THE CAVALIER

SSB Weekly

No. 14

Week of 9 – 15 November 2026 · Current affairs for your SSB board

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THE WEEK

Five stories the board may ask about

1 DEFENCE · AIR FORCE

"Who will be surprised?" The Air Force is told to prepare

At the **Air Force Commanders' Conference** (New Delhi, 12–13 Nov), Rajnath Singh asked the forces to master **surprise**, both striking unexpectedly and never being caught off guard. He asked for dedicated doctrines for **electronic, cyber and space warfare**, urged preparation against kamikaze and surveillance drones, and said victory will depend not merely on the number of aircraft. He also launched in-house AI tools built by the IAF's **UDAAN** unit.

WHY IT MATTERS

Recent wars show that drones, jamming and air defence can blunt costly aircraft. A smaller force that sees and decides faster can beat a bigger, slower one.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Quality and speed matter, but numbers still count. India needs both better technology and enough squadrons.

IO MAY ASK

If victory depends "not merely on the number of aircraft", can a force with fewer aircraft still deter a larger rival?

Source: Cavalier daily, 12 Nov (PIB, MoD)

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2 DEFENCE · COASTAL SECURITY

Sea Vigil-26 tests India's whole coastline at once

The Navy leads the fifth pan-India coastal defence exercise, **Sea Vigil-26** (11–19 Nov), covering the entire coastline and **EEZ** and every coastal State and UT, with fishing communities. Phase 1 (11–17 Nov) is a readiness audit; Phase 2 (18–19 Nov) is at sea. It began after the **26/11 Mumbai attack of 2008**, in which terrorists came by sea. The first edition was in January 2019.

WHY IT MATTERS

Three layers guard the coast: Navy, Coast Guard and the States' marine police. Only a national drill shows whether they work as one when something goes wrong.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Drills are worth it if the audit findings are fixed. Fishermen are the best eyes on the water, so treat them as partners.

IO MAY ASK

Terrorists reached Mumbai in 2008 by a small boat. How would you secure 7,500 km of coast with limited resources?

Source: PIB, MoD, 11 Nov

3 NEIGHBOURHOOD · NEPAL

A weekly train to link Sita's Janakpur and Ram's Ayodhya

Indian Railways has approved a **weekly train** between **Janakpur Dham** (Nepal) and **Ayodhya Cantt.**, about 604 km, via Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It leaves Janakpur on Saturdays and Ayodhya on Mondays. The Nepal stretch is the Indian-funded **Jaynagar–Kurtha broad-gauge line**, opened in 2022. The start date, fare and train number have not been announced.

WHY IT MATTERS

Pilgrimage travel is a low-friction form of diplomacy. It also builds Indian influence in Nepal by rail, a field where other powers compete.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

A good people-to-people gesture. Its worth depends on easy border checks and on Nepal gaining too, not only India.

IO MAY ASK

Does a train to Nepal make India a better neighbour, or just a bigger one?

Source: Cavalier daily, 14 Nov (Railways)

4 NATIONAL · HEALTH

Families now pay 43 paise of each health rupee, down from 64

The **National Health Accounts 2023–24** (15 Nov) show government health spending up from ₹1,29,778 cr (2013–14) to **₹4,14,196 cr**. **Out-of-pocket spending** fell from 64.2% to **42.7%** of total health spending. It dipped to 39.4% in the Covid year 2021–22 and then rose again. Private insurance grew from 3.4% to 10.2%.

WHY IT MATTERS

Out-of-pocket costs are what push families into debt. The fall is real but not a straight line, and the policy goal of 2.5% of GDP on public health is still not met.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Progress, but 42.7% is still high. Cheap primary care and insurance must reach the poorest, not only those who already use hospitals.

IO MAY ASK

If a family sells land to pay for an operation, who has failed: the family, the market or the State?

Source: Cavalier daily, 15 Nov (PIB, Health)

5 SCIENCE · SPACE & DEFENCE

Backing Indian satellites that listen for enemy radar

On 12 Nov the Technology Development Board signed with Bengaluru's **Astrome Technologies** to support a space-based, AI-enabled **ELINT** constellation. It will give ₹64.05 cr toward a ₹128.11 cr project, from the **RDI Fund**. The plan uses 50 kg-class

microsatellites in low Earth orbit, with AI software on the ground. No launch date or satellite count is given.

WHY IT MATTERS

ELINT reads radar signals, which reveal what a radar is and where it sits. Satellites can watch borders and seas without anyone's permission to overfly.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Welcome, since private firms are entering defence space. It is a development project, so judge it on delivery, not the announcement.

IO MAY ASK

Should a private company, not a government agency, hold India's space-based intelligence capability?

Source: Cavalier daily, 12 Nov (DST, TDB)

QUICK-FIRE

Know these cold

Mitra Shakti (12th)	India–Sri Lanka Army · Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka · 13–26 Nov · 170 personnel, mainly Rajputana Rifles · counter-terrorism in a semi-urban setting
Naseem Al Bahr (15th)	Indian Navy–Royal Navy of Oman · INS Surat with Al-Mu'azzar · boarding (VBSS) and cross-deck drills · MoD, 11 Nov
IMNEX-26 (8th)	India–Myanmar naval exercise under way at Visakhapatnam, as reported on 11 Nov
COAS in Czech Republic	Gen Dhiraj Seth · 16–19 Nov · Prague, Brno, NATO JCBRN Defence Centre of Excellence · defence industry meetings

Belgian Navy chief	RAdm Tanguy Botman in Delhi on 14 Nov · talks with Adm Krishna Swaminathan · maritime security and training
India–Egypt trade	Piyush Goyal in Cairo 15–16 Nov · 7th Joint Trade Committee, now at ministerial level · trade Apr–Sep 2026: USD 5.04 billion, up 64%
Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas	15 Nov · 151st birth anniversary of Birsa Munda · projects worth about ₹3,000 cr · PM joined the Gadchiroli event by video
Adi Vaani	AI translation of tribal languages · nine languages as of 15 Oct · built by an IIT Delhi-led consortium · about 13.9 lakh sentences collected

TALKING POINT

See early, secure the edge. The Air Force is told to be neither surprised nor caught off guard, Sea Vigil tests every layer of the coast at once, and a satellite project aims to listen for radar from space. Strength now rests on **awareness** as much as on numbers.

PRACTICE

Speak it

LECTURETTE OF THE WEEK

India's Coastal Security: From 26/11 to Sea Vigil

Why now: This week the Navy began Sea Vigil-26, a nine-day drill across the whole coastline, India and Oman held Naseem Al Bahr, and India–Myanmar naval exercise IMNEX-26 was under way at Visakhapatnam.

OPEN · 30S

“Ten men came by sea and held a city hostage.” Today I will speak on India's coastal security.

POINT 1 · 40S

Why it matters. The 26/11 attack of 2008 came by sea, and India has a long coastline and a vast EEZ. After it, the coastal security set-up was reorganised, and Sea Vigil began in 2019 to test it.

POINT 2 · 40S

Who guards what. The Navy has overall responsibility, the Coast Guard watches territorial waters, and the States' marine police guard the shallows and shore. Customs, ports and fishing communities add eyes, and a radar network ties them together.

POINT 3 · 40S

What is still needed. Regular audits with fixes, trained coastal police, and trust with fishermen, who are first to notice a strange boat. Partners help too: joint drills with Oman and Myanmar.

CLOSE · 30S

A coast cannot be guarded by one force alone. Safety there comes from many layers and one shared picture.

Use the three-layer line (Navy, Coast Guard, marine police) as your spine, and name 26/11 once only. Practise aloud against a 3-minute timer.

How to give a lecturette → 110 lecturette topics →

GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE WEEK

“The government should fund health insurance rather than build more hospitals to cut families' out-of-pocket costs”

The **National Health Accounts 2023–24** (15 Nov) show out-of-pocket spending at 42.7% of total health spending, down from 64.2% in 2013–14. Government spending reached ₹4,14,196 cr, and private health insurance rose to 10.2% of the total.

FOR

- Insurance reaches the patient quickly, without waiting for buildings to be built.
- Families can choose the nearest good hospital, public or private.
- It shields households from sudden big bills that push them into debt.
- Insurance share has risen alongside the fall in out-of-pocket costs.

AGAINST

- Insurance is useless where there are no hospitals or doctors.
- Costs and claims can balloon, and private hospitals may overcharge.
- Primary care is cheaper and prevents illness before it needs insurance.
- Public spending is still short of the 2.5% of GDP target set in 2017.

HOW TO CONCLUDE

Do both. Spend on primary care so that people fall ill less often, and on insurance so that a serious illness does not wreck a family.

GD guide for the SSB →

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