Current Affairs - 30 August 2026

FSSAI'S FOOD REGULATION PUSH: CRACKING DOWN ON MISLEADING CLAIMS AND MANDATING WARNING LABELS

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is tightening its regulatory grip on how packaged foods are marketed and labelled.

Two parallel developments illustrate this shift: a crackdown on **misleading health and nutrient claims** — exemplified by Mondelez India's withdrawal of such claims around Bournvita — and a Supreme Court-prompted proposal to introduce **red hexagonal warning labels** on unhealthy packaged snacks.

The Scale of the Crackdown

- FSSAI has issued more than 150 notices to food companies in recent months over misleading advertisements, false claims, and labelling non-compliance.
- The list includes major packaged-food and beverage companies — Nestlé India, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola India, Abbott India, Red Bull India, Danone India, Mondelez India, Ferrero India, and Kenvue.

The Problem with "100%" and Similar Terms

- A related concern involves absolute-sounding terms like "100%." In May 2025, FSSAI advised food businesses to stop using such language on labels and promotional material, reasoning that it could convey a "false sense of absolute purity or superiority."
- Words like "pure," "natural," "healthy," and "immunity-boosting" function as powerful marketing devices that can influence purchases even before consumers examine nutrition panels.

Proposed Warning Labels for Unhealthy Snacks

- Prompted by the Supreme Court, FSSAI has proposed introducing a **red hexagonal front-of-pack warning label** for packaged foods high in salt, added sugar, or added fat.
- The goal is to provide a "simple, prominent and easily comprehensible warning" to consumers.

- **Design and Format**
  - While no formal notification or implementation timeline exists yet, FSSAI's affidavit specifies:
    - The label will appear in English. Font size will be one point larger than the nutritional information table at the back of the pack.
    - Declarations will include "high fat," "high sugar," "high salt," or "highly sweetened beverage," as applicable.
- **Phased Implementation**
  - Implementation will occur in two phases:
    - **Phase I**: Only products high in at least two of the specified ingredients will require the warning label
    - **Phase II**: Coverage will extend to products high in even a single ingredient
  - Single-ingredient products and foods inherently rich in fat, sugar, or salt — such as ghee, edible oil, sugar, jaggery, and honey — will be exempted, subject to other labelling regulations.

Expert Concerns

- **The two-nutrient threshold**: Many unhealthy products are high in just one nutrient and would escape the Phase I requirement, potentially rendering the label ineffective.
- **No Phase II timeline**: FSSAI has not specified when the stricter single-nutrient threshold will apply.
- **The "added" ambiguity**: Warnings apply only to added sugar or added fat, which is difficult to estimate — and naturally high sugar levels can be equally harmful.
- **Accessibility gaps**: The proposed font size is too small, and the warning should also be available in Hindi.

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PM e-BUS SEWA SCHEME

The Centre's PM e-Bus Sewa scheme is gathering pace, with more than 500 electric buses now operational across 23 cities and daily ridership crossing one lakh.

- It aims to **strengthen the urban transport system** by deployment of **air-conditioned electric buses to urban cities.**
- **Eligible Cities:** Cities have a population **ranging 3-40 lakh and state capitals** including **North Eastern and Hilly Regions** below three lakh population as per 2011 census are eligible for the scheme.
- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).**
- **Features:**
    - It focuses on **cities with limited public transport capacity** and largely covers smaller cities including those where organised city bus services **have either been absent or inadequate.**
    - Under this scheme, city bus operations will be done on a **Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.**
    - This scheme will support bus **operations for 10 years.**
    - States/Cities shall be responsible for running the bus services and making payments to the bus operators.
    - The Central Government will support these bus operations by providing subsidies to the extent specified in the proposed scheme.
    - It overs development of **depots, charging infrastructure, green mobility initiatives** including accessible bus stops, last mile connectivity **Intelligent Transit Management System** (ITMS) and **National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)-based ticketing.**

NATIONAL HEALTH CLAIMS EXCHANGE

- It is developed under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** (ABDM).
- It is developed by the **National Health Authority** (NHA) in consultation with **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).**
- It aims to **streamline and standardize health insurance claim** processing, enhancing efficiency in the insurance industry and improving the patient experience.
- **Purpose:** To streamline and standardize the processing of health insurance claims across the country, leveraging the **Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources** (FHIR) standards to ensure interoperability across diverse systems.
- **Features of NHCX:**
  - **Checking Coverage Eligibility:** Providers can verify if a treatment is covered by insurance to avoid unexpected costs.
  - **Pre-Auth Request Submission:** Hospitals can request approval from insurers before starting treatment.
  - **Predetermination Request Submission:** Providers can ask for an estimate of benefits for a treatment before it begins.
  - **Claim Submission:** Hospitals submit claims in a standard format for easier processing by insurers.
  - **Payment Status:** Hospitals can check the payment status of submitted claims, ensuring everyone stays informed.
  - **Communication Request:** Providers can send questions or requests for more information through NHCX.
  - **Reprocess Request:** If a claim has issues, providers can request a review for a solution.

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PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA

- It was **launched in 2016** to bring the maximum number of farmers **under crop insurance coverage.**
- It **covers risks from pre-sowing**, including prevented or failed sowing, widespread mid-season adversity, localized calamities caused by hailstorms, inundation, landslide, etc.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Agriculture, Cooperation, and Farmers' Welfare, **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
- **Premiums**
  - Farmers pay a maximum premium **of 2% for Kharif and 1.5% for Rabi foodgrain** and oilseed crops. For **commercial and horticultural crops**, the **maximum premium is 5%.**
  - The **Central & State Governments subsidizes** the remaining premium in **50:50 proportion.** For the farmers in North-Eastern & Himalayan States/UTs, the contribution of Central & State Govt. **subsidy is in a 90:10 proportion.**
- **Eligibility for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana**
  - All farmers, **including sharecroppers and tenant farmers**, growing the notified crops in the notified areas are eligible for coverage.
  - **Compulsory Component:** All farmers availing Seasonal Agricultural Operations (SAO) loans from Financial Institutions (i.e. loanee farmers) for the notified crops would be covered compulsorily.
  - Farmers must have an insurable interest in the insured crops.
  - Farmers must possess a **valid and authenticated land ownership certificate** or a valid land tenure agreement.
  - **Farmers must not have received** compensation for the **same crop loss** from any other medium or source.

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DUNG BEETLE

A report published in Ecology and Evolution said that dung beetles are vulnerable to a previously unforeseen risk like dogs.

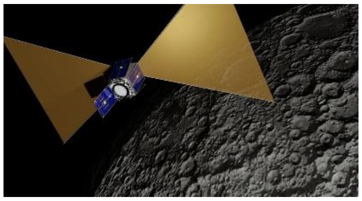
- It scientifically known as the **Scarabaeidae family** within the Animal Kingdom's order
- **Appearance:**
  - They are robust, compact **insects known for their hard,** protective exoskeletons and strong, clawed legs adapted for digging and rolling dung.
  - They vary in color, with some species displaying dull, black or brown hues, while others exhibit metallic shades of blue, green, or copper.
- **Habitat:** They live in habitats that range from desert to forest.
- **Distribution:** Dung beetles are found **worldwide, on every continent except Antarctica.**
- **Diet:** They feed on **the feces of large herbivores** during both their larval and adult stages.

Working: Dung beetles **span three main lifestyles:** rollers (ball-makers), tunnelers (bury beneath), and dwellers (live in the pat).

- Several dung **beetles navigate using celestial cues**; some use the Milky Way as an orientation reference during straight-line rolling.
- Many scarabs have **fan-like (lamellate) antennae** that open to sample odors-useful for locating fresh dung fast.

Ecological Role: They play major ecological roles **in nutrient cycling, soil aeration**, seed dispersal, and parasite/flies suppression.

COSMOCUBE MISSION



Recently, an international team of astronomers announced that CosmoCube mission will study faint radio signals from the early universe.

- It is a proposed **satellite that** will study the universe's earliest stages by listening **for faint radio signals from more than 13.5 billion years ago.**
- It is being developed by a team of scientists led by the **University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.**
- **Working:**
  - It would **operate near the Moon** and use the lunar far side as a natural shield against radio interference from Earth.
  - **Observation Period:** It will **spend around 40 minutes** on the far side during every two-hour orbit.
  - **Time Period:** Over a proposed **two-year mission**, the satellite could **collect roughly 1,000 hours of data** at extremely low radio frequencies.
  - The satellite would use **a lightweight radio antenna** to detect the early-universe signal.
  - It would also repeatedly determine its own position using onboard information and observations of its surroundings.

Significance:

- This mission concept could help scientists study the poorly understood period between the **Big Bang and the formation of the first stars.**
- The measurements could offer scientists a **clearer picture of the cosmic dark age** and the transition towards the formation of the first stars and galaxies.

IBC AND THE "HAIRCUT" DEBATE - RECOVERY, RESOLUTION AND CREDITOR RIGHTS

- A recent National Company Law Tribunal (**NCLT**) order concerning Zee Group founder Subhash Chandra has revived concerns over deep haircuts under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (**IBC**), **2016**, as well as the integrity of the creditor-voting process.
- The NCLT approved a repayment plan offering only ₹6.25 crore against admitted claims of about ₹22,006.57 crore, apart from ₹25 lakh towards process costs.
- The case has raised **questions** about **asset valuation**, admission of claims, related-party creditors, voting rights and the balance between resolution and recovery.

The "Haircut" Problem:

- Haircut is **not defined** in the IBC. In banking terminology, it broadly denotes the reduction in the value recognised against a lender's claim or collateral.
- MCA data show that during FY2021-22 to FY2025-26, 1,077 cases were resolved under IBC, with creditors recovering around ₹2.47 lakh crore—an average recovery of roughly 29% of admitted claims.
- **The 20% recovery in FY26**, the lowest in the five-year period, has intensified the debate over whether IBC is adequately protecting creditors.

Resolution vs Recovery - Government's Position:

- The government maintains that "**resolution, not recovery**" is the primary objective of the IBC.
- A creditor's admitted claim may include accumulated interest on NPAs; loans that have already substantially lost economic value; guarantees relating to such loans; and liabilities that do not correspond to currently recoverable assets.
- The government also argues that IBC has **improved credit discipline** and contributed to the decline in banks' Gross NPAs, while post-resolution equity value may not be captured fully in conventional recovery calculations.

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Subhash Chandra Case - Why Is It Controversial?

- The controversy **goes beyond** the size of the haircut. Of 23 creditors participating in voting, the repayment plan received 80.814% of the votes, while banks opposing it collectively held only 19.186%.
- Banks alleged that at least five entities supporting the plan were associate/related parties of Chandra and therefore their votes should not have been counted.
- Chandra's office **rejected the allegation**, arguing that certain entities were connected to Jawahar Goel and that their business interests had been separated from Chandra's through a family business restructuring in 2008-09.

Way Forward: The case highlights the need to strengthen the IBC ecosystem through -

- **Transparent** and standardised valuation methodologies across sectors.
- Greater emphasis on going-concern/enterprise value where businesses remain viable.
- **Stronger scrutiny** of related-party and associate-party claims.
- Robust documentary verification before admitting claims.
- Greater accountability of Resolution Professionals and valuers.
- **Safeguards** against artificial or collusive liabilities.
- Faster resolution to prevent further erosion of stressed assets.
- **Better monitoring** of creditor voting to preserve the integrity of the CoC process.

Conclusion:

- The central issue is not simply whether a particular haircut is “high”.
- The real question is whether the IBC process maximises the economic value of a distressed enterprise while ensuring fair treatment of creditors and preventing manipulation of claims and voting rights.
- A credible insolvency regime must therefore **balance resolution, value maximisation**, recovery, transparency and credit discipline.
