whopping 61%. In 2020-21, a year when the flagship employment scheme was a lifeline for millions of workers, 7.19 million households got 100 days of work, ministry data show. In 2023-24 so far, only 2.75 million households managed to utilise the full quota stipulated under law.

Besides a growing economy that has led to better wage opportunities in urban centres, the low wage rate in the welfare scheme in some states and delay in releasing payments had a dampening effect.

Average daily wage given to a MGNREGA worker was ₹219, which was lower than average minimum non-agricultural wages for both female and male workers, an analysis of data till October 2022 by the Accountability Initiative of the think tank Centre for Policy Research showed. A female worker got ₹248 daily, while a male worker received ₹344 during the same period.

Farmers protest across Europe

Farmers are protesting across the European Union, saying they are facing rising costs and taxes, red tape, excessive environmental rules and competition from cheap food imports.

Demonstrations have been taking place for weeks in countries that include France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Italy and Greece.

Demonstrations in eastern Europe have focused on what farmers say is unfair competition from large amounts of imports from Ukraine, for which the EU has waived quotas and duties since Russia's invasion.

Polish farmers have been blocking traffic at the border with Ukraine, which Kyiv says is affecting its defense capability and helping Russia's aims.

Meanwhile, Czech farmers have driven their tractors into downtown Prague, disrupting traffic outside the farm ministry.

The farmers resent the imports because they say they put pressure on European prices while not meeting environmental standards imposed on EU farmers.

Renewed negotiations to conclude a trade deal between the EU and South American bloc Mercosur have also fanned discontent about unfair competition in sugar, grain and meat.

Farmers take issue with excessive regulation, mainly at EU level. Center stage are new EU subsidy rules, such as a requirement to leave 4% of farmland fallow, which means not using it for a period of time.

They also denounce bureaucracy, which French farmers say their government compounds by overcomplicating implementation.

In Spain, farmers have complained of "suffocating bureaucracy" drawn up in Brussels that erodes the profitability of crops.

In Greece, farmers demand higher subsidies and faster compensation for crop damage and livestock lost in 2023 floods.

In Germany and France, the EU's biggest agricultural producers, farmers have railed against plans to end subsidies or tax breaks on agricultural diesel. Greek farmers want a tax on diesel to be reduced.

In France, many producers say a government drive to bring down food inflation has left them unable to cover high costs for energy, fertilizer and transport.

Public stock holding and food security.

The Bali decision (2013 Bali Ministerial Conference) on stockholding arises because some developing countries fear they could breach the limits they have agreed on trade-distorting domestic support — ie, support that influences prices and quantities. The stockholding programmes are considered to distort trade when they involve purchases from farmers at prices fixed by the governments, known as “supported” or “administered” prices. Normally

the support is within the agreed limits (see technical note) but some countries fear this might not always be the case. (Purchases at market prices are not counted as supported.)The concern is only on the purchasing side because there are no limits on supplying cheap or free food specifically to the poor or malnourished.

The “peace clause” was the approach adopted in Bali, but with conditions added to deal with fears that stockholding programmes involving purchases at supported prices could affect other countries. Governments seeking the shelter of the peace clause have to avoid distorting trade (ie, affecting prices and volumes on world markets) or impacting other countries’ food security, and to provide information to show they are meeting those conditions.

A permanent solution at WTO will give India and a coalition of developing countries the flexibility to give out higher farm support. As per WTO norms, agri subsidy should not exceed 10 per cent of the value of agricultural production for developing countries. But developing nations receive certain protections.

India has maintained that it must protect the interest of poor and vulnerable farmers, besides taking care of the food security needs of a large section of the population. The government provides 5-kg of free food grains per month to around 80 crore poor people free ration to about 80 crore people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

India’s subsidy on rice had exceeded the threshold on multiple occasions forcing it to invoke the ‘peace clause’ agreed during the Bali ministerial in 2013 which allows developing countries to breach the 10 per cent ceiling without invoking legal action by members.

Gaganyaan

Gaganyaan project envisages demonstration of human spaceflight capability by launching crew of 3 members to an orbit of 400 km for a 3 days mission and bring them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters.

The project is accomplished through an optimal strategy by considering inhouse expertise, experience of Indian industry, intellectual capabilities of Indian academia & research institutions along with cutting edge technologies available with international agencies. The pre-requisites for Gaganyaan mission include development of many critical technologies including human rated launch vehicle for carrying crew safely to space, Life Support System to provide an earth like environment to crew in space, crew emergency escape provision and evolving crew management aspects for training, recovery and rehabilitation of crew.

Various precursor missions are planned for demonstrating the Technology Preparedness Levels before carrying out the actual Human Space Flight mission. These demonstrator missions include Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT), Pad Abort Test (PAT) and Test Vehicle (TV) flights. Safety and reliability of all systems will be proven in unmanned missions preceding manned mission.

LVM3 rocket - The well proven and reliable heavy lift launcher of ISRO, is identified as the launch vehicle for Gaganyaan mission. It consists of solid stage, liquid stage and cryogenic stage. All systems in LVM3 launch vehicle are re-configured to meet human rating

requirements and christened Human Rated LVM3. HLVM3 will be capable of launching the Orbital Module to an intended Low Earth Orbit of 400 km.

HLVM3 consists of Crew Escape System (CES) powered by a set of quick acting, high burn rate solid motors which ensures that Crew Module along with crew is taken to a safe distance in case of any emergency either at launch pad or during ascent phase.

Orbital Module (OM) that will be Orbiting Earth comprises of Crew Module (CM) and Service Module (SM). OM is equipped with state-of-the-art avionics systems with adequate redundancy considering human safety.

CM is the habitable space with Earth like environment in space for the crew. It is of double walled construction consisting of pressurized metallic Inner Structure and unpressurised External Structure with Thermal Protection System (TPS). It houses the crew interfaces, human centric products, life support system, avionics and deceleration systems. It is also designed for re-entry to ensure safety of the crew during descent till touchdown.

SM will be used for providing necessary support to CM while in orbit. It is an unpressurized structure containing thermal system, propulsion system, power systems, avionics systems and deployment mechanisms.