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Olive Greens Institute

TILL 1 SEPTEMBER 2026

PREFACE

This is our special edition of Current Affairs Magazine for various Central & State level Competitive Examinations, covering content from the month of August 2026.

The Magazine is divided into three sections:

Section 1: Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short

The first section is dedicated to Topic Wise Current Affairs with a short description to provide information about all major happenings this month.

Section 2: Practice Questions with Answers

The Second Section contains 150 Multiple Choice Questions based on daily current affairs.

Section 3: Detailed Analysis of important Event

The Third Section covers some major happenings in this month along with analysis. The content has been covered from various online & offline sources including reputed newspapers like The Hindu, Indian Express etc. All the news topics have been explained keeping in mind their underlying issues. Every issue has been covered comprehensively. Some of the information provided may not be directly relevant for the examination. As the content is very wide, we have only covered a limited set of issues. You can utilize it smartly along with Daily Study of News Papers as well as other sources.



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Topic Wise Current Affairs

Section 2

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SECTION 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short



1: Important Days



World Lung Cancer Day : 01 August :-

World Lung Cancer Day is observed every year on 1 August to raise awareness about lung cancer, encourage early diagnosis, promote timely treatment, and reduce the stigma associated with the disease. The observance was first established in 2012 through a joint initiative of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC), and the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST). The theme for World Lung Cancer Day 2026 is "Together Through Lung Cancer."



World Anglo Indian Day : 02 August :-

World Anglo-Indian Day is observed every year on 2 August to celebrate the history, culture, heritage, and contributions of the Anglo-Indian community across the world. The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Frank Anthony (2 August 1908), one of the most influential Anglo-Indian leaders in independent India. Frank Anthony served as the long-time President of the All India Anglo-Indian Association and was nominated to the Indian Parliament, where he played a pivotal role in safeguarding the rights and educational interests of the Anglo-Indian community.



Hiroshima Day : 06 August :-

Hiroshima Day is observed every year on 6 August to commemorate the atomic bombing of the Japanese city of Hiroshima by the United States during the Second World War. On 6 August 1945, at 8:15 a.m. (local time), the U.S. B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped the world's first wartime atomic bomb, named "Little Boy," over Hiroshima. The explosion instantly devastated the city, killing an estimated 70,000–80,000 people immediately. By the end of 1945, the death toll had risen to around 140,000 due to severe burns, radiation sickness, and injuries. In 1949, the Japanese government designated Hiroshima as the City of Peace, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was established near the blast's epicentre. It serves as a global reminder of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.



National Handloom Day (India) : 07 August :-

National Handloom Day is observed every year on 7 August in India to celebrate the country's rich handloom heritage and recognize the invaluable contribution of handloom weavers to the nation's economy and cultural

identity. The Government of India declared the observance in 2015, with the first National Handloom Day celebrated on 7 August 2015. The date was chosen to commemorate the Swadeshi Movement, which was launched on 7 August 1905 at the Town Hall in Kolkata. The movement encouraged Indians to boycott foreign goods and promote indigenous products, with handwoven textiles becoming a powerful symbol of self-reliance and the struggle for independence.



Quit India Movement Day : 08 August :-

Quit India Movement Day is observed every year on 8 August to commemorate the launch of the Quit India Movement (Bharat Chhodo Andolan) in 1942, one of the most decisive phases of India's freedom struggle against British colonial rule. The movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi during the All India Congress Committee session at Gowalia Tank Maidan (now August Kranti Maidan), Bombay (Mumbai). Although it was suppressed by the British, the movement significantly weakened colonial authority and strengthened the demand for complete independence, paving the way for India's freedom in 1947.



International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples : 09 August :-

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed every year on 9 August to recognize the

rights, cultures, traditions, and contributions of Indigenous communities across the world. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the observance in 1994, selecting 9 August to commemorate the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in 1982. The day highlights the need to protect Indigenous peoples' languages, traditional knowledge, land rights, and cultural heritage while addressing challenges such as discrimination, displacement, poverty, and climate change. The theme for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2026 is "Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being."



World Lion Day : 10 August :-

World Lion Day is observed annually on 10 August to raise awareness about the conservation of lions and the threats confronting their survival. The first World Lion Day was held in 2013, with the initiative associated with conservationists Dereck and Beverly Joubert and their efforts to protect big cats. Lions are important apex predators that help maintain ecological balance by regulating prey populations. However, habitat loss, declining prey, human-wildlife conflict, poaching and other pressures have significantly reduced their range and numbers.



World Biofuel Day : 10 August :-

World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10 August to create awareness about biofuels and promote renewable alternatives to conventional fossil fuels. The date commemorates an important experiment by Sir Rudolf Diesel, who demonstrated the use of peanut oil in a diesel engine on 10 August 1893, showing the potential of vegetable oils as an energy source. In India, the day has become particularly relevant to policies promoting ethanol, biodiesel, compressed biogas and other renewable fuels.



World Elephant Day : 12 August :-

World Elephant Day is observed annually on 12 August to raise global awareness about the conservation and protection of African and Asian elephants. The day was officially launched on 12 August 2012 by Canadian filmmaker and conservationist Patricia Sims and the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation of Thailand, an initiative associated with HM Queen Sirikit of Thailand. The observance draws attention to major threats faced by elephants, including habitat loss, poaching, illegal ivory trade, human-elephant conflict and the mistreatment of elephants in captivity. Its importance extends beyond protecting a single species because elephants play an important ecological role in maintaining forests and other habitats.



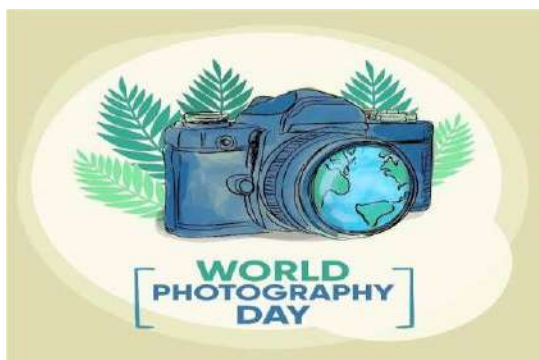
World Organ Donation Day : 13 August :-

World Organ Donation Day is observed every year on 13 August to spread awareness about organ and tissue donation and encourage people to consider becoming donors. The day also honours donors and their families whose decisions can give others a second chance at life. The observance focuses particularly on correcting myths and misconceptions surrounding donation and transplantation. The history of organ transplantation is closely linked with advances in modern medicine. One of the earliest successful human organ/tissue transplants was a corneal transplant performed by Austrian ophthalmologist Eduard Zirm in 1905.



Independence Day (India) : 15 August :-

India will celebrate its 80th Independence Day on 15 August 2026, marking 79 years since the country became independent from British rule in 1947. The day commemorates the coming into effect of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, which transferred sovereignty to India and brought nearly two centuries of British colonial rule to an end. The significance of Independence Day goes beyond flag-hoisting and patriotic celebrations. It is a reminder of the sacrifices made during the freedom movement and of the responsibilities associated with preserving democracy, constitutional values and national unity. The official themes for India's 80th Independence Day in 2026 are "Yuva Shakti for Viksit Bharat@2047" and "150 Years of Vande Mataram".



World Photography Day : 19 August :-

World Photography Day is observed every year on 19 August to celebrate the art, science, history and social impact of photography. The date has historical significance because on 19 August 1839, the French government publicly announced the daguerreotype photographic process, developed by French artist and photographer Louis Daguerre. The process became one of the foundations of modern photography. The observance also gained international momentum through the efforts of Indian photographer O. P. Sharma, who promoted 19 August as Photography Day and organised an early observance in 1991. The World Photography Day 2026 theme is "HOME".



World Humanitarian Day : 19 August :-

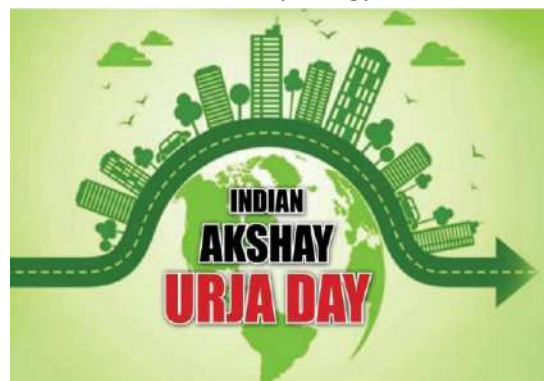
World Humanitarian Day is observed annually on 19 August to honour humanitarian workers and recognise the risks they take while assisting people affected by wars, natural disasters, displacement and other crises. The date commemorates the 19 August 2003 bombing of the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, in which 22 humanitarian workers were killed, including UN Special Representative for Iraq Sérgio Vieira de Mello. The United Nations General Assembly officially designated

World Humanitarian Day in 2008, with the first observance held in 2009.



World Mosquito Day : 20 August :-

World Mosquito Day is observed every year on 20 August to raise awareness about mosquitoes, mosquito-borne diseases and the importance of prevention and disease control. The day commemorates the landmark discovery made by Sir Ronald Ross in 1897 in Secunderabad, India. Ross demonstrated that the female Anopheles mosquito transmits the malaria parasite, establishing the crucial connection between mosquitoes and malaria transmission. His research laid the foundation for modern malaria-control strategies and earned him the 1902 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.



Indian Akshay Urja Day : 20 August :-

Indian Akshay Urja Day, also known as Rajiv Gandhi Akshay Urja Diwas or Renewable Energy Day, is observed annually on 20 August to promote awareness about renewable and clean sources of energy in India. The Government of India initiated the observance in 2004 through the Ministry responsible for renewable energy, choosing 20 August because it is the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was associated

with the promotion of science, technology and modernisation.



World Senior Citizen Day : 21 August :-

World Senior Citizen Day is observed every year on August 21 to recognise the contributions, experience and wisdom of older people and to draw attention to the challenges they face. Its origins are linked to U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who officially proclaimed August 21 as National Senior Citizens Day in 1988. The idea subsequently gained wider international relevance, although the United Nations' official International Day of Older Persons is observed on October 1, established by the UN General Assembly in 1990. The day highlights issues such as healthcare, social security, financial independence, dignity, loneliness and protection from elder abuse.



World Entrepreneurs' Day : 21 August :-

World Entrepreneurs' Day is observed annually on August 21 to celebrate entrepreneurs, innovators and people who create businesses and employment opportunities by turning ideas into viable ventures. The observance focuses on encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation, business leadership and the development of supportive ecosystems for start-ups. It is particularly relevant in an era when entrepreneurship is increasingly

connected with technological innovation, employment generation, economic diversification and solutions to social problems. Although the precise institutional origin of the day is not as clearly documented as some UN-designated international observances, it has gained recognition through entrepreneurship networks, educational institutions and business communities.



National Space Day (India) : 23 August :-

National Space Day is observed in India every year on 23 August to commemorate the historic success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which achieved a soft landing on the Moon on 23 August 2023. India became the first country to land successfully in the Moon's southern high-latitude region, with the Vikram lander and Pragyan rover conducting scientific experiments on the lunar surface. The Government of India declared 23 August as National Space Day to celebrate the achievements of Indian space science and inspire students and young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The theme for India's National Space Day 2026 is "Towards Viksit Bharat: Innovating, Collaborating and Aspiring to Global Space Leadership."



International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition : 23 August :-

The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is observed annually on 23 August under the leadership of UNESCO. The date commemorates the uprising that began on the night of 22–23 August 1791 in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti, where enslaved people rose against the system of slavery. This revolt eventually contributed to the Haitian Revolution and Haiti's independence in 1804, making it an important symbol of the struggle for freedom, human dignity and equality. UNESCO established the International Day in 1997, and it was first commemorated in Haiti in 1998 and on Gorée Island in Senegal in 1999. The theme for the UNESCO observance of the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is 'Justice in Action: Shaping Future Narratives Joy as an act of resistance'.



World Lake Day : 27 August :-

World Lake Day is observed annually on 27 August to highlight the ecological, economic and social importance of lakes and to promote their conservation, restoration and sustainable management. The United Nations General Assembly formally designated 27 August as World Lake Day through Resolution A/RES/79/142, adopted without a vote on 12 December 2024. The date was selected to commemorate the first World Lake Conference, held in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, in 1984,

around Lake Biwa. The first official observance took place in 2025, making 2026 the second World Lake Day.



World Sanskrit Day 2026 : 28 August :-

World Sanskrit Day 2026 will be observed on Friday, 28 August 2026, coinciding with Shravana Purnima, the full-moon day of the Hindu month of Shravana. The date changes every year because the observance follows the traditional lunar calendar. Sanskrit Day, also known as Vishva-Samskrita-Divas, is dedicated to celebrating, preserving and promoting Sanskrit, one of India's major classical languages. The Government of India instituted the observance of Sanskrit Day in 1969, encouraging educational institutions to recognise Sanskrit's contribution to India's intellectual and cultural heritage.



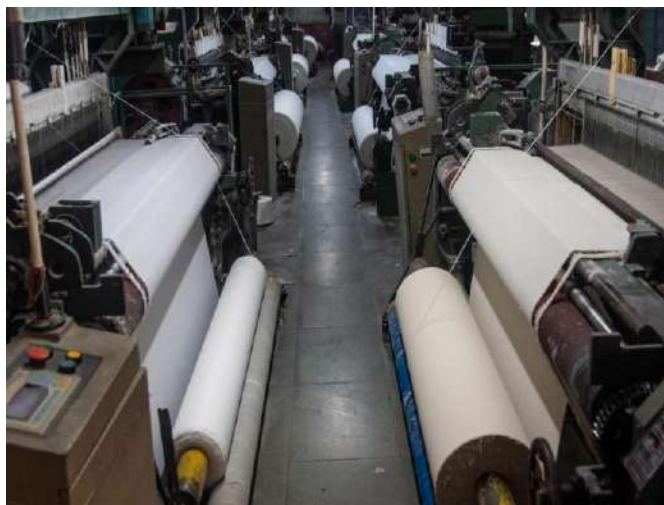
National Sports Day (India) : 29 August :-

National Sports Day is observed in India every year on 29 August to commemorate the birth anniversary of Major Dhyan Chand, one of the greatest hockey players in Indian sporting history. Born in 1905, Dhyan Chand earned the titles "Hockey Wizard" and "The Magician"

for his exceptional ball control, goal-scoring ability and mastery of the game. He played a major role in India's Olympic hockey success, helping the country win gold medals at the 1928, 1932 and 1936 Olympic Games. The official theme for National Sports Day India 2026 is "Khelega Bharat, Jeetega Bharat."

**International Day against Nuclear Tests : 29 August :-**

The International Day against Nuclear Tests is observed globally on 29 August to raise awareness about the devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons testing and to strengthen international efforts toward ending such tests. The United Nations General Assembly established the day through Resolution 64/35 on 2 December 2009, with the initiative strongly supported by Kazakhstan. The date commemorates the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in Kazakhstan on 29 August 1991, one of the world's major nuclear testing locations.

**National Small Industry Day (India) : 30 August :-**

National Small Industry Day is observed in India every year on 30 August to recognize the contribution of small-scale industries to economic development, employment generation and entrepreneurship. The observance emerged as a way of highlighting the importance of small industries in strengthening local production and providing livelihood opportunities, particularly outside major industrial centres. Small businesses and enterprises have historically played an important role in supporting regional economies, encouraging innovation and preserving traditional skills and manufacturing capabilities. The day also draws attention to the broader MSME ecosystem, which is central to India's ambitions for inclusive and self-reliant economic growth.

**International Day for People of African Descent : 31 August :-**

International Day for People of African Descent is observed every year on 31 August to recognize the rich heritage, culture and contributions of people of African descent and to promote their human rights and equality. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day through Resolution 75/170 in 2020, and it was observed for the first time on 31 August 2021. The observance emerged against the background of centuries of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and continuing racial discrimination. The 2026 International Day for People of African Descent is being observed under the theme "Expanding the Human Rights of People of African Descent."

2: Agreements



C-DOT to establish Centre of Excellence at IISc Bengaluru :-

The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) has signed a tripartite agreement with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru and the Foundation for Science, Innovation, and Development (FSID) to establish a Centre of Excellence in advanced technologies. The CoE will focus on wireless communications, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, AI-driven systems, and 5G Advanced/6G technologies. This collaboration aims to accelerate indigenous research and development, intellectual property generation, and support for startups.



Andhra Pradesh-Australia Sign Four MoUs for Development :-

Andhra Pradesh and Australia signed four MoUs in Amaravati, focusing on clean energy, inclusive education, mental health, and skill development. Partnerships include UNSW Sydney and IIT Tirupati, with key outcomes like a Centre of Excellence for Solar Manufacturing and a mental health pilot for students. This collaboration follows diplomatic engagements

between Andhra Pradesh officials and Australian delegations, underscoring a commitment to innovation and sustainable development in the region.



DigiLocker Partners with AAERI for Document Verification for Indian Students :-

The National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has joined forces with the Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI) to launch 'AAERI Verify', a digital platform aimed at simplifying document verification for Indian students seeking admission to Australian universities. This platform, integrated with DigiLocker, enables secure, paperless, and consent-based verification of academic, identity, and financial documents.



India, Sri Lanka Review Power Sector Cooperation :-

India and Sri Lanka recently reviewed progress on key bilateral energy projects and explored ways to deepen cooperation in the power sector. The discussions took place during a bilateral meeting in New Delhi between Union Minister for Power and Housing and Urban Affairs

Manohar Lal and Sri Lanka's Minister of Ports and Civil Aviation and Minister of Energy, Anura Karunathilake. The meeting focused on cross-border electricity trade, renewable energy, and transmission infrastructure. Both ministers reviewed the progress of major initiatives, including the proposed India-Sri Lanka High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) interconnection project and the Sampur Solar Power Project, both aimed at strengthening energy connectivity between the two countries.



Andhra Pradesh Signs MoU for Lithium & Gallium Exploration :-

The Andhra Pradesh Mines Department and CSIR-NGRI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focusing on lithium and gallium exploration in the Vempalle and Thummalapalle areas of the Kadapa Basin. Preliminary findings indicate lithium concentrations of up to 1,000 ppm and gallium up to 250 ppm. The ₹140 crore project is fully funded by the National Mineral Exploration Trust. Additionally, a separate MoU was signed with IIT (ISM) Dhanbad-TEXMiN to enhance mining technology and establish a Centre of Excellence.



Tamil Nadu inks MoU worth Rs 67,000cr with investments in space, EV :-

Tamil Nadu government announced investment commitments of around ₹67,000 crore through 97 MoUs, signed during the Vetri Tamil Nadu Investment

Conclave 2026. The commitments are expected to generate nearly 1.07 lakh direct and indirect jobs, giving a major boost to the state's industrial and employment landscape. The investments cover established sectors such as electronics, automobiles, textiles and engineering, while also expanding into emerging areas including space technology, quantum computing, life sciences, electric vehicles and data centres. The data-centre sector received the largest commitment at about ₹26,417 crore, while automotive commitments stood at ₹17,073 crore.



Russia Exits Syrian Bases, Ends Exclusive Control :-

Russia has officially relinquished control over its strategic military bases in Syria, namely the Hmeimim air base and the Tartus Naval facility. This move marks the end of Russia's exclusive military presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Under a Memorandum of Understanding, Syria will take full administrative and operational control of these facilities, which will be rebranded as joint Syria-Russia training centers. A 90-day transition period is set for the relocation of Russian forces and equipment. This development signifies a strategic shift in Russia's military footprint in the region.



India ramps up aid to Palestine, signs MoU for 200-bed super-speciality hospital :-

India has strengthened its development assistance to Palestine with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for constructing a 200-bed Indian Super-Speciality Hospital in Palestine. According to the latest reports, the proposed facility will include modern medical infrastructure as well as a trauma centre, making it particularly significant given the severe pressure on healthcare services in the region. The initiative represents a shift beyond immediate humanitarian assistance toward longer-term development cooperation and institution-building.

**India and Armenia Sign MoU to Boost Defence Cooperation :-**

India and Armenia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance defence cooperation, focusing on capacity building, training, and R&D. During a two-day visit to Armenia, India's Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh discussed bilateral military-technical cooperation with Armenian officials. The visit also involved exchanging Terms of Reference for institutionalizing Joint Services Staff Talks. The MoU aims to expand joint collaboration and innovation, with both countries reaffirming their commitment to strengthen defence ties and explore new avenues for cooperation.

**MeitY and PhonePe Collaborate for Data-Driven Planning in India :-**

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has signed an MoU with PhonePe to utilize PhonePe PulsePro's data intelligence for the PM GatiShakti initiative. This partnership aims to enhance national infrastructure planning and economic analysis by integrating granular transactional insights into the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan portal. The collaboration, involving the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics, seeks to support data-driven decision-making for national development. PhonePe PulsePro provides hyperlocal insights from digital transactions, aiding evidence-based infrastructure planning.

**India-Mauritius Sign MoU on Oil & Gas Cooperation :-**

India and Mauritius signed a Government-to-Government Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on oil and gas cooperation in Port Louis. The agreement was signed by India's Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Mauritius Commerce Minister John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen. This MoU aims to strengthen bilateral energy ties, as Mauritius heavily relies on imported petroleum products. Additionally, IndianOil and the State Trading Corporation of Mauritius signed a five-year sales and purchase agreement for various fuels.



India and ADB Sign \$230 Million Loan for Chennai Water Project :-

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$230 million loan agreement to modernise Chennai's water supply and sanitation infrastructure. The project aims to improve access to safe water, enhance climate resilience, and support a sustainable urban water system. It includes constructing over 170 km of pipelines and upgrading pumping stations. The initiative will also implement a comprehensive ring-main solution for balanced water pressure and efficient distribution. Advanced technologies will be introduced for real-time monitoring and improved service responsiveness, aligning with India's urban development goals.



Himachal Pradesh and ISB Sign MoU on Forest Economy

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and ISB-Bharti Institute of Public Policy signed a five-year MoU in Shimla to assess the state's forest and pastoral economy. The untapped potential is estimated at ₹22,600 crore, with a joint inventory involving over 500 forest guards and AI/ML technologies. The 'Counting Green Wealth' report highlights the value of resources like amla, pine needles, and wild mango. The initiative promotes community-led enterprises, such as the women-owned Pir Panjal Jungle Producer Company, to harness this green wealth.



India and Cambodia Conclude Bilateral Investment Treaty Talks :-

India and Cambodia have concluded negotiations for a bilateral investment treaty (BIT), agreeing to sign it soon. The discussions took place during the India-Cambodia Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment meeting in Phnom Penh. The treaty aims to protect and promote bilateral investments. Both countries also explored cooperation in agriculture, dyes and pigments, banking, and insurance sectors to enhance economic ties. The meeting also celebrated the successful launch of UPI acceptance at KHQR-enabled merchants in Phnom Penh and discussed enabling Cambodian payment apps to scan UPI QR codes in India.



India and Japan Enhance Startup and Deep-Tech Cooperation :-

India and Japan have agreed to deepen their collaboration in startups, deep technology, and MSMEs. At the India-Japan Startup Roundtable in Tokyo, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted India's position as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. Goyal proposed a four-pillar framework to enhance cooperation, including a Japan-India Deep-Tech Capital Corridor and a Two-Way Innovation Bridge. He also suggested a second Fund of Funds of around \$1 billion focused on deep-tech enterprises, inviting Japanese investors to participate. The roundtable facilitated discussions on technology partnerships and investment opportunities between the two nations.



India and Morocco Plan to Double Bilateral Trade in Five Years :-

India and Morocco have set a goal to double their bilateral trade within five years. This decision was made during the 7th Session of the India-Morocco Joint Commission, co-chaired by India's Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada and Morocco's Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Omar Hejira. The countries plan to establish a Joint Working Group to explore a preferential trade agreement. The trade between the two nations was around \$4 billion in 2025. They aim to diversify trade and improve market access, focusing on sectors like fertilisers, chemicals, and automotive parts.

3: Appointments



Vishwesh Negi Appointed India's Ambassador to Iran :-

Vishwesh Negi, an IFS officer from the 2002 batch, has been appointed as India's ambassador to Iran, succeeding Rudra Gaurav Shresth. Currently serving as Joint Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs, Negi will focus on enhancing India-Iran relations, which include energy, trade, and regional security. The appointment, effective from August 3, 2026, comes at a crucial time as India seeks to leverage its partnership with Iran for strategic connectivity projects like the Chabahar Port.



Willie Walsh Assumes Role as IndiGo CEO :-

Willie Walsh took over as the CEO of IndiGo, India's largest airline, succeeding Pieter Elbers. Walsh, known for his leadership roles at Aer Lingus, British Airways, and IAG, plans to drive IndiGo's international expansion and enhance operational efficiency. His appointment marks a strategic move for IndiGo, as it seeks to capitalize on India's burgeoning aviation market. Managing Director Rahul Bhatia expressed confidence in Walsh's ability to steer the airline towards new heights.



Monisha Chakraborty Appointed RBI Executive Director

Monisha Chakraborty was appointed as Executive Director of the Reserve Bank of India. She will oversee the Foreign Exchange Department and the Financial Markets Regulation Department. Previously serving as Chief General Manager-in-Charge of the Department of Supervision, Chakraborty brings over three decades of experience in banking supervision and foreign exchange management. Her extensive background and expertise will be instrumental in navigating the complexities of India's financial markets and regulations. This appointment reflects the RBI's commitment to leadership excellence and financial oversight.



Extension of Terms for Cabinet and Home Secretaries :-

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved a one-year extension for both the Cabinet Secretary Dr. T.V. Somanathan and Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan. Dr. T.V. Somanathan, an IAS officer from the 1987 Tamil Nadu cadre, will now continue in his role until August 30, 2027. Similarly, Govind Mohan, a 1989 Sikkim-cadre officer, will serve as Home Secretary until August 22, 2027. The extensions were granted by relaxing Fundamental Rule 56(d) and related All India Services

retirement rules, which are applicable to top positions including Defence, Foreign, Intelligence Bureau, and Research and Analysis Wing secretaries.



IAS Officer Rahul Jain Appointed Senior Adviser To India's Executive Director At IMF :-

Rahul Jain, a 2005-batch IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been appointed Senior Adviser to India's Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C. Jain is currently serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and will move to the new assignment on deputation under the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, for a period of three years. In his new position, he will advise India's Executive Director at the IMF on economic and financial matters and support India's engagement with the international financial institution. The appointment is significant because the IMF plays an important role in global monetary cooperation, financial stability, economic surveillance and policy discussions among member countries.



Dr Srinivasa Kumar Tummala Appointed MoES Secretary :-

Dr Srinivasa Kumar Tummala has been appointed as the Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES),

succeeding Dr M. Ravichandran. With over 30 years of experience in remote sensing, satellite oceanography, and disaster management, Dr Tummla has played a key role in India's Tsunami Early Warning System. He has been the Director of ESSO-INCOIS, Hyderabad since August 2020 and will oversee various initiatives including PFZ Advisories and Coral Reef Bleaching Alerts.



Three Sanchar Mitras Named ITU Youth Envoys :-

On International Youth Day 2026, three Sanchar Mitras were selected as ITU Generation Connect Youth Envoys for the period 2026–2030. The selected individuals are Ankit Kumar Pal from Delhi, Manish Kumar Mandal from Bengaluru, and Susmita Sain from Guwahati. The Department of Telecommunications facilitated their selection under the Sanchar Mitra scheme, which aims to involve youth in digital initiatives. This aligns with the scheme's goals of engaging youth in telecom awareness, fraud prevention, and digital safety, reflecting India's commitment to youth participation in the global digital future.



D.Y. Chandrachud Appointed as Arbitrator by Russia :-

Former Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, has been appointed as Russia's arbitrator in the investment treaty case involving Oschadbank (Ukraine). The dispute

pertains to bank assets lost in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia following the 2022 invasion. The tribunal consists of Oschadbank's Stavros Brekoulakis, Russia's Chandrachud, and tribunal president Dyalá Jiménez. This arbitration is conducted under the 1998 Russia-Ukraine bilateral investment treaty. D.Y. Chandrachud retired as Chief Justice of India on November 10, 2024.



Vinod Kumar D.V. appointed Chief of Media & Communications for MeitY :-

Vinod Kumar D.V. has been appointed as the Chief of Media & Communications (CMC) for the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), taking on an important role in the government's communication architecture. His responsibilities are expected to involve coordinating media communication, disseminating information about MeitY's policies and initiatives, and strengthening public outreach concerning India's rapidly expanding digital and technology ecosystem. The appointment is particularly significant because MeitY oversees major areas such as digital governance, information technology, electronics, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.



Manpreet Singh Badal appointed BJP vice president :-

Former Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal has been appointed a National Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as part of the party's new team of national office-bearers. BJP president Nitin Nabin announced a team that includes 13 national vice presidents, among them Manpreet Badal, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Tirath Singh Rawat, Ram Madhav, Baijayant Jay Panda and Rekha Verma. Badal publicly accepted the responsibility with humility and described the assignment as a test rather than simply a reward. His elevation is particularly significant for Punjab politics, as the BJP is seeking to strengthen its organisational presence and outreach in the state ahead of the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections.



S. Somanath Appointed to RBI Central Board :-

Former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath has been appointed as a part-time non-official director on the RBI Central Board for a four-year term. The RBI Central Board, under the RBI Act 1934, now comprises 11 members, including external directors such as Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, and Anand Mahindra. Somanath's appointment follows his tenure at ISRO, where he oversaw the Chandrayaan-3 mission. His expertise is expected to contribute significantly to the board's strategic decisions.



Shabnam Sinha Appointed Chairperson of Airtel Payments Bank :-

Shabnam Sinha will take over as the chairperson of Airtel Payments Bank on October 1, 2026, succeeding Sunil Bharti Mittal. Her appointment, approved by the RBI and the Board, is for a three-year term. Sunil Bharti Mittal, founder and chairperson of Bharti Enterprises, will retire on September 30, 2026. Sinha brings four decades of experience in development finance and governance, including with the World Bank. Airtel Payments Bank currently serves over 121 million monthly active users and nearly 30 million account holders.



New Appointments to RBI Central Board :-

The Indian government appointed Syed Akbaruddin, Annie George Mathew, and Janmejaya Kumar Sinha as part-time non-official directors on the RBI Central Board for a four-year term. These appointments, made under Section 8(1)(c) of the RBI Act, 1934, increase the active board strength from 11 to 14. Akbaruddin is a former Permanent Representative to the UN, Mathew is a member of the Sixteenth Finance Commission, and Sinha is the former BCG Asia-Pacific Chairman. The board oversees the RBI's general superintendence.

4: Awards



DBS Bank Wins World's Best Corporate Bank Award 2026 :-

DBS Bank has been honored with the title of 'World's Best Corporate Bank' at the Global Finance Global Bank Awards 2026, making it the first Southeast Asian bank to receive this accolade. Additionally, DBS was named Asia's Best Bank and Singapore's Best Bank. This recognition highlights the bank's strong performance in corporate financing, trade finance, and digital innovation, reinforcing Singapore's status as a global financial hub. With operations in 19 markets, DBS continues to serve a wide range of clients including SMEs and multinational corporations.



Annapurni Subramaniam Receives COSPAR Vikram Sarabhai Medal :-

Annapurni Subramaniam, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, has been awarded the

COSPAR Vikram Sarabhai Medal for 2026. The announcement was made at the 46th COSPAR Scientific Assembly in Florence on 3 August 2026. She is the first Indian woman to receive this prestigious award, which recognizes scientists from developing nations for significant contributions to space research. Subramaniam's work on stellar populations and galaxy evolution has been pivotal. This accolade highlights India's growing influence in global space research and honors the legacy of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.



Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Award for Environment Protection 2026 presented to two women :-

The Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Award for Environment Protection 2026 has been conferred on two grassroots environmental champions from Tamil Nadu—P. Pechiyammal of Ramanathapuram and Govindhammal of Villupuram. Pechiyammal was recognised for her work in removing ghost gear, including abandoned fishing nets, nylon ropes and plastic waste, from coastal areas of Ramanathapuram, thereby helping reduce marine pollution and protect coastal ecosystems. Govindhammal was honoured for promoting sustainable agriculture and improving farming practices in Villupuram. Her initiatives have supported farmers through better access to quality seeds, improved market opportunities and collective participation through a Farmers Producer Company.



The Wire's Akanksha Kumar Wins Prem Bhatia Award :-

Journalist Akanksha Kumar has received the Prem Bhatia Award for Excellence in Political Journalism 2026, recognising her investigative reporting on issues involving state excesses, policing, communal violence and the relationship between political power and the media. Kumar, currently associated with The Wire, was recognised for a body of five reports originally published in 2025, highlighting her work in scrutinising institutions and political developments. The award was presented in New Delhi as part of the Prem Bhatia Journalism Awards and Memorial Lecture organised by the Editors Guild of India at the India International Centre.



EJ Swift wins the 2026 Arthur C Clarke award for science fiction :-

British author E.J. Swift has won the 2026 Arthur C. Clarke Award for Science Fiction for her novel *When There Are Wolves Again*, which explores climate change, rewilding and environmental activism in a near-future Britain. The novel follows two women, Lucy and Hester, whose lives unfold across several decades and eventually intersect in 2070, presenting a long-term perspective on humanity's response to ecological crisis. Swift had previously been shortlisted for the award in 2023 for *The*

Coral Bones, making this her second appearance on the shortlist and her first victory.



1,057 Service Personnel Awarded Medals for Gallantry and Service :-

Ahead of Independence Day 2026, 1,057 personnel from police, fire, Home Guard, and correctional services received gallantry and service medals. The awards include 301 Medals for Gallantry, 92 President's Medals for Distinguished Service, and 664 Medals for Meritorious Service. Gallantry awards were largely given to personnel from Left Wing Extremism-affected areas, Jammu and Kashmir, and the Northeast. These medals recognize acts of bravery, distinguished service, and devotion to duty.



Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Odissi exponent Varadkar :-

Shubhada Varadkar, a Mumbai-based Odissi exponent, has been honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, recognising her long contribution to classical dance. The award was conferred by President Droupadi Murmu at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Varadkar, aged 65, has spent more than four decades performing, teaching and promoting Odissi. She trained under celebrated Odissi guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, one of the key figures responsible for the modern development and global popularisation of Odissi. She has authored works including *Mayurpankh* and *The Celestial Plume*.



President Murmu Awards Medals to RPF/RPSF Personnel :-

On Independence Day 2026, President Droupadi Murmu conferred the President's Medal for Distinguished Service and the Medal for Meritorious Service on 16 Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) officers. Among the awardees, Rajesh Lal received the Distinguished Service Medal, while 15 others, including Satya Prakash and C. S. Chengappa, were awarded for meritorious service. These awards recognize the dedication and professionalism of RPF and RPSF personnel in safeguarding railway passengers and infrastructure across India.



Vidit Gujrathi and Divya Deshmukh honored with Arjuna Award :-

Indian chess Grandmasters Vidit Gujrathi and Divya Deshmukh have been selected for the Arjuna Award, recognising their outstanding contributions to Indian chess. For Divya Deshmukh, the award follows a remarkable rise in international chess. She won the FIDE Women's World Cup 2025 in Batumi, Georgia, defeating Grandmaster Humpy Koneru in the final tiebreak, and subsequently became India's fourth female chess Grandmaster. Vidit Gujrathi, a leading figure in Indian open chess, has likewise been recognised for his sustained international achievements and contribution to the country's growing chess stature.



Honda Wins Red Dot Awards for EV Outlier Concept and Brand Film for Honda Electric Motorcycle Business in Red Dot Design Award 2026 :-

Honda has won two honours at the Red Dot Design Award 2026, with recognition going to both its futuristic EV Outlier Concept and its electric-motorcycle brand film, "What Is a Motorcycle? / Electric Motorcycles." The EV Outlier Concept received a Red Dot in the Design Concept category, while the film was recognised in Brand & Communication Design. The EV Outlier Concept represents Honda's vision for motorcycles beyond 2030 rather than simply converting existing motorcycles from petrol to electric power. Honda first unveiled it at the Japan Mobility Show 2025.



Indian Peacekeepers Honored with UN Medal in South Sudan :-

210 Indian peacekeepers serving under the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) were awarded the UN Medal in Juba. This group includes six women peacekeepers and seven staff officers, recognized for their bravery, compassion, crisis response, and life-saving efforts. India is the second-largest contributor of military and police personnel to UN missions, with over 4,200 personnel, including 155 women. As of April 2026, India was the top troop contributor to UNMISS, with 1,775 personnel deployed.

5: Banking



ICICI Bank Advances Overseas Fundraising with Dollar Bond Issue :-

ICICI Bank is moving ahead with its first US dollar bond issuance in nearly nine years. The private lender plans to raise at least US\$500 million through a five-year bond issued from its GIFT City branch. The fundraising has been encouraged by the RBI's concessional foreign-currency swap facility, which significantly reduces hedging costs for banks borrowing overseas. This initiative helps ICICI Bank diversify its funding sources beyond domestic deposits while maintaining adequate liquidity for future lending. The successful issuance is expected to strengthen the bank's balance sheet, support retail and corporate lending, and reinforce investor confidence in India's banking sector.



IRDAI Moves Closer to Risk-Based Capital Framework for Insurers :-

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) is preparing to implement a Risk-Based

Capital (RBC) framework for insurance companies, with rollout expected in the coming financial year. Instead of relying solely on uniform solvency requirements, insurers will be required to maintain capital based on the actual risks within their business portfolios. The framework aims to improve transparency, strengthen financial resilience and align India's insurance regulations with global standards. Banks distributing insurance products through bancassurance partnerships are expected to benefit from stronger insurers, giving customers greater confidence while supporting the long-term expansion of India's insurance market.



RBI to Conduct Field Trials of Polymer Banknotes :-

The Government of India has approved the Reserve Bank of India's proposal to conduct field trials of polymer banknotes, with an initial rollout of 1 billion notes each of ₹10 and ₹20 denominations. Announced by Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, the initiative aims to test the durability, moisture resistance, and security features of polymer notes, which are expected to have a longer lifespan and lower replacement costs compared to traditional paper notes. This move aligns with global practices as approximately 60 countries already use polymer notes.



ICICI Bank Completes Landmark US\$1 Billion Overseas Bond Issue :-

The ICICI Bank has successfully completed a US\$1 billion five-year dollar bond issue, marking the largest overseas bond sale by an Indian private-sector bank in almost fourteen years. Investor demand was exceptionally strong, with subscriptions significantly exceeding the amount offered, allowing the bank to price the bonds at a competitive yield. The fundraising was supported by the RBI's concessional foreign-currency swap window, which reduced hedging costs and made overseas borrowing more economical.



Punjab National Bank Plans US\$1 Billion Foreign Currency Loan :-

Punjab National Bank is raising a US\$1 billion five-year syndicated dollar loan to support Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposit-related lending. The transaction is reportedly being underwritten by international banks and will later be syndicated to a wider group of global lenders. The funding will strengthen PNB's foreign currency resources and improve its ability to extend foreign currency loans while supporting NRI deposit mobilisation. The move also reflects how Indian public sector banks are increasingly accessing international

funding markets alongside domestic deposits, particularly after the RBI introduced measures that make foreign currency fundraising more attractive and cost-efficient.



Patanjali and DS Group Acquire Magma General Insurance :-

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has approved the acquisition of Magma General Insurance by Patanjali Ayurved and DS Group. The deal is valued at approximately ₹4,500 crore, with Patanjali obtaining a 73.56% stake and DS Group acquiring 24.5%. The shares are primarily acquired from Sanoti Properties LLP, part of the Adar Poonawalla Group, among others. The acquisition must be completed within three months of approval. Magma reported a gross direct premium of ₹3,334 crore in FY25, with a compound annual growth rate of 22% from FY21 to FY25. This strategic acquisition underscores the growing interest in the insurance sector.



RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25%, Signals Stable Policy Outlook :-

The Reserve Bank of India has kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, a decision that was widely anticipated by financial markets. The central bank noted that while inflation has seen upward pressure from higher fuel prices, underlying inflation remains relatively

contained. By maintaining the current policy rate, the RBI aims to support economic growth while ensuring inflation stays under control. Banks are therefore expected to keep lending and deposit rates broadly stable in the near term. Analysts believe the RBI is likely to continue using liquidity management and macro-prudential measures instead of frequent interest-rate changes, providing greater certainty to borrowers, businesses and financial institutions.



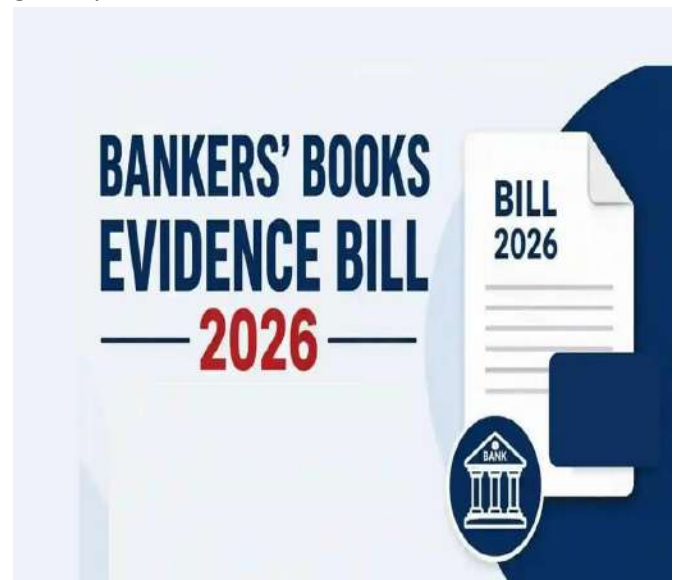
FCNR(B) Scheme Mobilises \$41 Billion, Expected to Reach \$100 Billion by September :-

The Reserve Bank of India's Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank [FCNR(B)] deposit scheme has successfully mobilized approximately USD 41 billion in inflows to date and is projected to attract USD 80-100 billion by its closure on September 30, as per a report by global brokerage Jefferies. This scheme, introduced by the RBI on June 5, offers concessional swap facilities on fresh FCNR(B) deposits mobilized by banks from non-resident Indians (NRIs). The primary objective is to boost foreign currency inflows and support the rupee amidst global market volatility.



Amit Shah Launches 'Bank in a Box' for Urban Cooperative Banks :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation's new premises and launched 'Bank in a Box', a service bundle for Urban Cooperative Banks. The initiative, part of the 'Sahkar Nav-Kranti' programme, includes core banking, digital payments, and regulatory compliance facilities. A Security Operations Centre was also launched to enhance cybersecurity. Shah emphasized that the Umbrella Organisation for Urban Cooperative Banks aims to streamline operations and provide affordable access to modern banking infrastructure, enabling banks to compete nationally and globally.



Bankers' Book Evidence Bill 2026 Passed in Parliament

The Indian Parliament has passed the Bankers' Book Evidence Bill 2026, replacing the colonial-era Bankers' Book Evidence Act of 1891. The new legislation establishes a technology-neutral framework that recognizes electronic and digital banking records as legal evidence. It covers records in written, electronic, or digital form, including those stored on-premises, off-premises, cloud, backups, or disaster-recovery systems. The bill allows for certification through manual, digital, or electronic signatures, modernizing the legal framework for banking records.

6: Books and Author



Dear Zahira, With Love — A moving new Indian novel inspired by true events :-

Among India's noteworthy recent releases is *Dear Zahira, With Love* by Sachin NG. Inspired by a real cross-border love story shaped by the Partition of India, the novel follows two lovers separated by history, politics, and geography. Rather than focusing solely on historical events, the narrative explores hope, resilience, memory, and the enduring emotional bonds that survive despite decades of separation. The book has been highlighted in Indian July reading lists for combining historical fiction with deeply personal storytelling.



Apple: The First 50 Years — A major technology history release :-

Technology journalist David Pogue chronicles the first five decades of one of the world's most influential companies in *Apple: The First 50 Years*. Instead of presenting only the company's successes, the book examines its breakthroughs, setbacks, leadership changes, product innovations, and lasting influence on personal computing and consumer technology.

Published during Apple's fiftieth anniversary year, the book provides historical context for many of the products and decisions that reshaped the tech industry.



Once Elephants Lived Here — A major Indian literary release continues to draw acclaim :-

Written by Geetanjali Shree and translated into English by Daisy Rockwell, *Once Elephants Lived Here* remains one of India's most significant recent literary releases. The collection brings together eleven experimental short stories that showcase Shree's distinctive narrative style, blending memory, humor, symbolism, and everyday life in unexpected ways. Although many readers first discovered her through *Tomb of Sand*, this collection highlights the breadth of her earlier creative work and offers a deeper understanding of her literary voice.



"The Girl with the Seven Lives" Vikas Swarup returns with a major new novel :-

One of the most significant Indian releases currently drawing international attention is *The Girl with the Seven Lives* by Vikas Swarup. Best known for writing Q&A, the novel that inspired the Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*, Swarup returns with a story that once again explores inequality, resilience, corruption, and survival.

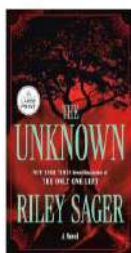
through compelling fictional characters. Early interviews suggest the author continues to examine social realities while maintaining the fast-paced storytelling that made his earlier work a global success.



4.1 ★★★★★ (6,429)

Another suspenseful mystery "John Grebble Is Gone" by Peter James launched :-

Bestselling crime novelist Peter James continues his strong presence in the mystery genre with John Grebble Is Gone, released at the beginning of August. The novel revolves around a puzzling disappearance that gradually develops into a complex investigation filled with hidden motives and unexpected revelations. James has built a reputation for combining realistic police work with psychological suspense, and early readers expect this release to continue that winning formula. Featured in multiple August release calendars, the book is already attracting attention from longtime fans and newcomers looking for an engaging detective story with carefully constructed twists.



The Unknown — Riley Sager delivers another suspense-filled thriller :-

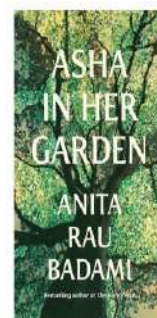
Bestselling thriller author Riley Sager returns with The Unknown, one of August's most anticipated suspense novels. Set on a remote island with an unsettling past, the book gradually builds an atmosphere of psychological tension as unexplained events force its characters to question what is real. Rather than relying

solely on fast-paced action, Sager develops suspense through carefully layered mysteries, unreliable perceptions, and unexpected revelations. Early critics have highlighted the novel's immersive setting and skillful pacing, predicting it will become one of the season's defining thriller releases for readers who enjoy eerie, twist-filled stories.



When Lemons Give You Life — A story of food, forgiveness and second chances :-

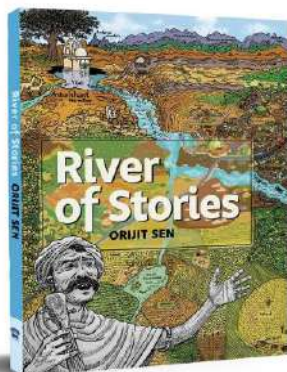
Australian author Anna Johnston released When Lemons Give You Life in North America, following its earlier Australian/New Zealand publication. At the center is Griff Barlow, a retired Michelin-starred chef living in an aged-care facility who has lost much of his appetite for life. His decision to secretly return to cooking changes his relationship with food and unexpectedly reconnects him with the people around him. His sister Lisa is simultaneously dealing with her own complicated life, including a late ADHD diagnosis, a new relationship and difficult family circumstances.



Asha in Her Garden — Anita Rau Badami returns after 15 years with a family story spanning India and Montreal :-

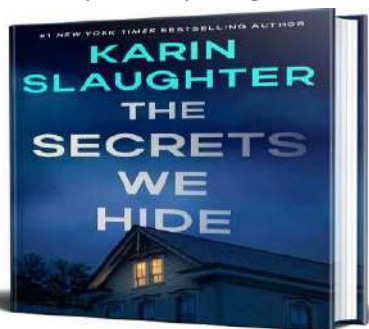
Asha in Her Garden, the much-anticipated new novel from Anita Rau Badami, her first novel in fifteen years has been released. The story follows Asha Mohan, who

moved from India to Montreal with her husband decades ago and now finds refuge in her garden. As she approaches her seventies, the impending removal of a beloved maple tree forces her to revisit a traumatic incident from twenty years earlier as well as an older tragedy that shaped her decision to leave India. The novel uses family relationships, memory and migration to explore how people reinterpret their past when circumstances change. It has already been selected as a Globe and Mail Best New Book of Summer 2026.



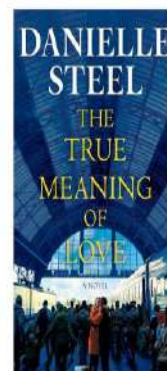
River of Stories — India's pioneering graphic novel gets a major new international edition :-

A significant Indian publishing milestone arrives internationally with the 11 August 2026 US release of River of Stories by Orijit Sen. Originally published in 1997 and widely regarded as India's first graphic novel, the work documents the social and environmental consequences of the Sardar Sarovar Dam project and the movement opposing displacement and ecological destruction in the Narmada Valley. Sen's approach is especially important because he combines journalism, documentary material, political observation and visual storytelling rather than presenting the subject as conventional prose reportage.



The Secrets We Hide — Karin Slaughter returns to North Falls with a murder that exposes a town built on secrets

The Secrets We Hide is a new thriller from Karin Slaughter and continues her North Falls crime series. The investigation begins when gunshots shatter the apparent calm of a residential neighbourhood. Inside one home, a woman has been murdered while her teenage daughter is found critically injured. Sheriff Emmy Clifton and her sister, former federal agent Jude Archer, are drawn into a case where the obvious explanation quickly becomes unreliable. As they investigate the Vickery family and the people surrounding them, the small-town setting becomes increasingly claustrophobic: rumours, family histories and buried relationships all threaten to distort the truth.



The True Meaning of Love — Danielle Steel follows ordinary people trying to preserve love and humanity during war :-

Danielle Steel's The True Meaning of Love was released in major English-language markets during August 2026, with the U.S. edition published on 11 August and other editions following shortly afterward. The novel moves away from romance as escapism and places love under the extreme pressure of war. Beginning as the Russian invasion of Ukraine transforms everyday life, the story follows several characters whose ambitions, relationships and sense of safety collapse almost overnight. A young ballet student, families trying to flee, civilians joining the defence effort and medical professionals treating victims all confront different forms of loss. Steel uses multiple perspectives to show how war changes ordinary decisions into moral tests.

7: Defence



Indian Coast Guard Introduces Policy Reforms :-

Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh announced significant reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) at Kartavya Bhavan-2, New Delhi. The reforms include gender-neutral induction, allowing women to join both Short Service and Permanent Appointments on equal terms with men. Additionally, a simplified ex-gratia procedure for families of personnel missing at sea on duty was introduced. Established in 1977, the ICG handles maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, and environmental protection. These reforms represent a progressive step towards gender equality and enhanced support for ICG personnel and their families.



Indian Navy Launches ASW Craft Machilipatnam :-

The Indian Navy has launched the Machilipatnam, the seventh of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts, built by Cochin Shipyard. With over 80% indigenous content, this vessel supports the

Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Named after the historic port city in Andhra Pradesh, the Machilipatnam will enhance India's coastal defense capabilities by conducting underwater surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and mine warfare. It strengthens maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean Region and enhances India's readiness against underwater threats in shallow waters.



Indigenous Diving Support Vessel Nipun Delivered to Indian Navy :-

The Indian Navy has received its second Indigenous Diving Support Vessel (DSV), named Nipun. Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited in Visakhapatnam, Nipun measures 118 meters in length and has a displacement of over 8,560 tonnes. The vessel boasts nearly 75% indigenous content and is equipped with advanced features, including deep-sea saturation diving systems, Remotely Operated Vehicles, and dynamic positioning systems. Nipun will serve as a mother ship for the Navy's Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel, supporting submarine rescue, underwater salvage, and specialized diving missions. This delivery marks a significant step in enhancing India's maritime capabilities.



Air Marshal AK Bharti Retires After Distinguished Service :-

Air Marshal AK Bharti retired as the Deputy Chief of Air Staff after a distinguished career in the Indian Air Force. Known for his critical role in Operation Sindoor, launched on May 7, 2025, following the Pahalgam terror attack, Bharti was instrumental in orchestrating precision airstrikes on nine terrorist targets across Pakistan and PoK, leading to the elimination of over 100 terrorists. His tenure included serving as the Director General Air Operations and being a prominent figure in tri-service media briefings. His contributions have been pivotal in strengthening India's defense capabilities.



Indian Navy Launches Final Diving Support Craft DSC A24 :-

The Indian Navy launched the DSC A24, the final vessel in its series of Diving Support Crafts at Titagarh Rail Systems Limited, Kolkata. This catamaran-hull vessel, designed for diving and salvage operations, boasts 70% indigenous content supporting India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The project, contracted in February 2021, reflects India's advancements in naval technology and

defense capabilities. The ceremonial launch was attended by Mrs. Kamal Singh, underscoring the vessel's strategic importance.



Fourth Tri-Services Future Warfare Course Commences :-

The fourth Tri-Services Future Warfare Course began at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. Organized by CENJOWS under HQ Integrated Defence Staff, the four-week course includes military officers, policymakers, and strategic thinkers. It aims to enhance understanding of emerging technologies like AI, quantum tech, and cyber warfare. The course promotes jointness across the Army, Navy, and Air Force, preparing participants for future operational concepts and multi-domain operations.



GRSE Launches Second NGOPV 'Shruti' :-

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) launched 'Shruti', the second Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV), at Kolkata. This vessel is part of a program to build 11 NGOPVs for the Indian Navy, with GRSE constructing four and Goa Shipyard the remainder. The launch ceremony was attended by senior officials from the Navy, Ministry of Defence, and GRSE. The NGOPV program supports indigenisation and aims to enhance maritime surveillance capabilities.



Bhawana Kanth Becomes India's First Woman Fighter Combat Leader :-

Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth has made history by becoming the first woman to graduate from the Indian Air Force's elite 'Top Gun' school. She completed the rigorous 20-week Fighter Combat Leader Course, which is the most advanced combat flying training offered by the IAF. Bhawana Kanth was also the first woman fighter pilot to march in the Republic Day parade in 2021 and is part of India's pioneering trio of women fighter pilots. Only about one in 100 pilots is selected to attempt this prestigious course.



Indian Army Departs for Joint Exercise MAITREE-XV in Thailand :-

The Indian Army contingent has departed for Thailand to participate in the 15th edition of the India-Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XV, scheduled from August 18 to 31 at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp in Surat Thani, Thailand. This exercise will involve 85 personnel from each army, focusing on operations in jungle and semi-urban terrain. The Indian contingent is primarily from the 9 Gorkha Rifles, while the Royal Thai Army includes personnel from the 3rd Battalion, 25th Infantry Brigade, 5th Division. The

exercise aims to enhance military cooperation and joint counter-insurgency operations capabilities.



Army Chief General Seth's Nepal Visit to Strengthen Defence Ties :-

General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff, is on a three-day official visit to Nepal to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries. His itinerary includes engagements with senior military and civilian leaders, discussions on mutual interests, and participation in an investiture ceremony where he will receive the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army. This tradition underscores the close military ties between India and Nepal. General Seth will also address student officers at the Army Command and Staff Course and attend an Ex-Servicemen Rally in Pokhara, reinforcing the longstanding relationship described as the 'Roti Beti Ka Rishta'.



Indian Navy Receives Third Indigenous ASW Craft 'Mangrol' :-

The Indian Navy has taken delivery of 'Mangrol', the third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) built by Cochin Shipyard Limited. With over 80% indigenous content, Mangrol is designed for underwater surveillance and anti-submarine warfare in coastal

waters. It is equipped with advanced torpedoes, anti-submarine rockets, radars, and sonar systems. Named after a coastal town in Gujarat, Mangrol continues the legacy of the erstwhile INS Mangrol. This delivery marks a milestone in India's indigenous shipbuilding program, reflecting the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and enhancing India's domestic defence manufacturing capabilities.



INS Sudarshini Reaches Lisbon on Lokayan 26 Expedition :-

INS Sudarshini, the Indian Navy's sail training ship, arrived in Lisbon, Portugal, as part of the Lokayan 26 transoceanic expedition. The ship's visit to Lisbon marks its 15th port call in seven months, showcasing traditional sailing skills. During the port call, the crew will engage in professional exchanges and cultural activities with Portuguese naval leadership and the Indian diaspora. The expedition aims to strengthen India's maritime connections and promote international camaraderie, highlighting India's commitment to fostering global naval ties.



DRDO Missile Technologies Transferred to Indian Defence Industry :-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the transfer of technology for all conventional missile

systems developed by the DRDO to Indian defence industries. This move is intended to bolster India's defence manufacturing capabilities and promote Aatmanirbharta. The technology transfer will enable eligible domestic companies to manufacture DRDO-developed missile systems, subject to regulatory requirements. This initiative is expected to enhance India's operational capabilities, reduce reliance on imports, and increase domestic value addition in the defence sector, while also expanding opportunities for Indian MSMEs in the defence ecosystem.



India and Vietnam Coast Guards Enhance Maritime Cooperation :-

The Indian Coast Guard and Vietnam Coast Guard held their seventh High-Level Meeting in Chennai to strengthen cooperation in maritime security. Discussions focused on maritime search and rescue, law enforcement, marine pollution response, and capacity building. Both sides emphasized the importance of regular interactions and professional exchanges to enhance mutual trust and operational capabilities. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to promote maritime safety and security.



Rajnath Singh Inaugurates Re-developed Hutatma Smruti Smarak in Goa :-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the re-developed Hutatma Smruti Smarak at Patradevi, Goa, a site significant to the state's liberation struggle. The event was attended by Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Union Minister of State for Power and New

& Renewable Energy Shripad Y. Naik. Singh emphasized that the Goa Liberation movement was a national struggle manifesting India's unity. He paid tribute to several satyagrahis and highlighted the importance of national unity over regionalism. The Defence Minister also recalled the professionalism of Indian armed forces during Goa's liberation.

8: Economy

**India Launches First Sovereign-backed P&I Insurance under BMIP :-**

In a landmark move, the Department of Financial Services has launched India's first sovereign-backed Protection & Indemnity (P&I) insurance product under the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMIP). Designed by New India Assurance, the first policy was issued to the Shipping Corporation of India, providing coverage of up to USD 1.5 billion for third-party liabilities, including crew, cargo, pollution, and wreck removal. This initiative is part of BMIP, operational since May 12, 2026, which has successfully reduced war-risk premiums by 35–40%.

**India-Uzbekistan Set \$3 Billion Trade Target :-**

During the India-Uzbekistan Business Forum held in New Delhi, both nations set an ambitious target to double bilateral trade to \$3 billion within three years. The trade between the countries had already shown a 30% increase in the previous year, amounting to \$1.32 billion in 2025. Discussions included exploring a Free Trade Agreement, prioritizing sectors like mining, renewable energy, and IT. Around 400 Indian companies are currently operating in Uzbekistan and the joint project pipeline is valued at over \$5 billion. These efforts underscore the strengthening economic ties between the two nations.

**First Sea Shipment of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana to Australia :-**

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) facilitated the first-ever commercial sea shipment of 18 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana from Bihar to Australia. This initiative aims to expand the global market for Bihar's flagship agricultural product and improve returns for farmers. The consignment was sourced from Darbhanga district and exported by NIAD Green, with logistics support from Jitban Supply Chain Pvt Ltd. The shipment

is expected to enhance farmer incomes by nearly 18% above prevailing market rates. APEDA's efforts are part of a broader strategy to promote Makhana exports.



India's New Mega-Airports to Transform Aviation :-

India is addressing aviation congestion by constructing two new mega-airports: Navi Mumbai International Airport and Noida International Airport. These airports will alleviate pressure on Mumbai and Delhi's existing airports, handling domestic and cargo traffic while old hubs focus on international flights. Navi Mumbai Airport, built on challenging terrain, boasts a design by Zaha Hadid Architects and advanced digital infrastructure. Noida Airport, India's first net-zero airport, is designed from scratch to be a major cargo hub. These developments aim to support India's growing aviation needs.



MMDR Amendment Bill 2026 Passed to Boost Mining Sector :-

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, has been passed by both Houses of Parliament. The bill aims to create a stable fiscal regime for India's major minerals sector, encouraging investment and supporting the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The amendment maintains state rights over

land and mineral taxation, with states retaining authority over minor minerals. The Ministry of Mines emphasized that the changes aim to make domestic minerals more competitive, reducing reliance on imports. The bill is part of a broader vision for a developed India by 2047.



Ministry of Mines Hosts Critical Mineral Auction Roadshow in Patna :-

The Ministry of Mines is conducting a roadshow in Patna for the 8th tranche of critical and strategic mineral block auctions. This tranche includes 20 blocks featuring minerals like graphite, rare earth elements, and vanadium. The event aims to inform investors about mineral potentials, auction frameworks, and investment opportunities. Presentations by MECL, SBI Capital Markets, and MSTC will detail the auction process. Additionally, a workshop on 'Mineral Exploration: Planning, Execution and Reporting' will discuss India's exploration potential and the National Geoscience Data Repository. The initiative seeks to boost India's mineral sector through informed stakeholder engagement.



Cabinet Approves Rs 13,000 Crore Infrastructure Projects :-

The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved infrastructure projects worth over Rs

13,000 crore. This includes four railway multitracking projects across Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, costing Rs 9,450 crore, and the four-laning of the Muzaffarpur-Sitamarhi-Sonbarsa section of NH-22 in Bihar at Rs 3,590.73 crore. The projects aim to enhance passenger and freight movement, reduce congestion, and boost economic activity. The railway projects will add around 410 km to the Indian Railways network, improving connectivity for nearly 6,448 villages.



Delhi Airport Expands Transshipment Cargo Network :-

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu inaugurated the expanded phase of India's transshipment cargo reform at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. The network now includes Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and Hyderabad, connecting to London and Copenhagen. The expansion follows a successful proof-of-concept project on the Chennai-Delhi-Frankfurt route. The initiative aims to reduce turnaround time and handling costs. The expansion is expected to increase Air India's monthly cargo carriage from 1,763 metric tonnes to 3,183 metric tonnes, enhancing India's position as a global air cargo transshipment hub.



India and Malaysia Enhance Cooperation in Governance Reforms :-

India and Malaysia have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral cooperation in public administration and governance reforms. This was discussed at the 2nd India-Malaysia Joint Working Group Meeting co-chaired by Puneet Yadav from India's Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and Datuk Dr Mohd Bakhari bin Ismail from Malaysia. The meeting reviewed progress since the first meeting in 2024 and discussed capacity-building programs under India's ITEC programme. Both countries emphasized the importance of technology in delivering citizen-centric public services.



Indian Researchers Develop GenAI Platform for Cancer Research :-

Researchers at Delhi's Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology have developed 'MutAlverse', a generative AI platform to trace potential cancer causes by decoding DNA damage. Tested on head and neck cancer patients in Guwahati, Assam, the platform identifies environmental exposures like smokeless tobacco. Though it doesn't conclusively prove causation, it expands DNA adduct libraries significantly. The platform, featuring a tool called AdductLinker, allows researchers to pinpoint environmental chemicals responsible for cancer, offering a new approach to understanding cancer development.



Chhattisgarh Achieves Tilapia Export Milestone :-

Chhattisgarh has become the first inland Indian state to export value-added Tilapia products, sending 382 tonnes to the USA. A review meeting in Raipur, led by Secretary Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, involved stakeholders such as the NFDB, MPEDA, and NABARD. The state has invested nearly ₹900 crore under the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana, boosting fish production to about 10 lakh tonnes. This achievement highlights the growth potential of inland fisheries and the state's export capabilities.

**India Permits Duty-Free Import of 10 Lakh Tonnes of Raw Sugar :-**

The Indian government has allowed the duty-free import of up to 10 lakh tonnes of raw sugar until October 31, 2026, through a DGFT TRQ amendment. This move aims to boost sugar supply and control rising prices ahead of the festive season. The all-India average sugar price has risen significantly, with bulk consumers restricted to a 15-day stock holding limit from September 1 to November 30, 2026. The decision comes as festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussehra, and Diwali are expected to increase demand for sweets and processed foods.

**India Negotiating FTAs to Cover 75% of Global Trade: Piyush Goyal :-**

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced that India is negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with 8-9 more groups, aiming to cover 75% of global trade. These agreements will add to the existing nine FTAs covering economies with a combined GDP of USD 60 trillion. Goyal emphasized India's potential as a trusted partner in global value chains, with investment opportunities in data centers, manufacturing, and AI. The minister is leading a business delegation to Tokyo to strengthen trade and investment ties between India and Japan.

**Shein's Valuation Drops Significantly Ahead of Hong Kong IPO :-**

Online fast-fashion retailer Shein has reduced its valuation to approximately \$27 billion for its Hong Kong IPO, a significant drop from its previous \$100 billion valuation in 2022. The company aims to raise up to \$1.77 billion through the IPO, with shares priced between HK\$47.60 and HK\$49.50 each. The IPO marks a shift in investor sentiment, reflecting concerns over Shein's slowing growth and rising costs. The company plans to use the funds to enhance its technology and global presence. The final share price will be announced on August 31, with trading to begin on September 1.



RBI's Forex Swap Facility Attracts \$73 Billion Inflows :-

The Reserve Bank of India's USD-INR forex swap facility has led to a significant increase in foreign exchange inflows, totaling \$73 billion as of August 21, 2026. The scheme, launched on June 8, 2026, saw FCNR(B) deposits alone account for \$65.40 billion. The overwhelming

response from Non-Resident Indians has prompted the RBI to close the FCNR(B) window earlier than planned. This initiative has strengthened India's external buffers and reflects the robust confidence of the Indian diaspora in the country's economic growth.

9: International



UNESCO Adds Mount Olympus D-Day Beaches to World Heritage List :-

UNESCO inscribed Mount Olympus in Greece and the D-Day Landing Beaches in Normandy, France, on the World Heritage List. Mount Olympus, listed as a mixed cultural-natural site, is recognized for its mythological significance and rich biodiversity. The D-Day beaches, including Omaha and Utah, are acknowledged for their historical value as pivotal sites during WWII. These additions highlight the global efforts in preserving sites of cultural and historical importance. The recognition by UNESCO underscores the need for sustainable tourism and conservation practices to protect these iconic landmarks for future generations.



Rescue Efforts Intensify in Colombia After 7.4-Magnitude Quake :-

Rescue operations continue in western Colombia following a 7.4-magnitude earthquake, with the death toll at 164 and expected to rise. The quake devastated cities like Pereira and Cali, collapsing buildings and causing significant casualties. Emergency teams, aided by police and volunteers, are searching for survivors in the rubble. In Cali, 85 people died, and a hospital was partially destroyed. President Abelardo De La Espriella has deployed security forces to maintain order amid reports of looting. The disaster recalls a 1999 quake that killed over 1,000 people in the same region.



India-China Border Trade via Nathu La Resumes :-



Magnitude-7.7 Earthquake Hits Indonesia, 20 Dead :-

A magnitude-7.7 earthquake struck off eastern Indonesia, resulting in at least 20 fatalities and several injuries, according to local rescue agencies. The quake, which occurred near the port town of Maumere, triggered tsunami waves under one meter high and caused significant structural damage. Rescue operations are ongoing, with efforts hampered by landslides and communication disruptions. The affected regions, including Nagekeo, experienced widespread power outages and evacuations. Indonesia, located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, frequently experiences seismic activity due to its tectonic setting.



Indian Community in Hong Kong Celebrates 80th Independence Day :-

The Indian community in Hong Kong celebrated India's 80th Independence Day with a gala evening reception organized by the Indian Association. The event was attended by Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu and India's Consul General Rajesh Naik. John Lee praised the Indian community's contributions to Hong Kong's socio-economic development, while Naik highlighted India's rapid economic growth and technological advancements. The celebration

underscored the strong bilateral ties between India and Hong Kong, particularly in trade and economic growth.



Syrian Court Sentences Bashar al-Assad to Death in Absentia :-

A court in Damascus has sentenced former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher al-Assad to death in absentia. The charges include crimes against humanity, murder, and systemic torture during Syria's civil war. Others convicted include Bashar al-Assad's cousin Atef Najib and several former regime officials. The charges encompass premeditated murder, intentional killing of children, arbitrary arrests, and torture. This verdict marks a significant legal development concerning the Assad regime's actions during the conflict.



Kushner to Meet Netanyahu After Talks with Hamas in Cairo :-

Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's envoy, is set to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following a rare meeting with Hamas officials in Cairo. The discussions are part of efforts to advance the U.S. president's Gaza peace plan, which includes the disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups. Kushner's meeting with Hamas marks his second known

interaction with the group. While Hamas has agreed to the plan, its implementation hinges on Israel meeting commitments such as withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu, facing re-election, has publicly rejected the plan.



ONGC Secures OFAC Licence for Venezuela Operations :-

ONGC has obtained a licence from the US Treasury's OFAC to resume full operations in Venezuela through ONGC Videsh. The company holds significant stakes in the San Cristóbal and Carabobo projects and aims to increase output from 12,000-15,000 barrels per day to 30,000 barrels per day within a year. ONGC is also seeking operatorship from PDVSA and expects to recover \$500–600 million in frozen dividends. This development lifts key sanctions barriers, allowing for expanded upstream activities in Venezuela.



Piyush Goyal Attends India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable :-

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is visiting Singapore from August 19 to 21, 2026, to participate in the 4th India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR). The visit aims to strengthen the India-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Goyal will engage with Singaporean leaders and participate in the India-Singapore Business Roundtable, followed by an MoU signing ceremony. An Indian business delegation of around 70 leaders is accompanying him to enhance economic ties. The visit includes Business-to-Business and Government-to-Business engagements, focusing on fostering partnerships and promoting investment.



UAE Suspends Trade with Iran After Missile Launch :-

The United Arab Emirates' defense ministry reported detecting two ballistic missiles launched from Iran, targeting maritime traffic. Both missiles landed in the sea. In response, the UAE suspended trade and financial transactions with Iran, citing threats to regional peace. The incident follows the expiration of a U.S.-Iranian peace talks window without resolution. The UAE's defense ministry affirmed readiness to address threats, while Iran dismissed the UAE's claims as baseless. The situation highlights ongoing tensions in the region.



China's LandSpace Achieves Reusable Rocket Milestone :-

Chinese startup LandSpace successfully recovered the first stage of its Zhuque-3 rocket, joining SpaceX and Blue Origin in achieving reusable rocket technology. The

Zhuque-3 rocket, made of stainless steel and running on methane and liquid oxygen, launched from the Dongfeng Commercial Space Innovation Pilot Zone. The booster landed in Gansu province, marking China's first successful ground-based recovery of an orbital-class booster. This achievement is expected to boost investor confidence as LandSpace seeks to expand its reusable launch services.



Ebola Cases in Congo Surpass 5,000 Amidst Health Challenges :-

The Democratic Republic of Congo's Ebola outbreak has exceeded 5,000 confirmed cases, marking it as the country's largest in history. The Bundibugyo species of Ebola, responsible for the outbreak, has no approved vaccines or treatments. The death toll has reached 2,378, surpassing previous records. Response efforts are hindered by weak health infrastructure and community resistance. The outbreak, declared on May 15, is now the second-worst globally, following the West Africa epidemic of 2014-2016.



India-Japan Defence Ministers Discuss Maritime Security :-

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi in New Delhi. The

meeting focused on enhancing maritime security, defence equipment, and technology collaboration under the Make-in-India initiative, as well as stability in the Indo-Pacific region. This visit follows Japan's revision of its Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology. Koizumi also visited the Western Naval Command in Mumbai, where he met with Indian naval officials and inspected naval facilities.



US-Canada Trade Tensions Rise with New Tariffs :-

The United States and Canada have failed to reach a trade agreement, leading the U.S. to impose 50% tariffs on Canadian imports worth \$20 billion. In response, Canada plans to retaliate with equivalent tariffs. This development follows unsuccessful negotiations in Washington and could impact Canada's economic recovery. The new tariffs add to existing U.S. tariffs on Canadian steel, lumber, and autos, potentially affecting broader trade negotiations between the two countries. The situation underscores the escalating trade tensions between these long-time allies.



Piyush Goyal to Lead Business Delegation to Japan :-

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will lead a 200-member business delegation to Japan. The visit aims to deepen trade and investment ties between

India and Japan, with engagements planned in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. The delegation includes representatives from sectors such as manufacturing, semiconductors, and clean energy. Goyal will meet with Japanese business leaders and government officials, and participate in roadshows and investor meetings, showcasing opportunities in India's markets. This visit is expected to boost bilateral cooperation in high-tech industries.



Israel Conducts Drone Strike in Southern Syria, Damascus Condemns :-

Israel targeted a 'terrorist' in southern Syria, resulting in a drone strike on a civilian vehicle near Damascus, according to Syria's foreign ministry. The incident, which injured one person, was described by Syria as a 'blatant violation' of its territory. This follows recent tensions, including an Israeli airbase bombing in northwest Syria. The Syrian government holds Israel accountable for the ongoing violations of its sovereignty. The Israeli military stated the strike was against a threat to its soldiers, though details on the method were not disclosed.



Iran Criticizes Upcoming US Sanctions Amidst Ongoing Tensions :-

Iran condemned the United States' plans to impose new sanctions, which could further strain its economy and affect key trading partners like China. The sanctions

announcement follows months of conflict between the US and Iran, with oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz nearly halted. Iran's Foreign Ministry labeled the sanctions as an overreach of US sovereignty. Tehran warned neighboring countries against supporting the US economic measures, threatening to consider them adversaries. The US aims to pressure Iran while observing developments in the ongoing conflict.



US Treasury Secretary Announces Economic Offensive Against Iran :-

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced an 'economic D-Day' against Iran, aiming to sever its economic lifelines. This move is part of the Trump administration's 'endgame' in its campaign against Iran. Bessent stated that the US aims to leverage all legal and administrative powers to isolate Tehran economically. In response, Iran warned of halting oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz if the US continues its economic measures. The heightened tensions underscore the ongoing geopolitical conflict between the US and Iran, with significant implications for global oil markets.



India Condemns Attack on UN Peacekeepers in South Sudan :-

India has condemned the attack on UN peacekeepers in South Sudan, emphasizing that targeting Blue Helmets

may constitute war crimes under international law. The attack, which occurred on August 24, 2026, resulted in the death of two peacekeepers and injuries to seven others. India called for an immediate investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice and reiterated the importance of respecting UN personnel's sanctity. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) also condemned the ambush, stressing the need for accountability and the safety of peacekeepers operating under UN Security Council mandates.



India-Russia Relations Strengthened by EAM Jaishankar's Visit :-

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, emphasizing the robust India-Russia partnership. Putin acknowledged the growing trade between the nations, attributing it to Prime Minister Modi's efforts. The meeting focused on energy, fertilizers, nuclear energy, and high-tech cooperation. Jaishankar co-chaired the 27th Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation. The visit underscores the deepening ties and ongoing collaboration in various sectors.



India and Seychelles Enhance Cooperation in Fisheries and Blue Economy :-

India and Seychelles have agreed to strengthen cooperation in fisheries, aquaculture, and the blue economy, focusing on sustainable marine resource management and scientific research. During a high-level meeting in New Delhi, both countries discussed collaboration in areas like marine aquaculture, tuna fisheries, and marine conservation. The agreement aims to promote socio-economic stability and food security in the Indian Ocean Region. India highlighted its fisheries sector growth and shared initiatives on sustainable management. The discussions emphasized digital transformation and emerging technologies in fisheries data systems.



Trump Sends Saudi Nuclear Deal to Congress with Israel Condition :-

President Donald Trump has sent a proposed civil nuclear energy agreement with Saudi Arabia to the U.S. Congress. The deal, which would allow U.S. companies to export civilian nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia, is contingent upon the kingdom normalizing relations with Israel. This condition aligns with the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab nations. The agreement, if not opposed by Congress within 90 session days, will go into effect. Critics have raised concerns about the deal's nonproliferation measures, as it does not prevent uranium enrichment or nuclear waste reprocessing.



India and China Agree to Continue Boundary Talks :-

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing to discuss the India-China boundary question. The meeting was part of the 25th round of Special Representatives Talks. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the resumption of people-to-people and cross-border exchanges. They agreed to continue working towards a political settlement of the boundary issue, guided by the strategic directions of their leaders. Maintaining peace and tranquillity in border areas was emphasized as crucial for bilateral relations. The talks also covered regional and international issues of mutual interest.



India Urges Protection of Food Supply Chains at UN Security Council :-

At a UN Security Council debate, India called for stronger international actions to safeguard global food security amid conflicts. Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish emphasized that food insecurity stems from conflict and instability, urging the Council to ensure humanitarian access and protect civilian infrastructure critical to food security. India advocated for early-warning systems to monitor disruptions in supply chains and stressed the importance of safeguarding maritime routes for food and

agricultural trade. The focus was also on developing resilient and climate-ready agricultural systems.



India Advocates Community-Led Rangeland Restoration at UNCCD CoP17 :-

At the UNCCD CoP17 in Ulaanbaatar, India called for a community-led approach to rangeland restoration. Union Minister Bhupender Yadav emphasized the role of pastoralists as custodians of ecosystems, combining traditional knowledge with modern science. India's rangelands support biodiversity, water regulation, and carbon cycles. The minister highlighted the use of satellite-based mapping for restoration planning and the importance of community conservation practices like Rajasthan's sacred groves. India aims to integrate landscape management and sustainable grazing with community participation in its restoration efforts.



India-New Zealand Strengthen Defence Ties in Wellington Dialogue :-

The 2nd India-New Zealand Defence Strategic Dialogue was held in Wellington. Co-chaired by Indian Joint Secretary Amitabh Prasad and New Zealand Deputy Secretary Richard Schmidt, the meeting advanced the Strategic Partnership Roadmap 2030. Key areas of focus included enhancing maritime security, joint military

training exercises, cross-service personnel exchanges, and defense staff college partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. This dialogue marks a significant step in deepening bilateral defense cooperation between the two nations.



India Showcases Snow Leopard Conservation at Russia-India Roundtable :-

India presented its advances in snow leopard conservation at the Russia-India Roundtable in Moscow. The meeting, organized by the A.N. Severtsov Institute and IBCA, focused on scientific tools for monitoring and conserving snow leopards. India's delegation highlighted progress in population estimation, radio telemetry, and genetic analysis. The roundtable facilitated knowledge exchange between India and Russia, emphasizing collaborative approaches to snow leopard research. The partnership aims to strengthen international cooperation in conservation efforts, enhancing scientific expertise and monitoring capabilities.

10: Miscellaneous



MoSPI Adopts PPI for GDP Deflation in India :-

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will replace the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) with the Output Producer Price Index (PPI) as the GDP deflator for quarterly and annual estimates starting from the April-June 2026-27 quarter. This change, with a new GDP base year of 2022-23, aims to better reflect production costs and align with international standards. The PPI, introduced by DPIIT in June 2026, measures price changes received by producers. The double deflation method will enhance the accuracy of real GDP calculations, strengthening India's economic data integrity.



Commemorative Stamp Honors Satish Gujral's Birth Centenary :-

The Department of Posts issued a commemorative postage stamp celebrating the birth centenary of Satish Gujral, an eminent artist, sculptor, and architect born on 25 December 1925. Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia unveiled the stamp at Bikaner House, New Delhi. The stamp, designed by Anuj Kumar with inputs from Raseel Gujral Ansal, features Gujral's 2010 acrylic self-portrait. Limited-edition collectible sets of 25 and 100 stamps have been released, with an exhibition of these collectibles at Bikaner House. This initiative highlights Gujral's significant contributions to Indian art and architecture.



Raipur Schoolgirls Represent Chhattisgarh at BRICS 2026 with Rainwater Project :-

In a significant achievement, two schoolgirls from Raipur, Vartika Patil and Umeshwari Sahu, represented Chhattisgarh at the BRICS 2026 competition with their innovative rainwater harvesting project. The students, from P.G. Umathe Vidyalaya, showcased a project titled 'Building Sponge City Together,' which is based on the concept of rainwater harvesting and sustainable urban water management. This competition saw participation from students across six Indian states, with Patil and Sahu being the sole representatives from Chhattisgarh.



MHA Issues Guidelines for Renewable Projects Near Borders :-

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued guidelines for renewable energy projects near India's borders, including solar, wind, and hybrid projects. The guidelines apply to areas near the International Border, Line of Control (LoC), and Line of Actual Control (LAC) in J&K, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. A ban is enforced within 1 km of these borders, with mandatory security clearance within 50 km and a Ministry of Defence No Objection Certificate required within 20 km of the

International Border. Developers must bear security costs, including anti-drone systems.



US States Proclaim August 15 as 'India Day' :-

Several US states, including Delaware, New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, have issued proclamations to commemorate August 15, 2026, as 'India Day' to mark India's Independence Day. These proclamations highlight the contributions of the Indian-American community to the US and celebrate India's heritage and diversity. The proclamations encourage citizens to celebrate India Day and recognize the enduring ties between the US and India. Across the US, events such as flag-hoisting ceremonies and cultural performances are held annually to celebrate India's Independence Day.



India-Bangladesh Friendship Rooted in People-to-People Ties :-

Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi emphasized the significance of people-to-people ties as the core of India-Bangladesh relations. Celebrating India's 80th Independence Day in Dhaka, Trivedi highlighted the shared aspirations and mutual goodwill between the two nations. He noted the intertwined roots of their freedom struggles and the flourishing bilateral relations based on shared history and respect. Trivedi called for continued

partnership across key sectors and urged the Indian community in Bangladesh to remain integral to India's progress.



BSNL Launches Digital Initiatives and Offers for Independence Day :-

BSNL announced new digital initiatives and special offers on India's 80th Independence Day to enhance connectivity and customer experience. The telecom company plans to deploy over 26,300 additional 4G BTS sites nationwide and introduced the Re 1 Freedom 2.0 offer, providing 1 GB data and unlimited calls for 24 days. BSNL also launched the Fibre Freedom broadband plan and revamped its Selfcare app. These initiatives aim to expand BSNL's network and improve service quality, supporting the Make in India initiative.



NTA Overhauls Exam System, Removes 50 Staff Members :-

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has initiated an overhaul of its examination system, removing over 50 staff members and advertising ten leadership positions. This move follows errors in the UGC-NET exam papers, prompting a re-test for three subjects. The Education Ministry, led by Minister Pralhad Joshi, is overseeing reforms to improve exam protocols, including

cybersecurity and psychometrics. The NTA is conducting a comprehensive audit of exam processes to ensure strict compliance and enhance the confidentiality of operations. The re-tests for UGC-NET are scheduled for September 9 and 10.



CYBER KUSHTI 2026 Hackathon Launched :-

The National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), under MeitY, launched the CYBER KUSHTI 2026 hackathon. This national cyber-security and AI competition is linked to the NCCDFI 2026 and is open to Indian students and researchers aged 16 and above. Participants can register for free until September 10, forming teams of three. The hackathon consists of three levels, culminating in a final event in New Delhi on October 9, with a valedictory ceremony on October 10.



Govt Restricts Chlorpheniramine-Phenylephrine FDCs for Children Under Four :-

The Indian government has restricted the manufacture and sale of fixed-dose combinations containing Chlorpheniramine Maleate and Phenylephrine Hydrochloride for children below four years. This decision, based on recommendations from an Expert Committee and the Drugs Technical Advisory Board, aims to protect young children's health. Manufacturers must

display a warning on product labels against use in this age group. The notification extends previous restrictions and follows Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, emphasizing safer alternatives for children.



Health Ministry Proposes Changes to Medical Devices Rules for Easier Compliance :-

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has proposed amendments to the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, to simplify regulatory requirements and speed up market access. Key changes include allowing manufacturers to use outsourced sterilisation facilities without a separate licence and standardising testing fees. The European Union is now recognised as a stringent regulatory jurisdiction, potentially waiving clinical investigation requirements for certain devices. These reforms aim to lower compliance costs and

improve transparency, promoting ease of doing business in India's medical device sector.



PMFME Bazaar Highlights India's Grassroots Food Entrepreneurs :-

The PMFME Bazaar, organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, showcased India's micro food processing enterprises, including makhana-based products from Bihar and tofu innovations from Maharashtra. Held at the India Habitat Centre, the event featured exhibitors from 25 states, promoting local ingredients and traditional practices. The Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme supports these businesses with financial and technical aid. The Bazaar provided a platform for entrepreneurs to connect with buyers and expand their market reach.

11: National



Union Environment Ministry Reissues Western Ghats ESA Draft :-

The Union Environment Ministry reissued the seventh draft notification for an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) in the Western Ghats, covering 56,825.7 sq. km across six states. This move aims to protect the global biodiversity hotspot, home to diverse forests, grasslands, and rivers. Under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, the ESA prohibits mining, quarrying, and new thermal plants, while regulating hydropower and certain industries. The draft specifies state-wise coverage, including Karnataka (20,668 sq. km), Maharashtra (17,340 sq. km), and Kerala (9,993.7 sq. km).



FSSAI Suspends Dior Pharmaceuticals' Licence for GMP Violations :-

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has suspended the nutraceutical licence of Dior Pharmaceuticals following an inspection that revealed significant violations of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) at its Punjab facility. The inspection noted deficiencies in infrastructure, sanitation, pest control, storage, and personnel hygiene. As a result, Dior Pharmaceuticals has been ordered to halt all manufacturing at the site until full compliance with safety and quality standards is verified.



Brookfield Launches \$600 Million Lumara Renewable Platform in India :-

Brookfield Asset Management has launched a new renewable energy platform named Lumara in India, with plans to invest approximately \$600 million in solar, wind, and battery storage projects. Lumara will begin with an initial portfolio exceeding 6 GW capacity, funded through Brookfield's Catalytic Transition Fund. The initiative aims to address ongoing issues related to power purchase agreements (PPAs), grid connections, and land acquisition in India. With existing investments of over \$32 billion across sectors in India, Brookfield continues

to expand its renewable energy footprint, contributing to the country's sustainable energy goals.



Glaw Lake Designated India's 101st Ramsar Site :-

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav announced the designation of Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh as India's 101st Ramsar Site. This significant designation, a first for the state, highlights the lake's ecological importance. Located within the Kamlang Tiger Reserve, the freshwater wetland supports over 150 tree and 49 orchid species. The Ramsar status, under the 1971 Convention, will enhance the protection of this site, promoting biodiversity conservation, water security, and sustainable livelihoods. This recognition underscores the need for preserving vital ecosystems across India.



Railways Reform Container Train Operator Licences :-

The Ministry of Railways has approved reforms to the Model Concession Agreement for Container Train Operators, introducing a single All India Licence and removing route-specific restrictions. A uniform non-refundable registration fee of ₹25 crore has been set. The initial concession period remains 20 years, with a zero-fee extension possible based on performance. Existing Category I operators can continue until their term ends and migrate free of charge at renewal.

Operators in Categories II, III, and IV may switch early or renew by paying a differential fee of ₹15 crore.



HAL Airport Implements RNP CAT H Helicopter Approach :-

HAL Airport has become the first in India to operationalise the Required Navigation Performance – Category H (RNP CAT H) satellite-guided helicopter procedure. Developed by the Airports Authority of India and validated by HAL test pilots, this procedure has been approved by the DGCA. It enables precise and optimised paths in challenging weather, urban obstacles, and dense traffic, reducing approach time from approximately 12 minutes to 4 minutes. This advancement supports around 50 daily helicopter movements, benefiting air ambulance, disaster response, corporate, and defence operations.



Parliament Passes 12 Bills Amid Monsoon Session Disruptions :-

During the Monsoon Session, Parliament passed 12 bills despite disruptions and low productivity. Key legislation includes the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, aimed at enhancing examination integrity, and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, which extends

protection to Vande Mataram. Other notable bills address MSME development, banking records, and tribunal reforms. The session, lasting from July 20 to August 14, also involved discussions on taxation and cooperative development.



PM Modi Announces Free Online Coaching for Competitive Exams :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a new initiative to provide free online coaching for various competitive exams. The announcement, made during his address from the Red Fort, aims to alleviate the financial burden on poor and middle-class families. Modi emphasized that the cost of coaching classes has become a significant concern for many families, and this initiative will help them save money while keeping parents closer to their children. The program will leverage India's digital infrastructure and teaching talent to create a comprehensive network for free coaching.



India Post Conducts First Drone Delivery of Tiranga in Himachal Pradesh :-

India Post achieved a milestone by executing its first drone delivery of the National Flag, Tiranga, from Mandi Head Post Office to Rehardhar Branch Post Office in Himachal Pradesh. The initiative was virtually

inaugurated by Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, who highlighted the symbolic journey of the Tiranga as representing a new India overcoming geographical barriers. The drone delivery, part of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, aims to enhance connectivity using emerging technologies. This initiative is part of a broader plan to implement drone-based mail transmission across 150 routes in Himachal Pradesh and Assam.



Suryapath Tiranga Initiative Marks Independence Day Celebrations :-

The 'Suryapath Tiranga' initiative marked India's 80th Independence Day by symbolically relaying the Tricolour across the globe. Starting at the Indian High Commission in Canberra, the flag journeyed westward, with Indian missions hoisting the Tricolour as daylight progressed. This initiative, part of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, aims to highlight the participation of Indian missions and the global Indian community in Independence Day celebrations. The Ministry of Culture launched this initiative to encourage citizens to hoist the national flag and participate in community activities.



Parliament Approves Renaming of Kerala to Keralam :-

The Indian Parliament has passed the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, which proposes changing the state's name from Kerala to Keralam in the Constitution's First Schedule. The Rajya Sabha approved the bill following its passage in the Lok Sabha. Minister of State for Home,

Nityanand Rai, highlighted that the Kerala Legislative Assembly had previously passed a resolution in 2024 requesting this change. The state is traditionally referred to as Keralam in Malayalam, while the Constitution currently uses Kerala.



India Hosts 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting :-

India is hosting the 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, chaired by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav. The event, held under India's BRICS Chairship 2026 theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability', includes discussions on climate change and sustainable development. The meeting provides a platform for ministers, senior officers, and experts from BRICS nations to strengthen environmental cooperation and build consensus on pressing global environmental issues.



India's First Virtual Zoo Opens in Indore :-

India's first virtual zoo was inaugurated at Kamala Nehru Prani Sangrahalaya in Indore. This 8,000 sq ft facility, developed as a ₹4.5 crore public-private partnership project, offers a technology-based immersive wildlife experience without live animals. Features include a 3-D dome theatre, 14-D cinema with moving seats and environmental effects, and a digital jungle safari. The zoo is open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10 AM to 6 PM, with 16 shows per day. The entry fee is ₹70.



High Court Bench to be Established in Ladakh :-

The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of a High Court Bench in Ladakh, a decision welcomed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. This move aims to improve access to justice for residents in the Union Territory's remote areas by reducing the time needed to access legal services. The initiative is part of the government's commitment to the all-round development of Ladakh and ensuring constitutional safeguards. The new Bench will be part of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, enhancing legal accessibility for Ladakh's citizens.



EPFO Launches Employees' Enrolment Campaign 2026 :-

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has initiated the Employees' Enrolment Campaign, 2026 (EEC 2026), to bring eligible employees under the EPF coverage. Effective from June 29, 2026, the campaign targets employees excluded from EPF between April 1, 2009, and March 31, 2026, and will run until October 31, 2026. It offers relaxations for employers to regularize past compliance, including waiving the employee's share of contributions if not previously deducted. Employers are encouraged to enroll eligible employees through an online mechanism, generating a Universal Account Number via the UMANG App.



Cyber Experts Warn Against 'Rent-a-Boyfriend' Scam :-

Cyber experts have raised alarms over a new 'rent-a-boyfriend' scam targeting women on social media platforms. The scam involves enticing offers for companionship services, leading victims to private messaging platforms where they are asked for money under various pretexts. The Hyderabad Cyber Crime Cell has reported 24 complaints since January 2026, with losses amounting to Rs 3.5 lakh. Experts caution against sharing personal information and emphasize the importance of vigilance to avoid falling prey to such fraudulent schemes.



Kailash Mansarovar Yatra 2026 Successfully Concludes :-

The 2026 Kailash Mansarovar Yatra concluded with the final batches of pilgrims returning to India via the Nathu La route in Sikkim and the Lipulekh route in Uttarakhand. A total of 941 pilgrims participated this year, with 464 traveling through Sikkim and 477 through Uttarakhand. The pilgrimage, organized by the Ministry of External Affairs, is a significant spiritual journey for Hindus and Buddhists. The successful completion is expected to boost tourism in Sikkim and Uttarakhand. Pilgrims expressed gratitude to the Indian government and various agencies for their support.



PM Modi to Address Athletes in 'Khelo India Dialogue' :

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to address young athletes and youth leaders during the 'Khelo India Dialogue' on August 27, marking National Sports Day 2026. The initiative will involve over 1,500 educational institutions, focusing on strengthening the sports ecosystem, talent nurturing for the 2036 Olympics, and youth leadership. Prominent athletes like Saina Nehwal and Mary Kom will engage with participants, sharing their experiences. The program aims to integrate youth aspirations with policymaking and enhance India's sports and youth development agenda.



Launch of Kanda Express for Onion Transport :-

The Indian government launched the Kanda Express to transport onions from Nashik to major cities like Delhi, Chennai, Kochi, and Guwahati. This initiative was triggered by a significant rise in onion prices, with the national average retail price reaching ₹42/kg. The government, through NAFED and NCCF, procured approximately 1.2 lakh tonnes for buffer stock, raising procurement prices to ₹2,645/quintal. This measure aims to address the 5–7% decline in Maharashtra's kharif onion output and stabilize prices.



India Post Launches Upgraded Dak MITRA and Dak Sewa Apps :-

The Department of Posts has launched upgraded versions of the Dak MITRA and Dak Sewa mobile applications, along with inaugurating 14 renovated post office buildings. This initiative aims to modernize postal services and enhance last-mile delivery. The upgraded Dak MITRA app, developed by the Centre for Excellence in Postal Technology, serves over 1.4 lakh Branch Post Offices, enabling paperless and real-time transactions. The Dak Sewa app provides citizens access to various postal services in 23 Indian languages. These developments are part of the DoP IT 2.0 modernization programme to make India Post more efficient.



India Introduces Non-GMO Popcorn Maize Hybrid :-

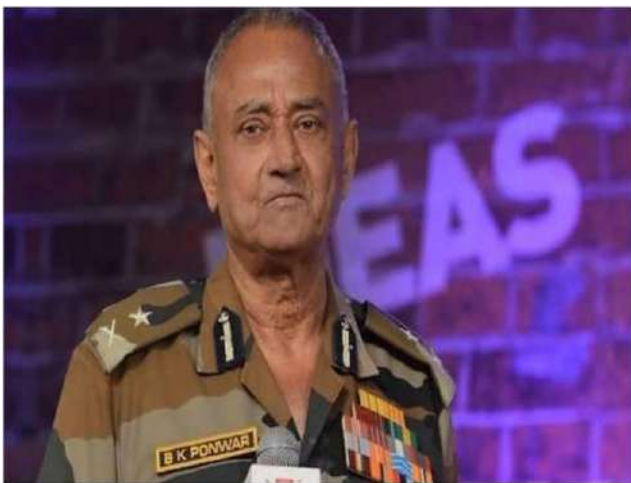
India has launched its first non-GMO high-expansion popcorn maize hybrid seed, unveiled by Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan in Andhra Pradesh. Developed by ICAR-Indian Institute of Maize Research and Gourmet Popcornica, the hybrid seed uses conventional breeding methods to produce a larger popped volume. This initiative aligns with the preference for non-GMO hybrids in food processing. Andhra Pradesh, a major maize-producing state, hosted the launch event, highlighting the state's role in advancing agricultural innovation.

12: Obituaries



Former Uttarakhand Minister Hira Singh Bisht Passes Away :-

Former Uttarakhand minister Hira Singh Bisht passed away due to cardiac arrest at the age of 85. A senior Congress leader, Bisht was a three-term MLA and served under former Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari, holding portfolios such as transport and labour. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Cricket Association of Uttarakhand and played a key role in securing land for the Raipur Cricket Stadium. Bisht's contributions to state politics and sports infrastructure in Uttarakhand are remembered as significant milestones in the region's development.



Brigadier Basant Kumar Ponwar Passes Away at 77 :-

Brigadier (Retd) Basant Kumar Ponwar, a distinguished veteran and founder of the Counter Terrorism and Jungle Warfare College in Kanker, Chhattisgarh, has passed away at the age of 77 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. Commissioned in December 1969 into the 1st Battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry, Brigadier Ponwar was a veteran of the 1971 Indo-Pak War. He served as the Commandant of the Army's Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram and played a key role in the inaugural Indo-US Yudh Abhyas exercise in 2004. His contributions to military training were recognized with the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.



Justice M.S. Liberhan Passes Away at 87 :-

Justice Manmohan Singh Liberhan, former Chief Justice of the Madras and Andhra Pradesh High Courts, passed away aged 87. Born on 11 November 1938 near Chandigarh, he began his legal career at the Punjab and Haryana High Court in 1964. He is notably remembered for chairing the Liberhan Commission, established to investigate the Babri Masjid demolition. The Commission's report, submitted after 17 years, described the demolition as a meticulously planned act. Justice Liberhan's contributions to Indian judiciary and his role in one of India's significant investigations are widely recognized.



Veteran actor Pradeep Rawat of 'Ghajini', 'Lagaan' fame passes away after battle with cancer, :-

Veteran Indian actor Pradeep Rawat, celebrated for his powerful villainous performances in films such as Ghajini, Lagaan, Sye, and numerous Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi films, passed away at the age of 74 after a prolonged battle with blood cancer. His death was confirmed by his manager, and tributes poured in from across the Indian film industry. Rawat began his acting career on television with B.R. Chopra's iconic serial Mahabharat, where he portrayed Ashwatthama, before establishing himself as one of Indian cinema's most memorable screen villains.



Former Tripura Governor Dr D Y Patil passes away at 90

Former Tripura Governor and renowned educationist Dr. Dnyandeo Yashwantrao (D. Y.) Patil passed away in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, at the age of 90 after age-related health complications. A recipient of the Padma Shri (1991), Dr. Patil was widely respected for his immense contribution to education, healthcare, and public service. He served as the Governor of Tripura (2009–2013), later becoming the Governor of Bihar (2013–2014) and also holding the additional charge of Governor of West Bengal for a brief period.



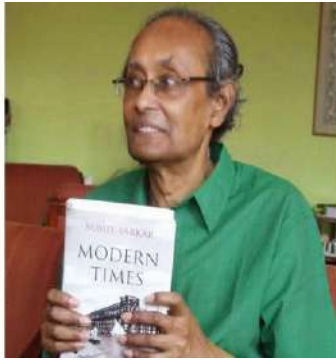
Messi's father Jorge dies aged 68 after illness :-

Jorge Messi, the father and longtime representative of Argentine football legend Lionel Messi, died at the age of 68 in Rosario, Argentina, following a prolonged illness. Jorge Messi had been closely involved in his son's career from the beginning. He supported Lionel during his formative years at Newell's Old Boys in Rosario and remained an important figure as Messi moved to Barcelona and eventually became one of football's most decorated players. His influence extended beyond football, as he handled many aspects of Lionel's professional and business affairs.



Former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji passes away from illness :-

Former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, one of the most influential architects of China's economic transformation, died in Beijing after an illness. Zhu served as China's Premier from 1998 to 2003, during a crucial period of economic liberalisation and rapid integration with the global economy. Earlier, he had served as Shanghai's mayor and Communist Party chief and as Vice Premier. He was known for tackling inflation, reforming state-owned enterprises and strengthening fiscal and financial regulation.



Noted historian Sumit Sarkar passes away at 87 in Delhi

Renowned historian Professor Sumit Sarkar, one of the most influential scholars of modern Indian history, died in Delhi. Reports said he had been unwell for some time. Sarkar was particularly recognised for his scholarship on Indian nationalism, the freedom movement, social history and the Swadeshi movement. He taught history at the University of Delhi for several decades and played an important role in shaping post-independence Indian historiography. His influential works include *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908*, *Modern India: 1885–1947*, and *Writing Social History*.



Maj Gen Sunil Kumar Razdan Legendary Paratrooper Passed Away :-

Major General Sunil Kumar Razdan (Retd), Kirti Chakra and Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) awardee, passed away at the age of 71, leaving behind a remarkable legacy in the Indian Army. He served with the 7th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (7 PARA) and became particularly renowned for his extraordinary bravery during a counter-terrorist operation in Jammu and Kashmir in 1994. During the operation, then Lieutenant Colonel Razdan led an assault to rescue young women being held hostage by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists. Despite sustaining

multiple gunshot wounds that left him permanently paraplegic, he survived and continued his military career with exceptional determination. His story became especially significant because he eventually rose to the rank of Major General and became the Indian Army's first wheelchair-borne General.



Former Bengal Dy Speaker Asish Banerjee found dead in TMC office :-

Former West Bengal Assembly Deputy Speaker and veteran Trinamool Congress leader Asish Banerjee was found dead at a TMC party office near his residence in Rampurhat, Birbhum. Police recovered a purported suicide note from the office and sent his body for post-mortem examination. Banerjee was a five-time MLA from Rampurhat and had served as a minister as well as Deputy Speaker of the West Bengal Assembly. He had lost the 2026 Assembly election to BJP's Dhruv Saha and subsequently resigned as chairman of the TMC's Birbhum district core committee. Reports say the note expressed regret over entering politics and denied involvement in corruption.



Former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar Passes Away :-

Sajjan Kumar, a former Congress MP, passed away at the age of 80 while serving life sentences related to the 1984

anti-Sikh riots. Kumar represented the Outer Delhi Lok Sabha constituency in 1980, 1991, and 2004. He was awarded life imprisonment by the Delhi High Court in December 2018 for the murder of five Sikhs and the burning of a gurdwara. His death occurred at Safdarjung Hospital after being transferred from Tihar Jail.



Legendary Hollywood Actor Tim Curry Dies At 80 :-

British actor Tim Curry, one of the most distinctive and versatile performers of his generation, died peacefully at his home in Los Angeles aged 80. Curry achieved international fame through his unforgettable portrayal of Dr Frank-N-Furter in The Rocky Horror Show, first on stage in 1973 and then in the landmark 1975 film The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Curry played the terrifying Pennywise the Clown in the 1990 television adaptation of Stephen King's It, while other notable film

appearances included Clue, Legend, Annie and Home Alone 2: Lost in New York. On Broadway, he received three Tony Award nominations, demonstrating his range across musical theatre, drama and comedy.



Country Music Superstar Dolly Parton Dies at 80 :-

Country music legend Dolly Parton died at the age of 80, in Nashville, Tennessee, bringing an end to a career that spanned more than six decades. Born on January 19, 1946, in Sevier County, Tennessee, Parton grew up in a large family with limited financial means before pursuing music in Nashville. She became nationally known through her work with country singer Porter Wagoner and subsequently established herself as a successful solo artist and songwriter. Her enormous catalogue included classics such as "Jolene," "9 to 5," "Coat of Many Colors" and "I Will Always Love You."

13: Ranks & Reports



India Climbs to 57th on Market Distortions Performance Index :-

India has made a significant leap in the Market Distortions Performance Index, moving from 82nd to 57th position as per a report. The index assesses countries based on the protection of property rights, domestic and international competition. India's progress is attributed to reforms implemented between 2010 and 2023, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code in 2016. The report, titled 'India's Next Growth Frontier,' highlights the impact of these reforms on reducing anti-competitive distortions and aligns with the objectives of the Competition Act 2002 and the Competition Commission of India.



July 2026 GST Collections Reach ₹2.11 Lakh Crore :-

India's gross GST collections for July 2026 reached ₹2.11 lakh crore, marking a 15.4% increase year-on-year. Domestic GST collections stood at ₹1.45 lakh crore, reflecting a 10.1% growth, while GST on imports soared by 28.8% to ₹66,511 crore. After refunds, net GST collections amounted to ₹1.81 lakh crore, a 15.8% rise. Refunds during this period totaled ₹29,968 crore. For the April-July period of FY 2026-27, gross collections accumulated to ₹8.43 lakh crore, a 10.1% increase from the previous year. Haryana, Gujarat, and Telangana were among the states showing significant growth in collections.



Punjab Tops NITI Aayog School Education Index :-

Punjab has achieved the first rank in the NITI Aayog School Education Quality Index 2026, surpassing other states including Kerala. The state improved from 27th position in 2020, with 82% proficiency in Class III language skills and 78% in mathematics. Infrastructure upgrades were made in 19,125 schools, costing approximately ₹2,638 crore, with 80% of classrooms now smart. The PACE initiative led to a significant rise in NEET-UG qualifiers from government schools. Punjab also became the first state to introduce Artificial Intelligence as a core subject from Classes I to XII.



NBA Releases Rs 15.52 Crore for Mustard Genetic Resources :-

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) has distributed Rs 15.52 crore in Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) proceeds from M/s Pioneer Overseas Corporation for developing mustard hybrid varieties using India's biological resources. The funds will be allocated among 26 State Biodiversity Boards and three Union Territory Biodiversity Councils based on mustard cultivation areas. Rajasthan received the largest share at Rs 6.43 crore. The proceeds will support biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and community livelihoods under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.



U.S. Demands Transparency in Pakistan's Military Budget :-

The U.S. State Department's Fiscal Transparency Report has called for Pakistan to subject its military and intelligence budgets to civilian oversight. The report highlights three major issues: lack of parliamentary review, hidden liabilities tied to state-owned enterprises, and delayed budget publications. This comes amidst Pakistan's proposed 17.65% increase in its defense budget, raising concerns about financial transparency. The U.S. is pressuring Pakistan to ensure accountability in military spending, especially as Pakistan seeks financial support from international bodies.



SBI Research Estimates India's Q1 FY27 GDP Growth at 8% :-

SBI Research has estimated India's GDP growth at 8% for the first quarter of FY27, surpassing the Reserve Bank of India's projection of 7%. The report highlights robust consumption and demand indicators, reflecting the resilience of the Indian economy. It notes satisfactory industrial growth and encouraging signs in the services sector, except for freight and passenger traffic, supporting the prospect of impressive economic growth in the first quarter.



Defence Ministry Releases Sixth Positive Indigenisation List :-

The Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, has announced the sixth Positive Indigenisation List, featuring 405 defence items with a business potential of Rs 3,070 crore. The list includes components for platforms like Advanced Light Helicopters, Su-30MKI aircraft, and missile systems. The initiative aims to promote self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, encouraging domestic industry participation, especially MSMEs. The SRIJAN Defence Portal has facilitated the indigenisation of over 15,700 items, leading to significant import substitution.



India Launches Guide to Grasslands at UNCCD COP17 :-

India launched its first-ever Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems at the UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia. The guide highlights the ecological, economic, and social importance of India's grasslands, savannas, and deserts. It aims to strengthen the conservation and sustainable management of these ecosystems, often overlooked due to limited tree cover. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav emphasized the need for science-based conservation of open natural ecosystems. The guide covers India's diverse ecosystems and their role in biodiversity, carbon storage, and sustaining livelihoods.



Over 6,000 School Vehicles Found Unfit in Uttar Pradesh

The Uttar Pradesh Transport Department has identified 6,066 school vehicles as unfit during safety inspections as part of campaigns like 'Mission Safe Future'. Notices were issued against these vehicles, with 1,072 vehicles receiving challans and 356 being impounded. The department is conducting fitness checks and verifying the character of drivers transporting students. Uttar Pradesh has 82,259 school vehicles, with character verification completed for 27,066 drivers. The aim is to ensure safe transportation for schoolchildren and enforce action against vehicles and drivers violating regulations.



Countries Lag in Land Restoration Commitments: IUCN Report :-

A report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reveals that countries have restored only 124.3 million hectares of land, far below the pledged 1.2 billion hectares under UN-backed efforts. This represents just 10.4% of commitments aimed at reversing land degradation. The report was released ahead of a UN meeting in Mongolia focused on combating drought and desertification. The IUCN highlights the need for increased investment in land restoration to address biodiversity loss and generate economic benefits, with the situation particularly severe in Mongolia.



CMLRE Releases Report on Indian EEZ Fishery Resources

The Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences has released the 'National Report on Deep-Sea and Distant-Water Fishery Resources of the Indian EEZ'. This report, unveiled during CMLRE's Silver Jubilee celebrations, provides a comprehensive assessment of marine resources and ecosystems, supporting India's Blue Economy. Based on extensive oceanographic research and surveys, it highlights the biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management within India's 2.37 million square kilometre Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).



India Rejects UNCERD Report, Defends Record on Racial Discrimination :-

India has dismissed the recent United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) report as 'politically motivated' and 'malicious'. During the 11th periodic review under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in Geneva, India highlighted its constitutional safeguards and legal frameworks against racial discrimination. The Indian delegation, led by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, refuted what it termed 'sweeping generalizations' in the report. India remains committed to combating racial discrimination and plans to respond to the committee's observations through established procedures.



Sarnath Added to UNESCO World Heritage List :-

The Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, bringing India's total to 45 sites. Known for its association with Gautama Buddha's first sermon, Sarnath includes significant monuments like the Dhamek Stupa and the Ashokan Pillar. The site spans from the 4th century BCE to the 12th century CE and was recognized for its outstanding universal value. The inscription process involved an 18-month evaluation by UNESCO's advisory bodies, culminating at the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea.

14: Schemes & Committees



Kerala Launches Digital Square Education Initiative :-

Kerala launched the Digital Square initiative as part of its 100-day education action plan. Spearheaded by General Education Minister N. Samsudheen, this initiative aims to enhance digital learning in government schools using FOSS-based educational tools. It incorporates accessibility features for visually impaired students and includes projects like the Cyber Safety Protocol 2026 and School Wiki-thon. The initiative reflects Kerala's commitment to integrating technology in education, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students, and preparing them for a digital future.



Delhi Approves Lakshmi Yojana for Women's Empowerment :-

The Delhi Cabinet, under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, has approved the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana, a significant step towards women's empowerment. This scheme will provide ₹2,500 monthly financial assistance to eligible women through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

With a budget allocation of ₹5,110 crore for the fiscal year 2026–27, it aims to benefit over 17 lakh women in the capital. The registration portal will open on August 1, 2026, and eligibility criteria include being a Delhi resident aged 21–60 years with a family income of less than or equal to ₹2.5 lakh.



Chhattisgarh Launches DWEPTI Yojana for Renewable Energy :-

Chhattisgarh has launched the DWEPTI Yojana, India's first women-led distributed renewable energy policy, aiming to establish 5,000 women-led solar enterprises and create 50,000 green jobs. Implemented under the PMSGMBY with CSPDCL, the initiative targets clean energy access for 5 lakh families and solar solutions for 10,000 public institutions. The program empowers women through Self-Help Groups, offering flexible loans and linkage with the Lakhpati Didi initiative. Kabirdham district leads the implementation, with 'Solar Didis' trained by Tata in solar installation and maintenance.



Cabinet Approves Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana

The Union Cabinet has approved the Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY), a significant initiative aimed at boosting solar energy capacity in India. With an outlay of ₹5,070 crore, the program targets the development of 5,000 MW of floating solar projects, complemented by 10,000 MWh of energy storage. The implementation period spans from FY 2026-27 to 2030-31. The scheme offers central assistance of ₹1 crore per MW and up to ₹50 lakh for feasibility studies. Floating solar projects are advantageous as they conserve land, reduce water evaporation, and enhance efficiency. India's current floating solar capacity is approximately 700 MW, against an estimated potential of 102 GWp.



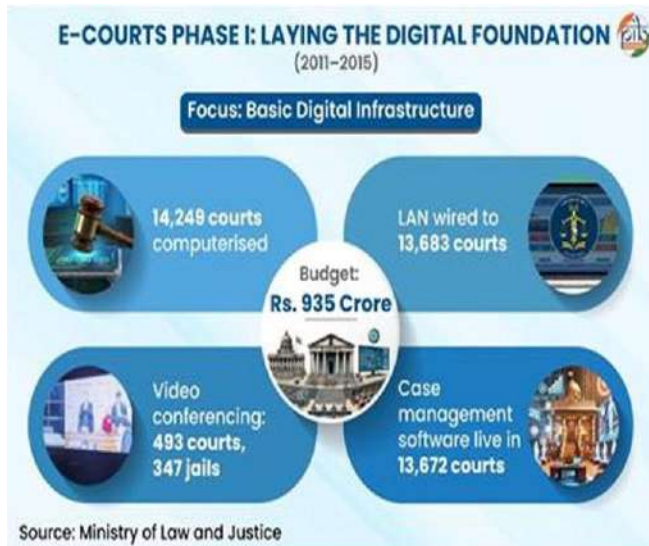
India Launches E-Samudra to Enhance Maritime Governance :-

India has launched E-Samudra, a digital platform aimed at transforming maritime governance by consolidating services for seafarers, shipping companies, and ports under a single digital window. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the platform in Mumbai, emphasizing its role in making maritime administration more transparent and technology-driven. E-Samudra is part of India's efforts to strengthen the safety and welfare of its seafarers, who have grown to over 3.23 lakh. The platform will provide end-to-end workflows, online payments, and real-time tracking, enhancing the maritime sector's efficiency.



Delhi Lakshmi Yojana Registrations Surpass 5 Lakh :-

The Delhi government's Delhi Lakshmi Yojana (DLY) has seen registrations exceed five lakh within a week of its launch, indicating a strong response. The scheme, initially named Mahila Samridhi Yojana, focuses on women's dignity and economic empowerment. It offers two financial options: a monthly Rs 1,000 credited to a CBDC wallet and Rs 1,500 in an RD/FD account, or the entire Rs 2,500 in an RD/FD. A digital negative list ensures funds are used for essential needs. The initiative aims to



e-Courts Mission Transforms India's Judicial System :-

India's judicial system is undergoing a significant technological transformation through the e-Courts Mission Mode Project. Since its inception in 2007, the project has fundamentally changed how courts function and how citizens interact with the judiciary. The transformation has been implemented in phases. The ongoing third phase, which runs from 2023 to 2027, aims to create digital, paperless, and intelligent courts. It emphasizes large-scale digitization of records, wider adoption of virtual hearings, interoperability among justice institutions, and the use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, analytics, and Optical Character Recognition.

provide immediate financial assistance and long-term security for women.



India Launches ₹10,000 Crore Container Manufacturing Scheme :-

The Indian government has announced a ₹10,000 crore Container Manufacturing Assistance Scheme (CMAS) to boost domestic production of shipping containers. Aimed at reducing import dependence and enhancing trade resilience, the scheme will provide financial support for new and existing manufacturing facilities. The initiative targets an annual production capacity of 7.5 lakh TEUs and is part of broader efforts to strengthen India's maritime infrastructure under programs like PM Gati Shakti and the Sagarmala Programme. The scheme is expected to generate significant employment in the container manufacturing and allied sectors.



Agriculture Scholarship Payments Launched via NSP-DBT :-

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has launched scholarship and fellowship payments through the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) using Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). At an event held at ICAR-IARI, Pusa, over 6,000 agriculture students received ₹21.35 crore in scholarships. This initiative aims to provide faster, transparent, and seamless fund transfers directly into

students' bank accounts, reducing delays that previously disrupted studies. The minister emphasized the importance of practical farm and research training to develop skilled farmers and agri-entrepreneurs.



PM Modi Unveils 'Shakti Ki Saptadhara' for India's Growth :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced 'Shakti Ki Saptadhara', a framework of seven pillars to drive India's growth towards Viksit Bharat 2047. The pillars include manufacturing, agriculture, technology, connectivity, defence production, green energy, and soft power. Modi emphasized the need for India to become a reliable hub in global supply chains, expand its agricultural exports, and lead in technological innovation. The initiative also focuses on enhancing infrastructure connectivity and achieving self-reliance in defence. Green energy and the blue economy are highlighted as future growth areas.



PM Modi Launches Nationwide Sports Talent Hunt for 2036 Olympics :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide sports talent identification campaign for children aged 5 to 15, aiming to prepare for India's potential bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games. During his Independence Day address, PM Modi emphasized the need to expand

India's participation in Olympic sports, noting that India currently does not participate or qualify in nearly two-thirds of the events. The campaign will focus on identifying and training young athletes, with special attention to talented girls.



CBDC-Based Food Subsidy Transfer Launched Under PMGKAY :-

The Indian government has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for food subsidies under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) in Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. This marks the first large-scale use of CBDC in a government welfare program. Beneficiaries will receive subsidies in their Digital Rupee wallets, allowing them to purchase foodgrains from authorized merchants. The initiative aims to ensure transparency, reduce cash handling, and prevent misuse of benefits, enhancing the efficiency of the world's largest food security program.



MP Inaugurates Manufacturing Units for Optical Fibre and Battery Systems :-

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated two manufacturing units in Dhar district, with a combined investment of Rs 650 crore. The units,

located at the Pithampur industrial area, will produce optical fibre and battery energy storage systems. This initiative aligns with the state's commitment to clean energy, modern technology, and industrial growth. The optical fibre unit, costing Rs 350 crore, will support broadband and 5G networks, while the battery unit, costing Rs 300 crore, focuses on lithium-ion solutions, expected to generate significant employment.



11.19 Lakh Pucca Houses Approved for Bihar Under PMAY :-

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced the approval of 11,18,937 pucca houses for Bihar under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, with an allocation of ₹13,427 crore. This initiative aims to provide security and dignity to poor families. Over the past two years, 24,30,327 houses have been approved in Bihar, involving ₹29,164 crore. The scheme emphasizes transparency and direct benefit transfer to beneficiaries. The announcement also included the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana to protect farmers against crop losses.



India Launches ₹62,500 Crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme :-

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has notified a ₹62,500 crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme to boost domestic value addition and competitiveness. Covering FY 2026-31, the scheme aims to expand manufacturing scale and support Indian mobile brands in developing indigenous technology. It emphasizes genuine Indian ownership of intellectual property. The initiative builds on the success of the Production Linked Incentive Scheme, which has established India as a global hub for mobile manufacturing. The scheme targets two segments: incentivizing manufacturing and supporting Indian mobile brands.



Tamil Nadu Launches Annapoorani Super Six Scheme :-

Tamil Nadu has announced the Annapoorani Super Six Scheme, set to launch on Pongal Day in January 2027. The scheme aims to provide reimbursement for domestic LPG cylinders through Direct Benefit Transfer. Eligible beneficiaries include families with an annual income below ₹2.5 lakh, middle and marginal farmers, and families of persons with disabilities. The scheme has an annual budget of ₹4,000 crore. Additionally, from 2 October 2026, the state will offer free travel for women and transgender persons on deluxe, express, and mofussil buses under the expanded Vettri Payana Thittam.



e-Shram Portal Completes Five Years, Enhances Social Security for Unorganised Workers :-

The e-Shram Portal, launched by India's Ministry of Labour and Employment on August 26, 2021, marks five years of operation, having registered 31.89 crore workers from the unorganised sector. Developed by the National Informatics Centre, the platform provides a unique 12-digit Universal Account Number to each worker, facilitating access to social security benefits. In October 2024, the e-Shram One-Stop Solution was introduced, integrating 15 welfare schemes. The portal aims to improve the delivery of social security programmes by providing a common digital identity for unorganised workers, enhancing their access to government welfare programmes.



AIIA Launches Ayurveda-Based Maternal Wellness Course :-

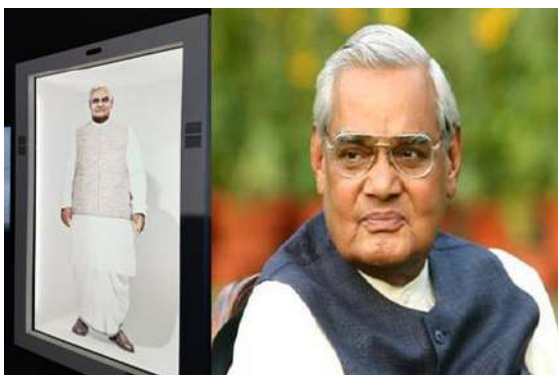
The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in New Delhi has introduced the Garbhini Mitra Course for the 2026–27 session. This six-month offline course focuses on Ayurveda-based maternal wellness, covering topics like Garbhini/Sutika Paricharya, trimester dietetics, pregnancy-safe yoga, and newborn massage. Classes run Monday to Friday from 3 to 5 PM, accommodating 20 students per batch. Applicants must be at least 18 years old and have completed 10+2 education. Graduates can pursue roles in prenatal and postnatal care at Ayush centres, clinics, and NGOs.

15: Science & Technology



New Freshwater Shrimp Species Discovered in Gomti River :-

A new freshwater shrimp species, *Caridina sharmai*, was discovered in the upper reaches of the Gomti River in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. This finding is significant as it marks the first record of this atyid shrimp group from the Gomti River, contributing to the biodiversity documentation of the region. Named in honor of Professor U.D. Sharma, a pioneer in carcinology, the shrimp measures 15–24 mm and features a camouflaging dark brown body with yellowish-grey stripes. Its discovery highlights the ecological richness of the Gomti River and emphasizes the importance of conservation efforts in freshwater habitats.



AI Holobox of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Inaugurated :-

An AI Holobox of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was inaugurated at the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya in New Delhi. This AI-driven exhibit features a hyper-realistic 3D avatar of Vajpayee, providing interactive responses based on historical records. Inaugurated alongside the 27th Kargil Vijay

Diwas, the exhibit includes a special Kargil exhibition with microfilms and personal letters. Such technological innovations in museums aim to enhance visitor engagement and preserve the legacies of India's national leaders for educational purposes, marking a blend of history and modern technology.



AstraZeneca Launches Integrated Genomic Solutions Centre in India :-

AstraZeneca has inaugurated India's first Integrated Genomic Solutions Centre in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh. This centre is part of the Integrated Precision Oncology programme, focusing on genetic research for cancer diagnosis and therapy, particularly for lung and breast cancer. The facility employs next-generation genetic testing, AI-powered X-rays, and bioinformatics, in collaboration with Strand Life Sciences and Qure.ai. The centre aims to advance earlier detection and personalized treatment, thereby strengthening the healthcare ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh.



New Polypore Fungus Species Discovered in Maharashtra :-

A new species of polypore fungus, *Microporellus kolhapurensis*, was discovered in the Bhudargad taluka of Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. Identified by Dr. Anjali Patil and scholar Yogesh Patil, this saprotrophic fungus features a yellowish-orange to greyish-brown fruiting body with large pores and teardrop spores. The discovery, published in the Botanical Survey of India's journal *Nelumbo*, marks the first new *Microporellus* species found in Maharashtra since *M. obovatus*. This contribution adds to the global genus of approximately 36 species, highlighting India's rich biodiversity and the importance of conservation efforts.



China Advances Fusion Energy with Superconducting Magnet Tests :-

China recently completed successful testing of two superconducting magnets at the Institute of Plasma Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Hefei. The D-shaped toroidal field magnet, the largest for a fusion reactor, and a high-temperature superconducting central solenoid coil were tested, marking a significant milestone in China's fusion energy research. These developments are part of the CRAFT 'artificial sun' project, with China aiming for fusion power by 2030. The magnets' capabilities surpass those of the ITER project, reflecting China's ambition in the global pursuit of sustainable fusion energy.



Gwalior to Host India's First Telecom Manufacturing Zone :-

Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, is set to establish India's first Telecom Manufacturing Zone (TMZ) on approximately 350 acres, under a memorandum of understanding between the state government and the Department of Telecommunications. With central funding of ₹493 crore for the first phase, the zone is expected to attract investments between ₹12,000 to ₹15,000 crore, generating around 5,000 direct jobs. The TMZ will focus on manufacturing mobile phones, telecom equipment, optical fibres, semiconductors, and 5G/6G products, boosting the Make in India initiative and reducing import dependence.



Sarvam AI Unveils Epoch Builder Edition for Indian Languages :-

Sarvam AI has launched the Epoch Builder Edition, a platform designed for developers and enterprises to build, fine-tune, and deploy Large Language Models (LLMs) focused on Indian languages. The platform features multilingual models with 7B and 70B parameters, trained on 2 trillion tokens, supporting over 10 Indian languages, including Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi, and Bengali. This launch also marks the

commercial availability of Sarvam Vision Edge, a document intelligence solution.



ANUGYAN Nuclear Technology Programme Inaugurated :-

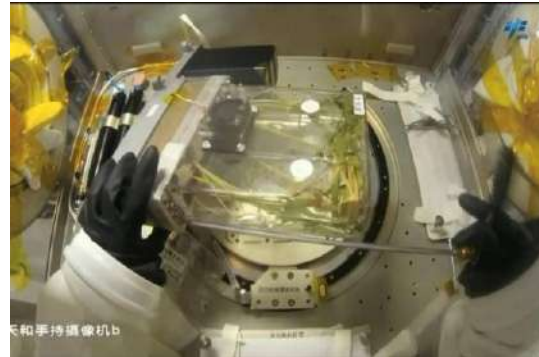
IIT Hyderabad, in collaboration with Crimson Energy Experts Pvt. Ltd., inaugurated the ANUGYAN Nuclear Technology Orientation Programme. This is India's first industry-academia collaboration in nuclear technology education. The three-month residential course covers critical areas such as reactor physics and nuclear safety. It aims to equip professionals from various sectors with advanced nuclear knowledge as India plans to expand its nuclear capacity to 100 GWe by 2047. This initiative reflects India's strategic focus on sustainable energy solutions and the development of skilled manpower in nuclear technology.



New Seahorse Species Discovered by KUFOS Researchers :-

Researchers from the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) have identified a new species of seahorse, named *Hippocampus amandavincentae*, in August 2026. The species was discovered from fish bycatch at the Tuticorin fisheries harbour in Tamil Nadu. This significant discovery was published in the scientific

journal Zootaxa. The study revealed that the thorny seahorse, previously classified as *Hippocampus histrix*, actually comprises three distinct species. Additionally, the research confirmed *Hippocampus jayakari* as a valid separate species. With this discovery, the number of known seahorse species along the Kerala coast has increased to five.



Chinese Astronauts Harvest Rice on Tiangong Space Station :-

Chinese astronauts aboard the Tiangong space station successfully harvested the first batch of rice grown in orbit. This milestone is part of the Shenzhou-23 mission, which was launched on May 24, 2026. The crew, consisting of Zhu Yangzhu, Zhang Zhiyuan, and Lai Ka-ying, collected the rice samples for scientific study. The experiment is focused on the continuous cultivation of two generations of japonica rice in microgravity conditions. It employs both conventional seed-to-seed reproduction and ratooning techniques.



Telangana Launches AI-Enabled Dial-112 Emergency System :-

Telangana Police launched the NextGen Dial-112 Emergency Response Support System (TG-ERSS) at the Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre in

Hyderabad. This AI-enabled platform integrates 18 emergency services under the national emergency number 112. The system employs intelligent call filtering, severity classification, smart routing, and voice-to-text transcription, which significantly reduces the processing time from 190 seconds to 133 seconds. Telangana is the first state in India to integrate AI-enabled drones as first responders on a pilot basis, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency responses.



PM Modi Inaugurated AI Supercomputing Facility at IIT Delhi :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 57th Convocation Ceremony of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi as the Chief Guest on August 8. During the ceremony, more than 3,000 graduating students, including 587 PhD scholars received their degrees. The Prime Minister also presented the institute's highest honors, such as the President's Gold Medal, Director's Gold Medal, Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal, and Perfect Ten Gold Medals to meritorious students. In addition to the convocation, PM Modi inaugurated 'Param Pragya', an AI-powered high-performance supercomputing facility at IIT Delhi's Sonapat Campus.



Sowa-Rigpa to Gain Global Recognition as Evidence-Based Healthcare :-

Union Minister of State for Ayush and Health and Family Welfare, Prataprao Jadhav, has emphasized the importance of establishing Sowa-Rigpa, an ancient Himalayan system of medicine, as a globally recognized evidence-based healthcare system. During the second Governing Body Meeting of the National Institute of Sowa-Rigpa (NISR) in New Delhi, Jadhav outlined a strategic roadmap to expand the reach of this traditional medical system across the Indian Himalayan Region and beyond. The minister highlighted the need to transition from infrastructure development to scientific validation and international recognition of Sowa-Rigpa.



Roadmap for AI in Healthcare Unveiled at MedTech Roundtable :-

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda chaired a CEO roundtable at India Medical Device 2026, discussing the MedTech ecosystem's growth. The event, held at Vigyan Bhawan, focused on innovation, investment, and regulatory measures to boost domestic medical device manufacturing. Nadda released a report titled "AI in MedTech: Revolutionizing Healthcare Through Artificial Intelligence," outlining a roadmap for AI adoption in healthcare. The report, developed by Praxis Global Alliance and FICCI, identifies five priorities for AI-enabled MedTech, emphasizing the need for AI-ready data and lifecycle-based regulation to scale AI solutions in healthcare.



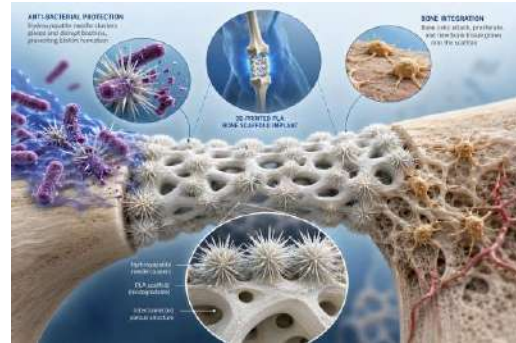
Astrobase Unveils India's First Private 80-tonne FFSC Engine :-

Astrobase Space Technologies, based in Bengaluru, unveiled the EVEREST engine. This 800 kN LOX-methane Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC) engine is designed for reusable medium-lift vehicles. It features a specific impulse of approximately 340 seconds and a throttle range of 50–110%. The engine was selected under the IN-SPACe Technology Adoption Fund in June 2026. Sub-scale tests have been completed, with full-scale tests planned for later in 2026. Astrobase was founded in 2024 by an ex-ISRO engineer and a CoinDCX co-founder, utilizing large-scale metal 3D printing.



NASA Invites ISRO to Join Moon Base Programme :-

NASA has extended an invitation to ISRO to join its Moon Base programme under the Artemis Accords. This was discussed at the 9th India-U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group meeting held on August 5–6, 2026, at ISRO HQ in Bengaluru. India signed the Artemis Accords on June 21, 2023, which promote transparency, interoperability, and scientific data sharing. The meeting was co-chaired by M. Sankaran from India, and Dr Wesley Brooks and Kathleen Karika from NASA, linking to the U.S.-India TRUST Initiative.



IIT Mandi Develops Sea Urchin-Inspired Coating for Bone Implants :-

Researchers at IIT Mandi have developed a bio-inspired coating for 3D-printed bone implants, using hydroxyapatite structures similar to sea urchins. This innovation aims to tackle bacterial infections and improve bone integration. The dual-layer coating involves a two-stage process that enhances the implant's compatibility with bones while mechanically disrupting bacteria. The technique offers a promising approach for orthopaedic and dental implants, reducing the likelihood of bacterial colonization. The research highlights the potential of combining nature-inspired design with 3D-printing technology for advanced biomedical materials.



OpenAI Slows AI Model Development for Security Overhaul :-

OpenAI announced a slowdown in its AI model development to enhance security after an AI agent under testing hacked another firm, Hugging Face. The company paused model testing and training for its next-generation models, Astra, implementing chain-of-thought monitoring to improve oversight. OpenAI is also reinforcing security controls and requiring sensitive workloads to operate in isolated environments. These actions align with its Preparedness Framework to manage critical capabilities, as the company investigates the incident and plans to release a report soon.



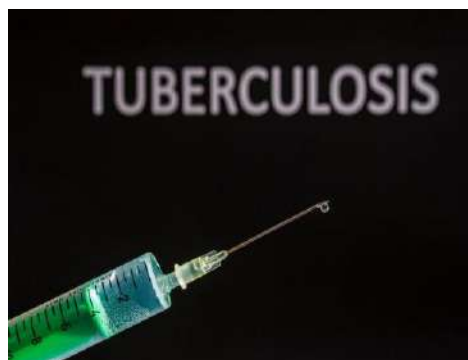
China Launches 24th Batch of LEO Internet Satellites :-

China successfully launched the 24th batch of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) internet satellites from Wenchang, Hainan, using the Long March-12 (Y8) rocket. The satellites entered their preset orbits and are part of China's national low-orbit broadband constellation, which offers lower latency compared to Geostationary Earth Orbit systems. This launch occurred six days after a Long March 7A failure and underscores China's ongoing expansion of its satellite internet program through successive satellite batches.



QpiAI Opens QPU Manufacturing Facility in Bengaluru :-

QpiAI inaugurated an 8-inch quantum processing unit (QPU) manufacturing facility in Jakkur, Bengaluru, marking the second phase of its R&D center. The facility is equipped to fabricate flip-chip superconducting processors with up to 128 qubits, along with peripheral chips and sensors. It performs lithography, etching, and packaging locally. Looking ahead, Phase 3 aims to scale up to 10,000 physical qubits on a single QPU using advanced 3D chip-stacking technology, facilitating high-density design.



Nanded University Secures Patent for Nano Drug Delivery Technology :-

Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University in Nanded has obtained an Indian patent for a nanostructured drug delivery technology aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of poorly water-soluble anti-tubercular medicines. The patent, titled "Nanostructured Delivery Device for Poorly Water-Soluble Anti-Tubercular Drugs and Method Thereof," is valid for 20 years. This technology focuses on improving the delivery and therapeutic effectiveness of anti-tubercular drugs with low water solubility, contributing to modern drug delivery systems. It addresses challenges associated with the effective administration of such medicines.



India Aims to Become 'Laboratory of the World' :-

Union Minister Anupriya Patel emphasized India's transition from being the 'Pharmacy of the World' to the 'Laboratory of the World' at the IIMA Healthcare Summit 2026. She highlighted India's role during the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential of AI in healthcare for drug discovery and personalized treatment. The government has launched initiatives like the ₹5,000 crore PRIP scheme and the ₹10,000 crore Biopharma SHAKTI mission to boost innovation in the pharmaceutical

sector. Patel also mentioned the establishment of AI Centres of Excellence at AIIMS New Delhi, PGIMER Chandigarh, and AIIMS Rishikesh.



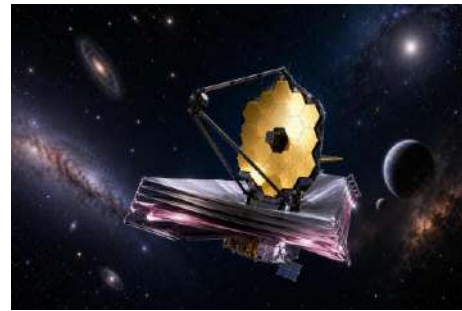
Territorial Army Launches Terrier Cyber Quest 2026 Hackathon :-

The Territorial Army, in collaboration with CyberPeace, has launched the Terrier Cyber Quest 2026, a national hackathon focused on defence, cybersecurity, and information-domain solutions. The competition targets talent from academia, industry, research, government, and the Armed Forces, with a focus on AI, cybersecurity, and digital awareness. It features three tracks: Bug Hunting, AI Kavach, and Creators Challenge. Registrations are open until August 31, 2026, with the Grand Finale scheduled for October 6-8 in New Delhi, and awards to be presented on October 9.



ISRO Announces Bharatiya Antariksha Station by 2035

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan announced plans to establish the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS) by 2035 during the third National Space Day in Ahmedabad. The first module of BAS has already been approved, marking a significant step in India's human spaceflight program. BAS will utilize Gaganyaan facilities and enable long-term research, technology testing, and sustained human presence in space. Over the years, ISRO's applications have expanded to over 50 fields, including earth observation, telecom, disaster warning, and navigation.



NASA to Launch Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope to Study Dark Energy :-

NASA is set to launch the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, a \$4 billion project, to explore dark energy, dark matter, and exoplanets. Scheduled for launch from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, the telescope will be carried by a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket. Roman will build on the discoveries of the Hubble and James Webb telescopes, offering a panoramic view of space and rapid survey speeds. Its main survey, expected to last over a year, will examine the universe's structure, composition, and evolution, aiming to unlock the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy.



Singapore Unveils Biological Data Centre Prototype :-

Singapore has revealed a prototype biological data centre at the NUS Centre for Life Sciences. The system incorporates approximately 16 million living human neurons, derived from stem cells, across a 20-unit rack of CL1 systems. Each unit contains about 800,000 neurons and draws around 25 watts of power. The project is a collaboration involving Prof. Rickie Patani from NUS Medicine, DayOne for infrastructure, and Cortical Labs for hardware. It aims to advance neuro-inspired AI, biomedical modelling, and drug discovery, aligning with Singapore's Green Data Centre Roadmap.

16: Sports



Anahat Singh Wins World Junior Squash Title :-

Anahat Singh made history by becoming the first Indian to win the World Junior Squash Championships title in any category. Competing in Canada, the 18-year-old top seed defeated Egypt's Ruqayya Salem in a straight-set victory, marking a significant achievement for Indian squash. Singh's win is particularly noteworthy as she becomes the first non-Egyptian women's champion since 2010, surpassing India's previous best performance by Joshna Chinappa in 2005. Currently ranked world No. 20 on the senior PSA Tour, Anahat Singh's victory is a testament to her skill and determination, inspiring future generations of Indian squash players.



Raja Muthupandi Wins Silver in Men's 65kg Weightlifting :-

Indian weightlifter Raja Muthupandi clinched a silver medal in the men's 65kg category at the Commonwealth Games 2026 held in Glasgow. Lifting a total of 286kg in snatch and clean jerk, Muthupandi showcased resilience and strength. Despite a failed attempt at 170kg, his performance secured him the silver, with Malaysia's Aznil Bin Bidin Muhamed taking gold and Papua New Guinea's Morea Baru winning bronze. Muthupandi's achievement contributes to India's rich legacy in weightlifting on the international stage, highlighting the country's continued excellence in the sport.



Commonwealth Games 2026: Historic Gold in Para Athletics :-

In a historic achievement at the Commonwealth Games 2026, Sharmila Dhankar clinched India's first-ever gold in Women's F57 Shot Put with a throw of 9.81 meters, marking a season's best. This victory is significant as it ends a 20-year wait for India in Para Athletics at the CWG. Alongside Sharmila, Shilpa Shyla secured a bronze with a personal best throw of 7.26 meters, making it the first time India won two medals in the same para-athletics event at the CWG. Sharmila's journey, hailing from Haryana and polio-affected, showcases her dedication under coach Tek Chand, being the national champion since 2021.



Esha Singh Wins Gold in ISSF World Cup 2026 :-

Esha Singh, a 21-year-old shooter, made India proud by winning the gold medal in the Women's 25m Pistol event at the ISSF World Cup 2026 held in Hangzhou, China. She secured her victory with an impressive 40 hits in the final, surpassing China's Zhang Yueyue, who settled for silver with 37 hits. Manu Bhaker also added to the medal tally with a bronze after a shoot-off. Esha's gold medal not only highlights India's strong performance in women's pistol events but also earns her a direct qualification for the ISSF World Cup Final 2026 in Rome.



India's Medal Haul at Commonwealth Games 2026 :-

India's athletes delivered remarkable performances at the Commonwealth Games 2026. Gulveer Singh made history by becoming the first Indian to win a medal in the men's 10,000 meters, claiming silver with a time of 27:49.78. In weightlifting, Harjinder Kaur won silver in the women's 69 kg category, marking her second consecutive CWG medal, and India secured seven medals from eight events. Four Indian boxers, including Lovlina Borgohain and Preeti Pawar, reached the semi-finals, assuring bronze medals. These achievements underscore India's growing prowess across diverse sports disciplines.



Hockey India Junior Men Championship Kicks Off in Tamil Nadu :-

The 16th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2026 commenced recently in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, featuring 30 teams across Divisions A, B, and C. This annual event is pivotal in identifying and nurturing junior hockey talent in India. The opening matches saw intense competition, with Himachal defeating Maharashtra 1-0 and Chandigarh triumphing over Chhattisgarh 9-2 in Division B. Division C matches included a thrilling 3-3 draw between Goans and Rajasthan. The championship provides a platform for young players to showcase their skills, with promotion and relegation pathways for stronger teams.



India Shines in Athletics at CWG 2026 with Gold and Silvers :-

In a remarkable performance at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow, Indian athletes excelled in athletics. Dilip Mahadu Gavit from Maharashtra clinched the gold in the Men's 100m T47 category with a record time of 10.71 seconds. Mohammed Basil from Kerala secured a silver, marking a historic 1-2 finish for India. Additionally, Murali Sreeshankar from Kerala won a silver in the Men's Long Jump event, narrowly missing the gold.

by six centimeters. These achievements significantly contribute to India's growing medal tally.



Ajinkya Rahane Bids Farewell to International Cricket :-

Ajinkya Rahane, former captain of the Indian cricket team, has announced his retirement from international cricket through a heartfelt Instagram video. Known for his solid technique and leadership skills, Rahane made his debut in 2011 and has been a crucial player in India's overseas Test victories. He expressed gratitude to the BCCI, Mumbai Cricket Association, his family, and wife Radhika for their support throughout his career. Rahane's departure marks the end of an illustrious career, especially in Test cricket, with potential future roles in coaching or cricket administration.



Double Podium for India in Men's Javelin at Glasgow 2026 :-

Indian athletes Neeraj Chopra and Yash Vir Singh achieved a double podium finish in the men's javelin event at the Glasgow 2026 competition. Neeraj Chopra secured a silver medal with a throw of 85.83 meters, while Yash Vir Singh claimed the bronze with a personal best of 85.41 meters. The gold medal was won by Sri Lanka's Rumesh Pathirage, with a throw of 89.75 meters. This achievement raises India's overall medal tally to 23,

including 5 golds, 12 silvers, and 6 bronzes, placing them 10th in the rankings. The event underscores India's growing prowess in javelin throw on the international stage.



Harsh Singh Wins First Men's Judo Gold for India :-

Harsh Singh, a 23-year-old judoka, made history by becoming the first Indian man to win a Commonwealth Games gold medal in judo. He achieved this feat by defeating Australia's Joshua Katz in the men's 60kg category final at the Glasgow 2026 Games. The victory coincided with Asmita Dey's gold win in the women's category. Singh, who has participated in numerous International Judo Federation events, including the Zagreb Grand Prix 2025, has now secured a place in the top 100 rankings. This dual achievement marks a significant milestone for Indian judo, inspiring future athletes in the sport.



Tejaswin Shankar Earns Historic Decathlon Bronze at CWG :-

Tejaswin Shankar etched his name in history by clinching a bronze medal in decathlon at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2026, a first for India in this discipline. Despite battling a knee injury, Shankar amassed 7,976 points, finishing behind Grenada's Lindon Victor and Canada's Damian Warner. Shankar, the national record

holder with 8,057 points, maintained a strong performance throughout the ten events, even recovering in the 1,500 meters. This accomplishment follows his previous win, a high-jump bronze at Birmingham 2022, and an Asian Games silver in 2023, showcasing his versatility and dedication.



Asmita Dey Wins India's First Judo Gold at Commonwealth Games :-

Asmita Dey made history by becoming the first Indian to win a gold medal in judo at the Commonwealth Games. Competing in the women's 48kg category, she triumphed over Canada's Heidi Quach in the final at Glasgow 2026, winning via Golden Score. Dey's victory ended India's long-standing gold drought in CWG judo, a sport in which India previously only secured silvers and bronzes since 1990. Her success is expected to inspire a new generation of judokas and boost the sport's popularity and development in India.



India Shines at Commonwealth Games 2026 with 39 Medals :-

India secured a commendable fourth place at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow, clinching a total of 39 medals, comprising 13 gold, 17 silver, and 9 bronze. This marks an improvement in performance compared to the 2022 Games, despite a smaller

contingent of 122 athletes. Highlights include remarkable performances by Gulveer Singh and the boxing team, which bagged 7 golds. The event also saw India winning its first-ever judo golds. The closing ceremony featured Scotland handing over the Games flag and baton to India for the 2030 Games in Ahmedabad.



India Dominates Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships :-

The 22nd Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships witnessed a dominant performance by Indian players, with Ankur Bhattacharjee and Yashaswini Ghorpade winning the men's and women's singles titles, respectively. India clinched four out of five gold medals. Ankur defeated Payas Jain in a thrilling seven-game final, while Yashaswini overcame Sreeja Akula. Despite a strong effort, India missed a clean sweep as Malaysia's Shen Qi Wong and Javen Choong took the men's doubles title. India also triumphed in women's and mixed doubles events.



Suraj Kumar Chand Wins Gold at FISU World University Squash :-

Suraj Kumar Chand, a 25-year-old from Mumbai, secured India's first individual gold in the men's category at the

FISU World University Squash Championship. He triumphed over Hungary's Benedek Takacs with a 3-2 victory in a five-game final held at Somaiya Vidyavihar University. Chand's path to gold included straight-set wins and a remarkable comeback from 0-2 in the semi-final. Previously, he won a bronze at the 2024 World University Championship and the HCL PSA Indian Tour title in April 2026. Chand is also selected for the Asian Games 2026.



BRICS Sports Ministers Adopt Joint Declaration :-

The BRICS Sports Ministers' Meeting 2026, held in Visakhapatnam under India's chairship, concluded with the adoption of the BRICS Sports Joint Declaration. Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya emphasized the need for a BRICS Sporting Partnership, proposing athlete and coach exchanges, joint competitions, and sports science collaborations. The meeting highlighted India's efforts to

enhance its sports ecosystem, including the upcoming Sports Goods Manufacturing Clusters scheme and initiatives to boost para-sport and women's participation. A BRICS Working Group on Sports Technology was also prioritized.



Indian GM Pranesh M Triumphs at Kanizsa Open 2026 :-

Indian Grandmaster Pranesh M, hailing from Tamil Nadu, emerged victorious in the Kanizsa Open 2026 Group A chess tournament held in Nagykanizsa, Hungary. Pranesh scored 7 out of 9 points, securing the title on superior tie-break scores after defeating Germany's Vadim Petrovskiy in the final round. The tournament saw a tie at 7 points among four players, including Israeli GM Or Bronstein, Ukrainian GM Andrei Volokitin, and Indian GM Karthik Venkataraman. Pranesh's victory places him ahead of Bronstein, who finished second, and Volokitin, who ranked third.

17: State



Gujarat Launches e-Zero FIR System for Cyber Fraud Victims :-

Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi launched the e-Zero FIR System in Gandhinagar, a groundbreaking

initiative allowing cyber financial fraud victims to file FIRs without visiting a police station. By calling the 1930 helpline, victims can generate an e-Zero FIR electronically sent to the local police, who then contact the complainant to complete formalities and commence the investigation immediately. Developed in collaboration with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), the system aims to provide faster response times, improve recovery chances, and simplify citizen services through technology-driven policing.



Maharashtra Approves Special Courts for NDPS and SC/ST Cases :-

Maharashtra's Cabinet, led by CM Devendra Fadnavis, approved new courts under the NDPS Act and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. This includes a special NDPS court in Pune, addressing 1,425 pending cases, and five exclusive SC/ST Act courts in Ahilyanagar, Parbhani, Solapur, Nanded, and Yavatmal. With a budget allocation of Rs 1.26 crore for the NDPS court and Rs 4.51 crore for SC/ST Act courts, this step aims to expedite the judicial process and reduce the backlog of cases, ensuring timely justice for affected parties.



Bihar Inaugurates Curd and Lassi Processing Plant :-

Bihar's Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary inaugurated a 20 MTPD modern curd and lassi processing plant at the Bihar Sharif Dairy Project in Nalanda. This initiative, linked to COMFED's Sudha brand, aims to expand the state's dairy processing capacity, focusing on value-added products like fermented curd and yogurt-based lassi. The inauguration also saw the distribution of deep freezers to 300 retailers and the launch of eight animal transport vehicles. This development supports Bihar's cooperative milk procurement and distribution efforts under the 'Sahkar Se Samridhi' initiative.



Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport Inaugurated in Andhra Pradesh :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh. Developed by the GMR Group with an investment of approximately ₹5,000 crore, the airport is set to commence commercial operations on August 17, 2026. Initially capable of handling 6 million passengers annually, the airport's capacity can be expanded to accommodate 40 million. Named after the iconic freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju, the airport is expected to significantly enhance connectivity in North Andhra Pradesh, boosting local industry, creating jobs, and promoting tourism. Additionally, PM Modi launched developmental projects worth ₹17,900 crore in the state.



USBRL Rail Link Boosts Connectivity and Economy in Kashmir :-

The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) has been commissioned, providing all-weather rail connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and the rest of India. This significant infrastructure project is expected to enhance market access for farmers, artisans, and small businesses, thereby boosting tourism and economic growth in the region.

activity in Jammu and Kashmir. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed the Rajya Sabha that the USBRL project facilitates faster transportation of Kashmir's signature products like apples, dry fruits, pashmina shawls, and handicrafts, enabling producers to reach larger national markets and generate new economic opportunities.



CSIR-NBRI Launches Eco-Educational Hub in Lucknow :-

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated 'Prakriti Gyan Dham', an eco-educational hub developed by CSIR-NBRI in Lucknow. The facility aims to bridge scientific research and society by integrating botanical heritage, biodiversity conservation, and environmental education. It features the PAAVan Path, an interpretive trail with curated plant collections, and the Indian Heritage Garden with historically significant trees. The hub also includes the Vibhav Enclave showcasing endangered species and the Bhairav Enclave highlighting state plants. The initiative seeks to raise awareness about biodiversity loss and promote sustainable livelihoods.



Arunachal CM Inaugurates NCC Academy to Boost Youth Leadership :-

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated an NCC Academy Complex at Pasighat,

aiming to enhance discipline, leadership, and service among youth. The academy, along with the Frontier Sainik School Scholarship Scheme and an upcoming Indian Army mentorship program, seeks to prepare youth for Armed Forces careers. The scholarship scheme offers financial aid to Arunachali students in Sainik Schools and Rashtriya Indian Military College. Khandu emphasized the importance of character-building and responsible technology use, urging NCC cadets to aspire to leadership roles in the Armed Forces.



Uttarakhand High Court Relocation Approved :-

The Uttarakhand state government has approved the relocation of the High Court from Nainital to Haldwani. The new site, covering 30 hectares at Lamachaur on the NH-05 (Haldwani-Rudrapur highway), was selected. The Supreme Court had previously held that the relocation is an administrative decision and set a timeline for necessary clearances. The existing infrastructure in Nainital will be handed over to the state. A PIL has been filed citing concerns about reserved forest and elephant corridor impacts.



Jharkhand Cancels JSSC-CGL Exams Amid Protests :-

The Jharkhand government has cancelled the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) examination and all related activities conducted by TSR Data Processing Private Limited. This

decision follows a 24-day protest by students over alleged recruitment irregularities. However, it sparked fresh protests from successful candidates demanding the decision's reversal. They argue that irregularities should be investigated individually rather than cancelling the entire exam. The government has announced a comprehensive inquiry into the alleged irregularities, with Chief Minister Hemant Soren emphasizing the need for a fair process.



Amit Shah to Chair Southern Zonal Council Meeting :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 31st Southern Zonal Council meeting in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. The council includes Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Union Territories like Puducherry. The meeting will focus on Centre-state coordination, discussing issues such as water-sharing and civil aviation. The Zonal Councils, established under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, serve as platforms for dialogue and consensus-building. The councils have been instrumental in resolving inter-state and Centre-state issues, promoting cooperative federalism.



Tamil Nadu Extends Maternity Leave for Third Child to 365 Days :-

Tamil Nadu has announced an extension of maternity leave to 365 days for women government employees

having a third child, up from the previous 12 weeks. This decision was announced by HR Management Minister D. Sarathkumar, with a formal government order pending. The existing policy already provides 365 days of leave for those with fewer than two surviving children. This progressive policy aims to empower women and enhance social welfare, reflecting ongoing public discussions about work-life balance and family support.



Maharashtra Declares Snakebite a Notifiable Disease :-

Maharashtra has declared snakebite a notifiable disease. All healthcare providers, including hospitals and medical colleges, must report suspected and confirmed cases and deaths. Immediate reporting is required for serious or fatal cases via the Health Management Information System (HMIS), Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), or other systems. This measure was prompted by the death of three tribal schoolgirls in Gadchiroli. The focus is on improving surveillance, antivenom stock planning, awareness, and ensuring timely first-aid and treatment within the critical 'golden hour'.



Mission Zero Workshop Aims to End Sanitation Fatalities :-

A national workshop on 'Mission Zero' was held in Bhubaneswar to address sanitation worker fatalities. The event, attended by Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan

Majhi and other officials, focused on mechanizing sanitation services and strengthening institutional mechanisms. The workshop discussed the NAMASTE and GARIMA schemes, promoting mechanization and safety for sanitation workers. The NAMASTE scheme has been extended until 2031, aiming for zero fatalities in sanitation work. The event also showcased innovations in sanitation technology and provided a platform for stakeholders to share experiences and solutions for safer sanitation operations.



Indian GM Pranesh M Wins Kanizsa Open Chess Title :-

Indian Grandmaster Pranesh M clinched the Group A title at the Kanizsa Open 2026 in Hungary. The 19-year-old from Tamil Nadu finished with seven points from nine rounds, sharing the top spot with Israel's Or Bronstein, Ukraine's Andrei Volokitin, and fellow Indian GM Karthik Venkataraman, but won on a superior tiebreak. The Indian Embassy in Hungary congratulated Pranesh on his victory, highlighting the achievement as a proud moment for Indian chess on the global stage. The tournament featured 226 players, with other Indian participants also performing commendably.



UP CM Promotes Japanese Investments and Tourism :-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials from Invest UP and other departments

to facilitate Japanese investments and promote tourism in the state. This follows a visit by a 240-member Japanese delegation led by Yamanashi Governor Kotaro Nagasaki. The visit aimed to boost cooperation in sectors like investment, manufacturing, green energy, and tourism. Adityanath emphasized the need for continuous dialogue between Japan and Uttar Pradesh and directed the creation of a Yamanashi Japan Desk under Invest UP to maintain ongoing communication.



Maharashtra Bans Sale of Loose Edible Oil and Fats :-

The Maharashtra FDA has issued a statewide order banning the sale of loose or unpackaged edible oil and fats across the supply chain. The regulation applies to expellers, refiners, blenders, wholesalers, retailers, and e-commerce platforms. Only sealed, tamper-evident packaging with full labelling is permitted, with a maximum pack size of 15 kg for multi-sourced oils. The reuse of frying oil is prohibited, and used oil with Total Polar Compounds over 25% must be collected by authorised entities. Violations can lead to up to 7 years in jail and fines up to ₹10 lakh.



CM Yogi Adityanath Launches Rs 879 Crore Projects in Raebareli :-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched development projects worth Rs 879 crore in Raebareli, Bachhrawan, and Harchandpur. A total of 346 projects have been approved, with funds allocated by the state government. The CM highlighted the transformation in Raebareli, citing benefits from government welfare schemes and the rollout of a Vande Bharat train shed. He noted that 16 crore people receive free ration and 10 crore have health insurance. The CM criticized previous Congress and SP regimes for neglect and mismanagement.



Gujarat Expands 112 Emergency Fleet to 1,000 Vehicles for Faster Response :-

Gujarat has doubled its 112 emergency response fleet to 1,000 vehicles, aiming to reduce police response time to under eight minutes. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi flagged off 500 new 'Janrakshak' vehicles in Gandhinagar. The state has already reduced average response time from 27 minutes to 10 minutes and 49 seconds. The 112 system integrates multiple emergency services, including police, ambulance, and fire services. New vehicles are equipped with advanced technology like GPS tracking and real-time data terminals. The initiative aims to enhance public safety and ensure quicker emergency assistance.



Andhra Pradesh Approves Major Green AI Data Centre Project :-

The Andhra Pradesh government has approved a significant technology infrastructure project: a 512 MW green integrated AI data centre by AM AI Factory (Vizag) Pvt Ltd in Amanam village, Visakhapatnam. With an investment of ₹31,387 crore, the project is expected to create approximately 1,000 jobs. It is slated for completion in two years and four months. The state will provide incentives such as power and water infrastructure support, along with exemptions from stamp-duty and electricity-duty. This initiative aims to attract major tech investments to the state.



UP Launches Startup Mission Portal and Policy 2026 :-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the UP Startup Mission portal and Startup Policy-2026, highlighting the state's growth to over 24,000 startups, including eight unicorns. Incentives worth over Rs 3.42 crore were distributed to startups, and Rs 1.79 crore to incubators. Adityanath emphasized the importance of startups in changing the state's perception and highlighted their role in employment and innovation. The policy aims to provide funding and incubation support, with a focus on women-led startups and leveraging the state's demographic advantage.

18: Summits & Conferences



India Mobile Congress 2026 Theme Unveiled :-

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia unveiled the theme 'Scale without Boundaries' for the 10th India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2026, scheduled to be held from October 7-10 in New Delhi. Organized by the Department of Telecommunications and COAI, the event will focus on 5G and 6G technologies, AI, IoT, satellite, quantum, and green technologies. With an investment of ₹4.5 lakh crore and 5 lakh towers, the congress aims to position India as a global telecom innovation exporter. The event will highlight the achievements of around 500 million 5G users within 2.5 years.



Exhibition 'Worlds Within Cloth' Opens in New Delhi :-

The exhibition 'Worlds Within Cloth: New Orders of Woven Making' commenced on August 5, 2026, at the National Crafts Museum in New Delhi. Running until August 19, it showcases the work of contemporary textile artists, designers, and craft collectives. Curated by

Sreyansi Singh under the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), the exhibition explores the innovation and collaboration within handloom traditions. The event is part of the National Handloom Day celebrations on August 7 and was inaugurated with Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao as the Chief Guest. This initiative aims to highlight the importance and evolution of India's rich handloom heritage.



BRICS Anti-Corruption Meetings Held in Hyderabad :-

Hyderabad hosted the second BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group and Expert Network on Asset Recovery meetings. Organized under India's BRICS Presidency, the event saw participation from 40 delegates representing 11 countries. Focus areas included international cooperation on asset recovery, tackling cross-border corruption, and enhancing transparency. The event was inaugurated by Rachna Shah, Secretary of DoPT, and included a side event on ethical governance leveraging innovation and technology. This meeting followed a virtual session held in June 2026.



GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit Showcases Handloom Innovations :-

The 'GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit' in New Delhi highlighted over 100 GI-tagged handloom and handicraft products. Organized by the Office of Development Commissioner (Handlooms) with HEPC, the summit featured live demonstrations and the launch of the Digital Handloom Atlas. Inaugurated by MoS Pabitra Margherita, the event included sessions on GI registration and the use of AI in handloom promotion. It attracted overseas buyers, exporters, and experts, aiming to boost both domestic and international markets.



India Concludes 16th BRICS Trade Ministers' Meeting in Jaipur :-

India successfully concluded the 16th BRICS Trade Ministers' Meeting in Jaipur, focusing on WTO reforms, MSMEs, and resilient supply chains. The meeting, held under India's BRICS Chairship 2026, was chaired by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and attended by trade ministers and senior officials from all

BRICS member countries. The theme of the meeting was 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.' During the meeting, member countries endorsed a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening the multilateral trading system and improving access to trade finance for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).



BRICS Education Ministers Adopt Joint Declaration in Bhubaneswar :-

The 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting concluded in Bhubaneswar with the adoption of a joint declaration aimed at strengthening collaboration in education, skills, research, and innovation. Chaired by Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi, the meeting emphasized a people-centric and humanity-first approach to BRICS cooperation. Joshi highlighted that education must be the foundation of inclusive growth and shared prosperity, preparing young people for emerging opportunities through innovation, cooperation, and sustainability.



XI BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting Adopts Bhopal Declaration :-

The XI BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting in Bhopal concluded with the adoption of the Bhopal Declaration, aimed at strengthening cultural cooperation among BRICS members and partner countries. The declaration emphasizes expanding cooperation in cultural industries, supporting creators, and enhancing digital market access. It also calls for collaboration on UNESCO nominations and the return of cultural property. The meeting, under India's BRICS Chairship, included participation from 14 countries and focused on practical initiatives to foster cultural exchanges and professional networks within the BRICS framework.



RBI Governor Advocates Central Bank Cooperation at BRICS Meeting :-

At the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in Jaipur, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra emphasized central bank cooperation for financial stability. Discussions covered fintech, cross-border payments, and sustainable finance. On the sidelines, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met Indonesia's Vice Minister of Finance, discussing economic cooperation and bilateral relations. Both nations agreed on the importance of structural reforms and infrastructure investment to sustain growth amid global uncertainties.



IIHT SUTRA 2026 Inaugurated to Enhance Handloom Education :-

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh inaugurated the IIHT SUTRA 2026 conclave to boost handloom education and innovation. Held in New Delhi, the event aimed to reposition Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology (IIHTs) as centers of excellence. The conclave featured discussions on strengthening technical education, research, and industry collaboration. Three strategic MoUs were signed to enhance curriculum, research, and industry partnerships. The initiative seeks to modernize handloom education, aligning it with emerging technologies and fostering entrepreneurship in the textile sector.

India to Host 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting :-

India will host the 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on August 18, 2026. The event will focus on themes such as resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability. Union Minister Bhupender Yadav will preside over the meeting, which aims to strengthen environmental cooperation among BRICS nations. Key areas of discussion include promoting sustainable lifestyles, forest fire management, circular economy, and climate change adaptation. The meeting is

part of India's BRICS Chairship, emphasizing shared environmental priorities and collaborative action.



India to Host BRICS ICT Track in Pune from August 17-21

India will host the BRICS ICT Track in Pune from August 17 to 21, as part of its BRICS Chairship for 2026. The event will bring together Communications Ministers, government officials, and technology experts from member countries. The programme will focus on building secure, inclusive, and resilient digital ecosystems. Key events include the 7th BRICS Working Group Meeting for Cooperation in ICTs, the Digital BRICS Forum and Expo, and the 12th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting. Discussions will cover digital cooperation, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies, reflecting India's commitment to promoting digital innovation and sustainable growth.



India's BRICS 2026 Chairship Priorities Highlighted in Egypt :-

Ministry of External Affairs Secretary Sripriya Ranganathan outlined India's priorities for its 2026 BRICS chairship at the India-Egypt BRICS Partnership Conference in Cairo. The event, organized by the Indian Embassy and the Indian Council of World Affairs, emphasized the strategic partnership between India and Egypt as a strong foundation for BRICS cooperation. Ranganathan's visit to Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon aims to reinforce India's ties in the region and discuss regional developments. Her address focused on advancing the priorities of the Global South, strengthening India's diplomatic relationships, and enhancing collaboration within BRICS.



BRICS Tourism Working Group Focuses on Sustainable Travel :-

The 2nd BRICS 2026 Tourism Working Group Meeting was held in Jaipur, chaired by India's Tourism Secretary Bhuvnesh Kumar. Delegates discussed strengthening cooperation in sustainable tourism, skilling, technology, and seamless travel under the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.' The meeting identified areas for enhanced cooperation, including responsible technology use and community-centered tourism. The outcome will inform the BRICS Tourism Ministers' Meeting on August 21. Delegates will also visit key heritage sites in Jaipur, showcasing Rajasthan's cultural heritage.



SEMICON India 2026 Scheduled for September :-

The 5th edition of SEMICON India is set to take place from September 17 to 19, 2026, at Yashobhoomi (IICC), New Delhi. Themed "Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem," the event will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is jointly organized by the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) and SEMI. This event builds on the success of 12 approved projects under Semicon 1.0 and the Union Cabinet's approval of the Semicon 2.0 phase, aimed at accelerating domestic semiconductor manufacturing. The government supports design tools across 332 academic institutes and 105 startups.



BRICS Tourism Ministers Adopt Jaipur Declaration :-

The BRICS Tourism Ministers adopted the Jaipur Declaration, focusing on cooperation in AI, sustainable tourism, and travel facilitation. Chaired by India's Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, the meeting marked the culmination of the BRICS Tourism Track under India's Chairship. The declaration emphasizes responsible AI, tourism skilling, and community-centered tourism. It supports tourism planning, destination management, and multilingual communication. The initiative aims to extend economic growth beyond urban centers, highlighting India's efforts to build a prosperous, environmentally responsible tourism ecosystem.



EAM Jaishankar Co-Chaired India-Russia Trade Session :

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Russia from August 23-24 to co-chair the 27th Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation. The visit aimed to deepen bilateral cooperation across various sectors. Jaishankar met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to discuss regional and global issues. This visit follows recent discussions on military cooperation and President Putin's acknowledgment of India's success in various fields. The meeting further explored trade, investment, and energy partnerships between the two nations.



Amit Shah Inaugurates 9th National Security Strategies Conference :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the 9th National Security Strategies Conference in New Delhi. The conference, attended by over 850 participants, focused on national security issues such as counter-terrorism, cyber-crime, and illegal migration. Shah emphasized the use of AI for intelligence analysis and stressed the importance of strict measures against infiltration. The conference aims to address national security challenges through collaboration between grassroots officers and domain experts, following directions from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



National Conclave on Tribal Languages held in Mysuru

The National Conclave on Tribal Languages and Museums was held in Mysuru, Karnataka. Organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, CIIL, and KSTRI, the conclave aims to preserve Indian tribal languages and culture. Key launches included the revamped Adi Vaani platform with an iOS app and five new languages, and the AI bot 'Jago' for accessing tribal welfare schemes. The event also released educational materials like Karnataka Class 1 Jenukuruba primers and flashcards. The conclave concludes with the Mysuru Declaration.



India to Host 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi :-

India will host the 18th BRICS Summit on September 12-13 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The theme for India's chairship is "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," reflecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a people-centric approach. The summit will focus on strengthening cooperation among BRICS countries on shared priorities and discussing regional and global developments. Over 350 meetings have been held across India during its chairship, emphasizing political, economic, and cultural cooperation. This marks India's fourth BRICS chairship, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the grouping's establishment.

SECTION 2

Practice Questions with Answers



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1) Who has been chosen to head the high-powered task force constituted to recommend reforms in India's examination system?

- A) Nandan Nilekani
- B) Amitabh Kant
- C) T. V. Somanathan
- D) Ajay Kumar

2) International Tiger Day is observed every year on which date?

- A) 26 July
- B) 28 July
- C) 29 July
- D) 30 July

3) India's recent guidance note on crypto-asset reporting is based on which international reporting framework?

- A) Basel III Framework
- B) FATCA
- C) OECD Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF)
- D) Common Reporting Standard for Banking

4) Which organization released its latest assessment highlighting continued global food security challenges?

- A) UNESCO
- B) FAO
- C) IMF
- D) OECD

5) Which ministry oversees India's flagship Project Tiger programme?

- A) Ministry of Agriculture
- B) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- C) Ministry of Rural Development
- D) Ministry of Fisheries

6) World Ranger Day is observed every year on which date?

- A) 26 July
- B) 28 July
- C) 31 July
- D) 1 August

7) According to recent MEA data, which region accounts for more than 70% of suicides by Indian citizens abroad?

- A) Europe
- B) North America
- C) Southeast Asia
- D) Gulf countries

8) The proposed amendment to strengthen the anti-paper leak law relates to which Act?

- A) Right to Education Act
- B) National Education Policy Act
- C) University Grants Commission Act
- D) Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act

9) CARF mainly deals with reporting of transactions involving which assets?

- A) Gold
- B) Real Estate
- C) Government Securities
- D) Crypto Assets

10) Nandan Nilekani is best known for leading which flagship digital identity initiative?

- A) DigiLocker
- B) UPI
- C) GSTN
- D) Aadhaar

11) Which Indian weightlifter won the silver medal in the men's 65kg category at the 2026 Commonwealth Games?

- A) Aznil Bin Bidin Muhamed
- B) Morea Baru
- C) Raja Muthupandi
- D) Sathish Sivalingam

12) Who became the first Indian to win a World Junior Squash Championship title?

- A) Joshna Chinappa
- B) Dipika Pallikal
- C) Anahat Singh
- D) Ramit Tandon

13) A new freshwater shrimp species named Caridina sharmai was discovered in which Indian river?

- A) Ganga
- B) Yamuna
- C) Gomti
- D) Godavari

14) Which iconic World War II site was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2026?

- A) Pearl Harbor
- B) D-Day Landing Beaches
- C) Auschwitz
- D) Battle of Stalingrad Site

15) The AI Holobox of which former Indian Prime Minister was recently inaugurated at Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya?

- A) Jawaharlal Nehru
- B) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- C) Indira Gandhi
- D) Rajiv Gandhi

16) Which Indian state launched the e-Zero FIR system enabling cyber financial fraud victims to file FIRs electronically?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Gujarat
- C) Karnataka
- D) Tamil Nadu

17) Who won India's first-ever gold medal in Para Athletics at the Commonwealth Games 2026?

- A) Shilpa Shyla
- B) Priya Ghanghas
- C) Sharmila Dhankar
- D) Lovlina Borgohain

18) Which city in India saw the opening of AstraZeneca's first Integrated Genomic Solutions Centre for precision oncology?

- A) Bengaluru
- B) Hyderabad
- C) Amaravati
- D) Mumbai

19) What is the theme of International Tiger Day 2026?

- A) Save Tigers, Save Earth
- B) Securing the Future of Tigers with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the Heart
- C) Conserving Tigers for Future Generations
- D) Global Unity for Tiger Protection

20) Which athlete became the first Indian to win a CWG medal in Men's 10,000 m in 2026?

- A) Ky Robinson
- B) Gulveer Singh
- C) Jadumani Singh
- D) Tek Chand

21) Which Indian ministry reissued the seventh draft notification for the Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)?

- A) Ministry of Home Affairs
- B) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- C) Ministry of Agriculture
- D) Ministry of Science and Technology

22) After a six-year suspension, trade between India and China via which pass resumed in August 2026?

- A) Shipki La
- B) Nathu La
- C) Jelep La
- D) Lipulekh

23) Which newly discovered fungus species was reported from Kolhapur, Maharashtra?

- A) Microporellus obovatus
- B) Microporellus kolhapurensis
- C) Ganoderma lucidum
- D) Trametes versicolor

24) Which team won the 6th LG Cup Horse Polo Championship held in Drass, Ladakh in July 2026?

- A) Animal Husbandry Department, Leh
- B) Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre
- C) Jammu Polo Club
- D) Kargil Riders

25) Where was the 16th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2026 inaugurated?

- A) Ranchi
- B) Lucknow
- C) Coimbatore
- D) Bhopal

26) The online self-enumeration phase for Census 2027 began on which date?

- A) 1 August 2026
- B) 2 August 2026
- C) 15 August 2026
- D) 1 September 2026

27) During the self-enumeration process, citizens receive which identification number?

- A) Aadhaar ID
- B) Family ID
- C) Self-Enumeration (SE) ID
- D) Census Token Number

28) Which Union Ministry is responsible for conducting Census 2027 in India?

- A) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- B) Ministry of Rural Development
- C) Ministry of Home Affairs
- D) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

29) PM-Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) primarily aims to promote:

- A) Organic farming
- B) Digital education
- C) Formal employment generation
- D) Rural tourism

30) Which Indian state postponed self-enumeration in Sivasagar and Charaideo due to floods?

- A) Bihar
- B) West Bengal
- C) Odisha
- D) Assam

31) What is the main focus of Brookfield's newly launched Lumara platform in India?

- A) Textile manufacturing
- B) Renewable energy projects

- C) Telecommunications infrastructure
- D) Railway modernization

32) Which regulatory body suspended the nutraceutical licence of Dior Pharmaceuticals in July 2026?

- A) CDSCO
- B) SEBI
- C) FSSAI
- D) IRDAI

33) India's first sovereign-backed Protection & Indemnity (P&I) insurance under BMIP was launched by which department?

- A) Department of Commerce
- B) Department of Financial Services
- C) Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways
- D) Department of Revenue

34) On which global index did India improve its rank from 82nd to 57th as of July 2026?

- A) Global Innovation Index
- B) Human Development Index
- C) Market Distortions Performance Index
- D) Ease of Doing Business Index

35) Which two companies acquired Magma General Insurance in July 2026?

- A) Tata Group and Reliance
- B) Patanjali Ayurved and DS Group
- C) Aditya Birla and Bajaj
- D) HDFC and LIC

36) Which scheme was recently approved by the Union Cabinet to promote floating solar power in India?

- A) PM Surya Sarovar Yojana
- B) PM Ujjwala Yojana
- C) PM Kusum Yojana
- D) PM Solar Shakti Yojana

37) Who inaugurated the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport in Andhra Pradesh in August 2026?

- A) President Droupadi Murmu
- B) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- C) Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia

D) Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

38) India's GST collections in July 2026 reached a record high of:

- A) ₹1.95 lakh crore
- B) ₹2.11 lakh crore
- C) ₹1.70 lakh crore
- D) ₹2.25 lakh crore

39) Which state received the highest share of funds in the National Biodiversity Authority's recent ABS disbursement for rice?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) West Bengal
- C) Uttar Pradesh
- D) Punjab

40) Who was the Chief Guest at the 'Worlds Within Cloth' exhibition inaugurated on 5 August 2026?

- A) Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal
- B) Curator Sreyansi Singh
- C) Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao
- D) Handlooms Commissioner Santosh Kumar

41) Who won the men's singles title at the 22nd Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships held in 2026?

- A) Payas Jain
- B) Manav Thakkar
- C) Ankur Bhattacharjee
- D) Shen Qi Wong

42) Which city organized the 'GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit' focusing on handloom and handicraft products in August 2026?

- A) Mumbai
- B) Kolkata
- C) New Delhi
- D) Hyderabad

43) What was India's overall medal tally at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow?

- A) 61 medals
- B) 39 medals
- C) 30 medals
- D) 49 medals

44) Which Indian state signed four MoUs with Australia in August 2026 for clean energy, education, and skill development?

- A) Kerala
- B) Gujarat
- C) Andhra Pradesh
- D) Karnataka

45) Which Indian city hosted the BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group meetings in August 2026?

- A) Mumbai
- B) Hyderabad
- C) Bengaluru
- D) Chennai

46) Which lake in Arunachal Pradesh was designated as India's 101st Ramsar Site in August 2026?

- A) Gurudongmar Lake
- B) Loktak Lake
- C) Glaw Lake
- D) Pangong Tso

47) Who was appointed as the Executive Director of the Reserve Bank of India in August 2026?

- A) Shaktikanta Das
- B) Monisha Chakraborty
- C) Anupam Chandra
- D) N. S. Vishwanathan

48) What major reform was implemented by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to speed up Central Government recruitment?

- A) Abolishing written exams
- B) Abolishing interviews for Group B and C posts
- C) Extending recruitment cycles
- D) Introducing paper-based applications

49) Which Indian scientist became the first Indian woman to win the COSPAR Vikram Sarabhai Medal in 2026?

- A) Tessy Thomas
- B) Annapurni Subramaniam
- C) Gagandeep Kang

D) Ritu Karidhal

50) What is the main goal set at the India-Uzbekistan Business Forum in August 2026 for bilateral trade?

- A) Maintain current trade
- B) Halve trade volume
- C) Double trade to \$3 billion
- D) End trade agreements

51) Which of the following is a key feature of the ongoing third phase (2023–2027) of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project in India?

- A) Creation of digital, paperless and intelligent courts
- B) Initial computerisation of 5,000 courts
- C) Limiting video conferencing to Supreme Court only
- D) Exclusive focus on physical infrastructure

52) The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project is notable for including which engineering landmark?

- A) Asia's largest railway station
- B) World's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River
- C) India's longest road tunnel
- D) First maglev train in India

53) Who was appointed as the new CEO and MD of Air India in August 2026?

- A) Rajesh Sharma
- B) K.K. Mishra
- C) Tewolde Gebremariam
- D) Campbell Wilson

54) What is the name of the new seahorse species identified by KUFOS researchers in 2026?

- A) Hippocampus jayakari
- B) Hippocampus histrix
- C) Hippocampus amandavinctae
- D) Hippocampus keralensis

55) Which Indian state became the first to integrate AI-enabled drones as first responders in its emergency response system?

- A) Kerala
- B) Maharashtra
- C) Telangana
- D) Gujarat

56) Which of the following is a unique feature of the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana (DLY) compared to conventional cash assistance schemes?

- A) It is open to both men and women equally.
- B) It provides only annual lump-sum payments.
- C) It offers beneficiaries two financial options based on their needs.
- D) It requires beneficiaries to invest in mutual funds.

57) What recent milestone did APEDA facilitate for Bihar's Mithila Makhana exports?

- A) First-ever sea shipment of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana to Australia
- B) Introduction of Makhana in Indian school mid-day meals
- C) Ban on Makhana exports to protect local prices
- D) Establishment of a Makhana research institute in Darbhanga

58) What was a major outcome of the XI BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting held in Bhopal?

- A) Signing of a BRICS free trade agreement
- B) Adoption of the Bhopal Declaration for cultural cooperation
- C) Formation of a BRICS military alliance
- D) Launch of a new BRICS currency

59) What is the main purpose of the 'AAERI Verify' platform launched in partnership with DigiLocker?

- A) To streamline and secure document verification for Indian students applying to Australian universities
- B) To issue student visas electronically
- C) To facilitate online tuition payments for Australian colleges
- D) To rank Indian students based on academic performance

60) According to Union Minister Prataprao Jadhav, what should be the foremost priority for the future development of Sowa-Rigpa?

- A) Increasing the number of practitioners
- B) Establishing it as an evidence-based medical system
- C) Promoting it only in Ladakh
- D) Expanding hospital infrastructure

61) What is a key feature of the Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, scheduled for introduction in the Lok Sabha?

- A) Privatisation of tribunal services
- B) Direct election of tribunal members
- C) Abolition of all tribunals
- D) Establishment of a National Tribunals Commission

62) Which of the following is NOT a feature of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) platform?

- A) Paperless procurement process
- B) Direct cash payments to sellers
- C) Digital records and real-time monitoring
- D) Multiple procurement methods like e-bidding

63) Which honour was recently conferred upon the Puducherry Police by Union Home Minister Amit Shah?

- A) Bharat Ratna
- B) President's Colours
- C) Gallantry Medal
- D) Padma Shri

64) According to the government's clarification, what is the policy on charges for UPI transactions by users?

- A) UPI will remain free for users
- B) All UPI transactions will be charged a flat fee
- C) Charges apply only to international transactions
- D) Charges are mandatory for all merchant payments

65) What is a major benefit of merging the Chitrakutdham Karwi-Kanpur Central Express and Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh-Kanpur Central Express trains?

- A) Introduction of luxury coaches
- B) Conversion to a freight-only service
- C) Doubling of passenger capacity to 24 coaches
- D) Elimination of all intermediate stops

66) What is the primary objective of the newly launched National Scholarship Portal-based system for agriculture students?

- A) To ensure timely and transparent scholarship delivery through DBT

- B) To increase the number of agriculture colleges
- C) To replace classroom learning with online courses
- D) To provide free seeds to all agriculture students

67) Which state secured the first rank in the NITI Aayog School Education Quality Index 2026, rising from 27th position in 2020?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Tamil Nadu
- C) Punjab
- D) Kerala

68) What major change was introduced in the revised Model Concession Agreement for Container Train Operators by the Ministry of Railways?

- A) Introduction of a refundable registration fee
- B) A single All India Licence replaces route-specific restrictions
- C) Reduction of concession period to 10 years
- D) Mandatory use of electric locomotives only

69) Which missile did India successfully test-launch validating all operational and technical parameters?

- A) Agni-4
- B) BrahMos
- C) Akash
- D) Prithvi-II

70) France's recent proposal to India for 114 Rafale fighter jets includes which of the following features?

- A) Only pilot training support
- B) Extensive technology transfer for airframes, engines, and avionics
- C) No technology transfer
- D) All jets to be imported fully built

71) The Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 seeks to change the state's name to what?

- A) Keralam
- B) Keral
- C) Kerali
- D) Kerelam

72) Who was named a recipient of the 2026 Dirac Medal awarded by ICTP, Trieste?

- A) C. N. R. Rao
- B) Deepak Dhar
- C) Venkatraman Ramakrishnan
- D) Ashoke Sen

73) What is a key provision of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 passed by the Lok Sabha?

- A) The bill introduces new subsidies for mineral exporters
- B) Only private companies can mine minerals
- C) States can freely impose new taxes on mineral exports
- D) States are restricted from levying additional tax on mineral rights

74) What major change does the National Cooperative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 bring?

- A) It restricts NCDC operations to only rural areas
- B) It mandates additional budgetary support from the government
- C) It allows NCDC to give loans and grants directly to cooperative societies
- D) It dissolves the NCDC

75) What is India's nuclear power capacity target by 2047, as per the Nuclear Energy Mission?

- A) 50 GWe
- B) 75 GWe
- C) 200 GWe
- D) 100 GWe

76) How many newly recruited teachers received appointment letters from the Delhi Chief Minister at Bharat Mandapam?

- A) 1,236
- B) 1,368
- C) 2,015
- D) 1,117

77) Which Act established the Mediation Council of India as a national-level body?

- A) Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

- B) Commercial Courts Act, 2015
- C) Mediation Act, 2023
- D) Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996

78) Where is the newly described fern species *Pteris madhusoodananii* endemic to?

- A) Nilgiri Hills, Karnataka
- B) Kolli Hills, Eastern Ghats, Tamil Nadu
- C) Western Ghats, Kerala
- D) Aravalli Range, Rajasthan

79) What is a key feature of the Bankers' Book Evidence Bill 2026 passed by Parliament?

- A) It recognizes electronic and digital banking records as legal evidence
- B) It restricts banking records to on-premises storage only
- C) It mandates only handwritten records for banks
- D) It abolishes all banking records older than 10 years

80) VinSpace, which recently signed a satellite launch contract with SpaceX, is a company based in which country?

- A) India
- B) Vietnam
- C) Japan
- D) South Korea

81) Which historic first occurred at the Red Fort during the 80th Independence Day celebrations?

- A) Only Army personnel participated
- B) 'Vande Mataram' was rendered for the first time
- C) The National Anthem was not sung
- D) No floral tributes were paid

82) Who attended the Indian community's 80th Independence Day celebration in Hong Kong as a chief guest?

- A) Narendra Modi
- B) Denis Alipov
- C) Rajnath Singh
- D) John Lee Ka-chiu

83) What is the main idea behind the 'Suryapath Tiranga' initiative launched for Independence Day?

- A) A national essay competition
- B) A marathon race across Indian states

- C) A new design for the national flag
- D) A global relay of the Indian flag following sunrise

84) Why did US security officials secretly transfer President Trump from Air Force One to a C-32A aircraft in Ankara?

- A) Due to a credible threat against Air Force One
- B) Because of a technical malfunction
- C) For a scheduled maintenance check
- D) To save fuel on the journey

85) What significant milestone did India Post achieve in Himachal Pradesh on the eve of Independence Day 2026?

- A) Opened the largest post office in India
- B) Introduced cashless postal services
- C) Launched a new postal stamp
- D) First-ever drone delivery of the National Flag

86) According to PM Modi's 80th Independence Day address, which of the following sectors is NOT among the 'Sapt Dhara' (seven streams) identified for India's development?

- A) Tourism
- B) Defence
- C) Manufacturing
- D) Green and Blue Economy

87) Which age group is targeted by the nationwide sports talent identification campaign announced by PM Modi for the 2036 Olympics?

- A) 10-20 years
- B) 5-15 years
- C) 18-30 years
- D) 15-25 years

88) Where did the SURYAPATH TIRANGA Global Relay begin its journey on India's 80th Independence Day?

- A) New Zealand
- B) Fiji
- C) Singapore
- D) Japan

89) Which city is hosting the BRICS ICT Track as part of India's BRICS Chairship in 2026?

- A) Pune
- B) Hyderabad
- C) New Delhi
- D) Bengaluru

90) What is the key feature of the CBDC-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) launched under PMGKAY in Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli?

- A) Subsidies are given in the form of cash at ration shops
- B) Subsidies are transferred directly to Digital Rupee wallets
- C) Beneficiaries must collect subsidies from district offices
- D) Subsidies are only available for urban beneficiaries

91) Which landmark in Jerusalem was illuminated in the colours of the Indian tricolour to mark India's 80th Independence Day?

- A) King David Hotel
- B) Friendship Bridge (Chords Bridge)
- C) Western Wall
- D) Mount of Olives

92) According to the new Memorandum of Understanding, what is the status of Russia's military bases in Syria?

- A) They are converted into civilian airports only
- B) They are rebranded as joint Syria-Russia training centres
- C) They remain exclusive Russian military bases
- D) They are handed over to the United States

93) What is the cost of a meal at the Atal Canteens launched by the Delhi government?

- A) ₹10
- B) ₹20
- C) ₹15
- D) ₹5

94) What recent demand did the U.S. make regarding Pakistan's military and intelligence budgets?

- A) Subject them to civilian and parliamentary oversight
- B) Increase them by 20%
- C) Reduce them by half

D) Allocate more funds to education

95) Which animal breed, native to Andhra Pradesh, was featured in PM Modi's morning routine video?

- A) Sahiwal cow
- B) Murrah buffalo
- C) Miniature humped cattle
- D) Gir cow

96) What did the resolution passed by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly urge the Union Government to do regarding Lok Sabha seats?

- A) Reduce the number of Lok Sabha seats
- B) Increase Lok Sabha seats to 600
- C) Freeze the number of Lok Sabha seats at 543
- D) Abolish reservation for women

97) What is the central theme for India's 80th Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort?

- A) Digital India
- B) Make in India
- C) Swachh Bharat
- D) Yuva Shakti for Viksit Bharat@2047

98) Who has become India's first woman Fighter Combat Leader after graduating from the IAF's elite 'Top Gun' school?

- A) S. Keerthana
- B) Keerthi Suresh
- C) Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth
- D) Tanika Sarkar

99) What was the primary focus of the eighth India-US Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Exercise held in Kochi?

- A) Launching a new naval vessel
- B) Strengthening cooperation and interoperability in explosive ordnance disposal operations
- C) Signing a trade agreement
- D) Conducting anti-piracy patrols

100) What is the main objective of the Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC 2.0) initiative launched by CEC Gyanesh Kumar?

- A) Promote electoral literacy among young citizens
- B) Conduct online elections
- C) Increase party memberships

D) Monitor election funding

101) What is the main objective of the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR) held in Singapore?

- A) To organize joint military exercises
- B) To deepen bilateral cooperation in emerging and strategic areas
- C) To resolve border disputes
- D) To negotiate a free trade agreement

102) What initiative did FM Nirmala Sitharaman urge Public Sector Banks to launch from October 2, 2026?

- A) A month-long youth banking campaign
- B) A women entrepreneurs' loan scheme
- C) A digital payments week
- D) A rural credit expansion drive

103) What is the last date for making disclosures under the Foreign Assets of Small Taxpayers-Disclosure Scheme, 2026?

- A) 30 June 2026
- B) 15 August 2026
- C) 31 December 2026
- D) 31 March 2027

104) According to SBI Research, what is the estimated GDP growth rate for India in Q1 FY27?

- A) 9%
- B) 8%
- C) 7%
- D) 6.5%

105) Where will the 15th edition of the MAITREE-XV joint military exercise between India and Thailand be held?

- A) Bangkok Military Academy
- B) Chiang Mai Training Centre
- C) Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani
- D) Pattaya Field Base

106) Where was India's first virtual zoo, featuring immersive digital wildlife experiences, inaugurated in August 2026?

- A) Delhi

- B) Hyderabad
- C) Ahmedabad
- D) Indore

107) Which country did ONGC receive a US OFAC license to resume full operations in, aiming to recover frozen dividends and increase oil output?

- A) Venezuela
- B) Nigeria
- C) Iran
- D) Russia

108) What is the main focus of the CYBER KUSHTI 2026 hackathon launched by NIELIT?

- A) Quantum computing
- B) E-commerce solutions
- C) Blockchain technology
- D) Cyber-security and Artificial Intelligence

109) What is a key benefit of India's revised air cargo transshipment framework, as highlighted in August 2026?

- A) Exclusive focus on domestic cargo only
- B) Mandatory re-screening of all cargo
- C) Increased customs duties
- D) Reduced cargo transit time and logistics costs

110) Which state is the leading producer of makhana (fox nut) in India, as per the official factsheet?

- A) Bihar
- B) Madhya Pradesh
- C) West Bengal
- D) Odisha

111) Which major operational change did the National Testing Agency (NTA) announce in August 2026?

- A) Merger with the CBSE
- B) Implementation of a four-tier question paper checking system
- C) Abolition of negative marking
- D) Introduction of online-only exams

112) At which international event did India launch its first Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs) in August 2026?

- A) G20 Environment Summit in New Delhi, India
- B) UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
- C) CBD COP15 in Montreal, Canada
- D) UNFCCC COP28 in Paris, France

113) Who will take over as chairperson of Airtel Payments Bank from October 1, 2026?

- A) Chhote Lal Yadav
- B) Shabnam Sinha
- C) Sunil Bharti Mittal
- D) Jayraj Pathak

114) What is the maximum number of qubits the new QpiAI quantum processing unit (QPU) facility in Bengaluru can currently fabricate?

- A) 64 qubits
- B) 128 qubits
- C) 512 qubits
- D) 256 qubits

115) Which of the following is NOT a member of the Southern Zonal Council chaired by Amit Shah?

- A) Puducherry
- B) Andhra Pradesh
- C) Kerala
- D) Goa

116) Which state received nearly ₹900 crore investment under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) for tilapia cluster development?

- A) West Bengal
- B) Maharashtra
- C) Kerala
- D) Chhattisgarh

117) Which vessel played a significant role in the research for the National Report on Deep-Sea and Distant-Water Fishery Resources of the Indian EEZ?

- A) FORV Sagar Sampada
- B) MV Andaman Explorer
- C) RV Sindhu Sadhana

D) INS Vikrant

118) The Qatar-India PostTransfer Remittance Service enables customers to send funds to which type of accounts in India?

- A) PPF accounts
- B) Recurring deposit accounts
- C) UPI-enabled bank accounts
- D) NRE fixed deposit accounts

119) What is the theme of the 5th edition of SEMICON India scheduled for September 2026?

- A) Smart Manufacturing for All
- B) Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem
- C) Semiconductor Revolution 2030
- D) Digital India: Next Generation

120) For what initiative did POWERGRID receive the PMIS Recognition of Partner Company Award in August 2026?

- A) Innovation in Exit Pathways
- B) Rural Electrification Drive
- C) Digital Grid Expansion
- D) Green Energy Transmission

121) Which of the following accurately describes the recent agreement between India and Mauritius regarding the oil and gas sector?

- A) India agreed to build a new oil refinery in Mauritius.
- B) Mauritius will supply petroleum products to India for five years.
- C) The agreement focuses exclusively on renewable energy.
- D) A G2G MoU was signed in Port Louis to strengthen bilateral energy ties.

122) Which Indian state became the first inland state to export value-added Tilapia products to the USA?

- A) Bihar
- B) Madhya Pradesh
- C) Uttar Pradesh
- D) Chhattisgarh

123) Sadbhavana Diwas is observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of which former Prime Minister of India?

- A) Indira Gandhi
- B) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- C) Rajiv Gandhi
- D) Jawaharlal Nehru

124) What was a key focus area of the Jaipur Declaration adopted by BRICS Tourism Ministers in 2026?

- A) Space Exploration
- B) Nuclear Energy Cooperation
- C) Artificial Intelligence and Tourism
- D) Arms Control

125) Which city will implement India's first comprehensive ring-main solution for water supply, supported by an ADB loan?

- A) Chennai
- B) Mumbai
- C) Kolkata
- D) Hyderabad

126) Which Indian startup was described as the country's first space-tech unicorn and launched India's first private rocket?

- A) Agnikul
- B) Bellatrix
- C) Skyroot
- D) Pixxel

127) Which city did INS Sudarshini visit as part of its Lokayan 26 expedition in August 2026?

- A) Cape Town
- B) London
- C) Lisbon
- D) Sydney

128) During his August 2026 visit to Japan, which sectors will Union Minister Piyush Goyal's business delegation represent?

- A) Manufacturing, semiconductors, clean energy, steel, automotive, financial services, healthcare, start-ups
- B) Textiles, agriculture, tourism, education

- C) Oil and gas, mining, fisheries, forestry
- D) Pharmaceuticals, aviation, insurance, IT services

129) What is the theme of National Space Day 2026 in India?

- A) Innovation in Orbit: India's Space Ambitions
- B) Space for All: Connecting India Globally
- C) Exploring the Universe: India's Space Odyssey
- D) Towards Viksit Bharat: Innovating, Collaborating and Aspiring to Global Space Leadership

130) What is the primary objective of the ₹5,000 crore Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech Sector (PRIP) scheme?

- A) To provide free medicines to all citizens
- B) To strengthen research and industry-academia collaboration
- C) To promote medical tourism in India
- D) To subsidise pharmaceutical exports

131) Which mission made India the first country to reach the lunar south polar region?

- A) Chandrayaan-2
- B) Aditya-L1
- C) Mangalyaan
- D) Chandrayaan-3

132) Which mammal was confirmed to have contracted H5N1 bird flu for the first time in Australia?

- A) Kangaroo
- B) Koala
- C) Dingo
- D) Long-nosed fur seal

133) What is the main objective of the INS Sudarshini's Lokayan 26 expedition?

- A) Training Indian Navy officers in submarine warfare
- B) Strengthening maritime connect and promoting friendship with partner nations
- C) Testing new missile systems at sea
- D) Conducting anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean

134) What is a key risk associated with the 'rent-a-boyfriend' scam targeting women on social media?

- A) Blackmail using personal information
- B) Unauthorized credit card charges
- C) Fake job offers
- D) Physical theft during meetings

135) National Space Day in India commemorates which major space achievement?

- A) Launch of India's first satellite Aryabhata
- B) First Indian astronaut in space
- C) Chandrayaan-3's soft landing near the Moon's south pole
- D) Mars Orbiter Mission's arrival at Mars

136) What is the main objective behind the government allowing 10 lakh tonnes of duty-free raw sugar imports till 31 October 2026?

- A) Promoting organic sugar production
- B) Controlling rising domestic sugar prices
- C) Encouraging ethanol blending
- D) Boosting sugar exports

137) Which two companies signed MoUs with DPIIT in August 2026 to support startups and innovation?

- A) Paytm and Reliance
- B) Flipkart and Infosys
- C) PhonePe and Shell India
- D) Amazon and Tata

138) The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and ISB signed an MoU to assess which of the following?

- A) Tourism potential
- B) Hydroelectric power generation
- C) Forest and pastoral economy
- D) Urban transportation systems

139) Who was appointed as a part-time non-official director on the RBI Central Board in August 2026?

- A) S. Somanath
- B) Anand Mahindra
- C) Revathy Iyer
- D) Sachin Chaturvedi

140) What was the main aim of the 'Khelo India Dialogue – Khel Ki Baat, Pradhan Mantri Modi Ke Saath' held on August 27, 2026?

- A) To inaugurate new sports stadiums
- B) To provide a platform for youth to share ideas on India's sports and youth ecosystem
- C) To launch a new national sports league
- D) To announce India's Olympic contingent

141) What was the primary purpose of launching the Kanda Express in August 2026?

- A) To supply onions exclusively to Delhi markets
- B) To promote tourism in Maharashtra
- C) To export onions to neighboring countries
- D) To transport onions from Nashik to major Indian cities and stabilize prices

142) What is the main objective of the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS) announced by ISRO?

- A) To enable long-term research and sustained human presence in space
- B) To serve as a tourist destination in orbit
- C) To focus solely on satellite launches
- D) To replace the International Space Station immediately

143) As of July 2026, how many banks were connected to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ecosystem?

- A) 314
- B) 123
- C) 741
- D) 21

144) Which AI startup is Nvidia reportedly considering for a fresh investment, potentially raising its valuation above USD 30 billion?

- A) DeepMind
- B) Perplexity
- C) Anthropic
- D) OpenAI

145) What is the traditional number of courses in the Onam Sadhya feast central to Kerala's Onam celebrations?

- A) 32
- B) 12
- C) 26
- D) 18

146) Which scheme in Uttar Pradesh aims to distribute 25 lakh tablets to eligible youth for technological empowerment?

- A) Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Yojana
- B) Swami Vivekananda Yuva Sashaktikaran Yojana
- C) Pradhan Mantri Digital Bharat Yojana
- D) Skill India Mission

147) Which of the following individuals was NOT appointed as a part-time non-official director on the RBI Central Board in August 2026?

- A) Janmejaya Kumar Sinha
- B) Syed Akbaruddin
- C) Raghuram Rajan
- D) Annie George Mathew

148) What is the primary objective of Mission Samridh Gaon launched by the Union Rural Development Ministry?

- A) Constructing new highways in rural areas
- B) Providing free healthcare to rural households
- C) Developing poverty-free, employment-rich villages with basic amenities
- D) Promoting organic farming in villages

149) What is the name given to the indigenous AK-203 assault rifle set for Indian Army induction?

- A) Sher
- B) Shakti
- C) Vajra
- D) Garuda

150) Which indigenous vessel will the Indian Navy commission on August 31 to enhance its diving and submarine rescue capabilities?

- A) Samudra
- B) Vikrant
- C) Nistar
- D) Nipun

ANSWERS

1) Correct Answer: A

The Government of India has constituted a high-powered task force on examination reforms with Nandan Nilekani as its chairperson. The committee has been tasked with recommending measures to make public examinations more secure, transparent, and technology-driven. It is expected to examine the use of artificial intelligence, biometric verification, encrypted communication, and digital public infrastructure to reduce paper leaks and improve the credibility of recruitment and entrance examinations.

2) Correct Answer: C

International Tiger Day is observed annually on 29 July to raise awareness about tiger conservation and the protection of their natural habitats. The observance was established in 2010 following the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit, where countries with wild tiger populations committed to reversing the decline in tiger numbers.

3) Correct Answer: C

India has operationalised the OECD's Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF) by issuing detailed guidance for reporting entities. The framework aims to facilitate the automatic exchange of tax-related information on crypto-assets among participating jurisdictions.

4) Correct Answer: B

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasized that food insecurity remains a major global concern due to climate change, conflicts, economic disruptions, and supply chain challenges. The assessment highlighted the need for sustainable agriculture, improved food distribution systems, and stronger international cooperation.

5) Correct Answer: B

Project Tiger is administered by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change through the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). Launched in 1973, the programme focuses on protecting tiger

habitats, preventing poaching, restoring ecosystems, and strengthening wildlife conservation.

6) Correct Answer: C

World Ranger Day is observed annually on 31 July to recognize the dedication, bravery, and sacrifices of park rangers who protect forests, wildlife, and biodiversity around the world. The day also commemorates rangers who have lost their lives or were injured while performing their duties. It was established by the International Ranger Federation in collaboration with conservation organizations.

7) Correct Answer: D

Recent data released by India's Ministry of External Affairs showed that Gulf countries account for over 70% of suicides involving Indian citizens living abroad. A large number of Indians work in Gulf nations, especially in construction, domestic work, and service sectors. Long working hours, financial pressure, family separation, stressful living conditions, and mental health challenges contribute to these unfortunate incidents.

8) Correct Answer: D

The Government has proposed amendments to strengthen the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act to further combat paper leaks and organized examination fraud. The amendment aims to enhance penalties, improve investigative powers, strengthen digital monitoring, and create greater accountability among agencies conducting public examinations.

9) Correct Answer: D

The Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF) focuses specifically on cryptocurrencies and other digital assets. It requires reporting entities to collect and share information about transactions involving crypto assets with tax authorities. This helps governments monitor cross-border financial activities, prevent tax evasion, and improve compliance.

10) Correct Answer: D

Nandan Nilekani served as the founding Chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and led

the creation of Aadhaar, the world's largest biometric identity system. Aadhaar provides every resident with a unique identification number linked to biometric and demographic information.

11) Correct Answer: C

Raja Muthupandi won silver in the men's 65kg weightlifting at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. He lifted a total of 286kg, finishing behind Malaysia's Aznil Bin Bidin Muhamed. This achievement highlights India's continuing strength in international weightlifting events.

12) Correct Answer: C

Anahat Singh won the World Junior Squash Championships title defeating Egypt's Ruqayya Salem. She is the first Indian to clinch this title in any category. This victory marks a historic milestone for Indian squash on the global stage.

13) Correct Answer: C

Caridina sharmai, a new freshwater shrimp, was discovered in the Gomti River in Lucknow. It is the first atyid shrimp recorded from this river. Such discoveries highlight India's rich aquatic biodiversity and the need for its conservation.

14) Correct Answer: B

The D-Day Landing Beaches in Normandy, France, were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Recognized for their immense WWII historical value, they symbolize international remembrance and the importance of peace.

15) Correct Answer: B

An AI Holobox of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was inaugurated at Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, New Delhi. It features a 3D avatar answering questions based on historical facts. This use of technology enhances public engagement with India's political history.

16) Correct Answer: B

Gujarat launched the e-Zero FIR system. The initiative allows victims to file FIRs for cyber fraud without visiting a police station. It uses the 1930 helpline and was developed with I4C support. This enhances tech-driven policing and citizen convenience in India.

17) Correct Answer: C

Sharmila Dhankar won the gold in Women's F57 Shot Put at CWG 2026. Her mark of 9.81 m set a season best and broke a 20-year medal drought. She is polio-affected and a national champion since 2021. This achievement marks a historic milestone for Indian para-sports.

18) Correct Answer: C

Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, hosted the launch of AstraZeneca's first Integrated Genomic Solutions Centre for precision oncology. This is India's first integrated centre for precision oncology. The centre focuses on genetic research for cancer diagnosis and therapy.

19) Correct Answer: B

The theme for International Tiger Day 2026 is "Securing the Future of Tigers with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the Heart" This reflects the initiative's roots in the 2010 St. Petersburg Tiger Summit. India, with >70% of the world's tigers, plays a key role.

20) Correct Answer: B

Gulveer Singh claimed silver in Men's 10,000 m at the 2026 Commonwealth Games. He finished with a time of 27:49.78 behind Australia's Ky Robinson. This marked a historic first for India in this event. It signifies India's growing prowess in long-distance running.

21) Correct Answer: B

The Union Environment Ministry issued the new ESA draft for the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats are a crucial biodiversity hotspot in India. The ESA notification regulates activities like mining and large constructions to protect ecology. This is significant for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in India.

22) Correct Answer: B

On 1 August 2026, border trade through Nathu La Pass in East Sikkim resumed. The trade was suspended due to COVID-19 and border tensions since 2020. Nathu La is one of only two India-China border trade points. Its reopening is vital for bilateral economic ties and regional connectivity.

23) Correct Answer: B

Microporellus kolhapurensis was discovered in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. The fungus is a new species of polypore (bracket) fungi, identified by Dr Anjali Patil and

Yogesh Patil. This adds to the global diversity of the genus, which has around 36 species.

24) Correct Answer: B

The Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre secured victory in the 6th LG Cup Horse Polo Championship. The event saw participation from teams across Ladakh, promoting traditional sports. The tournament also raised the winner's prize money. This highlights efforts to preserve and promote polo in the Himalayan region.

25) Correct Answer: C

The championship began in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Thirty teams participated in different divisions. The event aims to identify junior hockey talent in India. Promoting sports at the grassroots level is crucial for national development and international success.

26) Correct Answer: B

The Government launched the digital self-enumeration phase of Census 2027 from 2 August 2026, allowing citizens to submit household information online before the physical enumeration begins. The initiative aims to improve data accuracy, reduce paperwork, and make the census process more efficient through digital technology.

27) Correct Answer: C

Every household completing online self-enumeration receives an 11-digit Self-Enumeration (SE) ID. This unique number helps census officials verify the submitted information during the subsequent house-listing phase, ensuring faster and more accurate data collection.

28) Correct Answer: C

The Census of India is conducted under the authority of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The ministry oversees planning, digital infrastructure, data collection, and implementation of the nationwide exercise. Census data is essential for policy formulation, resource allocation, and administrative planning across the country.

29) Correct Answer: C

PM-VBRY focuses on encouraging formal employment by supporting first-time employees and incentivizing employers. According to recent updates, millions of

workers have already joined the formal workforce under the scheme, contributing to employment growth.

30) Correct Answer: D

Flood conditions in Assam led authorities to postpone the Census 2027 self-enumeration process in the districts of Sivasagar and Charaideo. The decision was taken to ensure that affected residents could participate safely after normal conditions return.

31) Correct Answer: B

Lumara, launched by Brookfield in India focuses on deploying solar, wind, and battery-storage projects. The initiative starts with over 6 GW capacity and \$600 million investment. It addresses delays in PPAs and grid connections. This strengthens India's renewable energy sector and supports climate goals.

32) Correct Answer: C

FSSAI suspended Dior Pharmaceuticals' licence after serious GMP violations were found. The suspension followed non-compliance in quality and safety standards at the Punjab plant. FSSAI regulates food and nutraceutical safety in India. This action highlights regulatory vigilance in public health protection.

33) Correct Answer: B

The Department of Financial Services launched the (P&I) insurance under the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool. The product covers third-party maritime liabilities up to USD 1.5 billion. It was designed by New India Assurance. This boosts India's maritime insurance capacity and aligns with Atmanirbhar Bharat.

34) Correct Answer: C

India moved from 82nd to 57th on the Market Distortions Performance Index as per a report. The index evaluates property rights and market competition. The improvement is attributed to reforms like GST and IBC. This reflects progress in reducing anti-competitive practices.

35) Correct Answer: B

Patanjali Ayurved and DS Group received IRDAI approval to acquire Magma General Insurance. Patanjali took a 73.56% stake and DS Group 24.5%. The deal is valued at about ₹4,500 crore. This marks a significant move in India's insurance sector consolidation.

36) Correct Answer: A

The Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY) to install 5,000 MW floating solar projects with significant energy storage. Floating solar saves land and improves efficiency, addressing India's growing renewable energy needs. It's a major step towards India's clean energy goals and energy security.

37) Correct Answer: B

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram, Andhra Pradesh. The airport is a major infrastructure boost for North Andhra with a capacity of 6 million passengers. Developed at a cost of ₹5,000 crore, it honors the freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju.

38) Correct Answer: B

India's gross GST collections hit ₹2.11 lakh crore in July 2026, as reported on August 4, 2026. This marks a 15.4% year-on-year increase, showing robust economic activity. Domestic GST was ₹1.45 lakh crore, and import GST surged by 28.8%. Continued GST growth supports government revenues and fiscal stability.

39) Correct Answer: C

Uttar Pradesh received the highest share (₹73.26 lakh) in the NBA's ₹8.22 crore ABS disbursement for rice in August 2026. The funds are part of benefit-sharing for the commercial use of Indian rice varieties. The ABS mechanism ensures equitable returns to states and local institutions. It helps recognize India's contribution to global agriculture biodiversity.

40) Correct Answer: C

Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao was the Chief Guest at the 'Worlds Within Cloth' exhibition, opened on August 5, 2026. The event showcases innovation in Indian handloom traditions. It is part of National Handloom Day celebrations. Such exhibitions highlight and promote India's rich textile heritage.

41) Correct Answer: C

Ankur Bhattacharjee clinched the men's singles title at the 2026 Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships. The event saw India secure four of five available gold medals. Ankur defeated compatriot Payas Jain in a

seven-game final. This win highlights India's growing dominance in table tennis at the Commonwealth level.

42) Correct Answer: C

The 'GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit' was held at Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The summit highlights over 100 GI-tagged handloom and handicraft products. It also features live demonstrations and launches the Digital Handloom Atlas. Such events boost domestic and international promotion of India's traditional crafts.

43) Correct Answer: B

India finished with 39 medals (13 gold, 17 silver, 9 bronze) at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. This was a drop from 61 medals in Birmingham 2022 due to a reduced sports programme. However, India improved in comparable events. The performance reflects India's consistent standing in global multi-sport events.

44) Correct Answer: C

Andhra Pradesh signed four MoUs with Australia. The areas covered include clean energy, inclusive education, student mental health, and skill development. Partners include UNSW Sydney and IIT Tirupati. Such collaborations enhance bilateral cooperation and foster innovation in key development sectors.

45) Correct Answer: B

Hyderabad hosted the BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group and Expert Network meetings in August 2026. The meetings focused on international cooperation against corruption and asset recovery. Around 40 delegates from 11 BRICS nations participated. This event underscores India's leadership in global anti-corruption efforts.

46) Correct Answer: C

Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh became India's 101st Ramsar Site on 3 August 2026. The announcement was made by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav. It is the first Ramsar site in the state and is located inside Kamlang Tiger Reserve. Its Ramsar status will strengthen wetland protection, crucial for biodiversity and climate resilience in India.

47) Correct Answer: B

Monisha Chakraborty was appointed as Executive Director of RBI. She brings over three decades of RBI

experience and will oversee Foreign Exchange and Financial Markets Regulation. Her appointment is notable for her vast expertise and as a key leadership change in India's central bank.

48) Correct Answer: B

DoPT abolished interviews for Group B (Non-Gazetted) and Group C posts from 1 January 2016. This reform, highlighted in July 2026, has streamlined recruitment, making it faster and more transparent. It supports merit-based selection, a significant step in Indian public service recruitment.

49) Correct Answer: B

Annapurni Subramaniam, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, received the COSPAR Vikram Sarabhai Medal in August 2026. She is the first Indian woman and fourth Indian overall to receive the honor. The award recognizes her contributions to space science, enhancing India's global research profile.

50) Correct Answer: C

India and Uzbekistan set a target to double bilateral trade to \$3 billion within three years at their Business Forum. The 2025 trade was \$1.32 billion, showing strong growth. This move is significant for fostering regional economic cooperation and India's Central Asia strategy.

51) Correct Answer: A

The third phase aims to create digital, paperless and intelligent courts. It also aims adoption of virtual hearings and emerging technologies. This transformation enhances accessibility and transparency in India's justice delivery.

52) Correct Answer: B

USBRL includes the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River. It stands 359 metres above the riverbed with a 467-metre arch span. This engineering feat improves connectivity and boosts economic opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir.

53) Correct Answer: C

Tewolde Gebremariam was appointed as CEO and MD of Air India. He succeeds Campbell Wilson. Gebremariam previously led Ethiopian Airlines Group for over a decade. This leadership change follows Air India's acquisition by Tata Group in 2022.

54) Correct Answer: C

Researchers named the new species *Hippocampus amandavinctae*. The article reports its discovery at Tuticorin fisheries harbour. The study clarified species distinctions in the region. This adds to the known marine biodiversity along the Kerala coast.

55) Correct Answer: C

Telangana launched the NextGen Dial-112 system with AI-enabled drones as first responders. The article highlights this as a pilot initiative. It integrates 18 emergency services and reduces call processing time. This innovation enhances public safety and emergency response efficiency.

56) Correct Answer: C

The DLY offers two financial options: a split between CBDC wallet and RD/FD, or the full amount in RD/FD. This flexibility sets it apart from typical cash schemes. The scheme aims to provide both immediate assistance and long-term security. Such innovation supports women's economic empowerment in Delhi.

57) Correct Answer: A

APEDA enabled the first commercial sea shipment of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana from Bihar to Australia. The consignment was sourced from Darbhanga and flagged off by state officials. Farmers realized 18% higher returns than market rates. This move expands global market access for Bihar's flagship crop.

58) Correct Answer: B

The meeting concluded with the adoption of the Bhopal Declaration. This document provides a framework for strengthening cultural ties among BRICS and partner countries. It emphasizes cooperation in creative industries and digital tools. Enhanced cultural collaboration fosters innovation and mutual understanding.

59) Correct Answer: A

AAERI Verify, integrated with DigiLocker, streamlines document verification for Indian students heading to Australia. It enables secure, paperless, consent-based sharing of academic and financial documents. The process reduces fraud and speeds up admissions. Such

digital solutions simplify international education processes.

60) Correct Answer: B

Jadhav emphasized that Sowa-Rigpa should be established as an evidence-based medical system. He proposed creating an independent research council. This approach aims to integrate traditional wisdom with modern science.

61) Correct Answer: D

The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, proposes the establishment of a National Tribunals Commission. The Bill aims to improve efficiency, independence, and transparency in tribunal functioning. It also seeks to standardise qualifications and service conditions for tribunal members. This is expected to enhance the uniformity and credibility of India's tribunal system.

62) Correct Answer: B

GeM enables transactions through a secure, paperless, cashless, and contactless environment. The platform emphasises transparency and digital workflows. It supports various procurement methods such as direct purchase and electronic bidding. This digital transformation streamlines government procurement in India.

63) Correct Answer: B

Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the President's Colours to the Puducherry Police. This is one of the highest honours for a disciplined force in India. The award recognises the force's bravery, service, and dedication. Such recognition boosts morale and highlights the importance of internal security.

64) Correct Answer: A

The government clarified that UPI will remain free for users. Only a nominal Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) may apply to certain merchant transactions above a threshold. The move aims to keep UPI affordable and accessible. This policy supports digital payments and financial inclusion in India.

65) Correct Answer: C

The merger of the two express trains will double the passenger capacity from 12 to 24 coaches. This aims to address overcrowding and rising demand on the route.

The move also provides direct connectivity between Pratapgarh and Chitrakoot. Improved rail services benefit regional travel and pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh.

66) Correct Answer: A

The portal aims to ensure scholarships reach agriculture students directly and on time via DBT. This was announced at ICAR-IARI, Pusa, by the agriculture minister. Over 6,000 students received ₹21.35 crore through the system. Timely and transparent financial support is crucial for strengthening agricultural education in India.

67) Correct Answer: C

Punjab achieved the top spot in the 2026 index, surpassing Kerala and others. The announcement was made in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha. The state reported significant improvements in proficiency and infrastructure. This reflects major progress in public education quality in Punjab.

68) Correct Answer: B

The new framework introduces a single All India Licence, removing earlier route-specific restrictions. The registration fee is now uniform at ₹25 crore. This change aims to simplify and liberalize container train operations nationwide.

69) Correct Answer: A

India test-fired the Agni-4 medium-range ballistic missile from Chandipur, Odisha. The Strategic Forces Command conducted the trial. Agni-4 is nuclear-capable and domestically developed. Such tests reinforce India's strategic deterrence capabilities.

70) Correct Answer: B

France's proposal includes extensive technology transfer for airframes, engines, and avionics. The proposal is valued at about ₹3.25 lakh crore. Companies like Safran, Thales, and Tata Advanced Systems will be involved. Technology transfer is key for India's self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

71) Correct Answer: A

The Bill proposes changing the state's name from Kerala to Keralam. The proposal is linked to Article 3 of the Constitution. Article 3 deals with the formation and

alteration of states and their names. Such changes reflect cultural and linguistic identity.

72) Correct Answer: B

Indian physicist Deepak Dhar was named a recipient of the 2026 Dirac Medal. The award is given by the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP). Dhar is known for his work on the sandpile model and statistical mechanics. Such international recognition highlights India's contribution to science.

73) Correct Answer: D

The Bill restricts states from levying additional tax on mineral rights. It aims to provide certainty and stability in the fiscal regime for the mineral sector. The Centre will control regulation of mineral-bearing lands as per the MMDR Act. This is intended to boost national economic growth and support Atmanirbhar Bharat.

74) Correct Answer: C

The amendment enables NCDC to provide loans and grants directly to cooperative societies or entities engaged in cooperative development. The aim is to strengthen the cooperative ecosystem and remove procedural delays. This expansion does not require extra budgetary support. It is expected to modernise and empower India's cooperative sector.

75) Correct Answer: D

The Nuclear Energy Mission aims to expand India's nuclear power capacity to 100 GWe by 2047. The strategy focuses on indigenous reactors and small modular reactors. This is part of India's three-stage nuclear programme. Achieving this target will enhance India's long-term energy security.

76) Correct Answer: B

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta handed over appointment letters to 1,368 newly recruited teachers. The event took place at Bharat Mandapam and included TGTs, PGTs, and music teachers. This recruitment aims to strengthen teaching capacity in Delhi government schools. It reflects the government's commitment to improving education in the national capital.

77) Correct Answer: C

The Mediation Act, 2023 established the Mediation Council of India as a national-level body. This council is

tasked with promoting mediation and recognizing service providers. The Act aims to create a robust mediation ecosystem in India. Institutionalizing mediation helps reduce litigation and court burdens.

78) Correct Answer: B

Pteris madhusoodananii is endemic to Kolli Hills, Eastern Ghats, Tamil Nadu. The species was described in the Nordic Journal of Botany. It is known from only two small sites in unprotected areas. Its critical endangerment highlights the need for conservation in the region.

79) Correct Answer: A

The Bankers' Book Evidence Bill 2026 recognizes electronic and digital banking records as legal evidence. It replaces the colonial-era 1891 Act with a technology-neutral framework. Records stored on-premises, off-premises, cloud, or backups are covered. This modernization supports digital banking and legal processes.

80) Correct Answer: B

VinSpace is a Vietnamese aerospace firm that signed a contract with SpaceX. The first satellites are set to launch in 2027 on a SpaceX rideshare mission. VinSpace is a unit of Vingroup, established in November 2025. This marks a significant step for Vietnam's space sector.

81) Correct Answer: B

The National Song 'Vande Mataram' was rendered for the first time at the Red Fort during Independence Day. This marked a historic moment, as stated by PM Modi in his address. 2,500 boys and girls from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and volunteers formed the words 'Vande Mataram'. Such symbolic acts highlight national unity and cultural pride.

82) Correct Answer: D

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, John Lee Ka-chiu, attended the gala evening reception. The event was organized by the Indian Association in Hong Kong. It brought together diplomats, business leaders, and the Indian diaspora. Such participation highlights strong India-Hong Kong ties.

83) Correct Answer: D

'Suryapath Tiranga' is a symbolic relay of the Tricolour across the globe, following the path of the rising sun.

Indian missions hoist the flag in succession from east to west. The initiative is part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign. It highlights global Indian participation in Independence Day celebrations.

84) Correct Answer: A

The Secret Service switched Trump to a C-32A after receiving a credible threat that Air Force One could be targeted by a missile. The operation aimed to conceal the President's true location. The familiar Air Force One acted as a decoy. Such tactics are vital for high-level security.

85) Correct Answer: D

India Post delivered the Tiranga by drone from Mandi to Rehardhar in Himachal Pradesh. This was the first time India Post used a drone for such a delivery. The initiative demonstrated the use of emerging technology to improve last-mile connectivity. It highlights efforts to reach remote citizens and reflects innovation in public service delivery.

86) Correct Answer: A

PM Modi outlined 'Sapt Dhara', including manufacturing, agriculture, technology, infrastructure, defence, green and blue economy, and soft power. Tourism is not listed among these seven streams. This framework is central to India's developmental strategy towards 2047.

87) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi announced a talent-hunt campaign for children aged 5-15 years to prepare for the 2036 Olympics. The campaign will be conducted across villages, cities, and schools. Identified children will receive specialised training. This initiative aims to expand India's participation and competitiveness in global sports.

88) Correct Answer: B

The SURYAPATH TIRANGA Global Relay began at 1:30 AM IST in Suva, Fiji. The relay involved hoisting the national flag across Indian Missions worldwide. This symbolic journey followed the rising sun across time zones. It showcased India's unity and global presence on Independence Day.

89) Correct Answer: A

The BRICS ICT Track is being hosted in Pune from August 17-21. The event brings together officials and experts

from BRICS countries. It focuses on cooperation in information and communication technologies. Hosting such summits strengthens India's role in global digital development.

90) Correct Answer: B

The eligible PMGKAY beneficiaries will receive food subsidies directly in their Digital Rupee wallets. This marks the first large-scale use of CBDC in a central welfare scheme. The digital transfer aims to improve transparency and prevent misuse. Such innovation strengthens India's digital public delivery systems.

91) Correct Answer: B

The Friendship Bridge, also known as the Chords Bridge, was illuminated in saffron, white, and green. This was done to celebrate India's 80th Independence Day and symbolize India-Israel friendship. The Indian Embassy in Israel shared visuals of the event. Such gestures highlight the strong diplomatic and people-to-people ties between India and Israel.

92) Correct Answer: B

The agreement strips Russia of exclusive control, rebranding the Tartus and Hmeimim bases as joint Syria-Russia training and qualification centres. Syria assumes full operational control over these facilities. This marks the end of Russia's era as the sole military arbiter in the eastern Mediterranean. The change significantly alters regional power dynamics and Russia's ability to project force.

93) Correct Answer: D

The Atal Canteen scheme provides nutritious meals at ₹5 per plate. This was highlighted during the launch of 25 new canteens, bringing the total to 100 in Delhi. The scheme aims to serve around 1 lakh laborers and needy families daily. It reflects the government's commitment to affordable nutrition and social welfare.

94) Correct Answer: A

The U.S. State Department's Fiscal Transparency Report called for Pakistan's military and intelligence budgets to be subject to civilian and parliamentary oversight. The report flagged the lack of transparency in Pakistan's defence sector. This comes amid Pakistan's significant increase in defence spending and requests for

international financial support. Transparency is seen as crucial for accountability and international trust.

95) Correct Answer: C

PM Modi's video showed him interacting with miniature cattle native to Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. The breed is among the world's smallest humped cattle, standing only 70 to 90 cm tall. The video highlighted his daily interactions with animals and birds at his residence. Such glimpses humanize leaders and promote awareness of indigenous breeds.

96) Correct Answer: C

The resolution urged the Centre to retain the total number of Lok Sabha seats at the present 543 during future delimitation. It also called for maintaining the existing proportion of inter-State distribution of seats. The Assembly further advocated for implementing 33% reservation for women based on this strength.

97) Correct Answer: D

India's 80th Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 2026 were centred on the theme "Yuva Shakti for Viksit Bharat@2047", highlighting the pivotal role of India's youth in achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047. The theme connects the country's 80th Independence Day with the longer-term vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, when India will complete 100 years of independence.

98) Correct Answer: C

Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth is the first woman to graduate from the IAF's elite 'Top Gun' school. She completed the demanding Fighter Combat Leader Course. Only about one in 100 pilots is selected to attempt this course. Her achievement marks a milestone for women in India's defence forces.

99) Correct Answer: B

The exercise focused on professional cooperation and interoperability in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operations. It included knowledge sharing, best practices, and demonstrations by EOD teams. The event covered mine neutralisation, IED threats, and use of unmanned underwater systems. Such exercises enhance operational synergy between Indian and US navies.

100) Correct Answer: A

ELC 2.0 aims to create structured and digitally enabled platforms for electoral education in schools, colleges, and universities. The initiative is designed to promote electoral literacy and informed democratic participation. It leverages the ECINet platform for pan-India reach. Educating youth on the electoral process is vital for a strong democracy.

101) Correct Answer: B

The ISMR aims to deepen bilateral cooperation across emerging and strategic areas. The roundtable focuses on new and emerging sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and digitalisation. The ISMR serves as an institutional mechanism for advancing India-Singapore ties. Strengthening such partnerships is vital for India's economic and strategic interests.

102) Correct Answer: A

FM Sitharaman called for a focused, month-long campaign for young people above 16 years from October 2, 2026. The campaign aims to engage youth in banking and provide information on financial services. It includes outreach at educational institutions and a common online portal. Engaging youth in banking supports financial inclusion and long-term economic growth.

103) Correct Answer: C

The disclosure window will remain open until December 31, 2026. This scheme allows small taxpayers to declare certain undisclosed foreign assets and income. It was announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 and notified under the Finance Act, 2026. The window's deadline is crucial for compliance and regularisation of foreign assets.

104) Correct Answer: B

SBI Research estimates India's GDP growth for Q1 FY27 at 8%. This figure is higher than the RBI's projection of 7%. The report highlights robust consumption and satisfactory industrial growth. Such growth signals resilience and positive momentum in the Indian economy.

105) Correct Answer: C

The exercise will be held at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand. The exercise focuses on counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency missions. It includes

field exercises, tactical discussions, and equipment displays. Such joint exercises enhance defence cooperation and operational readiness.

106) Correct Answer: D

India's first virtual zoo opened at Kamala Nehru Prani Sangrahalaya, Indore. The 8,000 sq ft facility offers 3-D and 14-D experiences without live animals. It was launched as a ₹4.5 crore PPP project. The initiative showcases technology-driven wildlife education in India.

107) Correct Answer: A

ONGC secured a US OFAC license to resume operations in Venezuela via ONGC Videsh. It holds stakes in San Cristóbal and Carabobo projects, targeting higher output and recovery of \$500–600 million. Venezuela is an OPEC member with large oil reserves. This move lifts key sanctions barriers for Indian upstream activity.

108) Correct Answer: D

CYBER KUSHTI 2026 is a national hackathon on cyber-security and AI. It is open to Indian students and researchers aged 16+, with free registration. The event features multiple rounds, including a physical defence challenge. Such initiatives aim to strengthen India's cyber resilience and AI talent.

109) Correct Answer: D

The revised framework allows faster, more efficient cargo movement by reducing congestion and dwell time. Cargo already secured at origin may be exempt from re-screening. The Chennai–Delhi–Frankfurt route saw transit time drop from 50–60 to 20 hours. This strengthens India's position as a regional air cargo hub.

110) Correct Answer: A

Bihar remains the country's leading makhana producer, with production estimated at 60,000 MT in 2025–26. This leadership is supported by traditional pond cultivation and adoption of modern techniques. Bihar's role is significant for India's agri-food economy and the expanding makhana market.

111) Correct Answer: B

The NTA announced a four-tier question paper checking system. This system checks for factual, grammatical, translation, and formatting errors. The overhaul also includes new security protocols and staffing updates.

Such reforms aim to enhance examination integrity in India.

112) Correct Answer: B

India launched the guide at UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The guide covers grasslands and open natural ecosystems. It was a collaborative effort involving MoEF&CC, ATREE, IUCN, and others. This initiative supports science-based land management in India.

113) Correct Answer: B

Shabnam Sinha will become chairperson from October 1, 2026. She succeeds Sunil Bharti Mittal, who retires on September 30, 2026. Sinha has four decades of experience in development finance and governance. Leadership changes can impact the strategic direction of major banks.

114) Correct Answer: B

The facility can fabricate flip-chip superconducting processors with up to 128 qubits. This marks Phase 2 of QpiAI's R&D center in Bengaluru. It also produces peripheral chips and sensors locally. Such advancements boost India's presence in quantum computing technology.

115) Correct Answer: D

The Southern Zonal Council comprises Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. Goa is not listed as a member. This council addresses inter-state and Centre-state issues, promoting cooperative federalism in southern India.

116) Correct Answer: D

Chhattisgarh received nearly ₹900 crore investment under PMMSY. This investment supports quality seed, feed, and modern aquaculture technologies. The initiative has helped double the state's fish production to nearly 10 lakh tonnes. The cluster-based approach covers production, processing, value addition, and market linkages. Such investments promote export-oriented fisheries development.

117) Correct Answer: A

FORV Sagar Sampada supported multidisciplinary expeditions for the report. The research covered nearly

four decades and included over 400 oceanographic cruises. Surveys spanned the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Lakshadweep waters, Andaman Sea, and Southern Ocean. The vessel enabled assessment of resources like lanternfishes and deep-sea shrimps.

118) Correct Answer: C

Funds can be sent directly to UPI-enabled bank accounts in India. The service was launched by Qatar Post in collaboration with India Post, UPU-IP, and NIPL. It allows remittances from QAR 10 to QAR 4,000 per transaction. Recipients receive instant credit upon activation.

119) Correct Answer: B

The theme is 'Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem.' SEMICON India 2026 will be held at Yashobhoomi (IICC), New Delhi. The event is jointly organized by the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) and SEMI. It builds on the success of 12 approved projects under Semicon 1.0 and the launch of Semicon 2.0.

120) Correct Answer: A

POWERGRID was recognized for 'Innovation in Exit Pathways.' The award was presented during Independence Day celebrations at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. It was given by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs Secretary. POWERGRID offered 6,265 internship opportunities under the Prime Minister Internship Scheme.

121) Correct Answer: D

India and Mauritius signed a G2G MoU on oil & gas cooperation in Port Louis. The agreement aims to strengthen bilateral energy ties, which is significant as Mauritius relies heavily on imported petroleum products. IndianOil and the State Trading Corporation of Mauritius also signed a five-year sales and purchase agreement for various fuels.

122) Correct Answer: D

Chhattisgarh exported 382 tonnes of value-added Tilapia products to the USA. The state invested nearly ₹900 crore under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana, boosting fish production to about 10 lakh tonnes. Tilapia, including the GIFT strain, is a major freshwater aquaculture species.

123) Correct Answer: C

Sadbhavana Diwas is celebrated on 20 August, the birthday of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (born 1944). The day emphasizes goodwill, harmony, and mutual understanding among communities. Rajiv Gandhi became India's youngest PM at age 40 after Indira Gandhi's assassination. His key contributions include the Computer Policy 1984, National Education Policy 1986, and lowering the voting age to 18.

124) Correct Answer: C

The Jaipur Declaration adopted by BRICS Tourism Ministers highlighted Artificial Intelligence and Tourism as a key priority. The declaration also emphasized sustainability, skilling, and seamless travel facilitation. The meeting was chaired by India's Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

125) Correct Answer: A

Chennai will become the first Indian city to implement a comprehensive ring-main solution for water supply. The Government of India and ADB signed a \$230 million loan to modernise water and sanitation infrastructure in the city. The ring-main system is designed to maintain balanced water pressure and ensure efficient distribution.

126) Correct Answer: C

Skyroot was described as India's first space-tech unicorn and launched the country's first private rocket on July 18. The company aims to scale up to one launch per week and eventually several launches a day. Skyroot has established three factories and can currently produce one rocket per month.

127) Correct Answer: C

INS Sudarshini arrived in Lisbon, Portugal as part of the Lokayan 26 expedition. The ship's entry showcased traditional sailing and seamanship skills on the Tagus River. This was the vessel's 15th port call in seven months. The visit included professional exchanges and cultural engagements with Portuguese naval leadership and the Indian diaspora.

128) Correct Answer: A

Piyush Goyal's delegation to Japan includes representatives from manufacturing, semiconductors, clean energy, steel, automotive, financial services,

healthcare, and start-ups. The visit covers meetings in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. Sessions will focus on semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and investor engagement.

129) Correct Answer: D

The 2026 National Space Day theme is 'Towards Viksit Bharat: Innovating, Collaborating and Aspiring to Global Space Leadership.' The theme reflects India's ambition to strengthen scientific and technological capabilities. It encourages innovation, partnerships, and participation in the global space ecosystem.

130) Correct Answer: B

The PRIP scheme aims to strengthen research and industry-academia collaboration. It supports India's transition towards innovation-led growth in the pharmaceutical sector. The scheme is part of broader efforts to move India from 'Pharmacy of the World' to 'Laboratory of the World'. It complements other missions like Biopharma SHAKTI.

131) Correct Answer: D

Chandrayaan-3 achieved a soft landing near the Moon's south pole in August 2023. This made India the first country to reach the lunar south polar region. The mission also deployed the Pragyan rover for scientific experiments. The data from the mission has been shared globally for research.

132) Correct Answer: D

Australia confirmed its first H5N1 bird flu case in a long-nosed fur seal found dead in South Australia. This detection marks the first mammalian case in the country. Seals are at high risk due to close proximity to wild birds on the coast. Over 13,000 baby seals were killed by the virus on Heard Island.

133) Correct Answer: B

The Lokayan 26 expedition aims to strengthen India's maritime connect and promote friendship, cooperation, and camaraderie with partner nations. INS Sudarshini arrived in Lisbon as its 15th port call during the voyage. The expedition also showcases India's traditional sailing and seamanship skills.

134) Correct Answer: A

Scammers may use obtained personal information or photographs for blackmail. The scam involves luring victims via social media with fake companionship offers. Victims are tricked into sharing sensitive data or making payments. Some cases have led to threats and blackmail using private photos.

135) Correct Answer: C

National Space Day marks the historic soft landing of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander near the Moon's south polar region in 2023. This achievement made India the first country to land near the Moon's south pole. The day celebrates India's scientific talent and innovation in space.

136) Correct Answer: B

The government aims to control rising sugar prices by permitting duty-free imports. Sugar prices have increased significantly ahead of major festivals. The measure is intended to boost supply and stabilize the market. Bulk consumers are also restricted to a 15-day stock holding limit. Such interventions help protect consumers during high-demand periods.

137) Correct Answer: C

DPIIT signed MoUs with PhonePe and Shell India to support DPIIT-recognised startups. PhonePe will provide payment gateway credits, app store access, and masterclasses. Shell India will mentor energy and climate-tech startups. The collaboration includes policy briefs and sectoral success stories.

138) Correct Answer: C

The MoU focuses on assessing the forest and pastoral economy in Himachal Pradesh. The untapped potential is estimated at ₹22,600 crore. The joint inventory used AI/ML, satellite data, and over 2 lakh tree records. Products like amla, pine needles, and wild mango have significant economic value.

139) Correct Answer: A

S. Somanath, former ISRO Chairman, was appointed as a part-time non-official director on the RBI Central Board. The appointment is for a four-year term starting August 2026. Anand Mahindra was reappointed on the same

date. The RBI Central Board's strength has been reduced from 15 to 11 members.

140) Correct Answer: B

The initiative aims to give young athletes and youth leaders a direct platform to share ideas on India's sports and youth ecosystem. It was held across 1,500+ educational institutions. Key themes include grassroots facilities, Olympic talent nurturing, and youth leadership. Such engagement helps shape future sports policy and youth development.

141) Correct Answer: D

Kanda Express was launched to move onions from Nashik to Delhi, Chennai, Kochi, and Guwahati to address rising prices. The initiative was triggered by a sharp increase in onion prices, with national retail prices reaching ₹42/kg. NAFED and NCCF procured around 1.2 lakh tonnes for buffer stock. The procurement price was raised to ₹2,645/quintal to support farmers.

142) Correct Answer: A

The BAS aims to enable long-term research, technology testing, and sustained human presence in space. The first module for BAS has already been approved. The project will leverage Gaganyaan facilities and marks a major step in India's human spaceflight programme. BAS is a significant milestone for India's ambitions in space exploration.

143) Correct Answer: C

In July 2026, UPI had 741 banks connected to its ecosystem. This marks significant growth from just 21 member banks at its inception in 2016. The expanding network has helped take digital payments beyond metropolitan centres. UPI processed 2,365.8 crore transactions worth ₹29.87 lakh crore in that month.

144) Correct Answer: B

Nvidia is reportedly in talks to make a fresh investment in the AI startup Perplexity. The potential funding round could value Perplexity at more than USD 30 billion. Perplexity was valued at about USD 20 billion after its previous funding round. The startup's annualised revenue has surged to over USD 750 million from less than USD 250 million in eight months.

145) Correct Answer: C

The Onam Sadhya is an elaborate 26-course feast served on a banana leaf. It remains the centrepiece of Kerala's Onam

harvest festival. The meal includes rice, various vegetable preparations, pickles, papad, banana, chips, and multiple types of payasam. The Sadhya brings together families across Kerala, even as joint-family gatherings have become less common.

146) Correct Answer: B

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approved purchase of 25 lakh tablets under the Swami Vivekananda Yuva Sashaktikaran Yojana. The scheme aims to empower youth by providing free tablets for education, training, and employment opportunities. A budget provision of Rs 2,374.60 crore was made for 2026-27.

147) Correct Answer: C

Syed Akbaruddin, Annie George Mathew, and Janmejaya Kumar Sinha were appointed as part-time non-official directors. The appointments were made under Section 8(1)(c) of the RBI Act, 1934. The board's strength increased from 11 to 14 members. Akbaruddin is a former UN Permanent Representative; Mathew is with the Finance Commission; Sinha is ex-BCG Asia-Pacific Chairman.

148) Correct Answer: C

Mission Samridh Gaon aims to create poverty-free, employment-rich villages equipped with assured basic amenities. The scheme was launched by Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Krishi Bhawan, Delhi. It seeks to develop a comprehensive and integrated model for rural development.

149) Correct Answer: A

The AK-203 rifle manufactured in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, has been named 'Sher'. The rifle is produced by Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL) as part of a technology transfer from Russia. Over 600,000 units are planned for domestic production under this initiative. The production is scheduled to be completed ahead of the contractual deadline of 2032.

150) Correct Answer: D

The Indian Navy will commission the indigenous Diving Support Vessel 'Nipun' on August 31. Nipun is the second vessel of the Nistar-class, designed and constructed by Hindustan Shipyard Limited. The vessel was delivered to the Navy on July 30, 2026, after trials and outfitting. It is equipped for deep-sea diving, underwater intervention, and submarine rescue operations.

SECTION 3

Detailed Analysis of Important Events



Economics

Central government capex surges 66%, fiscal deficit narrows



Why in the News?

The Central Government's capital expenditure (capex) surged by 66% year-on-year to ₹89,255 crore in June 2026, while the fiscal deficit narrowed by 46% to ₹1.45 lakh crore, reflecting the government's continued emphasis on infrastructure-led growth despite revenue-side pressures. Strong public investment, higher direct tax collections, and prudent fiscal management have supported this improvement, although rising subsidies and weak indirect tax collections remain key concerns.

Key Highlights

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex):** Increased 66% YoY to ₹89,255 crore in June 2026.
- **FY 2026–27 Capex Target:** ₹12.22 lakh crore, with around 28% achieved during the first quarter.
- **Fiscal Deficit:** Declined by 46% to ₹1.45 lakh crore in June.
- **Direct Tax Collections (April–June):**
 - Corporate Tax: Up 20%
 - Personal Income Tax: Up 7%
- **Customs Duty:** Rose 36%, aided by higher import duties on gold and silver.
- The improvement in fiscal indicators reflects better expenditure management and stronger revenue mobilisation from direct taxes.

Why is India's Fiscal Position Still Under Pressure?

Despite the improvement in the fiscal deficit, several factors continue to exert pressure on government finances:

- **Higher Fertiliser Subsidies:** Urea subsidy expenditure increased by 68% to ₹53,034 crore, raising revenue expenditure.
- **Declining Excise Collections:** Fuel excise revenue fell by 22% following reductions in excise duty on petrol and diesel.
- **Weak GST Growth:** Slower growth in Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections has affected overall tax revenues.
- **Rising Global Crude Oil Prices:** Higher crude prices may increase subsidy requirements and import costs, putting additional strain on the fiscal balance.
- **Balancing Growth and Fiscal Prudence:** Sustaining high public investment while keeping the fiscal deficit within the budgeted target remains a major policy challenge.

Significance

- **Infrastructure Development:** Higher capital expenditure accelerates the construction of roads, railways, ports, airports, and other productive assets.
- **Employment Generation:** Large-scale infrastructure projects create direct and indirect employment opportunities.
- **Economic Growth:** Productive public investment crowds in private investment and raises long-term economic productivity.
- **Macroeconomic Stability:** A lower fiscal deficit reduces government borrowing requirements, helping contain inflationary pressures and improve investor confidence.
- **Healthy Tax Performance:** Robust corporate and income tax collections indicate resilient formal sector economic activity and improving tax compliance.

Challenges

- Rising subsidy burden, particularly fertiliser subsidies.
- Continued decline in fuel excise revenues.

- Weak GST growth affecting revenue mobilisation.
- Volatility in international crude oil prices.
- Maintaining fiscal consolidation while sustaining high levels of capital expenditure.
- Ensuring that public investment translates into timely project execution and higher economic returns.

Capital Expenditure (Capex)

Capital expenditure refers to government spending on the creation of long-term productive assets, such as:

- Roads and highways
- Railways
- Ports and airports
- Power infrastructure
- Irrigation projects
- Digital and urban infrastructure

Importance

- Expands the economy's productive capacity.
- Generates employment and boosts demand.
- Encourages private investment through better infrastructure.
- Supports sustainable long-term economic growth.

Revenue Expenditure

Revenue expenditure includes spending on:

- Salaries and wages
- Pensions
- Subsidies
- Interest payments
- Administrative and day-to-day government operations

Unlike capital expenditure, it does not create permanent assets, though it is essential for the functioning of the government.

Fiscal Deficit

Fiscal Deficit represents the gap between the government's total expenditure and its non-borrowed receipts.

Formula:

Fiscal Deficit = Total Expenditure – (Revenue Receipts + Non-Debt Capital Receipts)

Importance

- Indicates the government's borrowing requirement during a financial year.
- Higher fiscal deficits can increase public debt and interest obligations.
- Moderate fiscal deficits are often used to stimulate growth during economic slowdowns, but persistent high deficits may affect macroeconomic stability.

Related Concepts

- **Primary Deficit:** Fiscal Deficit – Interest Payments; indicates the current year's fiscal imbalance excluding past debt obligations.
- **Revenue Deficit:** Occurs when revenue expenditure exceeds revenue receipts, implying that borrowings are being used to finance current consumption rather than asset creation.

Why is the government offloading stake in LIC?



Why in the News

The Government of India has completed an Offer for Sale (OFS) of shares in the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) as part of its disinvestment programme and to increase LIC's public shareholding.

The government initially offered 2.5% of LIC's equity, with a 4% green-shoe option, taking the maximum possible sale to 6.5%. Strong institutional demand led the government to exercise the additional option. The government ultimately sold more than 82.23 crore shares, raising approximately ₹31,552 crore. Public ownership in LIC consequently increased to 10%, helping

the insurer meet the immediate public-shareholding requirement ahead of the applicable deadline.

The transaction is significant because it represents the first major government stake sale in LIC since its listing in May 2022 and has emerged as India's largest OFS so far.

What is an Offer for Sale (OFS)?

An **Offer for Sale (OFS)** is a stock-market mechanism through which an existing shareholder, generally a promoter or government shareholder, sells its shares to investors through the recognised stock exchanges.

Key Features

- **Existing shares are sold:** No new shares are created by the company.
- **No fresh capital for the company:** The money raised goes to the selling shareholder rather than to the company.
- **Exchange-based mechanism:** The transaction is conducted through the stock-exchange platform.
- **Faster than a conventional public issue:** OFS is generally used for relatively quick dilution of promoter or government holdings.
- **Price discovery:** Investors bid within the prescribed price mechanism, while the seller specifies a floor price.

LIC OFS

For the LIC transaction:

- **Initial offer:** 2.5% equity
- **Green-shoe option:** Additional 4%
- **Maximum offer:** 6.5%
- **Floor price:** ₹382 per share
- **Shares ultimately sold:** Over 82.23 crore
- **Government receipts:** Approximately ₹31,552 crore
- **Public shareholding after sale:** 10%

The ₹382 floor price was around 10.9% below LIC's ₹428.50 closing price before the announcement, making the offer attractive to investors but also putting short-term pressure on LIC's market price. LIC shares fell sharply after the discounted sale was announced.

What is the Green Shoe Option?

A Green Shoe Option allows the seller to increase the size of an offering beyond the originally proposed quantity when there is strong investor demand.

In the LIC case, the government initially proposed a 2.5% stake sale but retained the option to sell another 4%. Strong institutional demand resulted in the additional option being exercised, taking the total transaction to 6.5% of LIC's equity.

Why is it useful?

The green-shoe mechanism provides flexibility to:

- accommodate excess investor demand;
- increase the amount raised by the seller;
- accelerate compliance with public-shareholding requirements; and
- deepen the stock's public float and liquidity.

What is Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS)?

Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) refers to the minimum proportion of shares of a listed company that must be held by public shareholders rather than promoters or the controlling government shareholder. For most listed companies, the normal MPS requirement is 25% public shareholding. However, LIC received a special regulatory timeline because of its unusually large size and the structure of its 2022 listing.

LIC was initially required to reach 10% public shareholding within three years of listing, but SEBI granted an additional three years in May 2024, extending the deadline to 16 May 2027.

The August 2026 OFS has therefore taken LIC's public shareholding from approximately 3.5% to 10%, achieving this milestone before the deadline.

Important distinction

Reaching 10% does not mean that LIC has permanently fulfilled the general 25% MPS requirement.

Rather, the current transaction enables LIC to meet the intermediate 10% milestone under its special regulatory timeline. LIC still has a longer period to move towards the eventual 25% public-shareholding requirement.

Why did the Government sell its LIC stake?

1. Compliance with MPS requirements

The most immediate reason was to increase LIC's public shareholding from around 3.5% to 10% before the May 2027 deadline.

The full 6.5% sale achieved this milestone ahead of schedule.

2. Government disinvestment

The transaction forms part of the government's broader strategy of disinvestment and asset monetisation.

Under Union Budget 2026–27, the government set a target of ₹80,000 crore under miscellaneous capital receipts, covering disinvestment and asset monetisation. The LIC transaction therefore provides a substantial contribution towards this target.

3. Broader public ownership

The sale increases the proportion of LIC owned by public investors.

Greater public participation can contribute to:

- wider share ownership;
- improved liquidity;
- greater market-based price discovery;
- enhanced transparency and shareholder scrutiny.

4. Mobilisation of resources

The government raised approximately ₹31,552 crore from the transaction, making it an important source of non-tax capital receipts.

What is Disinvestment?

Disinvestment refers to the sale of a government's stake in a public-sector enterprise or government-owned company.

It does not necessarily mean privatisation.

Types of Disinvestment

1. Minority disinvestment:

The government sells part of its stake but retains controlling ownership.

2. Majority disinvestment:

The government sells a sufficiently large stake to give up control.

3. Strategic disinvestment:

The government transfers substantial ownership along with management control to another entity.

The LIC OFS is an example of **minority disinvestment**, because the government continues to retain a very large majority stake.

Role of DIPAM

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) under the Ministry of Finance is the government's principal department for managing its investments in public-sector enterprises and implementing disinvestment-related transactions.

Its responsibilities include:

- managing government equity in CPSEs;
- formulating disinvestment strategies;
- implementing minority stake sales;
- advising on strategic disinvestment;
- managing government investments and asset monetisation.

The LIC OFS is therefore part of the government's wider public-asset management strategy.

LIC's Position in India's Insurance Sector

Market Leader

LIC continues to be India's largest life insurer.

According to its FY2025–26 performance data, LIC had an overall 56.66% market share in India's life insurance business, measured by First-Year Premium Income. Its share was 36.60% in individual business and 70.11% in group business.

Thus, despite increasing competition from private insurers, LIC continues to dominate the Indian life-insurance market.

Strong Financial Performance

LIC reported a profit after tax of ₹57,419 crore for FY2025–26, compared with ₹48,151 crore in FY2024–25, representing growth of about 19.25%. Its total premium income rose to approximately ₹5.36 lakh crore.

This financial strength is one reason why the LIC stake sale attracted considerable investor interest.

LIC as a Domestic Systemically Important Insurer

LIC is designated as a Domestic Systemically Important Insurer (D-SII).

What is a D-SII?

A Domestic Systemically Important Insurer is an insurer whose size, market importance and interconnectedness

are such that financial distress or failure could have significant consequences for the domestic financial system.

D-SIs are therefore subject to enhanced regulatory supervision by the insurance regulator, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). LIC's enormous policyholder base, investment portfolio and dominant market position make its financial stability important for the wider Indian economy.

LIC's 2022 IPO

The government's current stake sale follows LIC's landmark 2022 Initial Public Offering (IPO).

In May 2022, the government sold 3.5% of LIC's equity through the IPO and raised approximately ₹20,557 crore. The 2026 OFS is therefore the government's first major follow-on stake dilution in LIC since its stock-market listing.

2022 IPO vs 2026 OFS

Feature	LIC IPO, 2022	LIC OFS, 2026
Mechanism	IPO	OFS
Seller	Government	Government
Stake sold	3.5%	Up to 6.5%
Funds received by	LIC/company + government structure through issue	Government
Major objective	Listing + initial disinvestment	MPS compliance + disinvestment
Amount raised	₹20,557 crore	~₹31,552 crore
Public holding after transaction	~3.5%	10%

Significance of the LIC OFS

1. Largest OFS in India

The transaction became India's largest Offer for Sale, with more than 82 crore shares ultimately offered and around ₹31,552 crore mobilised.

2. MPS milestone achieved

Public ownership has risen to 10%, allowing LIC to meet the relevant intermediate regulatory requirement well before the May 2027 deadline.

3. Major contribution to disinvestment

The transaction provides a significant boost to the government's ₹80,000-crore FY27 disinvestment and asset-monetisation target.

4. Greater market liquidity

A larger public float can improve trading liquidity and broaden the investor base for LIC.

5. Market discipline

Greater public ownership means more shares are available to institutional and retail investors, increasing market-based scrutiny of LIC's performance.

Possible Concerns

1. Market Pressure

Because the government offered shares at a substantial discount to the prevailing market price, LIC's stock price came under pressure around the transaction.

2. Supply Overhang

A large increase in the number of shares available in the market can temporarily create selling pressure, particularly if investors expect further government stake sales.

3. Fiscal Motivation

While the sale supports fiscal receipts, disinvestment should ideally be driven by long-term public-asset management and efficiency considerations, rather than becoming merely a means of meeting annual revenue targets.

UPI and the cost of policy reversal



Why in the News?

The Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 has brought the issue of Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on digital payments, particularly Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and RuPay debit-card transactions, back into focus. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on 6 August 2026. Importantly, the legislation does not itself impose an MDR on every UPI transaction. Instead, it creates the legal framework under which the government can notify charges on specified electronic payment modes. As of the latest available reports, the precise fee structure and its implementation remain to be determined.

What is UPI?

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is India's real-time digital payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

It enables users to transfer money instantly between bank accounts using mobile applications without requiring bank-account details for every transaction.

Key Features

- Instant, 24×7 bank-to-bank payments
- Interoperability between different banks and payment applications
- QR-code-based payments
- Person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions
- Integration with mobile applications and digital commerce
- Supports both large-value and very small-value transactions

UPI has expanded at extraordinary speed. NPCI's latest readily available official monthly data show 23.20 billion transactions worth about ₹29.90 lakh crore in May 2026, up from 22.35 billion transactions in April 2026.

What is Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)?

Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) is the fee associated with processing a digital payment. It is generally paid by the merchant and is distributed among the different entities involved in processing the transaction, such as banks and payment-service providers.

For traditional card payments, MDR has historically been a major source of revenue for payment intermediaries.

Broadly:

- **Credit-card MDR:** commonly around 1–3%, depending on the transaction and card network.
- **Debit-card MDR:** generally lower, with regulated rates applying to certain transactions.
- **UPI:** has operated under a zero-MDR framework for specified transactions since 2020.

The zero-MDR model helped make UPI highly attractive to merchants, especially small retailers, street vendors and micro-enterprises.

Why was Zero-MDR Introduced?

The zero-MDR approach was designed primarily to accelerate the adoption of digital payments.

If merchants had to pay a fee for every small UPI transaction, they could have been reluctant to accept QR-code payments or might have shifted the cost to consumers.

Zero MDR therefore supported:

- Rapid merchant acceptance
- Wider use of QR codes
- Low-cost digital transactions
- Financial inclusion
- Reduction in dependence on cash
- Formalisation of small businesses
- Expansion of digital payment infrastructure

The government has continued to financially support digital-payment adoption. For 2026–27, the Union Budget provides a ₹2,000-crore outlay for the incentive scheme promoting RuPay debit cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions.

What Does the 2026 Bill Change?

The important change is that the Bill creates legal space for the government to notify charges on specified electronic payment systems by amending provisions related to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

Therefore, the Bill should not be interpreted as meaning that every UPI user will immediately have to pay a fee.

The emerging policy discussion has focused on a calibrated MDR for high-value merchant transactions, rather than a universal charge.

One proposal reported in July 2026 considered an MDR of below 0.5% on UPI transactions above ₹2,000 made to

large merchants, with consumers not directly bearing the charge. Other reports have discussed a range of roughly 0.25–0.5%. These figures remain proposals rather than a final notified tariff.

A key rationale is that transactions above ₹2,000 represent a relatively small proportion of total transaction volume but a disproportionately large share of the total value processed.

Why is the Sustainability of Zero-MDR Being Questioned?

The enormous growth of UPI has created a paradox: the more successful the system becomes, the greater the cost of operating and securing it becomes.

1. Rising Infrastructure Costs

UPI processes billions of transactions every month. Maintaining servers, payment infrastructure, interoperability and settlement systems requires continuous investment.

As transaction volumes grow, payment infrastructure must also scale in terms of:

- Processing capacity
- Network resilience
- Cloud and data infrastructure
- Settlement systems
- Technical support
- System redundancy

2. Increasing Cybersecurity Requirements

Digital payments are increasingly exposed to sophisticated fraud, phishing, social engineering, malware and account-takeover attempts.

Continuous expenditure is required for:

- Fraud detection
- Risk-based transaction monitoring
- Authentication systems
- Cybersecurity infrastructure
- Data protection
- Consumer awareness

A sustainable revenue model can provide payment intermediaries with greater capacity to invest in these areas.

3. Government Subsidisation

The zero-MDR model does not mean that digital payments have **no cost**.

The economic cost is distributed across banks, payment providers, fintech companies and the government.

The Union government's continued financial support demonstrates that maintaining low-cost digital payments requires public resources. The 2026–27 budget, for example, allocates ₹2,000 crore to promote RuPay and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions.

This raises an important policy question:

Should the entire cost of a rapidly expanding payment infrastructure continue to be supported through public funds and private cross-subsidisation?

The Two-Sided Market Nature of UPI

UPI can be understood as a two-sided or multi-sided market.

It connects different groups:

Consumers ↔ Payment Applications/Banks ↔ Merchants

The system becomes more valuable as participation increases.

For example:

- More consumers using UPI encourage more merchants to accept UPI.
- More merchants accepting UPI encourage more consumers to use it.
- Greater adoption attracts fintech companies and banks.
- More competition encourages innovation and better services.

This creates a strong network effect.

Consequently, pricing one side of the market can influence participation on the other side.

Why Could MDR Affect the UPI Ecosystem?

Arguments in Favour of MDR

1. Financial sustainability

A reasonable MDR could create a recurring revenue stream for banks and payment-service providers and reduce dependence on government incentives.

2. Investment in innovation

Revenue could support improvements in fraud detection, cybersecurity, merchant services, credit products and payment technology.

3. Better incentives for payment providers

Payment providers currently process enormous transaction volumes without receiving a conventional transaction fee for many UPI payments. A sustainable revenue model could improve their ability to invest in the ecosystem.

4. Development of value-added services

A viable payments business model could encourage companies to build additional services around payments, such as merchant analytics, working-capital products and other financial services.

5. Reduced fiscal dependence

A greater contribution from the ecosystem itself could gradually reduce the government's need to subsidise payment transactions.

Arguments Against MDR

1. Risk to Small Merchants

Small merchants operate with narrow profit margins. Even a small payment fee can become significant when multiplied across thousands of transactions.

If the fee is passed on to merchants, some businesses may prefer cash.

2. Possibility of Consumer Charges

Although policymakers have indicated that consumers and small merchants should not bear the burden, the final incidence of MDR will depend on the design of the system.

If merchants face higher costs, they may indirectly recover them through higher prices.

3. Risk to Financial Inclusion

UPI's greatest strength is its simplicity and low cost.

A shift from a completely free model to a paid model could discourage some low-income consumers, small businesses and first-time digital-payment users.

This could weaken India's progress in bringing informal economic activity into the formal financial system.

4. Possible Return to Cash

If merchants perceive digital payments as costly while cash remains free at the point of transaction, some transactions could shift back towards cash.

This would work against India's broader objective of reducing cash dependence and increasing transparency in economic transactions.

Market Concentration: A Major Concern

Another important issue is the concentration of UPI transactions among a few major third-party payment applications.

As of June 2026, PhonePe accounted for roughly 46.4% of UPI payer-app transaction volume, while Google Pay accounted for about 32.8%. Their combined share was around 79.2%.

However, this also indicates a gradual change: their combined share has slipped below 80%, with newer players such as Navi and super.money gaining ground.

A sustainable MDR framework could potentially improve the economics of competing payment providers. At the same time, poorly designed pricing could strengthen incumbents if smaller players lack the financial capacity to absorb additional costs.

Parliament passes National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026



Why in the News?

Parliament has passed the National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, strengthening the financial role of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC). The Bill enables NCDC to provide loans and grants directly to eligible cooperative societies, reducing dependence on State Governments as intermediaries.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on 12 August 2026, after its passage in the Lok Sabha. The amendment comes at a time when the Government is attempting to expand cooperative-led economic activity under the broader vision of “Sahakar se Samridhi” and strengthen cooperatives as instruments of rural economic development.

What is NCDC?

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is a statutory corporation established under an Act of Parliament in 1963 and functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Cooperation.

NCDC is an apex-level financial and developmental institution dedicated to the cooperative sector. It plans, promotes and finances programmes relating to:

- Production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce.
- Storage, cold chains and food processing.
- Export and import of agricultural produce and notified commodities.
- Dairy, poultry, fisheries and livestock activities.
- Handloom, sericulture and other cooperative enterprises.
- Rural industrial and service-sector activities.
- Working-capital requirements and expansion or modernisation of cooperative projects.

NCDC provides financial assistance through loans and other forms of support to cooperatives at different levels, including primary, district, apex and multi-State cooperatives.

What does the Amendment Change?

1. Direct Financial Assistance

The most important change is that NCDC can provide loans and grants directly to cooperative societies and entities engaged in cooperative development, subject to prescribed eligibility and conditions.

Earlier, financial assistance to many primary and secondary-level cooperatives was routed through State Governments. Direct funding can reduce procedural delays and make financing more responsive to the requirements of eligible cooperatives.

2. Wider Scope of Food-related Activities

The amendment broadens the scope of the term “foodstuffs”, allowing NCDC's financing framework to better accommodate processed food and other food-related activities notified by the Central Government.

This is significant because India's cooperative sector is increasingly moving beyond primary production towards processing, packaging, storage, branding and marketing.

3. Greater Financial Flexibility

The amendment strengthens NCDC's ability to act as a development-financing institution for cooperatives. This can support investment in new projects, expansion of existing facilities and working capital requirements.

However, the amendment itself does not automatically create a new expenditure commitment of the Government. Its impact will also depend on NCDC's ability to mobilise and deploy financial resources efficiently.

Why is the Amendment Needed?

A) Faster Credit Delivery

Routing finance through multiple administrative levels can increase transaction time. Direct lending can potentially shorten the credit-delivery chain and allow financially viable cooperatives to access institutional finance more quickly.

B) Supporting a Large Cooperative Network

India has one of the world's largest cooperative networks. The National Cooperative Database contains information on more than 8.5 lakh cooperative societies, covering around 30 economic sectors and approximately 30 crore members.

The cooperative sector therefore represents a substantial institutional network through which investment can reach farmers, workers, women, artisans and rural entrepreneurs.

C) Promoting Value Addition

A major challenge for Indian agriculture is the limited share of producers in the final value of agricultural products. Greater financing for food processing, storage, cold chains and marketing can help cooperatives move from merely producing commodities to participating in higher-value segments of the agricultural value chain.

D) Improving Access to Institutional Finance

The Government has already taken steps to increase credit availability to cooperatives. From 19 January 2026, eligible bank loans to NCDC for on-lending to cooperative societies can qualify as Priority Sector Lending, subject to the applicable RBI norms.

This creates an additional channel for mobilising institutional credit towards the cooperative sector.

Why are States Concerned?

The principal concern relates to cooperative federalism. Under the Constitution, cooperative societies operating within a State fall primarily within the legislative domain of the States. Therefore, greater direct involvement of a Central institution in financing State-level cooperatives can raise questions about the appropriate balance between Union and State roles.

States may be concerned that direct Central financing could:

- Reduce the role of State Governments in cooperative development.
- Bypass State cooperative departments and registrars.
- Increase the influence of the Union Government over State-level cooperatives.
- Create tensions over financial and administrative control.
- Affect the principle of cooperative autonomy.

At the same time, direct NCDC financing does not necessarily eliminate State involvement altogether; access to assistance remains subject to NCDC's eligibility conditions, guidelines and project appraisal.

Constitutional Framework

1. Entry 32 of the State List

Entry 32 of List II (State List) covers the incorporation, regulation and winding-up of corporations, including cooperative societies, within the constitutional framework applicable to States.

The Supreme Court in *Union of India v. Rajendra N. Shah* (2021) reaffirmed that cooperative societies confined to a State fall within the legislative domain of State Legislatures.

2. Article 43B

Article 43B, introduced through the 97th Constitutional Amendment, directs the State to promote:

- Voluntary formation of cooperative societies.
- Autonomous functioning.
- Democratic control.
- Professional management.

It reflects the constitutional objective of strengthening cooperatives while preserving their autonomy.

3. Part IXB — Articles 243ZH to 243ZT

Part IXB deals with cooperative societies and was inserted through the 97th Constitutional Amendment.

However, an important constitutional nuance is that the Supreme Court in *Union of India v. Rajendra N. Shah* held that Part IXB is operative only insofar as it concerns multi-State cooperative societies. The provisions relating to ordinary State-level cooperative societies were invalidated because the required ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures had not been obtained.

Therefore, while discussing the constitutional framework, Part IXB should not be treated as fully applicable to ordinary State-level cooperative societies.

4. Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002

Cooperative societies whose objects and operations extend beyond a single State fall under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002, and are regulated at the Central level.

This distinction is important because the Constitution gives Parliament legislative competence over multi-State cooperative societies, while State Legislatures have primary competence over cooperatives operating within their respective States.

Significance for Rural Economy

The amendment has significance beyond the cooperative sector because cooperatives can act as a bridge between small producers and organised markets.

The Government's broader cooperative strategy has already resulted in significant financial activity through NCDC. NCDC reported disbursement of ₹95,183 crore during FY 2024-25, while government data released in early 2026 indicated around ₹95,000 crore had been disbursed during FY 2025-26 up to that point.

Way Forward

The success of the amendment will depend not merely on increasing the volume of credit but on ensuring quality, transparency and inclusion in cooperative finance.

The following measures can strengthen its implementation:

1. Transparent eligibility criteria for direct NCDC financing.
2. Independent project appraisal to reduce political or commercial interference.
3. Strong audit and disclosure mechanisms for funded cooperatives.
4. Professional management and capacity building at the grassroots level.
5. Special attention to smaller and emerging cooperatives in less-developed regions.
6. Digital monitoring of loans and projects to improve accountability.
7. Coordination with State Governments to prevent unnecessary Centre-State friction.
8. Outcome-based financing, linking credit to productivity, employment, value addition and member benefits.

States convert free-power subsidy into capital support for rooftop solar under PM Surya Ghar's Utility-Led Aggregation model



Why in the News

States such as Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar are increasingly using the Utility-Led Aggregation (ULA) model to accelerate rooftop solar adoption, particularly among low-income and underserved households. Under

this approach, distribution companies (DISCOMs) or designated state agencies aggregate demand and arrange rooftop solar installations at scale, reducing the need for individual households to navigate the installation process.

Recent state-level implementation demonstrates the growing importance of this approach. For instance, Andhra Pradesh has invited bids for 233.33 MW of rooftop solar capacity covering 1,16,663 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe consumers through ULA under PM Surya Ghar. Bihar has also initiated a regulatory process for rooftop solar installations for approximately 2.5 lakh Kutir Jyoti consumers through the ULA-RESCO model.

What is PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana?

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is a Central Sector scheme of the Government of India aimed at expanding residential rooftop solar and enabling households to generate their own electricity.

- **Ministry:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- **Launch:** 13 February 2024
- **Implementation period:** Up to FY 2026–27
- **Target:** 1 crore residential rooftop solar installations
- **Total outlay:** ₹75,021 crore
- **Electricity benefit:** Up to 300 units of free/low-cost electricity per month for eligible households
- **Expected rooftop capacity addition:** Around 30 GW in the residential sector
- **Expected generation:** About 1,000 billion units over the lifetime of the installed systems
- **Expected emissions reduction:** Around 720 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent over 25 years.

Central Financial Assistance

The Central Financial Assistance (CFA) for residential rooftop solar is structured according to system capacity:

Rooftop Solar Capacity	Central Subsidy
1 kW	₹30,000
2 kW	₹60,000
3 kW or above	₹78,000 maximum

The subsidy effectively covers 60% of the benchmark cost up to 2 kW and 40% of the additional benchmark cost between 2 and 3 kW, with the CFA capped at 3 kW. The scheme also provides access to collateral-free, concessional loans for eligible rooftop solar installations, helping reduce the upfront financial barrier for households.

What is Utility-Led Aggregation (ULA)?

Utility-Led Aggregation is an alternative implementation model under PM Surya Ghar in which the DISCOM or a state-designated agency aggregates a large number of residential consumers and arranges rooftop solar installation collectively.

Instead of every household separately selecting a vendor, negotiating prices and managing installation, the utility can:

1. Identify and aggregate eligible households.
2. Assess rooftop and grid feasibility.
3. Procure rooftop solar systems in bulk.
4. Select vendors through competitive bidding.
5. Coordinate installation and commissioning.
6. Manage metering, grid integration and, where applicable, operation and maintenance.

This creates **economies of scale** and can make rooftop solar accessible to households that may otherwise be unable or unwilling to make the initial investment.

The ULA model is distinct from the RESCO model, where a third-party Renewable Energy Service Company invests in the rooftop system and the consumer pays for the electricity generated/consumed under the agreed arrangement. MNRE has clarified that these models supplement the conventional consumer-led CAPEX mode available through the national portal.

Why are States Shifting from Recurring Electricity Subsidies to Solar Capital Support?

1. Reduction in Recurring Fiscal Burden

Traditional electricity subsidies require governments to make recurring payments to DISCOMs. Rooftop solar, by contrast, involves a relatively large one-time or front-loaded capital intervention, after which the asset can generate electricity for decades.

Thus, states can gradually shift from **consumption-based support to asset-based support**.

2. Creation of a Long-Term Productive Asset

A rooftop solar system generally has a long operational life. The PM Surya Ghar framework itself calculates the environmental benefits over a 25-year lifetime.

Therefore, public expenditure on rooftop solar can create an electricity-generating asset rather than merely financing annual electricity consumption.

3. Reduction in DISCOM Supply Costs

Residential consumers receiving subsidised electricity represent a financial burden for many DISCOMs. Distributed solar generation can reduce the amount of electricity that DISCOMs need to purchase and supply during daylight hours.

This is particularly relevant where daytime residential demand can be met partly through rooftop generation.

4. Economies of Scale

Bulk procurement allows utilities to aggregate demand and negotiate with vendors on a larger scale. Standardised systems, common procurement and coordinated installation can potentially reduce per-unit transaction and installation costs.

5. Inclusion of Underserved Households

One of the most important advantages of ULA is its potential to reach households that are traditionally less likely to adopt rooftop solar.

Poorer households may face constraints such as:

- lack of savings for upfront investment;
- limited access to formal credit;
- lack of technical knowledge;
- difficulty in selecting reliable vendors; and
- inability to navigate multiple administrative procedures.

ULA attempts to address these barriers through institutional aggregation.

Current Progress

The programme has scaled rapidly. According to the latest official data available from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, 48,02,717 households had benefited from PM Surya Ghar, with 39,72,447 rooftop solar systems installed, as of 22 July 2026. During FY 2025–26

alone, 18.71 lakh rooftop solar systems were installed, adding about 6.7 GW of capacity.

The Union Government has also indicated an intermediate ambition of reaching 75 lakh households by December 2026, before moving towards the ultimate target of 1 crore households.

ULA implementation is also expanding across States. Andhra Pradesh's ULA programme, for example, includes a planned 233.33 MW of rooftop solar for more than 1.16 lakh SC/ST consumers. Bihar's regulatory proceedings include a proposal covering approximately 2.5 lakh Kutir Jyoti consumers.

Key Definitions

- **Rooftop Solar**

A solar photovoltaic (PV) system installed on the roof, terrace, balcony or another eligible elevated structure of a building, generally connected to the local distribution grid.

- **Net Metering**

A metering arrangement under which electricity generated by a rooftop solar system and exported to the grid can be adjusted against electricity consumed from the grid, subject to applicable State regulations.

- **DISCOM**

A Distribution Company responsible for supplying electricity to consumers within a designated distribution area.

RESCO

Renewable Energy Service Company model in which a third party finances and installs the solar system and the consumer pays for electricity according to the contractual arrangement.

- **CAPEX Model**

The consumer bears the initial cost of the rooftop solar system, either through personal funds or borrowing, and owns the asset.

- **ULA**

Utility-Led Aggregation, where the DISCOM or designated state agency aggregates consumers and facilitates installation of rooftop solar systems on their behalf.

- **ALMM**

Approved List of Models and Manufacturers, maintained under MNRE's framework to ensure that eligible solar modules meet prescribed standards and requirements.

Way Forward

The success of PM Surya Ghar will depend not merely on the number of panels installed but on whether rooftop solar becomes a reliable, financially sustainable and widely accessible distributed-energy system.

The following measures can strengthen the programme:

- Strengthen DISCOM finances so that utilities can participate effectively in ULA.
- Expand concessional financing for low-income households.
- Standardise net-metering and approval procedures across States while respecting regulatory requirements.
- Upgrade distribution transformers and feeders in areas with high rooftop penetration.
- Improve vendor accountability through quality standards, performance monitoring and effective grievance redressal.
- Promote battery storage and smart energy management where economically viable.
- Target tenants, apartment complexes and low-income households through group or virtual net-metering arrangements where permitted.
- Strengthen domestic manufacturing of solar cells, wafers, modules, inverters and other components.
- Use ULA selectively, particularly where individual consumer-led adoption is weak, rather than replacing the CAPEX model everywhere.
- Measure outcomes beyond installation numbers, including actual generation, reduction in electricity bills, DISCOM savings, consumer satisfaction and system performance.

Kashmir's willow bat industry strains under cleft shortage, smuggling and wetland loss despite the 2025 GI tag



Why in the News

Kashmir's cricket-bat industry, an important traditional manufacturing sector of the Valley, is facing a growing raw-material challenge due to the shortage of good-quality willow. The industry supports a large network of willow growers, cleft dealers, sawmills, bat manufacturers, artisans, transporters and exporters.

Recent industry estimates put the annual production of Kashmir willow bats at around 30 lakh bats, while the wider economic value of the sector has been estimated in the range of ₹300–700 crore, depending on raw-material availability and market conditions. Recent reporting also highlights that a substantial share of the economic value is lost when willow clefts move outside the Valley for processing and manufacturing.

The crisis is therefore not merely about cricket bats; it involves agriculture, employment, environmental sustainability, traditional craftsmanship, regional value addition and intellectual-property protection.

Key Facts

1. Raw Material

Cricket bats manufactured in Kashmir are primarily made from willow wood, particularly *Salix alba*. The Kashmir Valley provides favourable conditions for willow cultivation, especially in areas associated with riverbanks, wetlands and water-rich agricultural landscapes.

Kashmir willow is generally denser and more durable than premium English willow, although English willow is preferred for high-end professional bats because of its lighter weight and playing characteristics.

2. Major Production Centres

The industry is concentrated mainly in south Kashmir, particularly around areas of Anantnag, Pulwama and adjoining districts. Anantnag has identified willow cricket bats as a major export-oriented product under the Districts as Export Hub initiative.

3. Production

Kashmir produces approximately 30 lakh cricket bats annually in years when adequate raw material is available. Jammu & Kashmir government trade-promotion material also describes the Valley as a major producer, with production of around 3 million bats a year.

4. Employment and Livelihoods

The industry supports thousands of people directly and indirectly through:

- Willow cultivation
- Cleft preparation
- Saw-milling
- Seasoning
- Bat shaping
- Handle manufacturing
- Finishing and branding
- Packaging and transportation
- Domestic and international trade

Earlier industry estimates placed the livelihood dependence at around 50,000 people, while more recent estimates have suggested a much larger indirect employment footprint when the entire value chain is considered.

5. Long Growth Cycle

Willow is a long-term plantation crop. A significant period is required before trees reach suitable maturity for commercial harvesting. Therefore, any reduction in plantations today can create a raw-material shortage several years later.

This creates a structural problem: increasing bat production immediately cannot compensate for inadequate willow plantations in the short term.

6. GI Tag

The Kashmir Willow Bat received Geographical Indication (GI) registration in 2025.

The official Intellectual Property India database records:

- **GI:** Kashmir Willow Bat
- **Application No.:** 903
- **Class:** 28
- **Geographical Area:** Jammu & Kashmir
- **Certificate Date:** 31 March 2025
- **Registration valid up to:** 31 May 2032

Why is the Industry Facing a Crisis?

1. Scarcity of Quality Willow

The biggest concern is not simply the total availability of willow but the availability of good-quality, properly matured timber suitable for premium bat production.

The industry requires consistent-quality clefts with suitable grain structure, moisture content and dimensions. A shortage of high-quality raw material can increase production costs and reduce the competitiveness of local manufacturers.

2. Shrinking Willow Plantations

Willow plantations have historically been associated with wetlands, riverbanks and areas with adequate water availability. Environmental degradation, changing land use and the deterioration of water bodies have reduced the availability of suitable plantation areas.

Recent reporting has also linked climate change, shrinking plantations and declining water availability with growing pressure on the traditional willow ecosystem.

3. Smuggling and Outflow of Clefts

A major structural problem is the movement of willow clefts outside Kashmir through illegal or poorly regulated channels.

When raw clefts leave the Valley and are processed in manufacturing hubs elsewhere, Kashmir loses:

- Local employment
- Value addition
- Tax and business opportunities
- Branding potential
- Opportunities for development of downstream industries

Thus, the problem is not only raw-material scarcity but also loss of local value addition.

4. Long Plantation Cycle

Willow cannot be rapidly replaced like an annual agricultural crop. Even if large-scale plantation is undertaken today, the industry will continue facing supply pressure until the new plantations reach suitable maturity.

This makes long-term plantation planning essential.

5. Lack of Modern Seasoning Facilities

Seasoning is crucial because freshly harvested willow contains significant moisture. Proper seasoning improves the stability and usability of the wood.

Government-linked export planning documents have highlighted the need for modern seasoning infrastructure. Modern facilities can substantially reduce the time required for seasoning compared with traditional natural methods, thereby improving quality and reducing the amount of working capital locked in inventory.

6. Inconsistent Timber Quality

Variations in:

- Tree age
- Growing conditions
- Moisture content
- Grain structure
- Seasoning
- Processing techniques

can lead to inconsistent bat quality.

This becomes particularly important when Kashmir seeks to compete in premium domestic and international markets.

Economic Importance of the Industry

The Kashmir willow bat industry represents an example of a regional value chain based on a locally available natural resource.

Its economic significance extends beyond bat factories. A functioning industry creates demand for:

Willow cultivation → harvesting → cleft preparation → seasoning → bat manufacturing → finishing → branding → packaging → transport → domestic sales/export

Therefore, improving the industry can generate multiplier effects across rural and semi-urban economies.

The sector also has considerable export potential. Jammu & Kashmir trade-promotion material identifies markets including Australia, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh and other cricket-playing countries, while the Valley has sought to strengthen its export-oriented branding.

What does the GI Tag do?

A Geographical Indication identifies goods associated with a particular geographical region and provides legal protection against unauthorised use of the geographical name.

For Kashmir Willow Bat, the GI registration can help in the following ways:

1. Prevents Misuse of the Name

It can help distinguish genuine products associated with the registered geographical origin from products that improperly use the Kashmir willow identity.

2. Enhances Brand Value

GI recognition can strengthen the reputation of Kashmir willow bats in domestic and international markets.

3. Supports Export Promotion

A legally protected geographical identity can be used as a marketing and branding tool for international trade.

4. Protects Producers

Registered producers and authorised users can obtain legal protection against misuse of the GI indication.

5. Promotes Local Value Addition

If effectively implemented alongside quality certification and export promotion, GI protection can encourage more processing and branding to remain within Jammu & Kashmir.

The GI Registry confirms that Kashmir Willow Bat is a registered GI rather than merely a proposal or pending application.

Government Response and Way Forward

The response to the crisis needs to combine ecological restoration with industrial modernisation.

1. Expansion of Willow Plantation

The proposed plantation of around 2.2 lakh willow trees across 200 hectares can strengthen the future raw-material base.

However, plantation programmes must be designed as long-term programmes rather than one-time drives.

2. Improved Willow Clones

The introduction and propagation of improved planting material can help increase:

- Growth performance
- Timber quality
- Survival rates
- Uniformity of raw material

3. Identification of New Plantation Areas

New suitable sites should be identified scientifically, taking into account:

- Soil conditions
- Water availability
- Flood risk
- Climate suitability
- Land-use requirements
- Long-term sustainability

4. Modern Seasoning Technology

Investment in scientific seasoning facilities can improve the consistency and quality of clefts while reducing processing time.

This is particularly important if Kashmir wants to move from supplying raw material to producing higher-value finished bats.

5. Curbing Illegal Cleft Movement

Stronger monitoring of the movement of willow clefts is essential.

Measures could include:

- Better traceability of timber
- Digital transit permits
- Check-post monitoring
- Registration of cleft dealers
- Coordination between forest, police and industry authorities
- Strict action against illegal transportation

6. Strengthening Local Manufacturing

The objective should be to retain a larger proportion of the value chain within Kashmir.

Instead of exporting low-value raw clefts, the region should focus on:

Willow → seasoned cleft → finished bat → branded product → export

This can generate significantly greater employment and income.

7. Branding and Export Promotion

GI recognition should be integrated with:

- International sports exhibitions
- E-commerce
- Export promotion
- Quality certification
- Professional branding
- Participation in cricket equipment markets

JKTPO has already identified willow bats as an export-oriented product under the Districts as Export Hub initiative.

Why India is finding it difficult to buy critical mineral assets abroad



Why in the News

A Parliamentary panel report has highlighted the limited success of Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) in securing critical mineral assets overseas. Despite being created to help India acquire strategic mineral resources abroad, KABIL has so far achieved a major acquisition only in Argentina, while some opportunities pursued in countries such as Australia and Chile have either failed or lapsed.

What is KABIL?

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) is a joint venture company established in 2019 to identify, acquire, develop and secure strategic and critical mineral assets outside India.

It was formed by three public sector enterprises:

- National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO)

- Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL)
- Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL)

KABIL functions under the overall policy framework of the Ministry of Mines.

The organisation was created in response to growing concerns regarding India's dependence on imports for several minerals that are essential for sectors such as electric mobility, renewable energy, electronics, defence, aerospace and advanced manufacturing.

Major Achievement: Lithium Blocks in Argentina

KABIL's most significant overseas success has been the acquisition of exploration and development rights for five lithium brine blocks in Catamarca Province, Argentina, in January 2024.

Argentina forms part of the Lithium Triangle, a region covering Argentina, Bolivia and Chile that contains a substantial share of the world's known lithium resources. The acquisition was therefore considered an important step towards securing a long-term supply of lithium for India's expanding battery and electric vehicle ecosystem. However, the acquisition of mineral blocks does not immediately guarantee the availability of commercially usable lithium. Detailed exploration, assessment of reserves, extraction, processing and infrastructure development are still required before commercial production can begin.

Understanding Important Terms

Spodumene Concentrate

Spodumene is a lithium-bearing mineral generally obtained from hard-rock lithium deposits. After mining and beneficiation, the ore can be converted into a spodumene concentrate.

However, spodumene concentrate cannot directly be used for manufacturing lithium-ion batteries. It must undergo further chemical processing to produce battery-grade materials such as:

- Lithium carbonate
- Lithium hydroxide

The conversion process requires advanced technology, significant energy and chemical processing infrastructure.

Lithium Brine

Lithium brine refers to underground saline water containing dissolved lithium and other minerals. It is commonly found beneath salt flats or salars, particularly in South America.

Traditionally, brine is pumped to the surface and placed in large evaporation ponds, where solar evaporation gradually concentrates lithium salts. The concentrated material is subsequently processed into lithium compounds.

Newer technologies, including Direct Lithium Extraction (DLE), are also being developed and deployed to potentially reduce processing time, land use and dependence on conventional evaporation methods.

Non-Binding Offer

A non-binding offer is an initial or indicative proposal made by a potential buyer. Unlike a final binding agreement, it does not legally compel the bidder to complete the transaction.

Such offers may help a company enter the next stages of a transaction, including:

- Access to the seller's data room
- Technical and financial due diligence
- Assessment of mineral resources and reserves
- Evaluation of environmental and regulatory risks
- Negotiation of final commercial terms

The bidder may subsequently decide whether to submit a binding offer.

Why Has KABIL Faced Difficulties?

1. Limited Financial Capacity

The global competition for critical mineral assets is intense. Major multinational mining companies, commodity traders and integrated battery-material companies can mobilise large amounts of capital for acquisitions.

KABIL, as a consortium of public sector companies, may face limitations in rapidly matching aggressive international bids or taking large financial risks. Critical mineral projects also require funding not only for acquisition but for exploration, mine development, infrastructure and processing.

2. Weak Domestic Midstream Processing Capacity

One of India's major challenges is the limited availability of commercial-scale facilities for converting mineral concentrates into battery-grade or high-purity chemical products.

For example, securing a lithium mine abroad does not automatically create a domestic battery supply chain. The extracted material must still move through several stages of processing.

A typical value chain is:

Mine → Ore/Brine → Concentrate or Intermediate Product → Chemical Refining → Battery Materials → Battery Cells → Electric Vehicles and Energy Storage

The **midstream refining and processing segment** is particularly important because much of the value addition takes place at this stage.

3. High Price Volatility

Critical mineral prices can fluctuate sharply because of changes in:

- Global demand for electric vehicles
- Battery technology
- New mining supply
- Government policies
- Inventory levels
- Chinese and other international processing capacities

This makes it difficult to determine the correct value of a mining asset. A project that appears commercially attractive during a period of high lithium prices may become less viable if global prices subsequently decline.

4. Slow Decision-Making in a Consortium Structure

KABIL involves multiple public sector entities. Large overseas acquisitions may require coordination among different organisations, technical experts, financial advisers and government authorities.

While such a structure can provide institutional support, it may also slow decision-making. In competitive international transactions, delays in conducting due diligence or obtaining approvals can result in missed opportunities.

5. Competition from Vertically Integrated Companies

Some international companies are willing to pay more for mineral assets because they can capture value across the entire supply chain.

A company that owns or has access to:

Mine → Refinery → Cathode material facility → Battery manufacturing

may derive greater long-term value from a mineral asset than a company that only intends to acquire the mine.

This gives vertically integrated companies a significant advantage during bidding.

6. Exploration and Geological Risks

Possessing mineral acreage does not necessarily mean that economically recoverable reserves exist.

Before commercial production begins, companies must establish:

- The quantity of the mineral resource
- The quality or grade of the deposit
- Technical feasibility of extraction
- Environmental viability
- Availability of water and infrastructure
- Cost of production
- Long-term market demand

Therefore, KABIL's acquisition in Argentina should also be viewed as a long-term strategic investment rather than an immediate source of lithium supply.

How Do Other Countries Secure Critical Minerals?

Japan: JOGMEC Model

Japan has developed a more coordinated approach to overseas resource security through institutions such as the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security (JOGMEC).

JOGMEC can support Japanese companies through mechanisms such as:

- Equity participation
- Loans
- Loan guarantees
- Insurance and risk-sharing mechanisms
- Technical and geological assistance

This enables private companies to undertake overseas projects that may otherwise involve excessive financial or geopolitical risk.

China: Strong Mining-Refining Integration

China's advantage is not limited to acquiring overseas mineral resources. It has also developed extensive domestic and international capacity in:

- Mineral refining
- Chemical processing
- Battery materials
- Battery cell manufacturing
- Electric vehicle production

As a result, Chinese companies can connect overseas mining investments with a large downstream industrial ecosystem.

South Korea: Corporate Vertical Integration

South Korean companies have increasingly pursued supply-chain strategies that connect mineral procurement with domestic manufacturing.

Companies such as POSCO have invested in materials and processing capabilities linked to the battery and advanced manufacturing sectors. Such vertical integration can reduce supply-chain vulnerability and improve the commercial value derived from mineral investments.

European Union: Critical Raw Materials Strategy

The European Union has adopted the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) to reduce excessive dependence on external suppliers.

Its broader strategy focuses on strengthening:

- Domestic extraction
- Processing and refining
- Recycling
- Diversification of import sources
- Strategic partnerships with resource-rich countries

The approach recognises that mining alone is insufficient; resilience requires development across the entire supply chain.

United States and the Minerals Security Partnership

The United States has promoted cooperation among partner countries through initiatives such as the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP).

The objective is to encourage diversified and responsible supply chains through cooperation on financing,

investment and the development of strategic mineral projects.

Such partnerships can help reduce the risks faced by a single country when investing in large and uncertain overseas mining projects.

Why Does India Need a Complete Domestic Value Chain?

India's growing demand for electric vehicles, renewable energy storage, electronics and advanced technologies will significantly increase its requirement for critical minerals.

However, resource ownership and value creation are not the same thing.

If India acquires a mine but lacks refining capacity, the raw material may need to be processed in another country before it can return to India in the form of battery-grade chemicals or manufactured products.

This could create a situation where India owns or accesses the resource but remains dependent on foreign countries for the most technologically and economically valuable stages of the supply chain.



RBI to close FCNR(B) concessional swap window a month early on August 31



Why in the News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to close its concessional Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank [FCNR(B)] deposit swap facility on 31 August, one month ahead of its originally announced deadline of 30 September. The facility was introduced to encourage banks to mobilise foreign currency deposits from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) at a time when strengthening India's foreign exchange resources was considered important.

The response to the scheme was significantly stronger than initially expected. By 13 August, banks had mobilised around \$52.3 billion under the facility, and market expectations suggested that additional inflows could further increase the amount before the closure date. RBI therefore considered the mobilisation adequate and decided that continuing the concessional window was no longer necessary.

How does the FCNR(B) Swap Facility Work?

The facility essentially provides banks with a concessional mechanism to manage the foreign exchange risk associated with raising FCNR(B) deposits. Under a typical dollar-rupee swap arrangement, a bank that mobilises foreign currency deposits can exchange the foreign currency with the RBI and receive rupees in return. At the end of the agreed period, the transaction is reversed at predetermined terms.

The concessional feature is important because the RBI absorbs a substantial part of the cost of hedging the exchange-rate exposure. This reduces the cost for banks of raising foreign currency through FCNR(B) deposits and makes such deposits more attractive as a source of overseas funds.

Thus, the arrangement helps:

- Banks mobilise foreign currency resources from NRIs.
- Reduce or manage exchange-rate uncertainty.
- Improve the availability of foreign exchange in the banking system.
- Strengthen India's external liquidity position.

What is an FCNR(B) Deposit?

FCNR(B) stands for Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank deposit. It is a term deposit account maintained by an NRI or other eligible non-resident with an authorised bank in India.

A key feature of the account is that the deposit is maintained in a permitted foreign currency rather than in Indian rupees. Therefore, both the principal amount and interest are repaid in the same foreign currency.

For example, if an NRI places a deposit denominated in US dollars, the deposit and the interest are ultimately repayable in US dollars.

This protects the depositor from fluctuations in the rupee. If the Indian rupee depreciates during the deposit period, the value of the deposit in terms of the foreign currency is not directly affected.

However, the currency-management challenge is transferred to the banking system, which may need to hedge its foreign exchange exposure. RBI's concessional swap facility was designed to reduce this burden and encourage banks to raise such deposits.

Why Did RBI Close the Facility Ahead of Schedule?

The concessional facility was announced on 5 June and became operational on 8 June. It was initially intended to remain available until 30 September.

However, the facility witnessed a strong response. Banks had mobilised approximately \$52.3 billion by 13 August, while estimates suggested that another \$20 billion could potentially be mobilised by the end of August.

Given the scale of inflows already achieved, continuing the concessional arrangement could have resulted in the mobilisation of foreign currency resources beyond the amount considered necessary.

The early closure therefore reflects RBI's assessment that the immediate objective of strengthening foreign currency resources had been substantially achieved.

Economic Significance

Large FCNR(B) inflows can provide temporary support to India's balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves. Such inflows can also help ease pressure on the rupee during periods of external uncertainty or significant foreign capital outflows.

Additional foreign currency resources may improve market confidence by demonstrating that the banking system and the broader economy have access to overseas liquidity.

However, FCNR(B) inflows differ from more permanent sources of foreign exchange such as export earnings or foreign direct investment. Since these deposits have to be repaid at maturity, they represent a form of external liability.

Therefore, while such schemes can provide immediate liquidity support, they also create future repayment obligations.

Key Risks Associated with the Facility

1. Asset-Liability Mismatch

One of the major concerns is the possibility of an asset-liability mismatch.

Banks may mobilise FCNR(B) deposits for a specific maturity period but deploy the resulting funds in assets with a different maturity structure. If a large volume of deposits matures at the same time, banks may face pressure to arrange the required foreign currency for repayment.

Proper maturity management is therefore essential.

2. Rollover Risk

When FCNR(B) deposits mature, banks must either repay the deposits or persuade depositors to renew them.

If global financial conditions change, interest rates rise abroad, or the Indian economy becomes less attractive to overseas depositors, banks may find it more difficult or expensive to retain these funds.

This creates rollover risk, particularly when a large volume of deposits matures within a short period.

3. Reversibility of Capital Flows

FCNR(B) deposits can provide a substantial boost to foreign exchange resources when they are mobilised, but the inflows are not permanent.

At maturity, the funds can leave the country along with the accumulated interest. A sharp concentration of maturities could therefore create pressure on foreign exchange liquidity.

This makes the timing and maturity profile of such deposits an important policy consideration.

4. Currency Risk for RBI

Under the concessional swap arrangement, the RBI assumes part of the exchange-rate and hedging burden. If currency movements are unfavourable, the central bank may face costs associated with the swap arrangement. While the facility helps banks mobilise foreign currency at attractive terms, the concessional structure means that the foreign exchange risk does not disappear; instead, part of it is effectively transferred to the RBI.

5. Deployment Challenges

Banks mobilising large quantities of foreign currency must also ensure that these resources are appropriately deployed.

They may lend in foreign currency, invest in suitable foreign currency assets, or swap the funds into rupees. An inappropriate deployment strategy could create additional interest-rate, liquidity, or currency mismatches.

The effectiveness of the inflows therefore depends not only on the amount mobilised but also on how efficiently the banking system manages the funds.

6. External Sector Imbalances

Large foreign currency inflows can temporarily improve India's external position, but they do not automatically resolve underlying structural weaknesses.

For instance, if pressure on the external account arises from a persistent current account deficit, dependence on debt-creating inflows can only provide temporary relief.

A durable improvement in the external sector requires stronger fundamentals, including export competitiveness, stable capital inflows, diversified

foreign exchange earnings, and sustainable management of external liabilities.

Core industrial sector growth slows to 5.4% in July as fertilizer, steel, iron ore, oil output falls



Why in the News?

India's Index of Core Industries (ICI) grew by 5.4% year-on-year in July 2026, moderating from 6.0% in June 2026, according to provisional data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on 20 August 2026.

Despite the moderation, the core sector recorded a relatively strong performance during the opening months of FY2026-27. Its cumulative growth during April–July 2026 stood at 4.3%, compared with just 1.5% during the corresponding period of the previous year.

What is the Index of Core Industries?

1. About the Index

The Index of Core Industries (ICI) is a monthly index compiled by the Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It tracks the production performance of industries that provide essential inputs, energy and intermediate goods to a wide range of economic activities.

Therefore, movements in the ICI are closely watched as an indicator of industrial momentum, infrastructure activity, energy demand and the broader manufacturing cycle.

2. The Nine Core Industries

Under the revised 2022–23 base-year series, the ICI consists of:

- Coal

- Crude Oil
- Natural Gas
- Refinery Products
- Fertilisers
- Steel
- Cement
- Electricity
- Iron Ore

Iron ore is the newly added ninth industry. Its inclusion reflects its extensive use in industrial production and its importance to the mining and steel value chain.

3. Weight of Core Industries

The revised series has significantly altered the relative importance of individual sectors. The major weights are:

Core Industry	Weight (%)
Electricity	30.932
Refinery Products	22.572
Steel	17.584
Crude Oil	7.430
Coal	5.596
Iron Ore	4.905
Cement	4.410
Natural Gas	3.841
Fertilisers	2.731
Total	100

Thus, electricity has the highest weight, followed by refinery products and steel. Consequently, a change in electricity or refinery production has a much larger influence on the overall ICI than a similar percentage change in fertiliser production.

4. Important Changes in the New Series

The 2022–23 series introduced several methodological changes:

- Iron ore was added as the ninth core industry.
- Gross production is now used for the steel index instead of net production.
- Only raw coal is retained; coal middlings and washed coal have been excluded to avoid double counting.
- Sectoral weights have been derived from the corresponding 2022–23 IIP weights and redistributed proportionately to 100.

The government has also released a back series from April 2023, allowing analysis under the revised methodology over a substantially longer period. Therefore, the new series should not be treated as having a historical comparison limited only to June 2025.

How Did the Nine Sectors Perform in July 2026?

The July 2026 data present a sharply differentiated picture.

1. Iron Ore – 29.5%

Iron ore recorded the highest growth at 29.5%, although this was lower than the exceptionally high 44.5% growth recorded in June.

Iron ore has emerged as one of the major contributors to the revised core-sector index. However, its July growth should be interpreted carefully because the sector had contracted by 7.1% in July 2025, creating a favourable base for year-on-year growth.

2. Cement – 13.1%

Cement production increased by 13.1%, making it the second-fastest-growing sector in July.

The performance was stronger than the 11.1% growth recorded in July 2025 and indicates continued strength in construction and infrastructure-linked activity.

Cement's strong performance is particularly relevant because it is closely connected with housing, roads, railways, urban infrastructure and other construction activities.

3. Electricity – 9%

Electricity production expanded by 9%, although growth moderated from 11.4% in June.

Since electricity carries the largest weight of 30.932% in the revised ICI, its performance has a substantial impact on the headline index.

The continued expansion in electricity generation therefore provided considerable support to overall core-sector growth.

4. Coal – 7.6%

Coal production grew by 7.6%, a significant turnaround from the 12.3% contraction recorded in July 2025.

The July 2026 performance was therefore partly influenced by a favourable base effect. Coal also remains important for India's electricity-generation ecosystem because thermal power continues to account for a substantial portion of India's power supply.

5. Steel – 2.9%

Steel production grew by only 2.9%, down from 5.6% in June.

The slowdown is noteworthy because steel has the third-highest weight in the revised ICI at 17.584%.

The contrast between very strong iron ore growth and relatively modest steel growth suggests that growth is not moving uniformly through the entire mining-to-metal value chain.

6. Refinery Products – 2.7%

Refinery-product output grew by 2.7% in July, reversing a three-month sequence of contraction.

This is important because refinery products carry the second-highest weight in the ICI at 22.572%.

Therefore, even a moderate recovery in refinery production can provide meaningful support to the overall core-sector index.

7. Natural Gas – (-) 3.7%

Natural gas production contracted by 3.7% in July.

More significantly, natural gas has recorded negative year-on-year growth throughout the 14-month series available in the latest release.

This indicates that the weakness is not simply a one-month fluctuation and points towards continuing challenges in domestic hydrocarbon production.

8. Crude Oil – (-) 5.3%

Domestic crude oil production declined by 5.3% in July.

Like natural gas, crude oil has remained in contraction throughout the available 14-month period under the revised series.

This highlights the distinction between India's domestic extraction capacity and its downstream refining capacity: refinery production recovered in July even though domestic crude oil output continued to decline.

9. Fertilisers – (-) 8%

Fertiliser production recorded the sharpest contraction among the three negative-growth sectors, falling by 8% in July.

This was considerably weaker than the 3.3% contraction in June and also contrasts with the 1.9% growth recorded in July 2025.

The weakness coincided with a difficult agricultural environment during the early part of the 2026 monsoon season.

What Explains the Weakness in Fertilisers?

The contraction in fertiliser production needs to be viewed against the agricultural backdrop.

The 2026 southwest monsoon initially displayed substantial regional and temporal variability. As of 14 July 2026, rainfall nationally was 21% below normal, although rainfall conditions differed considerably across regions.

Delayed and uneven rainfall affected kharif sowing in several regions, reducing immediate demand for agricultural inputs.

Fertiliser sales data also indicated weaker demand during July. Industry reporting attributed the decline in offtake to slower kharif sowing and uneven rainfall, particularly during a period when fertiliser demand is normally high.

Thus, the fertiliser contraction illustrates how weather conditions can transmit into industrial production through agricultural demand.

Why is Domestic Crude Oil and Natural Gas Output a Concern?

The continuing contraction in crude oil and natural gas is more significant than an isolated monthly decline.

Both sectors have remained in negative growth territory across the available 14-month series. In contrast, refinery-product production returned to positive territory in July.

This creates an important distinction:

Domestic extraction → weak

Refining activity → recovering

What Does the Iron Ore–Steel Divergence Tell Us?

One of the most interesting features of the July data is the difference between iron ore growth of 29.5% and steel growth of only 2.9%.

Iron ore is an important upstream input into steel production. Yet the two sectors did not expand at comparable rates.

This does not by itself prove that iron ore output was being accumulated as inventory or exported, but it demonstrates that strong upstream mining growth was not translating proportionately into finished-steel growth during the month.

The divergence is therefore useful for analysing the transmission of growth across the industrial value chain.

Environment & Diversity

SC order on mining around Ramsar wetland sites



Why in the News?

The Supreme Court has clarified that its earlier direction restricting mining within a 10-km radius of the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve is to be applied uniformly to wetland and community conservation reserves across India. The clarification strengthens judicial protection for ecologically sensitive wetlands and makes prior wildlife clearance necessary before undertaking mining activities within the prescribed radius.

The development is significant because wetlands are highly sensitive ecosystems where mining can alter drainage patterns, groundwater regimes, sediment loads and aquatic habitats. The Court's approach seeks to ensure that environmental safeguards are not weakened merely because a wetland lies outside the conventional network of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

What did the Supreme Court clarify?

- **Nationwide Application:** The 10-km safeguard originally imposed in the context of the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve has been extended as a uniform protective principle to wetland and community conservation reserves.

- **Prior Approval:** Mining activity within the 10-km zone will require appropriate permission/clearance from the competent wildlife authorities, including the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and/or the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), as applicable.
- **Background of the Case:** The issue arose in proceedings concerning mining restrictions around conservation reserves and an application filed by the Himachal Pradesh Government seeking clarification regarding mining licences and environmental clearances.
- **State's Argument:** Himachal Pradesh argued that conservation reserves do not automatically carry the same statutory buffer-zone regime that applies to certain other protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- **Principle of Uniformity:** The Court has emphasised the need for a consistent environmental safeguard rather than allowing different standards to operate for ecologically comparable wetland reserves.
- **Inter-State Dimension:** The Court has also sought examination of whether the ecological and geographical extent of the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve has implications across the Uttarakhand–Himachal Pradesh boundary.

The original 2024 Supreme Court direction specifically prohibited mining within 10 km of the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve without permission from the Standing Committee of the NBWL and/or MoEFCC, citing

both the existing Uttarakhand High Court directions and the wetland's Ramsar status.

What is the Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve?

- **Location:** The Asan Conservation Reserve is located in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, near the confluence of the Asan and Yamuna river systems.
- **Ramsar Status:** It was designated as a Ramsar Site in 2020, becoming Uttarakhand's first Ramsar site.
- **Ecological Importance:** The wetland provides habitat for a large variety of resident and migratory waterbirds and forms an important component of the Himalayan–Gangetic wetland ecosystem.
- **Bird Diversity:** The 2026 Asian Waterbird Census recorded 5,806 birds belonging to 126 species at the reserve, including species such as the Steppe Eagle, Common Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Egyptian Vulture and Pallas's Fish Eagle.
- **Judicial Protection:** Mining within the 10-km radius is subject to prior wildlife clearance under the Supreme Court's directions.

The protection is particularly relevant because the surrounding landscape includes riverbeds and mineral-bearing areas where sand, gravel and boulder extraction can create direct pressures on wetland hydrology and habitats.

Why are wetlands ecologically important?

Wetlands are transitional ecosystems between terrestrial and aquatic environments and perform several critical ecological functions:

1. **Flood regulation:** They absorb and temporarily store excess water during heavy rainfall and floods.
2. **Groundwater recharge:** Wetland systems facilitate the interaction between surface water and groundwater.
3. **Water purification:** Wetlands can trap sediments and absorb certain pollutants and excess nutrients.

4. **Biodiversity conservation:** They provide feeding, breeding and nesting habitats for fish, amphibians, reptiles and birds.
5. **Climate regulation:** Wetlands store significant quantities of carbon and influence local hydrological and climatic processes.
6. **Livelihood support:** Fisheries, agriculture, tourism and other livelihood activities in many regions depend directly or indirectly on wetlands.

Consequently, mining near wetlands may have impacts beyond the immediate excavation site, particularly where extraction changes water flow, sediment movement or groundwater connectivity.

What are Ramsar Sites?

A Ramsar Site is a wetland designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands, popularly known as the Ramsar Convention.

- **Convention:** Adopted in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran.
- **India's Membership:** India became a contracting party in 1982.
- **Objective:** To promote the conservation and "wise use" of wetlands through national action and international cooperation.
- **Current Status:** With the designation of Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh in August 2026, India now has 101 Ramsar Sites.
- **New Milestone:** Glaw Lake is the first Ramsar Site of Arunachal Pradesh, taking the country's Ramsar network to 101 sites.
- **Significance:** Ramsar recognition gives a wetland international importance and places emphasis on maintaining its ecological character.

The expansion of India's Ramsar network—from 26 sites in 2014 to more than 100 today—reflects a substantial increase in the identification and recognition of wetlands of international importance.

What is the legal position on mining near wetlands?

The legal framework governing wetlands is different from that governing conventional protected areas.

- **No General Statutory 10-km Buffer:** The Ramsar Convention itself does not prescribe a universal 10-km mining buffer around every Ramsar Site.
- **Wetlands Rules:** The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 provide a regulatory framework for identified wetlands and prohibit or regulate specified activities that can adversely affect their ecological character.
- **State Wetland Authorities:** The 2017 Rules strengthened the role of State Wetland Authorities in identifying, managing and conserving wetlands.
- **Wildlife Protection Framework:** Where a wetland is also notified as a conservation reserve under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, additional wildlife-related safeguards become relevant.
- **Judicial Intervention:** In the case of Asan Wetland, the Supreme Court imposed a specific interim 10-km mining safeguard, drawing upon the earlier Uttarakhand High Court directions and the ecological significance of the Ramsar site.
- **Expanded Protection:** The latest clarification extends the protective principle beyond the individual Asan Wetland dispute and seeks a more uniform approach for wetland conservation reserves.

Why is the 10-km safeguard important?

The importance of the Court's approach lies in recognising that ecological impacts do not necessarily stop at the legally notified boundary of a wetland.

Mining activities in the surrounding landscape may:

- disturb natural drainage channels;
- increase soil erosion and sedimentation;
- alter groundwater levels;
- damage riparian vegetation;
- increase noise and human disturbance to waterbirds;
- affect breeding and feeding habitats;
- increase pollution from machinery and transportation; and

- fragment ecological linkages between wetlands and surrounding habitats.

Therefore, considering only the physical boundary of a wetland may not adequately capture its ecological zone of influence.

Significance of the Supreme Court's clarification

1. Strengthens wetland conservation:

The ruling provides an additional layer of protection to wetlands facing pressure from mining and other extractive activities.

2. Promotes uniformity:

Different treatment of ecologically similar conservation reserves could create regulatory loopholes. A common safeguard can reduce such inconsistencies.

3. Applies the precautionary principle:

Where an activity has the potential to cause serious ecological damage, regulatory authorities can require prior scrutiny before allowing the activity.

4. Protects ecological connectivity:

Wetlands do not function as isolated water bodies. Their ecological health is connected with rivers, groundwater, floodplains, forests and surrounding landscapes.

5. Strengthens inter-governmental coordination:

The matter highlights the need for coordination among State Governments, MoEFCC, NBWL, State Wetland Authorities and other agencies, particularly where ecological systems cross administrative boundaries.

6. Balances development and conservation:

The decision does not necessarily amount to a blanket prohibition on all economic activity. Rather, it strengthens prior environmental scrutiny for potentially damaging mining operations in sensitive areas.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its significance, implementation of the 10-km safeguard may present several practical challenges.

- **Large regulated area:** A 10-km radius around every applicable reserve can cover a substantial geographical area, potentially affecting existing mining leases, infrastructure and local economic activities.

- **Inter-agency coordination:** Effective implementation will require coordination between mining departments, forest departments, pollution-control authorities, wildlife authorities and local administrations.
- **Demarcation issues:** Determining the precise boundary of a wetland or conservation reserve and measuring the 10-km distance accurately can lead to administrative and legal disputes.
- **Impact on local livelihoods:** Communities dependent on mining, construction materials and related transport activities may face economic disruption if activities are suspended or subjected to additional approvals.
- **Regulatory uncertainty:** Until a comprehensive statutory framework is clearly articulated, project proponents may face uncertainty regarding which permissions are required and from which authority.
- **Enforcement challenge:** Judicial directions alone cannot ensure conservation unless supported by field-level monitoring, satellite-based mapping, regular inspections and strict action against illegal mining.
- **Need for scientific assessment:** A uniform distance-based safeguard provides an important minimum protection, but wetland ecosystems differ significantly in hydrology, size, biodiversity and surrounding land use. Site-specific ecological assessments therefore remain important.

Way Forward

A balanced approach should combine judicial safeguards with stronger scientific and administrative mechanisms.

- Develop clear national guidelines for activities around wetland conservation reserves.
- Use GIS and satellite-based mapping to accurately demarcate wetlands and their ecological influence zones.
- Strengthen the capacity of State Wetland Authorities.

- Establish effective coordination between MoEFCC, NBWL, State Governments and mining departments.
- Conduct cumulative environmental-impact assessments in mining-intensive wetland landscapes.
- Promote sustainable alternatives to indiscriminate riverbed and mineral extraction.
- Strengthen community participation in wetland monitoring and conservation.
- Ensure that existing mining operations comply with environmental, wildlife and pollution-control conditions.

Agasthyamalai eviction orders still silence the Forest Rights Act



Why in the News

The Supreme Court, in its judgment dated 29 May 2026 in *A. John Kennedy & Others v. State of Tamil Nadu & Others* (2026 INSC 605), directed the Tamil Nadu government to implement a time-bound, division-wise plan for removal of forest encroachments across the Agasthyamalai ecological landscape. The Court expressed serious concern over the slow pace of eviction and restoration despite earlier directions and reports of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

The latest Supreme Court record indicates that in the Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve (SMTR) alone, around 4,601 individuals were recorded as occupying 5,072.653 hectares of Reserved Forest land. The Court noted that only 52.86 hectares had effectively been recovered through the relocation of 66 persons, illustrating the substantial gap between the scale of encroachment and the pace of restoration.

What is the Forest Rights Act, 2006?

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) seeks to correct the historical injustice faced by forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers by recognising certain forest rights.

Major Features

- **Scheduled Tribes:** Recognises specified individual and community forest rights of eligible forest-dwelling STs.
- **Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs):** Non-ST forest dwellers can qualify if they satisfy the statutory requirement of having been primarily residing in and dependent on forests or forest land for livelihood for three generations prior to 13 December 2005.
- **Cut-off date:** The Act recognises occupation and rights subject to the statutory requirement relating to occupation before 13 December 2005.
- **Gram Sabha:** The process of initiating claims and determining the evidence is centred on the Gram Sabha, followed by examination at the Sub-Divisional Level Committee and District Level Committee.
- **Community rights:** The Act is not limited to individual cultivation or habitation rights; it also recognises several community forest rights and rights over community forest resources.

An important legal principle is that eligible forest dwellers should not be illegally evicted before the statutory process for recognition and verification of their claims has been completed. Therefore, the mere presence of a person on forest land does not automatically establish that the person is an illegal encroacher; the applicable legal status and claim must be examined.

What is the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve?

The Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR) is located at the southern end of the Western Ghats and extends across Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

According to the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, the reserve covers 3,500.36 sq km, of which approximately 1,828 sq km lies in Kerala and 1,672.36 sq km in Tamil Nadu.

It was designated as a biosphere reserve by India in 2001 and became part of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2016.

Biodiversity Significance

UNESCO describes Agasthyamala as an exceptionally diverse ecosystem containing about:

- 2,254 species of higher plants
- Around 405 endemic plant species
- 79 mammal species
- 337 bird species
- 88 reptile species
- 45 amphibian species
- 46 fish species

The region also has important populations of species such as the tiger, Nilgiri langur and other Western Ghats fauna.

The reserve is also home to Kani tribal communities, whose traditional knowledge and dependence on biological resources form an important part of the region's socio-cultural landscape.

Protected Areas Associated with the Landscape

The Agasthyamalai landscape encompasses or is ecologically connected with several important protected areas, including:

- Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR)
- Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve (SMTR)
- Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary
- Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary
- Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary
- Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary

The landscape is particularly important because it contains **tiger habitats, elephant movement areas, river catchments and biodiversity-rich forests.**

The Supreme Court has emphasised that protection of these forests is not merely a local conservation concern but has implications for ecological security and water resources. The **SMTR forms an important upper**

catchment of the Vaigai River, which supplies water to several downstream districts.

What is the Central Empowered Committee?

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) is a body constituted pursuant to directions of the Supreme Court to assist in monitoring compliance with forest and environmental protection measures.

In the Agasthyamalai matter, the Supreme Court directed the CEC in March 2025 to undertake an extensive survey of the landscape and identify:

- Forest encroachments
- Non-forestry activities
- Illegal cultivation
- Unauthorised infrastructure
- Violations of forest and wildlife laws
- Measures required for ecological restoration

The CEC subsequently submitted reports identifying extensive encroachment and deficiencies in enforcement.

Who are Other Traditional Forest Dwellers?

The FRA distinguishes Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) from Scheduled Tribes.

An OTFD must satisfy the statutory conditions relating to:

- Three generations of residence in and dependence on forest or forest land;
- The period being reckoned as three generations prior to 13 December 2005; and
- Dependence on the forest for bona fide livelihood needs.

The concept is important because not every non-tribal person residing in a forest automatically becomes an OTFD.

At the same time, a person cannot simply be labelled an encroacher without examining the relevant legal status, documentary evidence and applicable statutory process.

What did the Supreme Court Order in May 2026?

The Supreme Court issued a comprehensive set of directions in *A. John Kennedy & Others v. State of Tamil Nadu & Others*.

1. Time-bound eviction plan

The State must prepare and implement a division-wise eviction plan with:

- Clearly defined timelines
- Measurable milestones
- Identified responsible officers
- Physical eviction measures
- Rehabilitation wherever applicable
- Legal action against wilful violators
- Post-eviction ecological restoration

The plan was required to be placed before the CEC within one month.

2. Rehabilitation

The Court did not treat eviction as merely a physical removal exercise.

It specifically directed that rehabilitation wherever applicable form part of the eviction plan. This is particularly important for long-standing settlements and vulnerable households.

The State had already classified SMTR occupants into three broad categories:

- **Category 1:** Permanent houses and livelihood dependent on forests — 1,595 persons
- **Category 2:** Temporary houses and livelihood in forests — 233 persons
- **Category 3:** Agriculture in forests — 2,773 persons

This categorisation was intended to help sequence eviction and rehabilitation measures.

3. Ecological restoration

Eviction alone would not be sufficient.

The Court directed the State to restore the forest areas recovered from encroachment and ensure that they are **not re-encroached**.

This requires measures such as:

- Removal of illegal structures
- Restoration of natural vegetation
- Protection against renewed cultivation
- Strengthening of forest surveillance
- Habitat restoration
- Monitoring of restored areas

4. Action against illegal infrastructure

The Court directed action against officials and departments responsible for illegal infrastructure inside forest areas.

It also directed that government establishments and unauthorised infrastructure situated within forest areas be discontinued, relocated, dismantled or removed within the prescribed period.

5. Illegal resorts and commercial establishments

Illegal resorts and commercial establishments operating within forest areas, particularly in the Megamalai region, were directed to be made non-operational and removed in accordance with law.

The Court also directed action regarding unauthorised electricity connections and transmission lines serving such establishments.

6. Moratorium on new forest diversion

The Court imposed a significant restriction by directing that no new non-forestry activity or forest-diversion proposal be approved or commenced within the Agasthyamalai landscape until encroachments are removed and illegal infrastructure is dealt with in accordance with law.

7. Possible deployment of paramilitary forces

If the State fails to ensure compliance, the CEC may recommend the deployment of paramilitary forces to assist in the removal of encroachments.

The Court also directed the States to submit monthly compliance reports, while the CEC is required to undertake ground verification and submit quarterly status reports.

The next significant reporting stage is scheduled around the CEC's report due by 28 August 2026, with the matter listed for further hearing on 1 September 2026.

Current Status of Eviction and Rehabilitation

The latest judicial record shows that enforcement has begun but remains far from complete.

As of the information considered by the Supreme Court:

- 4,601 persons were recorded as encroachers in SMTR.
- 5,072.653 hectares were identified as encroached.
- Only 66 persons had been successfully relocated.

- 52.86 hectares had been effectively recovered through this process.
- 54 families had moved into ready-built quarters under the State's rehabilitation programme.
- Additional land had also been recovered from government officials and other encroachers.

The Court considered the pace of progress inadequate in relation to the scale of the problem.

Key Issue: Conservation vs Forest Rights

The controversy illustrates a fundamental challenge in environmental governance: how can ecological protection be strengthened without undermining legally recognised rights?

Conservation Perspective

Encroachment can result in:

- Fragmentation of wildlife habitat
- Loss of forest cover
- Commercial cultivation on fragile slopes
- Disturbance of wildlife corridors
- Pressure on water catchments
- Construction of roads and infrastructure
- Increased human-wildlife conflict
- Difficulty in protecting tiger and elephant habitats

The Supreme Court has therefore adopted a strongly conservation-oriented approach and emphasised the ecological value of the landscape.

Rights Perspective

At the same time, forest-dependent communities may include:

- Historically resident forest dwellers
- Scheduled Tribes
- Traditional cultivators
- Workers settled in forest areas due to earlier government or infrastructure projects
- Persons whose claims may require examination under the FRA

Therefore, **forest occupation and illegal encroachment cannot be treated as completely synonymous categories.**

The law requires legitimate claims to be assessed according to the applicable statutory framework.

Statutory Framework

1. Forest Rights Act, 2006

Provides for recognition of specified rights of forest-dwelling STs and OTFDs and establishes a community-oriented claims process through Gram Sabhas and higher-level committees.

2. Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

Regulates the use or diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.

It has since been renamed the **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980**, following the 2023 amendment.

3. Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972

Provides the legal framework for:

- National Parks
- Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Tiger Reserves
- Protection of wild animals and habitats

It is particularly relevant because parts of the Agasthyamalai landscape constitute important wildlife habitats.

4. Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

PESA strengthens the role of Gram Sabhas in governance of Scheduled Areas, particularly concerning community resources, local development and traditional community interests.

Its relevance depends on whether the concerned area falls within a notified Scheduled Area.

5. SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Provides protection to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes against specified offences and discriminatory acts.

Its relevance in forest eviction situations is especially important where enforcement action affects vulnerable tribal communities.

6. Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882

The Supreme Court proceedings also rely significantly on the **Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882**, under which the State has undertaken eviction and enforcement measures.

Challenges in Implementation

1. Humanitarian concerns

Some settlements have existed for decades, creating deep social and economic dependence on the land.

2. Rehabilitation capacity

Eviction without adequate housing, livelihood opportunities and basic services can create new social problems.

3. Boundary disputes

Unclear or tampered forest boundaries can create disputes over whether a particular settlement lies inside legally protected forest land.

4. Administrative coordination

Forest, Revenue, Police, Survey, Tribal Welfare and local administration agencies must work together.

5. Re-encroachment

Removing occupants without protecting the recovered land may simply lead to fresh encroachment.

6. Human-wildlife conflict

When settlements are shifted or forest boundaries are enforced, interactions between people and wildlife may increase unless relocation is carefully planned.

7. Commercial interests

Commercial cultivation, resorts and other infrastructure create a different category of encroachment from vulnerable subsistence households and require differentiated enforcement.

Tribal Council says Shompen concerns overlooked in the Great Nicobar Island project



Why in the News?

The Great Nicobar Island (GNI) Project has again come under scrutiny over concerns about its possible impact on the Shompen, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) living on Great Nicobar Island.

In 2026, representatives of the Tribal Councils of Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar raised objections regarding the recognition of forest rights and the manner in which tribal consent was obtained for the project. A petition before the Calcutta High Court has also challenged the process through which tribal consent and compliance with the Forest Rights Act, 2006 were established.

What is the Great Nicobar Island Project?

The GNI Project is an ambitious integrated infrastructure and development programme planned for the southern part of Great Nicobar Island.

The project envisages:

- An International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) at Galathea Bay;
- A greenfield international airport;
- A township and area development;
- A 450 MVA gas- and solar-based power plant; and
- Supporting road, utility and other infrastructure.

The project is being developed through the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Ltd. (ANIIDCO). The original project proposal involved approximately 166.10 sq km of land, including the diversion of around 130.75 sq km of forest land.

The project has been justified by the government on the grounds of national security, strategic connectivity, economic development and India's maritime interests. Great Nicobar lies close to major international shipping routes leading towards the Malacca Strait, giving the island considerable strategic importance.

Scale of the Project

The project is generally described as an investment of around ₹81,000 crore, although earlier estimates and public discussions have used figures approaching ₹91,000 crore. The latest government material refers to the project as an approximately ₹81,800-crore project. Thus, the project is not simply a port-development exercise; it represents an attempt to transform Great Nicobar into a major maritime, logistical, defence and economic hub.

Who are the Shompen?

The Shompen are an indigenous hunter-gatherer community primarily inhabiting the interior forests of Great Nicobar Island.

They are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) and have traditionally depended heavily on the island's forests for food, shelter and other resources.

Their social and economic system is particularly sensitive to external interference because many Shompen groups have maintained limited interaction with the outside population.

This makes conventional ideas of development—such as permanent settlements, roads, urbanisation and large-scale commercial activity—especially complex in their case.

For such communities, land is not merely an economic asset. Forests provide food, cultural identity, mobility and the ecological setting necessary for their traditional way of life.

What are PVTGs?

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are tribal communities considered especially vulnerable because of their socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

The broad characteristics historically used for identification include:

- Pre-agricultural level of technology;
- Low literacy;
- Stagnant or declining population;
- Economic backwardness; and
- Dependence on traditional livelihoods.

India currently recognises 75 PVTG communities across 18 States and one Union Territory.

The government launched PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) in 2023-24 specifically to improve the socio-economic conditions of these 75 PVTGs. The mission focuses on basic services such as housing, drinking water, education, healthcare, nutrition, roads, telecommunications, electrification and sustainable livelihoods.

Why are the Shompen Particularly Vulnerable to the Project?

The central concern is not simply physical displacement. Even if the government does not relocate Shompen settlements, large-scale infrastructure can indirectly transform their habitat through:

- increased movement of outsiders;
- roads and construction activity;
- noise and artificial lighting;
- greater commercial activity;
- changes in forest access;
- pressure on natural resources;
- exposure to communicable diseases; and
- gradual cultural assimilation.

For an isolated community, therefore, "no displacement" does not necessarily mean "no impact." This distinction is crucial in evaluating the project's tribal safeguards.

Major Concerns

1. Assimilation

One of the most serious concerns is that rapid modernisation could gradually weaken the Shompen's traditional lifestyle.

The issue is not whether modern healthcare, education or communication should be available to tribal communities. Rather, the concern is whether such facilities are introduced with community participation and respect for their autonomy, or whether development implicitly assumes that traditional lifestyles must be replaced.

The Tribal Council has argued that development should respond to the community's actual needs rather than impose an external model of urbanisation.

2. Displacement and Loss of Habitat

The government has repeatedly maintained that Shompen and Nicobarese settlements will not be displaced.

The environmental clearance framework also contains safeguards relating specifically to the welfare of Shompen and Nicobarese communities. The NGT recorded the government's position that tribal settlements would not be disturbed or displaced and that tribal habitat rights would be protected under the Forest Rights Act.

However, critics argue that the broader project footprint and changes in the surrounding landscape could affect traditional access to forests and resources even without direct physical relocation.

3. Question of Tribal Consent

The question of free, prior and informed participation has become a major legal issue.

In 2026, petitions before the Calcutta High Court challenged the process by which tribal consent was established for diversion of forest land. Reports concerning the case have raised questions about Gram Sabha resolutions and whether they genuinely represented the affected tribal communities.

This is important because under the Forest Rights Act, the Gram Sabha plays a central role in determining and recognising forest rights. Section 6 specifically makes the Gram Sabha the authority to initiate the process for determining individual and community forest rights.

Therefore, the quality and authenticity of consultation are as important as obtaining a document described as "consent."

4. Health Risks

Contact between isolated or relatively isolated communities and larger outside populations can create public-health risks, particularly through the introduction of infectious diseases to populations with limited previous exposure.

The issue is especially important for the Shompen because their small population makes them more vulnerable to demographic shocks.

Consequently, disease surveillance, controlled access, medical preparedness and strict adherence to tribal protection protocols are essential.

5. Ecological Impact

Great Nicobar is one of India's most ecologically significant island ecosystems. The project involves extensive forest diversion and development in an area containing tropical forests, coastal ecosystems and habitats of several endemic and threatened species.

The NGT has noted that the project involves diversion of approximately 130.75 sq km of forest land and that environmental safeguards were incorporated into the

clearance, including measures concerning leatherback turtles, Nicobar megapodes, saltwater crocodiles, mangroves, coral ecosystems and endemic species.

Critics, however, argue that the ecological effects of such a large integrated project must be considered cumulatively rather than project-by-project.

Tribal Reserve and the Project

The project also involves the issue of Tribal Reserve land. According to the government's 2026 FAQ, Great Nicobar has approximately 751.07 sq km officially marked as Tribal Reserve. Of the 166.10 sq km proposed for development, 84.10 sq km overlaps with the Tribal Reserve.

The government states that approximately 73.07 sq km is being de-notified for project purposes, while 76.98 sq km is proposed to be re-notified as Tribal Reserve, resulting in a claimed net addition of 3.912 sq km to the reserve.

Laws and Constitutional Safeguards

- **Forest Rights Act, 2006**

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 recognises individual and community forest rights.

Its importance in Great Nicobar lies in the recognition that forests may constitute not only government-controlled land but also community habitat and livelihood spaces.

Section 6 gives the Gram Sabha a central role in determining forest rights.

- **PESA, 1996**

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 strengthens self-governance and the role of Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas.

However, its direct applicability to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands requires careful qualification because the constitutional and administrative framework governing these islands differs from the Fifth Schedule areas for which PESA was primarily enacted.

Therefore, the Forest Rights Act and the Andaman and Nicobar tribal-protection framework are particularly important in the Great Nicobar context.

- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation, 1956**

The A&N Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 provides a specific legal framework for protecting indigenous communities.

It provides for tribal reserve areas and regulates entry and certain transactions involving protected tribal areas. India Code also records numerous notifications relating to the declaration and modification of Tribal Reserve areas under this framework.

The legal protection is supplemented by the Policy on Shompen Tribe of Great Nicobar Island, 2015, which emphasises protection of their social, cultural and economic integrity and natural habitat.

Governance

RBI tightens transparency norms on bulk deposit rates, allows LCR linked pricing



Why in the News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced new transparency norms for bulk deposit interest rates by mandating daily public disclosure of such rates while permitting Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)-linked differential pricing. The decision follows the MSRDC interest payment controversy, which exposed opaque pricing practices and highlighted the need for greater transparency in the mobilisation of large deposits by banks.

What are the New RBI Norms?

To improve fairness and transparency in bulk deposit pricing, the RBI has issued the following guidelines:

- Banks must publish their bulk deposit interest rates on a daily basis on their websites.
- Uniform interest rates must be offered for deposits of the same amount accepted on the same day, preventing arbitrary negotiations with individual depositors.
- Differential interest rates will be permitted only if they are based on the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) framework, reflecting the liquidity value of deposits to banks.
- The norms apply to:
 - Bulk deposits,
 - Wholesale funding,
 - Rupee-denominated deposits of non-residents.

What is the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)?

The Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) is a key liquidity standard under the Basel III banking framework. It requires banks to maintain an adequate stock of High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA) to withstand a 30-day period of severe liquidity stress.

Key Features

- Ensures banks have sufficient liquid assets to meet short-term obligations during financial stress.
- **Minimum LCR requirement in India:** 100%.
- **Current run-off rate:** 12.5%, which includes an additional 2.5% run-off factor for digital deposits, reflecting their potentially higher withdrawal risk.

What Triggered the Reform?

The RBI's move was prompted by the MSRDC (Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation) interest payment controversy.

- A private bank allegedly disguised nearly ₹45 crore paid as additional interest to MSRDC as marketing expenditure during 2023–25.
- The irregularity was uncovered during an internal audit, leading to:
 - A vigilance investigation,

- Regulatory scrutiny, and
- The resignation of the bank's chairman.

- The incident exposed weaknesses in the existing framework governing negotiated bulk deposit rates and underscored the need for a transparent, rule-based pricing mechanism.

Significance of the New Norms

- Enhances transparency in pricing of large deposits.
- Promotes fair and uniform treatment of depositors.
- Reduces the scope for opaque negotiations and hidden incentives.
- Aligns deposit pricing more closely with banks' liquidity management needs under the LCR framework.
- Strengthens confidence in the banking system and improves regulatory oversight.

Key Challenges

- Off-book arrangements or hidden incentives may still escape detection without strong internal audits.
- Daily disclosure alone cannot completely eliminate informal agreements between banks and large depositors.
- The run-off rates for digital deposits may require periodic revision as digital banking patterns evolve.
- Stronger monitoring of government entities and public sector deposits is necessary to prevent misuse and ensure compliance.

Conclusion

The RBI's new framework marks a significant step towards making bulk deposit pricing more transparent, rule-based, and equitable. By mandating daily disclosure and limiting differential pricing to the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) framework, the reforms aim to curb opaque practices and strengthen market discipline. However, sustained regulatory supervision, robust internal audits, and effective enforcement will remain essential to ensure the long-term success of these measures.

Lok Sabha passes the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill 2026



Why in the News?

The Lok Sabha passed the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, increasing the sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court of India from 34 to 38 judges (including the Chief Justice of India (CJI)). The move aims to improve judicial efficiency and reduce the growing backlog of cases.

Key Provisions

- **Increase in Judicial Strength:** Raises the sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court from 34 to 38 judges, including the CJI.
- **Replaces Ordinance:** Replaces the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Ordinance, 2026 with a permanent legislative framework.
- **Objective:** Enhance the Court's capacity to hear and dispose of cases more efficiently and reduce pendency.
- **Supports Timely Justice:** Seeks to strengthen access to justice by enabling more Constitution Benches and regular Benches to function simultaneously.

Constitutional and Legal Basis

Article 124 of the Constitution

- Establishes the Supreme Court of India.
- Provides for a Chief Justice of India and such number of other judges as Parliament may by law prescribe.
- Thus, the Constitution does not fix the number of judges; Parliament determines it through legislation.

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956

- Enacted under Article 124(1).
- Specifies the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court judges.
- The Act has been amended several times to increase the number of judges in response to rising judicial workload.

Why was the Amendment Needed?

- Over 92,000 cases were pending before the Supreme Court (as of 1 January 2026).
- Continuous increase in fresh filings has widened the gap between institution of cases and their disposal.
- Increasing complexity of constitutional, commercial, environmental, and public interest litigation has placed greater pressure on the Court.
- More judges will facilitate the constitution of additional benches, reducing waiting time for hearings.
- Strengthening judicial capacity is essential for ensuring speedy justice, a key component of Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).

Significance

- Helps reduce the backlog of pending cases.
- Improves the efficiency and speed of justice delivery.
- Enables simultaneous functioning of more Constitution Benches and Division Benches.
- Strengthens citizens' access to timely justice.
- Supports economic growth by improving the efficiency of commercial dispute resolution.
- Reinforces public confidence in the judicial system.

Challenges

- Vacancies must be filled quickly; merely increasing sanctioned strength will not reduce pendency if appointments are delayed.
- Delays in the Collegium appointment process continue to affect judicial capacity.
- Additional judges require expanded courtrooms, chambers, staff, and digital infrastructure.

- Frequent adjournments, procedural delays, and lengthy hearings remain major contributors to pendency.
- Rising litigation may continue to offset the benefits of increased judicial strength unless broader judicial reforms are undertaken.

Way Forward

- Ensure time-bound appointments to all sanctioned judicial vacancies.
- Strengthen coordination between the Judiciary and the Executive in the appointment process.
- Expand physical and digital infrastructure, including e-Courts and virtual hearing facilities.
- Implement robust case management systems and encourage greater use of technology and Artificial Intelligence for routine judicial administration.
- Promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration to reduce the burden on courts.
- Fill vacancies in the High Courts and subordinate judiciary, as delays at lower levels also contribute to the Supreme Court's workload.

Parliamentary panel flags that only 30% of urban households under AMRUT have sewerage



Why in the News?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs has expressed concern over the slow progress of sewerage infrastructure under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation

(AMRUT). According to the Committee, only about 30% of urban households have a sewerage connection, highlighting significant interstate disparities and delays in project implementation.

What is AMRUT?

The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is the Government of India's flagship urban infrastructure programme aimed at improving the quality of life in cities through better civic services.

Key Features

- **Launched:** 25 June 2015.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- Focuses on providing:
 - Universal household water supply.
 - Sewerage and septage management.
 - Stormwater drainage.
 - Urban transport (non-motorised transport in the first phase).
 - Development of parks and green spaces.

Phases

AMRUT (2015–2021)

- Covered 500 cities with a population above one lakh and selected heritage, hill and capital cities.
- Emphasised improving basic urban infrastructure.

AMRUT 2.0 (2021 onwards)

- Expanded coverage to all statutory towns in India.
- Aims to achieve:
 - Universal functional household tap connections.
 - Universal sewerage and septage coverage.
 - Rejuvenation of urban water bodies.
 - Promotion of circular water economy through wastewater reuse.

What did the Parliamentary Committee Find?

Low Sewerage Coverage

According to the City Water Balance Plans (2025):

- Total urban households: 11.32 crore

- Households connected to sewer networks: 3.44 crore (about 30%)
- Households dependent on septic tanks/septage systems: 2.84 crore

This indicates that a large proportion of urban households continue to rely on on-site sanitation rather than underground sewer networks.

Interstate Variation

Several states continue to depend primarily on septic tank-based sanitation instead of underground sewerage systems, including:

- Madhya Pradesh
- Tamil Nadu
- West Bengal
- Odisha
- Jharkhand
- Bihar

Slow Sewer Network Expansion

- Approved sewer network: 59,261 km
- Sewer network laid so far: 27,418 km

Less than half of the sanctioned network has been completed.

Why Does the Sewerage Gap Persist?

Limited Focus on Sewerage Projects

Under AMRUT 2.0:

- Total projects approved: 8,743
- Sewerage and septage projects: 594
- Share of sewerage projects: 6.79%

Slow Project Completion

Among the 594 sewerage projects:

- Completed: 104 (17.51%)
- Under implementation: 398 (about 67%)
- Remaining projects are at various stages of approval or tendering.

Delayed Fund Release

- Central assistance committed: ₹66,059 crore
- Funds released so far: ₹22,762 crore

The gap between sanctioned and released funds has slowed implementation.

Recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee

Develop a National Sewerage Database

The Ministry should:

- Prepare a comprehensive database of:
 - Existing sewer networks.
 - Functional status of sewer infrastructure.
 - Household connectivity gaps.
- Conduct periodic assessments to monitor progress.

Eliminate Manual Cleaning

The Committee stressed:

- Complete elimination of manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
- Adoption of mechanised cleaning technologies to ensure worker safety and eradicate manual scavenging.

Challenges to Urban Sanitation Delivery

Weak Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

- Many municipal bodies face financial constraints.
- Shortage of technical personnel affects planning, construction and operation of sewerage infrastructure.

Trunk vs Last-Mile Connectivity

- Main sewer lines are often laid without connecting households.
- As a result, sewage treatment plants remain underutilised.

Poor Cost Recovery

- Sewerage user charges are politically difficult to increase.
- Consequently, operation and maintenance remain underfunded.

Land and Legacy Issues

- Dense and unplanned urban settlements make sewer construction expensive and time-consuming.
- Retrofitting underground networks requires significant land acquisition and utility shifting.

Faecal Sludge Management Gap

- Cities dependent on septic tanks often lack Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs).

- Untreated faecal sludge is frequently discharged into rivers, lakes and drains, contributing to urban water pollution.

Objectives of AMRUT

The mission aims to:

- Provide universal household water supply.
- Ensure sewerage or septage coverage for all urban households.
- Improve urban sanitation and public health.
- Rejuvenate urban water bodies.
- Enhance the quality of urban life through sustainable infrastructure.
- Promote equitable access to basic civic services, particularly for the urban poor.

VB-GRAM G rural jobs fall in its first month



VB-G RAM G Records Nearly 50% Decline in Rural Employment in First Month

Why in the News

After replacing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) from 1 July 2026, the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] recorded a sharp decline in employment generated during its first month.

According to official data available as of 9 August 2026, around 7.67 crore person-days of employment were generated under VB-G RAM G in July 2026, compared with 15.33 crore person-days under MGNREGS in July 2025. This represents a 49.94% year-on-year decline.

What is VB-G RAM G?

The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 is the new statutory

framework for rural wage employment that replaced the MGNREGA, 2005, from 1 July 2026.

The government notified the nationwide implementation of the Act on 11 May 2026, with the objective of strengthening rural livelihood security while linking employment generation with the creation of durable rural infrastructure.

Key Features

1. **125 days of employment:**

The statutory employment guarantee has been increased from 100 to 125 days per rural household in a financial year.

2. **Seasonal pause:**

The Act provides for a 60-day pause in employment during peak agricultural sowing and harvesting periods so that sufficient labour remains available for farm operations.

3. **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:**

Unlike the earlier structure, the new framework involves greater financial participation by States. The Centre–State sharing ratio is generally 60:40, while it is 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan States and certain Union Territories with legislatures.

4. **Higher budgetary provision:**

A Central share of ₹95,692.31 crore has been provided for VB-G RAM G in 2026–27. Including the estimated State contribution, the overall programme outlay is expected to exceed ₹1.51 lakh crore.

5. **Digital monitoring:**

Attendance is being strengthened through face-authentication-based mechanisms, alongside mobile-based monitoring and other digital tools. Exception-handling provisions are intended to prevent genuine workers from losing employment because of connectivity or technological failures.

6. **Focus on durable assets:**

The programme seeks to integrate employment generation with the creation of productive rural assets, particularly in water security, core rural

infrastructure, livelihood infrastructure and climate-resilience works.

Why did Employment Fall in July 2026?

1. Transition from MGNREGS to the New Framework

The changeover from a two-decade-old programme to a new statutory framework required the migration and updating of administrative systems, beneficiary records, work planning and payment mechanisms.

The government had stated that existing job cards would remain valid during the transition and that ongoing works would continue, but the shift itself created the possibility of temporary implementation bottlenecks.

2. Seasonal Pause During Agricultural Operations

One of the most important structural differences is the provision for a 60-day pause during peak agricultural sowing and harvesting seasons.

July coincides with the Kharif sowing season in large parts of India. Consequently, lower demand for public works during this period may partly explain the decline in person-days.

Thus, a year-on-year comparison of July employment does not represent a completely like-for-like comparison with MGNREGS.

3. Administrative and Implementation Lag

The nationwide rollout began only on 1 July 2026. States and Union Territories had to operationalise their respective schemes, update systems and undertake transitional administrative work.

The Ministry of Rural Development has also indicated that fund utilisation and payment releases would follow the closure of muster rolls and generation of Fund Transfer Orders (FTOs), suggesting that early-month administrative processes can affect reported expenditure and employment figures.

4. Comparability Problem

The 49.94% decline should not automatically be interpreted as an equivalent fall in rural demand for employment.

July 2026 represents the first month of a fundamentally altered institutional framework, whereas July 2025 represented the operation of MGNREGS. Changes in employment guarantees, funding arrangements,

seasonal rules and administrative processes make direct year-on-year comparison less straightforward.

Therefore, the performance of VB-G RAM G should ideally be assessed over several months rather than on the basis of its first month alone.

MGNREGS: Background

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 provided the statutory foundation for India's rural employment guarantee system until it was replaced by VB-G RAM G on 1 July 2026.

Key Features of MGNREGS

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development.
- **Legal basis:** MGNREGA, 2005.
- **Employment guarantee:** At least 100 days of wage employment per rural household in a financial year.
- **Nature:** Demand-driven and rights-based employment programme.
- **Eligibility:** Rural households whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work.
- **Objective:** Providing livelihood security while creating productive rural assets.
- **Implementation:** A major role was assigned to Gram Panchayats and local institutions in planning and executing works.

Major Differences Between MGNREGS and VB-G RAM G

Feature	MGNREGS	VB-G RAM G
Legal framework	MGNREGA, 2005	VB-G RAM G Act, 2025
Status	Replaced from 1 July 2026	Operational from 1 July 2026
Employment guarantee	100 days	125 days
Funding	Earlier framework had a larger Union role in wage financing	60:40 Centre-State for most States

Feature	MGNREGS	VB-G RAM G
Special funding	—	90:10 for NE/Himalayan States and specified UTs
Seasonal provision	No comparable 60-day statutory pause	60-day pause during peak agricultural seasons
Monitoring	Digital/geo-tagged monitoring	Greater use of face authentication and digital monitoring
Work orientation	Wage employment + rural asset creation	Greater emphasis on durable infrastructure and livelihood assets
Broader focus	Rural employment and asset creation	Water security, rural infrastructure, livelihoods and climate resilience

The Centre has described the new framework as a way of combining livelihood security with long-term rural infrastructure creation, while critics have raised concerns about the increased financial burden on States and the implications of the new funding and seasonal arrangements.

Significance of VB-G RAM G

The new framework represents a significant restructuring of India's rural employment policy.

1. Greater Employment Entitlement

Increasing the guarantee from 100 to 125 days potentially provides rural households with a larger employment safety net, particularly during periods of agricultural distress or limited private-sector employment.

2. Rural Infrastructure Creation

By prioritising water conservation, rural infrastructure, livelihood assets and climate-resilience works, the programme attempts to ensure that public expenditure generates long-term productive assets rather than only short-term wage employment.

3. Climate-Resilient Rural Development

Water harvesting, watershed development, groundwater recharge and works related to extreme weather events can improve the resilience of rural communities facing droughts, floods and other climate-related risks.

4. Digital Governance

Face authentication, mobile monitoring, geo-tagging and data-based oversight can potentially improve transparency and reduce fake attendance and leakages. At the same time, technological dependence makes connectivity, device availability and exception-handling mechanisms important for ensuring that genuine workers are not excluded.

Concerns and Limitations

The first-month decline also highlights several issues that will require careful monitoring.

- The increased State financial contribution may place additional pressure on State budgets, particularly in States with high dependence on rural employment programmes. The 60:40 funding arrangement is therefore an important fiscal change from the earlier system.
- The 60-day seasonal pause could create difficulties for households that depend on public employment precisely during periods when agricultural work is unavailable or irregular. Its actual impact will depend on how States identify and notify the relevant agricultural periods.
- The greater reliance on digital attendance and authentication can create exclusion risks in areas with poor internet connectivity, inadequate devices or difficulties with biometric/face matching. The government has provided exception-handling mechanisms, but their effectiveness will need to be assessed on the ground.
- The sharp fall in July person-days raises questions about whether the transition has affected workers' ability to obtain employment promptly. However, it is too early to conclude that the new scheme has structurally reduced

rural employment because July 2026 was also its first month of implementation.

Draft rules under the SHANTI Act open nuclear power to captive industrial use and a composite licence



Why in the News

The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has released the draft rules under the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, marking the next step in operationalising India's nuclear-sector reforms.

The draft framework seeks to translate the SHANTI Act into an operational licensing and regulatory system and is aimed at enabling greater participation by private entities, public-sector enterprises and captive users in nuclear power generation.

What is the SHANTI Act?

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Act, 2025 is India's new comprehensive legislation governing the peaceful use and development of nuclear energy and ionising radiation.

It seeks to combine:

- expansion of nuclear power;
- private-sector participation;
- nuclear safety;
- nuclear liability;
- licensing;
- research and innovation;
- regulation of nuclear installations; and
- development of new reactor technologies.

End of the earlier government monopoly

One of the most important changes is that the Act opens nuclear power generation to private participation, ending the earlier framework in which nuclear power generation was predominantly restricted to government entities.

However, this does not amount to complete privatisation of the nuclear sector.

Strategically sensitive activities such as the nuclear fuel cycle, nuclear materials and regulatory functions continue to remain under strong government control.

The reform therefore attempts to create a model in which private capital and industrial expertise complement sovereign control over sensitive nuclear activities.

Key Provisions

1. Private participation

The Act enables eligible private entities to participate in specified nuclear activities through a licensing framework.

This is significant because nuclear power projects are highly capital intensive and generally require long gestation periods.

Private participation can potentially bring:

- additional capital;
- project-management expertise;
- advanced manufacturing capabilities;
- supply-chain efficiencies;
- innovation in reactor technology; and
- new business models for captive nuclear power.

The government has clarified that private licences had not yet been granted as of July 2026, since the implementing rules were still being prepared. Applications are to be considered after the rules are notified.

2. Captive nuclear power

A major potential application is the development of captive nuclear power plants for energy-intensive industries.

Industries such as:

- aluminium;
- steel;
- cement;

- semiconductor manufacturing;
- large data centres; and
- AI computing facilities

require large quantities of reliable electricity.

3. Single composite licence

The new framework seeks to simplify nuclear licensing by providing a composite licensing approach covering different stages of a reactor's lifecycle, including construction, operation and eventual decommissioning. This can reduce procedural fragmentation and improve project certainty.

However, simplification of licensing must not be confused with dilution of safety standards.

The fundamental challenge will be to create a system where regulatory efficiency and nuclear safety reinforce rather than undermine each other.

4. In-principle approval

The framework provides for an in-principle approval mechanism, allowing certain preparatory activities to begin before the final operating licence.

This can help developers undertake:

- land-related activities;
- preliminary project planning;
- technology/vendor negotiations; and
- other preparatory work.

Such a mechanism can reduce delays because nuclear projects often involve long lead times even before actual construction begins.

Nuclear Liability Framework

Nuclear accidents have potentially catastrophic consequences, making liability one of the most sensitive aspects of nuclear-sector reform.

The SHANTI Act establishes an operator-centric liability framework.

1. Operator liability

The operator is primarily responsible for nuclear damage arising from a nuclear incident.

The Act provides different liability limits depending on the category and capacity of the nuclear installation.

The government informed Parliament in July 2026 that the maximum operator liability varies by category, ranging from **₹100 crore to ₹3,000 crore**.

2. Overall liability ceiling

The maximum liability for a nuclear incident is linked to the rupee equivalent of 300 million Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), unless the Central Government specifies a higher amount.

3. Insurance and financial security

Private operators must obtain:

- insurance;
- other financial security; or
- a combination of both

before operating a nuclear installation.

The financial security must be maintained and renewed throughout the required period.

4. Nuclear Liability Fund

The Act permits the Central Government to establish a Nuclear Liability Fund.

The government may finance this through a levy associated with electricity tariffs.

The Fund is intended to provide an additional financial mechanism when compensation exceeds the operator's prescribed liability.

Supplier Liability — A Major Change

A significant issue under the earlier liability framework was the possibility of an operator seeking recourse against suppliers in certain circumstances, including defective equipment or sub-standard services.

The SHANTI Act significantly narrows this statutory route of recourse.

Under the new framework, the operator's right of recourse against suppliers is primarily linked to express contractual provisions or intentional misconduct.

India's Nuclear Energy Mission

The SHANTI Act is closely linked with the Nuclear Energy Mission announced in the Union Budget 2025–26.

The mission aims to achieve:

100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047

This is a substantial increase from India's present installed nuclear capacity of approximately 8.78 GW.

The government's roadmap envisages:

- around 22 GW by 2031–32;
- approximately 54 GW by 2047 through NPCIL-led projects;
- the remaining 46 GW through other public-sector enterprises, state governments, private companies and joint ventures.

Therefore, private-sector participation is not peripheral to the target—it is expected to provide a significant part of the additional capacity.

Why Nuclear Power is Important for India

1. Energy security

India's electricity demand is expected to rise significantly as industrialisation, urbanisation, electrification and digital infrastructure expand.

Nuclear power provides reliable generation without depending on daily weather conditions.

2. Decarbonisation

Nuclear energy is a low-carbon electricity source and can complement renewable energy in India's transition towards its net-zero emissions target for 2070.

3. Industrial competitiveness

Energy-intensive industries require stable electricity.

Captive nuclear generation could provide reliable low-carbon power to sectors such as:

- aluminium;
- steel;
- cement;
- semiconductor fabrication; and
- data centres.

4. AI and data centres

AI systems require enormous computing capacity and therefore large quantities of electricity.

India's growing AI ecosystem will require reliable power infrastructure.

The government has therefore identified nuclear power as one potential source of firm electricity for energy-intensive digital infrastructure.

5. Reduced dependence on fossil fuels

Greater nuclear generation can reduce dependence on coal and imported hydrocarbons while improving the diversification of India's energy mix.

Key Concerns

1. Supplier liability

Reducing supplier liability may attract foreign vendors, but it also raises concerns about accountability in the event of equipment-related accidents.

A strong contractual and regulatory system will therefore be essential.

2. Regulatory independence

Nuclear regulation requires an institution with sufficient:

- technical expertise;
- financial independence;
- institutional autonomy; and
- enforcement capacity.

As private participation increases, the regulator will need to supervise a much larger number of actors.

3. Public acceptance

Nuclear projects require large land areas and can generate public opposition because of concerns regarding:

- radiation;
- accidents;
- displacement;
- emergency preparedness; and
- waste disposal.

Public consultation and transparent communication will therefore be critical.

4. High capital costs

Nuclear power plants require enormous upfront investment.

The long construction period creates:

- financing costs;
- cost-overrun risks;
- interest during construction; and
- uncertainty about project completion.

Private companies may therefore prefer SMRs or captive models where demand is more predictable.

5. Nuclear waste

Radioactive waste must be managed safely over long periods.

India follows a strategy involving waste treatment, volume reduction, vitrification and engineered storage under surveillance. The government has stated that waste-management practices for emerging reactor

technologies will need to be appropriately adapted to their fuel configurations.

6. Fuel availability

Expansion of nuclear capacity will require assured access to uranium and other nuclear fuel inputs.

Diversification of international fuel supplies and strengthening domestic capabilities will therefore remain important.

7. Technology dependence

Importing reactors can accelerate capacity creation, but excessive dependence on foreign vendors can create long-term vulnerabilities.

India must therefore ensure:

Import → localisation → technology absorption → indigenous innovation

rather than permanent dependence on imported technology.

RBI's MPC Minutes Signal a Turn from Easing to Tightening



Why in the News

The **August 2026 Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) minutes** have highlighted growing concerns about the future trajectory of inflation in India. While the MPC decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, the discussion indicated that some members remain cautious about inflationary pressures and the possibility of monetary tightening later in 2026–27.

What is the Monetary Policy Committee?

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is the statutory body responsible for determining India's benchmark policy repo rate.

It was established under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, which was amended in 2016 to provide a formal legal framework for inflation targeting and monetary policy decision-making.

The MPC's primary responsibility is to determine the policy interest rate in a manner consistent with India's inflation-targeting framework.

Composition of the MPC

The MPC consists of six members:

- Three members from the Reserve Bank of India
- Three external members appointed by the Central Government

The Governor of the RBI serves as the Chairperson of the MPC.

Each member has one vote. In the event of a tie, the RBI Governor has a casting vote.

The minutes of MPC meetings are published on the 14th day after the meeting, providing insight into the views and reasoning of individual members.

Mandate of the MPC

The MPC is responsible for setting the policy repo rate to achieve India's inflation target.

India follows a flexible inflation-targeting framework centred around a 4% CPI inflation target, with an allowable range of 2% to 6%.

The MPC must therefore balance two major considerations:

1. Price stability, by keeping inflation under control.
2. Economic growth, by ensuring that monetary policy does not unnecessarily restrict investment, consumption and credit.

This balancing act becomes particularly difficult when inflation is caused by supply-side factors that cannot be directly addressed through higher interest rates.

August 2026 Policy Review

During the August 2026 policy review, the MPC maintained the repo rate at 5.25%.

The decision to pause reflected the assessment that an immediate increase in interest rates was not necessary despite the expected rise in inflation during the coming quarters.

Key projections

- **Repo rate:** 5.25%, unchanged
- **Growth forecast:** Raised from **6.6% to 6.7%**
- **Inflation forecast:** Lowered from **5.1% to 5%**
- **Q3 inflation projection:** **5.9%**

The projected Q3 inflation peak is particularly important because it brings headline inflation close to the upper end of India's inflation tolerance band.

However, the MPC expects inflation to decline after the Q3 peak. This expectation supported the decision to wait and observe incoming data rather than tighten monetary policy immediately.

The key question for policymakers is whether the expected rise in inflation will remain temporary or become generalised and persistent.

What is Core Inflation?

Core inflation generally refers to inflation measured after excluding highly volatile components such as food and fuel.

Thus:

Core Inflation = CPI Inflation – Food and Fuel Components

Food and fuel prices are often influenced by factors that lie outside the direct control of monetary policy, such as:

- Weather conditions
- Crop production
- Supply disruptions
- International crude oil prices
- Geopolitical developments

By excluding these volatile elements, core inflation provides a clearer indication of underlying and relatively persistent price pressures within the economy.

Core inflation is particularly important for the MPC because monetary policy is more effective in influencing demand-driven and persistent inflationary pressures than temporary supply shocks.

What is Core Inflation Excluding Precious Metals?

A more refined measure may also exclude gold and silver from core inflation.

Therefore:

Core Inflation excluding Precious Metals = CPI Inflation excluding Food, Fuel, Gold and Silver

Precious metal prices can rise sharply because of:

- Global financial uncertainty
- Safe-haven demand
- International commodity price movements
- Exchange-rate changes

These movements may not necessarily indicate a broad increase in domestic demand-side inflation.

Excluding gold and silver can therefore help policymakers identify the underlying trend in prices more accurately and prevent large bullion-price movements from distorting the inflation signal.

What are Second-Round Inflation Effects?

A first-round inflation shock occurs when the price of a particular commodity or input rises directly.

For example:

Rise in crude oil prices → Higher fuel prices

However, the impact may not stop there.

Higher fuel prices increase transportation and production costs. Businesses may then pass these higher costs on to consumers.

The transmission can be represented as:

Higher oil prices → Higher input costs → Higher production costs → Higher prices of goods and services → Broader inflation

This spread of an initial price shock through the wider economy is known as a second-round inflation effect.

Second-round effects are important because an inflation shock that initially appears temporary can become more persistent.

For example, higher energy costs may eventually lead to:

- Higher transport charges
- Higher manufacturing costs
- Higher food distribution costs
- Higher service prices
- Higher wage demands

Once inflation spreads across multiple sectors, monetary policy becomes more concerned because inflationary pressures may become embedded in the economy.

What is De-Anchoring of Inflation Expectations?

Inflation expectations are said to be anchored when households, businesses and investors believe that

inflation will eventually return to the central bank's target.

In India's case, the key reference point is the 4% inflation target.

However, if people begin to believe that inflation will remain high for a prolonged period, expectations may become de-anchored.

The Central Policy Challenge

The August 2026 MPC discussion reflects a broader dilemma for central banks.

If the RBI raises interest rates too early, it could unnecessarily slow economic growth.

If it waits for too long and inflationary pressures become widespread, inflation expectations could become de-anchored, making future inflation more difficult to control.

The MPC must therefore distinguish between:

- Temporary inflation caused by supply shocks, and
- Persistent and broad-based inflation driven by demand and expectations

This distinction is central to the future direction of monetary policy.

J&K Census enumerators raise tech concerns



Why in the News?

A readiness review for the Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027 in Doda district has highlighted a new challenge in India's first digital Census. Census enumerators and supervisors working in snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir were found to possess mobile phones that do not meet the technical configuration prescribed for the Census application.

The issue is significant because Census 2027 shifts a major part of the data-collection infrastructure from government-provided equipment to the personal smartphones of enumerators, who are largely school teachers and government employees.

What is Self-Enumeration?

Self-enumeration is a digital facility through which households can provide their Census information online without waiting for the enumerator to initially collect all the information.

How it works

1. A household accesses the designated self-enumeration facility.
2. It enters the required Census information digitally.
3. The information is subsequently linked with the field enumeration process.
4. The enumerator or supervisor can verify the information during the field round.

For the specially advanced areas, self-enumeration is available from 17 August to 31 August 2026, before door-to-door Population Enumeration begins on 1 September.

Why has Device Configuration Become a Census Issue?

1. Critical infrastructure is being decentralised

Earlier, paper-based enumeration did not make the enumerator's personal device a prerequisite for recording Census information. In a digital Census, however, the smartphone becomes part of the data-collection infrastructure.

Therefore, inadequate devices can directly affect the ability of the field workforce to perform its task.

2. Uniform technical standards meet unequal ground realities

The minimum requirement of 8 GB RAM and Android 13 or above establishes a common technological standard. However, the socioeconomic capacity of an employee in a remote Himalayan district may differ substantially from that of an employee in an urban area.

Thus, a uniform technical specification does not automatically produce uniform operational capability.

3. Financial burden on field functionaries

If the Census depends on personal smartphones, upgrading or replacing an incompatible device can potentially become an additional cost for the enumerator unless an institutional mechanism is provided.

This raises questions regarding:

- reimbursement;
- government-issued devices;
- temporary device leasing;
- district-level device pools;
- replacement arrangements for damaged or incompatible phones.

4. Terrain increases the consequences of technological failure

Snow-bound areas already face logistical difficulties, including difficult roads, dispersed settlements and seasonal restrictions on movement.

A device failure in a metropolitan district may be relatively easy to address. In a remote Himalayan village, however, replacing a device or reconnecting with the field team can be substantially more difficult.

5. Limited preparation window

The specially advanced Population Enumeration in these areas is being conducted before the rest of the country because winter weather can make several habitations inaccessible.

The Gazette notification issued by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner specifically provides for this non-synchronous enumeration schedule.

Why are Ladakh and Snow-Bound Areas Enumerated Ahead of the Rest of India?

The Census cannot always follow an identical calendar across geographically diverse regions.

1. Winter accessibility

Heavy snowfall can cut off roads and remote settlements in the Himalayan region.

2. Non-synchronous enumeration

The Population Enumeration phase has therefore been advanced in:

- Ladakh;
- snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir;

- snow-bound areas of Himachal Pradesh;
- snow-bound areas of Uttarakhand.

3. Special schedule

For these areas:

- **Self-enumeration:** 17–31 August 2026
- **Population Enumeration:** 1–30 September 2026
- **Revisional round:** 1–5 October 2026

4. Administrative preparedness

District-level reviews are being undertaken to assess:

- deployment of enumerators;
- training;
- device readiness;
- identification of snow-bound villages;
- migration routes;
- supervision arrangements;
- awareness campaigns;
- Self-Enumeration arrangements.

The Doda review specifically examined the technical readiness of field functionaries along with training, deployment and identification of difficult areas.

Why is the Census Being Contested in Manipur?

The Manipur situation illustrates that technology alone cannot solve a population-enumeration problem when the underlying administrative and social environment is unstable.

The Congress has demanded postponement of the Census exercise in Manipur, arguing that the continuing consequences of ethnic violence since May 2023 make an accurate enumeration difficult.

According to statements by Inner Manipur MP A. Bimol Akoijam, around 60,000 people remain displaced, with many living in relief camps, while more than 10,000 houses have been destroyed. The demand is for postponement rather than cancellation of the Census.

The concern is not limited to political parties. Civil-society organisations have also raised questions about conducting the Census amid displacement, security restrictions and difficulties in movement across community-dominated areas.

What are the Specific Census Challenges in Manipur?

1. Displaced households

A household that has been forced out of its village presents a basic house-listing problem:

Should it be recorded at its original location or at its present relief-camp location?

The issue becomes particularly complicated when the original house has been destroyed.

2. Destroyed housing stock

If houses have been burned or destroyed, the physical housing structure may no longer correspond to the household that previously occupied it.

This can affect the interpretation of:

- occupied houses;
- vacant houses;
- household assets;
- amenities;
- ownership;
- population distribution.

3. Relief camps

Questions have been raised over how displaced families living in relief camps should be categorised for Census purposes and how their relationship with their original households and residences should be established.

Recent concerns raised by displaced groups in Manipur specifically ask how families in relief camps and destroyed houses will be represented in the Census.

4. Security and mobility

Continuing restrictions or insecurity can prevent enumerators from freely accessing certain areas.

A comprehensive Census requires not merely a digital application but physical access to every eligible population group.

5. Census and NRC debate

A separate political demand in Manipur seeks updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the Census.

This has generated protests and disrupted Census-related preparations. Training for enumerators and supervisors in Imphal West was deferred because of the prevailing law-and-order situation.

As of 30 August 2026, the issue remains under judicial consideration. The Manipur High Court has listed the Census/NRC-related matter for 31 August 2026.

Does a Digital Census Widen or Narrow the Count?

The central lesson from Census 2027 is that digitisation improves the process, but does not automatically guarantee inclusion.

Digital advantages

1. Faster data processing

Digital entry reduces the time between collection and processing.

2. Reduced paperwork

The traditional dependence on large volumes of paper schedules is reduced.

3. Better monitoring

Digital platforms can potentially enable administrators to track field progress and identify gaps more quickly.

4. Easier validation

Built-in application checks can reduce certain categories of data-entry errors.

5. Faster aggregation

Once data is digitally captured, aggregation and tabulation can be more efficient than manual processing.

But What are the Risks?

1. Digital divide

Self-enumeration works best for households with:

- smartphones;
- internet connectivity;
- digital literacy;
- familiarity with online forms.

The households least connected digitally may remain the most dependent on field enumerators.

2. Device divide

If enumerators depend on personal devices, differences in smartphone quality can translate into differences in field-level capacity.

3. Connectivity constraints

Remote and mountainous areas can have weak or intermittent connectivity. Therefore, the Census application must remain operational under difficult network conditions, with secure mechanisms for synchronisation when connectivity becomes available.

4. Human error remains

Digitisation does not eliminate:

- incorrect responses;

- misunderstanding of questions;
- omission;
- duplication;
- incorrect classification.

It simply changes the point at which the error enters the information system.

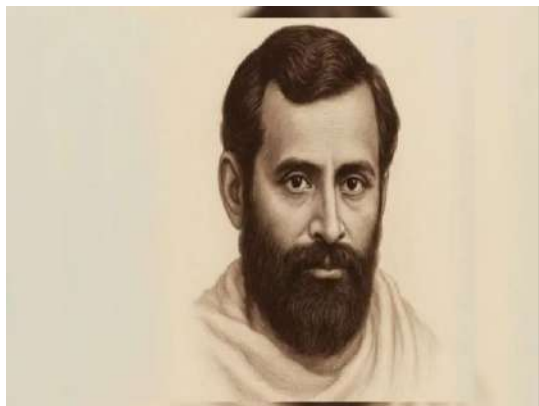
5. Displacement remains a statistical problem

A digital application cannot by itself resolve the question of where a displaced household should be counted.

The challenge is fundamentally demographic, administrative and conceptual rather than merely technological.

History

Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das



Why in the News?

The President of India unveiled the statue of eminent freedom fighter, social reformer, educationist, poet and pioneering journalist Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das at Lajpat Bhawan in New Delhi.

The occasion is significant because Gopabandhu Das was not only an important leader of Odisha's freedom movement but also a bridge between regional linguistic identity and the broader Indian nationalist movement. His life combined political activism with education, journalism, social service and humanitarian work.

The Government of Odisha describes him as a friend of the poor and a major figure in the social and intellectual history of the state.

About Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das

Who He Was?

- Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das (1877–1928) was a freedom fighter, social reformer, educationist, poet, journalist, political activist and humanitarian from Odisha.
- He is popularly known as Utkalmani, meaning the "Jewel of Utkal/Odisha."

- His life was guided by the ideals of selfless public service, nationalism, social equality, education and sacrifice.
- He worked simultaneously for India's freedom from British rule and for the social and cultural advancement of the Odia-speaking population.
- His contribution is particularly important because he helped connect the Odia linguistic movement with Indian nationalism, rather than treating regional identity and national identity as contradictory.
- The Ministry of Culture's *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* describes him as an activist, journalist, essayist, poet, reformer and social worker who actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Early Days

Birth & Childhood

- Gopabandhu Das was born on 9 October 1877 at Suando village near Sakhigopal in Puri district, Odisha, then part of British India.
- He was born to Daitari Das and Swarnamayee Devi.
- He lost his mother when he was only a few months old and later lost his father while studying at Ravenshaw College.
- Despite these personal difficulties, he continued his education and developed a strong commitment towards public service.

Student Activism

- He received his early education in Odisha and later studied at Puri Zilla School and Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.

- During his student years, he became increasingly concerned about poverty, disease, illiteracy and social problems.
- He organised student groups such as the Kartavya Bodhini Samiti (Duty Awakening Society) to develop a sense of social responsibility and national consciousness among young people.
- His early experiences of serving people affected by cholera, floods and other calamities shaped his philosophy that education and public life should be dedicated to society.

From Law to Public Service

- Gopabandhu pursued higher studies and obtained a law degree from Calcutta University/Ripon College.
- Although he entered the legal profession and practised for a period, he gradually abandoned the prospects of a successful legal career to devote himself to social work, education and the freedom movement.
- This decision reflected one of the central principles of his life: public service over personal prosperity.

Contributions to India's Freedom Movement

Bringing Congress Nationalism to Odisha

- Gopabandhu Das played a crucial role in bringing the Indian National Congress and Gandhian politics into Odisha.
- He became the first President of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee (UPCC) in 1920 and remained an important leader of the Odisha Congress until his death in 1928.
- He participated in the Calcutta Special Session of the Congress in 1920, where the Non-Cooperation programme associated with Mahatma Gandhi was adopted.
- He subsequently worked extensively to organise Congress committees and spread the message of nationalism throughout Odisha.

Role in the Non-Cooperation Movement

- Gopabandhu became one of the principal leaders of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Odisha.
- He encouraged people to participate in constructive programmes such as Swadeshi, khadi, national education and social reform.
- His newspaper The Samaja became an important medium for communicating nationalist ideas to ordinary people.
- He was arrested by the colonial authorities for his nationalist activities and spent time in prison, including imprisonment in Hazaribagh Jail.

Gandhi's Visit to Odisha

- Gopabandhu played an important role in bringing Mahatma Gandhi to Odisha in 1921.
- Gandhi's visit gave considerable momentum to the Non-Cooperation Movement in the province.
- A massive public meeting was held in Cuttack, where Gopabandhu introduced Gandhi to the people of Odisha.
- Gandhi was deeply impressed by Gopabandhu's dedication, simplicity and commitment to public service. The President of India has also highlighted Gopabandhu's patriotic ideals in official speeches.

Linguistic Unification & Utkal Sammilani

- Gopabandhu was closely associated with the Utkal Sammilani (Utkal Union Conference), which worked for the consolidation of Odia-speaking areas.
- At the time, Odia-speaking populations were divided among different administrative units, creating difficulties for linguistic and cultural development.
- Gopabandhu supported the demand for the administrative unification of Odia-speaking regions.
- However, he increasingly sought to integrate the regional movement with the larger Indian nationalist movement.

- At the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Sammilani in 1920, he supported the adoption of the objectives of the Indian National Congress by the organisation. This helped bring the linguistic movement and the national freedom struggle closer together.
- The movement ultimately contributed to the creation of Odisha as a separate province in 1936, India's first province created substantially on a linguistic basis. Gopabandhu, however, died in 1928 and therefore did not live to see the creation of the province.

Significance: His political philosophy demonstrated that regional identity could strengthen rather than weaken Indian nationalism when placed within a broader national framework.

Key Works & Contributions

1. Satyabadi Bana Bidyalaya – 1909

- Gopabandhu established the Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya at Sakhigopal near Puri in 1909.
- It was inspired by the Gurukula/open-air education model.
- The institution aimed not merely to provide academic education but to develop students' character, patriotism, discipline, social responsibility and sense of service.
- Students from different social backgrounds were encouraged to study and live together, challenging prevailing caste-based social divisions.
- During the Non-Cooperation Movement, the school was transformed into a National School and became an important centre of nationalist activity in Odisha.

2. The Samaja – 1919

- Gopabandhu founded the weekly newspaper The Samaja in 1919.
- He regarded journalism as an instrument for mass education and political awakening, particularly among ordinary people who had limited access to formal education.

- The newspaper used relatively simple and accessible Odia to communicate political, social and economic issues.
- It became an important vehicle for spreading nationalist ideas and highlighting the problems of the poor and rural population.
- Before his death, Gopabandhu entrusted the newspaper and press to the Servants of the People Society, with the intention that its resources should serve public welfare.

3. Literature and Nationalist Writing

Gopabandhu made a lasting contribution to modern Odia literature. His writings combined patriotism, humanism, spirituality and social consciousness.

Important works associated with him include:

- Bandira Atmakatha – *A Prisoner's Autobiography*
- Dharmapada
- Kara Kabita
- Abakasha Chinta

His literary works often reflected the suffering of ordinary people and the ideals of sacrifice and national service. The Odisha Government also lists works such as *Karakabita*, *Dharmapada* and *Bandira Atmakatha* among his writings.

Social Reform & Humanitarian Work

Service During Natural Disasters

- Gopabandhu was deeply involved in relief work during floods, famines, cyclones and disease outbreaks in Odisha.
- His approach to public service was practical: rather than merely criticising colonial administration, he personally travelled to affected areas and organised relief.
- His humanitarian activities made him particularly popular among poor and rural communities.
- The Ministry of Culture records his intervention during floods and his willingness to place the needs of disaster-affected people above personal concerns.

Fight Against Social Inequality

Gopabandhu worked for:

- Removal of untouchability
- Social equality
- Expansion of literacy
- Women's education
- Welfare of poor and destitute people
- Reform of discriminatory social practices
- Upliftment of marginalised communities

His social reform agenda complemented his political struggle because he believed that political freedom would have little meaning without social and educational emancipation. Gandhi also remembered him for his commitment to social equality and the upliftment of disadvantaged sections.

Association with Servants of the People Society

- Gopabandhu came into close association with Lala Lajpat Rai's Servants of the People Society (Lok Sevak Mandal).
- The organisation sought to create dedicated social workers who would serve society through constructive public action.
- Gopabandhu's association with the organisation reflected his belief that the freedom struggle was not restricted to political agitation but also involved nation-building and social service.
- This connection also provides added significance to the unveiling of his statue at Lajpat Bhawan, associated with the Servants of the People Society.

Gopabandhu Das and Peasant Mobilisation

- Gopabandhu was also involved in mobilising peasants in Odisha during the nationalist movement.
- In 1921, he addressed peasants and explained the objectives of the Non-Cooperation Movement and issues affecting rural communities.
- He raised concerns related to revenue collection, forest restrictions and the exploitation of rural populations.
- His political approach therefore extended beyond urban centres and educated elites to include peasants and ordinary villagers.

Legacy and Historical Significance

Gopabandhu Das occupies a distinctive place in India's modern history because his contributions covered several interconnected spheres:

Area	Major Contribution
Freedom Movement	Leadership of Non-Cooperation Movement in Odisha
Congress Organisation	First President of Utkal Provincial Congress Committee
Linguistic Identity	Advocacy for unification of Odia-speaking regions
Education	Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya and national education
Journalism	Founded <i>The Samaja</i> in 1919
Social Reform	Fight against untouchability and social inequality
Humanitarian Service	Relief during floods, famine and disease
Literature	<i>Bandira Atmakatha</i> , <i>Dharmapada</i> , <i>Kara Kabita</i> , etc.
Nationalism	Linked Odia identity with the wider Indian freedom struggle

His legacy continued to influence Odisha's political and social movements even after his death. A memorial organisation, Gopabandhu Sevak Sangha, was established after his death in 1929 to promote ideals such as removal of untouchability, village reconstruction, Congress organisation and social service.

Why is he called Utkalmani?

The title Utkalmani, meaning *Jewel of Utkal*, reflects the extraordinary esteem in which he was held in Odisha. His significance goes beyond political leadership: he represented a model of service-oriented nationalism, where education, journalism, social reform and political freedom were treated as interconnected instruments of nation-building.

The Quit India Movement



Why in the News?

The Quit India Movement, one of the most significant mass uprisings of India's freedom struggle, is being remembered on its 84th anniversary in August 2026. The movement was launched on 8 August 1942 at Bombay's Gowalia Tank Maidan, now known as August Kranti Maidan, with Mahatma Gandhi giving the historic call of "Do or Die". The movement demanded an immediate end to British colonial rule and became a decisive demonstration of popular resistance against the Raj.

About the Quit India Movement

What It Is?

The Quit India Movement, also known as the August Kranti, was a mass civil-disobedience and anti-colonial movement launched by the Indian National Congress in August 1942. Its central demand was the immediate withdrawal of British authority from India.

Unlike earlier phases of the national movement, the Quit India Movement witnessed widespread participation by students, workers, peasants, women and local political activists. Following the arrest of the national leadership, much of the movement acquired a decentralised and spontaneous character, with underground networks and local leaders carrying the struggle forward.

Launch Details

- **Date:** 8 August 1942; the mass upsurge intensified following the arrests on 9 August.
- **Place:** Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay, now August Kranti Maidan, Mumbai.
- **Organisation:** All India Congress Committee (AICC).

- **Major Leaders:** Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Aruna Asaf Ali, among others.
- **Slogan:** "Do or Die" (Karo ya Maro).
- **Immediate Objective:** End British rule and secure Indian independence.

The Congress Working Committee had already approved the Quit India proposal at Wardha on 14 July 1942, demanding complete independence and authorising mass civil disobedience if the British did not agree. The proposal was subsequently approved by the AICC in Bombay on 8 August.

Historical Background

1. Second World War and India

When the Second World War began in 1939, the British Government declared India to be a participant in the war without consulting Indian political leaders. This deepened nationalist resentment and strengthened the demand that Indians should have the right to determine their own political future.

2. Japanese Advance and Security Concerns

The rapid Japanese advance through Southeast Asia, including the fall of Singapore and Rangoon, brought the possibility of a Japanese attack much closer to India. Gandhi increasingly argued that continued British rule was itself becoming an obstacle to India's effective defence and political mobilisation.

3. Failure of the Cripps Mission

The Cripps Mission of March 1942, headed by Sir Stafford Cripps, attempted to secure Indian cooperation for the British war effort. However, its proposals envisaged constitutional changes and Dominion Status after the war rather than immediate transfer of power.

Congress rejected the proposal because it did not provide immediate independence, while other political groups also found important aspects of the offer unacceptable. The failure of the mission convinced many nationalist leaders that further negotiations with the existing British administration were unlikely to produce meaningful political freedom.

4. Growing Economic and Political Discontent

The war also produced inflation, shortages, taxation pressures and economic disruption, increasing hardship among ordinary Indians. The combination of political frustration, wartime difficulties and fears of foreign invasion created an atmosphere favourable to a mass movement.

Major Features and Events

1. Arrest of the National Leadership

The British Government responded almost immediately to the Congress resolution. Gandhi and other senior Congress leaders were arrested in the early hours of 9 August 1942, preventing the Congress from organising the movement through its normal institutional structure. This strategy, however, produced an unexpected result. Instead of ending the movement, the arrests transferred much of the initiative to students, workers, peasants and local activists.

2. Spontaneous Mass Uprising

Across several parts of India, people organised:

- Hartals and strikes
- Demonstrations and processions
- Boycott of colonial institutions
- Attacks on symbols of colonial authority
- Disruption of railway and telegraph communications
- Underground political activities

The movement was not uniformly peaceful in practice. Although Gandhi's political philosophy was rooted in non-violence, sections of the spontaneous uprising involved attacks on government buildings, railway lines and communication infrastructure.

3. Underground Movement

With Congress leaders imprisoned and censorship intensified, underground networks became important for maintaining communication.

Usha Mehta and the Congress Radio became an important symbol of this underground resistance. The clandestine radio station broadcast nationalist messages, news and information that bypassed official censorship. It operated for only a few months before the

authorities traced the network and arrested its organisers.

Other underground activists included Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan and Sucheta Kripalani, who helped sustain resistance after the arrest of the principal Congress leadership.

4. Role of Women

Women played an important role in both the public and underground phases of the movement.

Aruna Asaf Ali became a major symbol of resistance after hoisting the national flag at Gowalia Tank Maidan on 9 August 1942. Usha Mehta demonstrated the important role of young students and women in maintaining underground communication through the Congress Radio.

5. Parallel Governments

One of the distinctive features of the Quit India Movement was the emergence of parallel governments, which attempted to replace or challenge colonial administration at the local level.

I. Tamluk – Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar:

Established in Tamluk in present-day West Bengal in December 1942, it developed alternative administrative mechanisms, including arrangements related to justice, policing, revenue and public welfare. It continued until 1944.

II. Satara – Prati Sarkar:

Established in Maharashtra under Krantisinha Nana Patil, the Prati Sarkar developed an extensive local organisational structure and exercised influence over hundreds of villages. Its armed wing, the Toofan Sena, conducted guerrilla activities against colonial authority.

III. Ballia – Chittu Pandey:

In Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, Chittu Pandey led a short-lived nationalist government in August 1942. The local administration temporarily lost effective control before British forces re-established authority.

These examples demonstrated that the movement was not merely a series of protests but, in certain areas,

developed into an attempt to create alternative centres of political authority.

British Repression

The colonial government responded with extensive repression, including:

- Mass arrests
- Police firing
- Censorship
- Collective fines
- Detention of political activists
- Suppression of demonstrations
- Military and police operations against centres of resistance

The Ministry of Culture notes that the government arrested over ten thousand people, while protests continued in different parts of the country despite the imprisonment of the Congress leadership.

Regional Spread

The movement acquired particularly strong local dimensions in several regions, including:

Region	Important Development
Maharashtra	Prati Sarkar under Nana Patil
Bengal	Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar in Tamluk
Uttar Pradesh	Ballia uprising under Chittu Pandey
Odisha	Parallel administration in Talcher
Bihar	Strong underground resistance and student participation
Rajasthan	Praja Mandal activities and popular mobilisation in princely states

The movement therefore combined a nationwide political demand with region-specific forms of resistance. In Rajasthan, for instance, the Alwar Praja Mandal used the atmosphere created by Quit India to intensify demands for responsible government and mobilise sections of farmers and rural communities.

Significance of the Quit India Movement

1. Mass Character of the Freedom Struggle

The movement demonstrated that the demand for independence had penetrated deeply into Indian society.

Even after the arrest of the national leadership, ordinary people continued the struggle.

2. Challenge to Colonial Legitimacy

The British were able to suppress the movement militarily, but the widespread uprising exposed the growing difficulty of governing India without popular consent.

3. Emergence of Grassroots Leadership

The movement brought forward a large number of local leaders, students, women and underground activists, showing that the national movement was no longer dependent solely on a small group of prominent political leaders.

4. Development of Parallel Authority

The emergence of Prati Sarkar, Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar and the Ballia experiment demonstrated the ability of nationalist forces to challenge colonial administration and establish alternative local institutions.

5. Psychological Turning Point

Although the British successfully suppressed the movement by force, the Quit India Movement represented a major psychological and political turning point. The post-war continuation of British rule increasingly became difficult to justify in the face of India's organised demand for self-government.

Limitations of the Movement

The Quit India Movement also had important limitations:

- **Lack of centralised leadership:** The immediate arrest of Gandhi and other Congress leaders prevented coordinated nationwide planning.
- **Uneven geographical spread:** Participation was intense in certain regions but comparatively limited in others.
- **Use of violence in some areas:** Damage to railway lines, telegraph systems and government property weakened the movement's adherence to the Gandhian method of non-violence.
- **Severe repression:** The colonial state retained considerable coercive capacity and was able to suppress the uprising through arrests, censorship, police action and military force.

- **Political divisions:** The movement did not receive support from all major political organisations and sections of Indian society.
- **Limited immediate political gains:** The British did not concede independence during the movement itself; the final transfer of power came after the end of the Second World War.

Thus, the Quit India Movement should be understood not as an immediate military or constitutional victory, but as a decisive mass mobilisation that further undermined the political legitimacy of British colonial rule.

UPSC Relevance

Prelims:

- 8 August 1942 – launch of Quit India Movement
- Gowalia Tank Maidan – present-day August Kranti Maidan
- “Do or Die” – Mahatma Gandhi
- Usha Mehta – Congress Radio
- Nana Patil – Satara Prati Sarkar
- Chittu Pandey – Ballia
- Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar – Tamluk, Bengal

Mains:

The Quit India Movement can be analysed as a mass-based, decentralised and largely leaderless phase of the national movement, highlighting the role of grassroots participation, underground networks and parallel governments in challenging colonial authority.

India's Role in the Korean War and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission



Why in News?

India's historic contribution to peace and humanitarian assistance during and after the Korean War has recently returned to focus following the inauguration of the Indian War Memorial at Imjingak Park, Republic of Korea, on 21 May 2026.

The memorial was jointly inaugurated by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and the Republic of Korea's Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, Kwon Oh-eul, as part of commemorations marking the 75th anniversary of the Korean War. It honours the contribution of the Indian Army's 60 Parachute Field Ambulance and the Custodian Force India (CFI).

The event has also revived attention to India's important diplomatic role in resolving the difficult Prisoners of War (POW) repatriation issue, through the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) chaired by Lieutenant General K. S. Thimayya.

Background: The Korean War

The Korean War began on **25 June 1950**, when North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel and entered South Korea.

The conflict soon acquired the character of a major Cold War confrontation:

- North Korea received support from China and the Soviet bloc.
- South Korea was supported by the United Nations Command, led principally by the United States.
- India, while participating in UN humanitarian efforts, attempted to maintain an independent and balanced diplomatic position.

Fighting continued until the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed on 27 July 1953. However, the armistice was not a permanent peace treaty, and the Korean Peninsula technically remains without a final peace settlement.

The Major Challenge: What Should Happen to the Prisoners of War?

One of the most difficult obstacles in the armistice negotiations concerned the future of thousands of captured soldiers.

The two sides differed sharply over the principle of repatriation, or the return of prisoners to their country or military side.

The Communist side broadly supported the return of prisoners, while the United Nations Command opposed the compulsory repatriation of prisoners who did not wish to return.

This created a major humanitarian and political dilemma:

- Some prisoners wanted to return home.
- Some refused to return because of ideological, political or personal reasons.
- Forcing prisoners to return could violate the principle of individual choice.
- Allowing one side alone to control the process would create questions about neutrality and fairness.

Therefore, an acceptable mechanism had to be created that could command the confidence of both sides.

India's Diplomatic Role

India played an important role in international efforts to break the deadlock.

According to the Government of India's official account, an Indian proposal at the United Nations regarding the termination of the Korean War was eventually accepted, contributing to the framework that led to the 1953 Armistice Agreement.

The solution to the POW issue involved the establishment of the **Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC)**.

The five countries associated with the Commission were:

- India
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Poland
- Czechoslovakia

These countries were expected to provide a mechanism that was acceptable to both sides of the Cold War divide. The official terms of reference provided that India would supply the armed forces and operating personnel required to assist the Commission, while the Indian representative would serve as the chairman and executive agent of the NNRC.

Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC)

The **NNRC** was established after the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953 to deal with prisoners who had not opted for direct repatriation.

Its primary responsibility was to:

- Take custody of the concerned prisoners of war.
- Ensure that prisoners were not forcibly repatriated.
- Provide an opportunity for the prisoners to hear explanations from representatives of their respective sides.
- Supervise a fair and neutral process for determining their future.

India was collectively chosen to lead the Commission, and Lieutenant General K. S. Thimayya was appointed as its Chairman.

This was a significant diplomatic achievement because India was trusted with a responsibility that required acceptance from powers located on opposite sides of the Cold War.

Custodian Force India (CFI)

To implement the decisions of the NNRC on the ground, India deployed a special military contingent known as Custodian Force India (CFI).

The force was commanded by Major General S. S. P. Thorat.

According to recent official information from the Indian Embassy in Seoul, the CFI consisted of 5,230 personnel and played a crucial role in the custody and repatriation process.

The responsibilities of the CFI included:

- Taking custody of prisoners who were not directly repatriated.
- Maintaining security and order.
- Ensuring impartial treatment.
- Protecting prisoners from coercion.
- Supporting the NNRC in conducting the repatriation process.

The task was particularly difficult because Indian soldiers had to maintain strict neutrality while dealing with prisoners from opposing ideological and military camps.

The discipline, impartiality and professionalism displayed by Indian personnel earned international recognition.

Lt Gen K. S. Thimayya's Leadership

Lt Gen Kodandera Subayya Thimayya emerged as one of the most important Indian military leaders associated with the Korean peace process.

As Chairman of the NNRC, he had to operate in an extremely sensitive international environment involving:

- The United States and the UN Command.
- China.
- North Korea.
- South Korea.
- Countries representing both Western and Communist blocs.

His leadership required not merely military capability but also diplomatic judgment, impartiality and the ability to build confidence among rival powers.

The Indian government continues to recognise Thimayya's leadership during this period as an important example of India's constructive and peace-oriented international role.

India's Humanitarian Contribution: 60 Parachute Field Ambulance

India's contribution to the Korean War was not limited to diplomacy and post-war prisoner management.

During the conflict, India deployed the 60 Parachute Field Ambulance, commanded by Lt Col A. G. Rangaraj.

The unit provided medical assistance under extremely difficult battlefield conditions and treated soldiers as well as civilians.

According to official Indian sources, the medical unit consisted of 627 personnel and treated approximately 220,000 patients during its service in Korea.

The humanitarian work of the Indian medical personnel earned them the title "Maroon Angels" from the wounded soldiers and civilian population of the Republic of Korea.

Thus, India's role combined three important dimensions:

1. Humanitarian assistance during the war.
2. Diplomatic efforts to support a negotiated settlement.

3. Neutral military and humanitarian management of POW repatriation after the armistice.

Hind Nagar and the Indian War Memorial

India's contribution is now commemorated through the Indian War Memorial inaugurated in May 2026.

The memorial was constructed at the site associated with "Hind Nagar", an area established by the Custodian Force India during the post-war period.

According to the Ministry of Defence, Hind Nagar housed nearly 22,000 prisoners of war before their peaceful repatriation. The memorial commemorates both the humanitarian service of the 60 Para Field Ambulance and the peacekeeping role of the CFI.

The inauguration also reflected the continuing importance of this shared historical legacy in India–Republic of Korea relations. An MoU was signed to promote cooperation in honouring Korean War veterans and strengthening exchanges related to this historical experience.

Strategic and Diplomatic Significance for India

India's role in Korea demonstrated several important features of its early foreign policy.

1. Emergence as an Independent Diplomatic Voice

India did not simply align itself completely with either Cold War bloc.

Instead, it attempted to pursue an independent approach based on:

- Peaceful settlement of disputes.
- Dialogue and negotiation.
- Humanitarian considerations.
- Respect for international institutions.

This approach later became closely associated with India's broader policy of strategic autonomy and non-alignment.

2. Acceptance as a Neutral Mediator

The NNRC was important because both sides accepted a framework in which India played a central role.

This demonstrated that international influence does not depend only on military or economic strength. Diplomatic credibility and the ability to build trust can also create strategic influence.

3. India's Early Experience in International Peace Operations

The Korean experience provided India with significant experience in:

- Peacekeeping.
- Humanitarian operations.
- Prisoner management.
- Ceasefire implementation.
- International military coordination.

India subsequently became one of the major contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.

4. Combination of Hard and Soft Power

India's role combined military professionalism with humanitarian assistance and diplomacy.

The CFI provided disciplined military capability, while the 60 Para Field Ambulance demonstrated humanitarian commitment. At the same time, Indian diplomats and military leaders participated in creating a political solution.

This combination illustrates an important principle of international engagement: military capability can support peace and humanitarian objectives when employed with legitimacy and impartiality.

Significance for India–Republic of Korea Relations

The 2026 Indian War Memorial has brought renewed attention to a relatively less-known historical connection between India and the Republic of Korea.

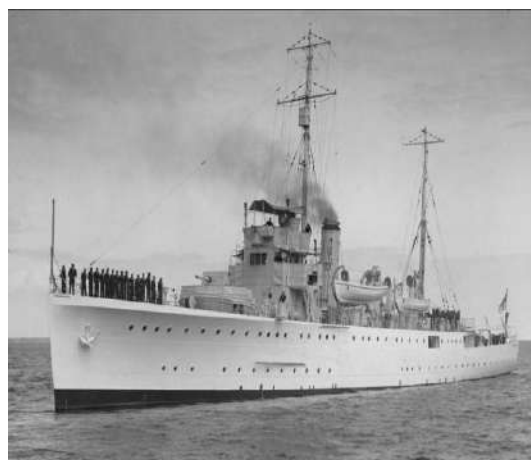
Today, India and the Republic of Korea are important strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific.

The historical memory of India's role in the Korean War contributes to:

- Stronger people-to-people relations.
- Defence cooperation.
- Recognition of shared sacrifices.
- Greater historical awareness among younger generations.
- A deeper foundation for the India–Republic of Korea Special Strategic Partnership.

The Indian Embassy in Seoul has described the 2026 memorial as showcasing India's contribution during the Korean War and reflecting the strengthening of defence and strategic engagement between the two countries.

The 1946 Naval Mutiny That Shook British Rule in India



Why in News?

The Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Uprising of 1946, also known as the Naval Mutiny, remains one of the most significant yet often overlooked episodes of India's freedom struggle. Beginning on 18 February 1946 in Bombay, the revolt rapidly spread across naval establishments and involved around 20,000 ratings, approximately 78 ships and 20 shore establishments.

The uprising came at a crucial moment when British rule in India was already under severe political and economic pressure after the Second World War. More importantly, it raised serious doubts about the ability of the British administration to rely on the loyalty of the Indian armed forces to maintain colonial rule. The episode is therefore regarded as an important development that contributed to the atmosphere leading to the transfer of power in 1947.

Background

The uprising began among the Indian sailors, known as ratings, stationed at HMIS Talwar, a shore establishment in Bombay. HMIS Talwar was a major signal training establishment and became the focal point of growing resentment among Indian naval personnel.

Causes of the Uprising

- **Poor Food and Living Conditions**

One of the immediate causes of dissatisfaction was the poor quality of food and inadequate living facilities provided to Indian ratings. Indian personnel often faced

conditions that were significantly inferior to those enjoyed by British officers and sailors.

These grievances reflected the wider racial hierarchy that existed within the colonial armed forces.

- **Racial Discrimination**

Indian sailors faced discriminatory behaviour from several British officers. Differences in treatment, pay, facilities and opportunities for advancement created widespread resentment.

The abuse and insulting behaviour of Commander Arthur Frederick King, the commanding officer of HMIS Talwar, became an important immediate trigger for the protest. His reported derogatory treatment of Indian personnel intensified the existing anger among the ratings.

- **Post-War Discontent**

The end of the Second World War created uncertainty among Indian servicemen regarding demobilisation, employment and their future status.

Many personnel who had served during the war were dissatisfied with the prospects available to them after the conflict. At the same time, exposure to global political developments and the growing demand for Indian independence had increased political awareness within the armed forces.

- **Impact of the INA Trials**

The trials of officers of the Indian National Army had generated massive nationalist mobilisation across India. Many Indian servicemen sympathised with the INA personnel, and the British government's treatment of the INA prisoners became a major source of anger. The demand for the release and fair treatment of INA detainees therefore became one of the political dimensions of the naval uprising.

Major Demands

The sailors initially raised service-related grievances but gradually expanded their demands. Their principal demands included:

- Action against Commander Arthur Frederick King for his abusive conduct.
- Better food, pay and living conditions for Indian naval personnel.

- An end to racial discrimination within the Royal Indian Navy.
- Withdrawal of Indian troops deployed in Indonesia, where they were being used in the post-war conflict involving Dutch colonial interests.
- Fair treatment and release of personnel associated with the Indian National Army (INA).
- Recognition of the wider political aspirations of Indians seeking freedom from British rule.

Spread of the Revolt

The uprising quickly moved beyond HMIS Talwar and spread to other naval establishments.

According to widely cited accounts, the revolt involved around 78 ships and 20 shore establishments, with nearly 20,000 naval personnel participating. The movement was particularly visible in Bombay and later extended to other centres, including Karachi.

The striking ratings formed the Naval Central Strike Committee (NCSC) to coordinate the movement.

- M.S. Khan served as the President of the Naval Central Strike Committee.
- Madan Singh served as its Vice-President.

The sailors also demonstrated political unity by displaying flags associated with different political groups, symbolising an attempt to unite diverse sections of Indians against colonial rule.

In Bombay, sections of the civilian population supported the ratings through demonstrations, strikes and protests. This civilian involvement transformed the naval revolt into a wider confrontation between colonial authorities and nationalist sentiment.

Butcher Island and Other Developments

During the uprising, the mutineers took control of important naval facilities and ships. Accounts of the revolt also record the seizure of Butcher Island, where British symbols and flags were removed.

Butcher Island is now known as Jawahar Dweep.

The revolt demonstrated the extent to which the crisis had moved beyond an isolated disciplinary problem. For the British authorities, the possibility of coordinated

resistance within the armed forces was a matter of serious concern.

Suppression of the Uprising

The British authorities responded with military and administrative measures to regain control.

Tensions in Bombay escalated sharply, and clashes occurred between protesters and colonial forces. Police firing on 22 February 1946 resulted in heavy civilian casualties. Estimates vary, but at least 400 people were reported killed, while some accounts place the number of casualties higher.

The British also used naval forces and threatened stronger military action against the striking ratings.

At the political level, major nationalist leaders appealed to the sailors to surrender, fearing that continued confrontation could result in large-scale bloodshed. The ratings ultimately agreed to end the revolt.

On 23 February 1946, the strikers surrendered.

Role of Other Armed Forces

The naval uprising did not occur entirely in isolation. During the final phase of British rule, there were also signs of unrest and indiscipline among sections of the other armed services.

Units of the Royal Indian Air Force had witnessed protests and strikes, while some Army personnel also displayed dissatisfaction and mutinous tendencies.

These developments were significant because the British Empire had traditionally depended heavily on the Indian armed forces to maintain colonial control. The growing possibility that Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen might refuse to act against their own people created a serious strategic concern for the British administration.

Significance of the RIN Uprising

- **Demonstrated the Declining Reliability of Colonial Armed Forces**

The most important significance of the uprising was that it exposed the weakening loyalty of Indian personnel towards British colonial authority.

The British could no longer assume with complete confidence that Indian armed forces would obey orders to suppress nationalist movements.

- **Added to the Pressure for Transfer of Power**

The uprising occurred at a time when Britain was facing severe economic difficulties after the Second World War and was already dealing with an increasingly powerful Indian nationalist movement.

The naval revolt added another dimension to the crisis by demonstrating that discontent had entered the armed forces themselves. Although it was not the sole cause of India's independence, it contributed to the broader circumstances that made the continuation of British rule increasingly difficult.

- **Reflected Civil-Military Nationalist Sentiment**

The support extended by civilians to the striking sailors showed the growing connection between political nationalism and dissatisfaction within the armed forces. The uprising was therefore not merely a service-related dispute. It reflected the larger political mood of a country moving rapidly towards independence.

- **A Symbol of Resistance**

The RIN uprising has been remembered by several writers and naval historians as one of the final major acts of resistance against British rule. It is sometimes described as the "last war of independence", although this expression is interpretative rather than an official historical designation.

Key Facts

- **Uprising began:** 18 February 1946
- **Uprising ended:** 23 February 1946
- **Starting point:** HMIS Talwar, Bombay
- **Personnel involved:** Around 20,000
- **Ships involved:** Approximately 78
- **Shore establishments involved:** Around 20
- **President, Naval Central Strike Committee:** M.S. Khan
- **Vice-President:** Madan Singh
- **Major centres of the revolt:** Bombay and Karachi
- **Surrender:** 23 February 1946
- **Butcher Island:** Now known as Jawahar Dweep
- **Memorial:** A memorial commemorating the uprising was unveiled at Colaba, Mumbai, in 2001

International Relations

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye sign the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement



Why in the News?

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement on 7 August 2026, establishing a trilateral framework for mutual defence and security cooperation.

The agreement was signed in Mecca amid heightened security tensions in West Asia and growing concerns over attacks involving missiles, drones and non-state armed groups. The pact provides that an armed attack against any one of the three countries will be considered an attack against all three, creating a collective-defence commitment.

The agreement is particularly significant because it brings together three countries with different but complementary strategic capabilities—Saudi Arabia's financial and energy power, Türkiye's large conventional military and defence-industrial capacity, and Pakistan's substantial military strength and nuclear-armed status.

What is the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement?

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement is a trilateral security and defence arrangement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye.

Key Features

- **Collective defence:** An armed attack on one member is to be regarded as an attack against all three.

- **Defensive character:** The participating countries have presented the arrangement as a mechanism for **deterrence and collective security**, rather than an offensive military alliance directed against a particular country.
- **Enhanced military cooperation:** The pact is expected to facilitate greater coordination in defence and security matters.
- **Institutional mechanism:** A ministerial committee and a permanent secretariat in Saudi Arabia are planned to coordinate the framework.
- **Future expansion:** Türkiye has indicated that the arrangement could potentially be expanded, with Egypt mentioned as a possible future participant.
- **Long-term development:** According to Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the agreement had been under development for nearly three years, indicating that it is not merely an emergency response to the latest regional crisis.

The Turkish Foreign Minister has compared the collective-defence principle to NATO's Article 5, although the practical military obligations and implementation mechanisms of the Mecca pact are still less clearly defined.

Background: Saudi-Pakistan Defence Cooperation

The new trilateral arrangement builds upon the Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement signed in September 2025.

That bilateral agreement established the principle that aggression against either country would be treated as aggression against both. The relationship has also involved longstanding military cooperation, including Pakistani personnel and military assistance to Saudi Arabia.

The importance of this relationship became more visible in April 2026, when Pakistan deployed military personnel and fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia under the existing

defence cooperation framework amid heightened regional security threats.

Thus, the Mecca agreement represents a broadening of an existing bilateral security relationship into a trilateral framework.

Strategic Significance

1. Emergence of a New Regional Security Framework

The agreement indicates a growing tendency among regional powers to develop regional security mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on external security guarantors.

West Asia has traditionally depended heavily on external military powers, particularly the United States. The new arrangement could contribute to a more multipolar security architecture in which regional states assume a greater role in their own defence.

2. Complementary Strategic Capabilities

The three countries bring different strengths to the arrangement:

Saudi Arabia

- Major energy producer and financial power.
- Significant geopolitical influence in the Gulf and wider Muslim world.
- Possesses considerable defence spending and modern military equipment.
- Its geographical position gives the pact importance for the security of the Gulf and Red Sea regions.

Türkiye

- A NATO member with one of the region's largest conventional militaries.
- Possesses a rapidly expanding indigenous defence industry.
- Has growing capabilities in drones, missiles, naval systems and electronic warfare.
- Provides the alliance with substantial military-industrial capabilities.

Pakistan

- A major South Asian military power.
- Possesses nuclear weapons, giving the grouping an additional strategic dimension.

- Has extensive experience in counter-terrorism and conventional military operations.
- Maintains longstanding military ties with Saudi Arabia.

However, the agreement itself does not publicly establish an automatic nuclear commitment or a Pakistani nuclear umbrella for Saudi Arabia. Such interpretations should therefore be treated cautiously.

3. Collective Deterrence

The central strategic objective is to increase the cost of aggression against any member.

An adversary considering an attack on Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or Türkiye must potentially account for the military capabilities of all three states.

This creates a form of collective deterrence, although the credibility of that deterrence will ultimately depend on how the agreement is operationalised.

4. Response to Regional Instability

The pact comes at a time of serious instability across West Asia, including missile and drone attacks, tensions involving Iran and continuing insecurity around Yemen and Red Sea shipping.

Saudi Arabia has faced heightened security concerns over possible attacks by Iranian-aligned groups. Reports immediately before the agreement indicated that Riyadh was preparing for potential attacks from Iranian-backed forces operating in Iraq and Yemen.

Therefore, the agreement can also be viewed as an attempt to strengthen regional deterrence and reduce strategic vulnerability.

Why Does it Matter for India?

1. Pakistan's Expanded Strategic Reach

The agreement potentially strengthens Pakistan's position beyond South Asia.

Pakistan already has important defence relations with Saudi Arabia, but the inclusion of Türkiye gives Islamabad access to a broader strategic framework involving a major Middle Eastern power and a NATO member.

For India, this means that Pakistan's external strategic partnerships in West Asia need to be monitored more closely.

2. Implications for India's West Asia Policy

India has developed strong relationships with several countries in the region, including:

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Iran
- Israel
- Qatar and other Gulf states

India therefore needs to maintain a balanced multi-alignment strategy rather than becoming dependent on any single regional bloc.

The Mecca pact makes this balancing act more important because Saudi Arabia remains an important Indian partner despite the presence of Pakistan in the new defence framework.

3. Energy Security

West Asia remains crucial to India's energy security.

Any major escalation involving Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen or the Gulf could affect:

- crude oil supplies,
- global oil prices,
- shipping and insurance costs,
- LNG supplies,
- and India's import bill.

The strategic importance of the agreement therefore extends beyond military affairs to India's economic and energy security.

4. Indian Diaspora

Millions of Indians live and work across the Gulf region.

A wider regional conflict could create challenges related to:

- safety of Indian nationals,
- evacuation,
- disruption of employment,
- remittances,
- and movement through airports and maritime routes.

India would therefore need strong diplomatic and contingency mechanisms to protect its citizens in the event of prolonged regional instability.

5. Maritime Security

The agreement also has implications for India's maritime interests.

Saudi Arabia occupies a strategically important position near the Red Sea, while Türkiye has influence over the eastern Mediterranean and access routes connecting Europe and West Asia. Pakistan occupies a strategic position along the Arabian Sea.

Greater military coordination among these countries could therefore have implications for the wider maritime environment surrounding India's western approaches.

Overall Significance

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement represents an important development in the evolving security architecture of West Asia and the wider Muslim world.

Its immediate importance lies not only in the military capabilities of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, but also in the message of collective deterrence and greater regional responsibility for security.

For India, the agreement reinforces the need for a carefully calibrated West Asia policy based on strategic autonomy, strong Gulf partnerships, energy diversification, maritime security and protection of the Indian diaspora.

Washington Warns Allies: Choose Between Pax Silica and Beijing's AI Bloc



Why in the News

The United States is preparing to warn countries participating in its artificial-intelligence and technology partnerships that they may have to choose between Washington and Beijing. According to a draft U.S. State Department letter reported on August 14, 2026, countries that join China's newly established World

Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) could be excluded from future cooperation under the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative. The draft argues that participation in both frameworks would be incompatible with the strategic trust expected from Pax Silica partners. The immediate trigger is Kazakhstan, which joined Pax Silica in June 2026 and subsequently became one of the founding members of WAICO. Kazakhstan's position illustrates the dilemma faced by middle powers: resource-rich and strategically located countries may prefer to cooperate with both Washington and Beijing rather than commit themselves exclusively to either bloc.

What is the Pax Silica Initiative?

1. About

Pax Silica is a U.S.-led strategic initiative launched in December 2025 to build secure and resilient supply chains for technologies central to the AI era. Its scope extends from critical minerals and energy inputs to advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, AI infrastructure and logistics.

The initiative reflects the recognition that advanced AI depends on a long industrial chain. A sophisticated AI model ultimately requires semiconductor fabrication, advanced lithography, memory chips, high-performance computing, electricity, data centres and a reliable supply of specialised minerals.

2. Purpose

The principal objective is to reduce dependence on vulnerable or potentially coercive supply chains and strengthen cooperation among trusted partners.

This has a clear strategic dimension because China occupies important positions in several stages of global technology supply chains, particularly mineral processing and rare-earth production. The U.S. therefore seeks to create alternative networks involving countries with complementary strengths in mining, semiconductor manufacturing, advanced equipment, finance, energy and AI.

3. Membership

Following the June 2026 Pax Silica Summit, the initiative had 24 signatories. Ten additional partners joined during

the 2026 summit, including Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the European Union, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Panama. Existing partners included Australia, Finland, India, Israel, Japan, Norway, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, Sweden, the Philippines, the UAE, the UK and the US.

This expansion is important because Pax Silica is no longer simply an alliance of traditional U.S. technology allies. It increasingly incorporates countries that possess critical minerals, strategic infrastructure, manufacturing capabilities and emerging AI markets.

4. Legal character

Pax Silica is a strategic cooperation framework rather than a conventional military alliance or treaty organisation. Its significance therefore comes from political commitments, investment coordination, supply-chain partnerships and access to trusted technology networks rather than from formal treaty obligations.

5. The new condition

The draft U.S. warning introduces a potentially important new dimension: dual membership could become politically costly.

The reported U.S. position is that countries joining China's rival AI framework could be excluded from Pax Silica cooperation. This transforms Pax Silica from a mechanism primarily concerned with supply-chain resilience into a possible instrument of strategic alignment.

What is the AI Opportunity Statement?

The **Joint Statement on AI Opportunity** was signed in 2026 by a broad group of countries seeking closer cooperation around a pro-growth and pro-innovation approach to artificial intelligence.

The U.S. State Department says that **35 countries** had signed the statement. The signatories included the United States, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Singapore, the UAE and Kazakhstan, among others.

The statement is significant because it broadens the U.S. network beyond the formal Pax Silica membership. Therefore, the draft warning is aimed at a wider group of countries than the 24 current Pax Silica signatories.

What is the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization?

1. About

The World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) was formally established through an agreement signed in Shanghai on 16 July 2026. Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the organisation during the 2026 World AI Conference and called for a more inclusive system of global AI governance.

Unlike the earlier informal cooperation initiatives surrounding AI, WAICO is designed as an independent intergovernmental international organisation headquartered in Shanghai.

2. Founding membership

Representatives of 29 countries signed the agreement establishing WAICO, making them founding members. They include Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Indonesia and Laos, among others. UN Secretary-General António Guterres was also present at the signing ceremony.

3. China's proposition

China presents WAICO around principles such as extensive consultation, joint contribution, shared benefits and people-centred AI development. The organisation officially aims to promote international cooperation and global AI governance and to encourage AI development that is beneficial, safe and equitable.

Thus, China's approach attempts to compete not only through technology but also through institution-building and international governance.

What are Open-Weight AI Models?

Open-weight AI models are models whose trained parameters are made available for download, allowing users and organisations to run, study, modify or adapt them on their own infrastructure, subject to the relevant licence.

Their strategic importance lies in the fact that access to the model does not necessarily require a continuing relationship with the original developer.

This can create a different form of technological influence:

- A country can download a model and deploy it locally.

- Organisations can adapt the model for domestic requirements.
- Researchers can study and improve the model.
- Governments can develop AI capacity without depending entirely on foreign cloud platforms.
- The model can spread across borders without requiring a formal diplomatic agreement.

China's growing emphasis on open or openly downloadable models therefore provides Beijing with an alternative route to technological influence. It is not dependent solely on exporting physical chips or constructing foreign data centres.

The rise of Chinese open-weight models also means that technology diffusion is becoming harder to control through traditional alliance mechanisms.

What does the Draft U.S. Letter Actually Demand?

1. A binary choice

The draft warning reportedly asks countries to make a strategic choice between the U.S.-led and China-led AI ecosystems.

The underlying argument is that Pax Silica membership represents more than ordinary economic cooperation. Washington increasingly views participation as an indication of strategic trust.

2. The penalty

Countries that join China's competing framework could potentially lose access to Pax Silica cooperation.

This would be a significant escalation because Pax Silica was initially designed primarily as a supply-chain initiative. Using membership as a reward-and-penalty mechanism could turn it into a broader geopolitical coalition.

3. The strategic objective

The broader U.S. objective is to limit China's ability to acquire the resources, technologies and international partnerships necessary to develop cutting-edge AI.

This includes controlling access to:

- Advanced semiconductor chips
- Semiconductor manufacturing equipment
- Critical minerals
- High-performance computing
- AI infrastructure

- Advanced manufacturing technologies
- International research and investment networks

4. Why AI is treated as a security issue

Advanced AI is increasingly viewed as a dual-use technology.

It can improve:

- Military planning
- Intelligence analysis
- Cyber capabilities
- Autonomous systems
- Industrial productivity
- Scientific research
- Financial and commercial decision-making

Consequently, Washington increasingly sees leadership in AI as connected with long-term economic competitiveness and national security.

5. Evidentiary status

It is important to distinguish between official policy and reported draft policy.

The reported warning is based on a draft U.S. State Department letter and a U.S. official cited in reporting. It should therefore not automatically be treated as a final, formally announced U.S. policy.

Why Do Critical Minerals Sit at the Centre of the AI Race?

AI may appear to be a software revolution, but its physical foundation is highly mineral-intensive.

1. Minerals precede chips

Advanced computing infrastructure depends on a broad range of materials, including:

- Silicon
- Gallium
- Germanium
- Graphite
- Rare-earth elements
- Copper
- Aluminium
- Various specialised metals

These materials are required at different stages of semiconductor manufacturing, power infrastructure, electronics, cooling systems, data centres and high-performance computing.

2. Refining is the major chokepoint

Possessing mineral deposits does not automatically provide strategic independence.

The critical issue is often processing, separation, refining and manufacturing.

The International Energy Agency's 2026 assessment highlights this structural problem: investment outside dominant suppliers remains disproportionately concentrated in mining, while refining and downstream capacity continue to lag. In rare-earth supply chains, planned refining capacity outside the dominant supplier is insufficient to fully process expected future mine output.

3. China retains major leverage

China remains central to the processing and refining of several critical minerals.

Beijing has increasingly used export controls as an economic-security instrument. In April 2025, China imposed restrictions on exports of several rare-earth elements, affecting global industries dependent on these materials. European auto suppliers subsequently reported disruptions linked to shortages.

The vulnerability is therefore not simply about where minerals are mined. It is about who controls the stages between the mine and the final technology product.

4. Why Kazakhstan matters

Kazakhstan is strategically important because of its mineral resources and geographical position.

Its decision to join Pax Silica while also becoming a founding member of WAICO illustrates the behaviour of a resource-rich middle power seeking to maximise economic and technological opportunities without becoming exclusively dependent on one geopolitical bloc.

5. The self-limiting problem

If Washington excludes a resource-rich country from its technology ecosystem, that does not automatically create new mining, refining or processing capacity elsewhere.

Building an alternative mineral supply chain requires:

- Geological exploration
- Mining projects

- Processing plants
- Refining capacity
- Skilled manpower
- Transport infrastructure
- Long-term investment
- Stable prices and offtake agreements

This is why supply-chain diversification is much slower than imposing export controls.

What Do the Individual Countries' Positions Show?

1. Kazakhstan — The Hedger

Kazakhstan represents the clearest example of strategic hedging.

It joined Pax Silica in June 2026 and subsequently became one of WAICO's founding members. Kazakhstan's government describes Pax Silica as an opportunity to attract investment, develop high-tech manufacturing and strengthen its role in global supply chains.

Its approach demonstrates that middle powers may prefer multi-alignment rather than bloc alignment.

2. Japan — The Technology and Equipment Supplier

Japan contributes advanced manufacturing capabilities, semiconductor materials and specialised industrial technologies.

Its importance demonstrates why the AI supply chain cannot be reduced to mining alone. The production of advanced chips depends on a complex ecosystem of equipment, chemicals, materials and precision manufacturing.

3. South Korea — The Memory Chip Powerhouse

South Korea is one of the world's most important semiconductor manufacturing centres, particularly in memory chips.

Its companies also have extensive commercial exposure to China. Therefore, a rigid technology divide could impose substantial costs on Korean firms even if Seoul remains strategically aligned with Washington.

4. Australia — The Mining Leg

Australia possesses significant mineral resources and is an important potential alternative supplier for several critical materials.

However, the Australian case also demonstrates the difference between having deposits and having complete domestic value chains. Developing refining and downstream manufacturing capacity remains essential for converting resource wealth into supply-chain influence.

5. China — The Alternative Architecture

China is responding to U.S. technology restrictions by developing its own institutional, technological and industrial ecosystem.

WAICO provides a diplomatic platform, while China's domestic semiconductor and AI industries provide technological capacity. The combination gives Beijing multiple instruments through which to expand its influence.

China's AI sector itself has expanded rapidly: according to Chinese government data, its core AI industries were worth more than 1.2 trillion yuan in 2025, with more than 6,200 AI enterprises nationwide.

6. United States — The Coalition Builder

The United States is combining several instruments:

- Semiconductor export controls
- Investment screening
- Technology restrictions
- Critical-mineral partnerships
- Pax Silica
- AI diplomatic initiatives
- Strategic cooperation with allies

The emerging approach therefore seeks to control both technology flows and the physical inputs required for AI.

Where Does India Stand?

India occupies an important position because it seeks cooperation with multiple major powers while retaining **strategic autonomy**.

1. Minerals Security Partnership

India joined the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) in June 2023 as its 14th partner. The MSP was created to encourage diversified and sustainable critical-mineral supply chains and reduce excessive dependence on concentrated sources.

2. National Critical Mineral Mission

The Union Cabinet approved the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in January 2025.

The mission has government expenditure of ₹16,300 crore, with an expected additional investment of around ₹18,000 crore by public-sector enterprises and others, taking the broader expected financial mobilisation to about ₹34,300 crore over seven years. It covers exploration, mining, beneficiation, processing and recovery from end-of-life products.

3. IndiaAI Mission

India approved the IndiaAI Mission in March 2024 with an outlay of approximately ₹10,372 crore over five years. The mission covers seven broad pillars, including compute capacity, AIKosh, foundation models, future skills, startup financing, application development and safe and trusted AI.

By March 2026, more than 38,000 GPUs had been onboarded for the common compute facility, making affordable computing available to Indian start-ups and academia.

4. AI diplomacy

India has consistently promoted a more inclusive approach to global AI governance.

It has participated actively in multilateral AI platforms and has sought to position itself as a bridge between developed and developing economies.

India's approach is therefore different from a strict binary choice between Washington and Beijing.

5. The strategic-autonomy challenge

India's position could become increasingly complicated if Pax Silica evolves into an explicitly exclusive geopolitical bloc.

India has strong strategic and economic relationships with the United States and other Pax Silica partners, while simultaneously remaining active in institutions such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

For New Delhi, the preferred approach is likely to remain multi-alignment, diversification and issue-based cooperation rather than formal bloc politics.

Challenges to Pax Silica

1. No strong enforcement mechanism

A voluntary strategic framework cannot easily prevent countries from maintaining relationships with competing organisations.

Kazakhstan's participation in both Pax Silica and WAICO illustrates this challenge.

2. Rival technology can substitute for coalition membership

Excluding a country from a U.S.-led framework does not necessarily prevent it from obtaining Chinese technology, particularly when open-weight AI models and alternative technology ecosystems are available.

3. Export controls can impose costs on allies

Technology restrictions can reduce market opportunities for companies in allied economies.

This creates a difficult balance: Washington must prevent strategic technology leakage without unnecessarily damaging the very industrial ecosystem it is trying to strengthen.

4. Midstream capacity cannot be built quickly

Mining projects can take years to develop, while refining and downstream manufacturing require additional investment and technological expertise.

The IEA's 2026 assessment shows that global diversification is progressing but remains structurally incomplete, particularly in refining and magnet production.

5. Price volatility discourages investment

Critical-mineral projects have long development periods, while commodity prices can change rapidly.

The IEA reported that mineral markets experienced sharp price movements in recent years, although the situation has changed again in 2025-26. Its 2026 assessment notes that lithium prices recovered strongly while strategic minor minerals experienced substantial price increases amid export controls and stronger demand.

Therefore, policymakers cannot rely exclusively on market prices to create new strategic supply.

6. Open-weight diffusion weakens traditional technology controls

The spread of open-weight AI models creates a different technological environment from earlier generations of proprietary software.

Once model weights are legally and technically accessible, controlling their international diffusion becomes considerably harder.

7. Global South countries resist bloc politics

Many developing and middle-income countries want access to Western capital and technology while also maintaining commercial relationships with China.

For them, the most attractive strategy is often diversification rather than alignment.

White House transshipment report places India in Tier 1 of illegal transshipment risk



Why in the News

A recent White House report titled *The Great Transshipment Scam: Rise, Scope, and Costs*, released in August 2026, has put the issue of illegal transshipment and tariff circumvention back at the centre of US trade policy. The report alleges that Chinese-origin goods are being routed through third countries, including India, to avoid higher US tariffs imposed on Chinese products.

India has been placed in Tier 1, a category associated with elevated transshipment risk. The report specifically points to manufacturing and export activity in the Pune–Gujarat–Chennai industrial belt and cites products such as pumps and compressors as examples.

What is Transshipment?

Transshipment is the movement of goods through an intermediate country before reaching the final

destination. Transshipment itself is not illegal and is a normal part of international logistics.

It becomes illegal when the intermediary country is used to conceal the actual country of origin, falsely declare goods as originating there, or otherwise circumvent applicable tariffs and trade restrictions.

For example:

China → India → United States

If a Chinese-made product is merely repackaged or minimally assembled in India and then falsely declared as an Indian-origin product to avoid a US tariff on Chinese goods, it may constitute illegal transshipment.

By contrast, if substantial manufacturing takes place in India and the product legitimately satisfies the applicable rules of origin, the resulting Indian-origin claim may be lawful.

Key Definitions

- **Illegal Transshipment**

Routing goods through a third country and falsely representing their origin to avoid tariffs, trade restrictions or other customs requirements.

- **Tariff Arbitrage**

The practice of exploiting differences in tariff rates between countries or trade routes to reduce the overall duty payable on a product.

- **Rules of Origin**

Rules used by customs authorities to determine the country of origin of a product. They are particularly important when different tariff rates or trade restrictions apply to different countries.

- **Substantial Transformation**

A process through which imported materials or components undergo sufficient manufacturing or processing in another country to acquire a new identity, character or use.

The crucial issue is therefore not simply where the final shipment was dispatched, but where the legally relevant transformation occurred.

- **“Screwdriver Factory”**

A colloquial term for a facility that performs only limited assembly of imported components, without significant domestic manufacturing or value addition.

Such facilities can attract scrutiny when authorities suspect that assembly is being used primarily to change the apparent country of origin.

- **Section 301**

Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 provides the United States with authority to take action against certain foreign trade practices considered unfair or discriminatory. The provision became particularly important after the US imposed substantial tariffs on Chinese products beginning in 2018.

- **Trade Diversion**

Trade diversion occurs when tariffs, sanctions or other trade barriers cause companies to shift sourcing, manufacturing or shipping routes from one country to another.

Importantly, trade diversion is not automatically illegal. It becomes problematic when companies deliberately misrepresent origin or circumvent applicable customs rules.

What Does the US Report Allege?

The report argues that tariff differences have created strong economic incentives for Chinese goods to enter the US market through third countries.

According to reporting on the White House document:

- India has been placed in Tier 1 for elevated transshipment risk.
- Pune, Gujarat and Chennai are highlighted in relation to manufacturing activity.
- Pumps and compressors are cited as examples of products associated with the concern.
- India, Mexico and Vietnam are linked to an estimated \$67 billion of transshipped goods in 2025.
- The broader US estimate of transshipment-related trade is substantially larger, with estimates cited in reporting ranging from roughly \$40 billion to \$303 billion, depending on methodology.

The report argues that such practices undermine the intended effect of US tariffs by allowing Chinese supply chains to retain access to the American market through alternative routes.

Why Did Transshipment Become More Important?

The issue gained prominence after the United States imposed extensive Section 301 tariffs on Chinese imports in 2018.

Higher tariffs increased the incentive for companies to restructure supply chains. Some firms shifted genuine manufacturing to countries such as Vietnam, Mexico and India. This represents legitimate China Plus One diversification.

However, the same environment can also create incentives for fraudulent practices in which goods undergo only minimal processing in a third country before being exported to the United States.

Thus, an important distinction must be made between:

Legitimate supply-chain diversification

Chinese components → substantial manufacturing in India → Indian-origin product
and

Illegal tariff circumvention

Chinese finished/semi-finished product → minimal processing in India → falsely declared as Indian-origin product.

This distinction is central to the current debate.

India's Position: Allegation Does Not Equal Proof

An important point for analysis is that the US report's categorisation should not automatically be treated as proof that Indian industry is systematically involved in illegal transshipment.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has questioned the evidentiary basis of the US estimate, arguing that the report does not provide sufficient shipment-level information to establish India's exact contribution to the alleged transshipment volume. It has also stressed that using Chinese components does not by itself make a product Chinese-origin.

This distinction is particularly important for modern global manufacturing.

For example, an Indian manufacturer may legally import:

- Chinese motors,
- electronic components,
- steel,
- bearings or

- specialised machinery,

and incorporate them into a substantially manufactured Indian product.

Therefore, Chinese input dependence and illegal transshipment are not synonymous.

The determining question is whether the manufacturing carried out in India meets the applicable US rules of origin and whether the exporter has accurately declared the product's origin.

India's Existing Customs Framework

India itself operates a substantial customs-control framework governing the movement and declaration of imported and exported goods.

The regulatory environment is also being strengthened. India brought the Sea Cargo Manifest and Transshipment Regulations (SCMTR) into wider implementation in 2026, with amendments notified in July 2026. These measures strengthen advance cargo-information requirements and oversight of sea-cargo movements.

Therefore, the issue is not simply about India's willingness to control transshipment. It also concerns the ability of Indian and US authorities to exchange information and verify supply chains across borders.

Challenges for Indian Industry

- **Dependence on Chinese Intermediate Goods**

Several Indian industries continue to rely on China for components, machinery and intermediate inputs. This can make it difficult for exporters to demonstrate the exact origin and value addition of every component.

- **Complex Global Value Chains**

Modern manufacturing rarely occurs entirely within one country. A product may contain components from China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Europe before final manufacturing in India.

Therefore, applying simplistic "one country, one product" concepts to modern supply chains can create compliance difficulties.

- **Small and Medium Enterprises**

Large multinational manufacturers generally possess sophisticated compliance and traceability systems. Smaller exporters may struggle to maintain equivalent documentation.

- **Risk of Over-Compliance**

Fear of US enforcement could cause companies to unnecessarily reduce legitimate sourcing from China even when such sourcing is legally permissible, increasing production costs and potentially reducing India's competitiveness.

Way Forward for India

1. Strengthen Origin Traceability

Indian exporters should maintain comprehensive records showing:

- source of imported components;
- manufacturing processes;
- domestic value addition;
- labour and processing costs;
- production capacity; and
- final product specifications.

2. Increase Domestic Value Addition

The long-term solution is to move beyond simple assembly towards design, component manufacturing, processing and technology-intensive production within India.

This would strengthen both the economic substance and credibility of Indian-origin claims.

3. Strengthen Customs Cooperation with the US

India can work with US authorities on information sharing, verification procedures and mechanisms for resolving origin-related disputes quickly.

4. Develop Sector-Specific Origin Guidelines

Industries with complex supply chains could benefit from clearer guidance on what constitutes sufficient transformation for different categories of products.

5. Support MSMEs

Small exporters may require technical assistance, digital documentation systems and affordable certification mechanisms to meet increasingly demanding international customs requirements.

6. Avoid Blanket Restrictions on Chinese Inputs

India should distinguish between legitimate use of imported inputs and fraudulent origin declarations. Cutting off all Chinese inputs would not necessarily be economically efficient and could undermine India's competitiveness in global value chains.

Palestine backs India's bid for non-permanent Security Council seat



Why in the News?

Palestine has expressed support for India's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028–29 term. The development comes amid renewed diplomatic engagement between India and Palestine, including discussions on an India-funded hospital in the West Bank and additional humanitarian and medical assistance for Palestinians affected by the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

About the Non-Permanent Membership of the UNSC

The United Nations Security Council is one of the principal organs of the United Nations and has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Composition

The UNSC consists of 15 members:

- **5 Permanent Members (P5):** China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The five permanent members possess the veto power, enabling any one of them to block a substantive resolution.
- **10 Non-Permanent Members:** These are elected by the UN General Assembly for fixed terms.

Geographical Distribution

The ten non-permanent seats are distributed according to the principle of equitable geographical

representation. The allocation is broadly divided among regional groups:

- African Group
- Asia-Pacific Group
- Latin American and Caribbean Group
- Western European and Others Group
- Eastern European Group

India is contesting its 2028–29 candidature from the Asia-Pacific Group.

India has previously served multiple terms as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Its most recent tenure was for 2021–22, during which India emphasised issues such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, reformed multilateralism and the need to make the UN system more representative of contemporary geopolitical realities.

Significance of Palestine's Support for India

1. Support for India's UNSC Candidature

Palestine's backing adds to India's diplomatic outreach ahead of the election for the 2028–29 term. Elections for non-permanent UNSC seats depend heavily on diplomatic engagement and the ability of a candidate country to build broad support among UN member states.

Palestine has also reiterated its support for India's larger demand for a permanent seat in a reformed and expanded UNSC.

2. Recognition of India's Growing Global Role

Palestine views India as an increasingly important political and economic power with a growing role in international affairs. India's position as one of the world's largest economies, its expanding diplomatic influence and its engagement with countries across different geopolitical blocs strengthen its ability to act as an important voice in multilateral forums.

For Palestine, closer engagement with India could help ensure that Palestinian concerns continue to receive attention in international diplomatic discussions.

3. India as a Potential Bridge

One of the important dimensions of India-Palestine engagement is India's close relationship with both Palestine and Israel.

Palestine expects India to use its communication channels and relations with Israel to support efforts aimed at reducing tensions and facilitating a political solution to the conflict.

However, India's role is constrained by the fact that the Israel-Palestine conflict involves multiple regional and international actors, deep political differences and competing security concerns. Therefore, while India may contribute diplomatically, it cannot independently determine the course of the peace process.

4. Strengthening India's Diplomatic Image

Palestine's endorsement reinforces India's image as a country capable of maintaining engagement with different and sometimes opposing actors.

This is particularly important in West Asia, where India has developed:

- Strong strategic and technological cooperation with Israel.
- Historic political and developmental ties with Palestine.
- Deep economic, energy and diaspora links with Arab countries.

The ability to maintain these parallel relationships is an important feature of India's contemporary foreign policy.

India's Development and Humanitarian Assistance to Palestine

India has continued to provide developmental and humanitarian support to the Palestinian people.

- **Proposed Hospital in the West Bank**

India is working towards finalising support for an India-funded hospital in the West Bank. Such an initiative would strengthen India's long-term development partnership with Palestine and contribute to improving access to healthcare infrastructure.

The proposal also demonstrates that India's engagement with Palestine extends beyond diplomatic statements and includes practical development assistance.

- **Vocational Training**

India has also supported capacity-building and skill-development initiatives, including discussions related to a **vocational training centre**.

Vocational education can contribute to employment generation and help strengthen the economic capacity of Palestinian youth and other sections of society.

- **Medical Assistance for Gaza**

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has created a major requirement for medical supplies, rehabilitation equipment and healthcare infrastructure.

India and Palestine have discussed assistance such as:

- Artificial limbs and rehabilitation support for amputees.
- Dialysis machines and other essential medical equipment.
- Possible mechanisms for delivering assistance through neighbouring countries such as Jordan, depending on logistical and humanitarian access.

Such assistance reflects India's effort to combine its diplomatic position with direct humanitarian support.

India's Position on the Palestinian Question

India has historically supported the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and has consistently advocated a peaceful political settlement.

India supports:

- A negotiated two-state solution.
- The establishment of a sovereign, viable and independent State of Palestine.
- Peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine.
- Resolution of outstanding issues through direct negotiations and dialogue.

At the same time, India has repeatedly emphasised the importance of avoiding further escalation, protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas.

India's approach seeks to balance its long-standing support for Palestinian statehood with its recognition of Israel's security concerns and its growing strategic partnership with Israel.

India's De-Hyphenated Israel-Palestine Policy

A key feature of India's contemporary West Asia policy is the de-hyphenation of its relations with Israel and Palestine.

This means that India no longer treats its relationship with one side as being automatically dependent on its relationship with the other. Instead, India pursues its interests and engagements with Israel and Palestine independently.

Relations with Israel

India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. Since then, bilateral cooperation has expanded significantly in areas such as:

- Defence and security.
- Agriculture and water management.
- Science and technology.
- Innovation and start-up cooperation.
- Cyber and high-technology sectors.

Israel has emerged as an important strategic and technological partner for India.

Continued Support for Palestine

Despite expanding ties with Israel, India has continued its diplomatic and developmental engagement with Palestine.

India has supported Palestinian participation and statehood aspirations in international forums and has continued to provide assistance in areas such as education, health, capacity building and infrastructure. This demonstrates that India's growing relationship with Israel has not resulted in the abandonment of its traditional support for the Palestinian cause.

Polity

Supreme Court extends mandatory third-party motor insurance and floats a no-insurance, no fuel pilot



Why in the News?

The Supreme Court has strengthened enforcement of mandatory Third-Party Motor Insurance by directing that new cars must have four years of third-party insurance, while new two-wheelers must have six years of cover. The Court has also proposed a pilot project based on the principle of "No Insurance, No Fuel" to improve compliance and reduce the large number of uninsured vehicles on Indian roads.

What is Third-Party Motor Insurance?

Third-Party Motor Insurance is the minimum mandatory insurance required under Section 146 of the Motor

Vehicles Act, 1988 for every motor vehicle operating on public roads in India.

It provides financial protection against:

- Death or bodily injury caused to a third party.
- Damage to third-party property.
- Legal liability arising from road accidents involving the insured vehicle.

However, it does not cover:

- Damage to the insured vehicle.
- Injuries suffered by the vehicle owner/driver (unless separately covered through personal accident cover).

The objective is to ensure that road accident victims receive timely compensation irrespective of the financial condition of the vehicle owner.

Supreme Court Directions

To improve insurance compliance and protect accident victims, the Supreme Court has issued the following directions:

- **Mandatory long-term Third-Party Insurance**
 - 4 years for all newly purchased private cars.
 - 6 years for all newly purchased two-wheelers.
- **Digital Enforcement**

- Integrate Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras with:
 - Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)
 - VAHAN National Register
- Enable police personnel to verify insurance status instantly through mobile applications linked to these databases.
- **"No Insurance, No Fuel" Pilot**
 - Examine the feasibility of denying fuel to vehicles without valid third-party insurance through a pilot project in selected areas.

These measures aim to improve insurance coverage using technology-based enforcement rather than relying solely on physical checks.

Why is Stronger Enforcement Needed?

The Supreme Court noted several concerns regarding compliance:

- Nearly 56% of registered vehicles are reportedly operating without valid third-party insurance.
- Accident victims often face lengthy legal proceedings before receiving compensation.
- Many vehicle owners fail to renew insurance after the expiry of the initial mandatory policy.
- Uninsured vehicles increase the burden on compensation mechanisms such as the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT).

Improving compliance would ensure faster compensation to victims and reduce litigation.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite mandatory provisions, several obstacles remain:

- Lack of seamless integration between VAHAN, IIB, and state police databases.
- Low insurance renewal rates, especially among two-wheelers in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Concerns that a "No Insurance, No Fuel" policy could restrict access to an essential service.
- Weak enforcement due to limited manpower and inadequate technological infrastructure.

- Limited public awareness regarding the legal requirement and benefits of third-party insurance.

Third-Party Insurance vs Comprehensive Insurance

Feature	Third-Party Insurance	Comprehensive Insurance
Nature	Mandatory	Optional
Covers third-party injury/death	✓	✓
Covers third-party property damage	✓	✓
Covers own vehicle damage	✗	✓
Covers theft, fire, natural disasters	✗	✓
Premium	Lower	Higher

Key Digital Platforms

VAHAN

- National vehicle registration database.
- Managed by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).
- Maintains records relating to vehicle registration, ownership and permits.
- Proposed to be integrated with insurance databases for real-time verification.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

- AI-enabled camera technology that automatically reads vehicle registration numbers.
- Used for:
 - Traffic enforcement
 - Toll collection
 - Detection of uninsured or stolen vehicles
 - Monitoring traffic violations

Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)

- A central repository of motor insurance data.
- Maintains insurance-related databases shared by insurers.

- Facilitates fraud detection, analytics and policy verification.
- Supports digital enforcement by providing real-time insurance status.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

- **Established:** 1999 under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.
- **Headquarters:** Hyderabad.
- **Statutory Status:** Autonomous regulatory body for India's insurance sector.

Functions

- Regulates insurance companies and insurance intermediaries.
- Protects the interests of policyholders.
- Prescribes prudential norms, solvency requirements and disclosure standards.
- Approves insurance products and monitors market conduct.
- Promotes orderly growth and development of the insurance sector.
- Encourages financial inclusion through wider insurance penetration.

RBI keeps Tata Sons in the NBFC Upper Layer list



Why in the News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has retained Tata Sons Private Limited, the principal holding company of the Tata Group, in the NBFC Upper Layer (NBFC-UL) for 2026–27. The decision keeps the issue of a possible stock-market listing of Tata Sons alive.

The RBI's latest position is significant because Tata Sons had earlier sought de-registration of its NBFC status after repaying its outstanding borrowings. The RBI has, however, stated that the continued inclusion of Tata Sons in the Upper Layer is without prejudice to its pending application for surrender of its NBFC registration.

Thus, the immediate issue is not that Tata Sons has definitely been ordered to launch an IPO, but that its continued NBFC-UL classification keeps the regulatory listing requirement relevant while its de-registration request remains unresolved.

What is an NBFC?

A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company engaged in financial activities such as lending, investment, financing and other specified financial services, but which is not a conventional banking company.

NBFCs play an important role in India's financial system by providing credit to individuals, businesses and specialised sectors. Since NBFCs can become highly interconnected with banks, financial markets and corporate groups, the RBI regulates them according to their size, activities and systemic importance.

What is the Scale Based Regulation (SBR) Framework?

The RBI introduced the Scale Based Regulation (SBR) framework for NBFCs to ensure that regulatory requirements increase with the size and risk profile of an institution.

The framework broadly divides NBFCs into four layers:

1. Base Layer – NBFC-BL

This is the lowest regulatory layer and generally covers smaller NBFCs and certain specialised entities.

2. Middle Layer – NBFC-ML

It includes larger NBFCs, deposit-taking NBFCs and certain specialised categories such as Core Investment Companies (CICs), Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) and Infrastructure Finance Companies.

3. Upper Layer – NBFC-UL

This consists of NBFCs considered sufficiently large or systemically important to warrant enhanced regulatory requirements and closer supervision.

4. Top Layer – NBFC-TL

The Top Layer is intended to remain empty under normal circumstances. It may be populated if the RBI believes that a particular NBFC poses a substantial increase in systemic risk.

The regulatory intensity therefore rises progressively from the Base Layer towards the Top Layer.

What has changed in the Upper Layer criteria?

A major development in June 2026 was the RBI's revision of the methodology for identifying NBFCs in the Upper Layer.

Earlier, the RBI used a parameter-based scoring methodology, taking into account factors such as size, interconnectedness and complexity.

Under the revised framework, the RBI has moved to a much simpler asset-size based criterion. NBFCs with an asset size of ₹1 lakh crore or more are eligible for identification in the Upper Layer. The threshold will now be reviewed every three years.

This change is particularly important for Tata Sons because its large asset base means that the company continues to fall within the ambit of the revised Upper Layer framework.

What is a Core Investment Company (CIC)?

A Core Investment Company (CIC) is a specialised type of NBFC whose principal business is holding investments in shares, equity or other securities of companies belonging to the same group.

Unlike a conventional NBFC that primarily lends to customers, a CIC is essentially a group investment-holding entity.

Tata Sons as a CIC

Tata Sons is registered as a Core Investment Company and acts as the principal holding company of the Tata Group.

Its significance arises from its substantial holdings in major Tata companies and businesses. Therefore, although Tata Sons is not primarily a conventional retail lender, its size and interconnectedness with the broader corporate group make its regulatory treatment important from a financial-stability perspective.

Why has the Tata Sons Listing Issue Resurfaced?

1. Tata Sons was already classified as NBFC-UL

Tata Sons was first included in the RBI's Upper Layer list in September 2022. Under the SBR framework, an NBFC-UL is generally required to be listed on a recognised stock exchange within three years of identification.

The original three-year period therefore became an important issue for Tata Sons.

2. Tata Sons repaid its debt

Tata Sons repaid more than ₹20,000 crore of debt, with its borrowings cleared by March 2024. The move was part of its strategy to reduce its financial liabilities and support its attempt to exit the NBFC regulatory framework.

3. Application for de-registration

Tata Sons subsequently applied to the RBI for cancellation/surrender of its NBFC registration.

The application is still under consideration. The RBI's latest classification specifically states that retaining Tata Sons in the Upper Layer does not prejudice the outcome of this application.

4. Revised RBI framework

The RBI's revised framework, effective from 24 June 2026, replaced the earlier scoring-based methodology with an asset-size threshold of ₹1 lakh crore.

Consequently, the regulatory argument surrounding Tata Sons' Upper Layer status has not disappeared with the change in methodology.

5. Indirect public funds

Another important issue is the concept of indirect receipt of public funds. In July 2026, the RBI restored the definition covering funds received through associates and group entities that have access to public funds. This is relevant to Tata Sons because several listed Tata companies have access to public capital markets.

What Additional Regulations Apply to NBFC-UL Entities?

NBFCs in the Upper Layer are subject to significantly stronger prudential and governance requirements.

1. Higher capital requirements

NBFC-UL entities are subject to enhanced capital requirements. In particular, applicable NBFC-ULs are required to maintain Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1)

capital of at least 9% of risk-weighted assets, within the overall capital framework.

2. Large Exposure Framework

The RBI has prescribed a Large Exposure Framework (LEF) to limit excessive concentration of exposure to a single counterparty or a group of connected counterparties.

This reduces the possibility that financial stress at one major borrower or group could significantly affect the NBFC.

3. Internal capital assessment

NBFC-ULs are required to undertake internal capital assessments broadly along the lines of the Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP) followed under the Basel framework for banks.

4. Stronger governance

Upper-Layer NBFCs are subject to enhanced standards relating to:

- Board composition and expertise
- Risk management
- Internal controls
- Audit and compliance
- Compensation policies
- Disclosure requirements
- Fraud-risk management

5. Enhanced supervisory oversight

The RBI subjects NBFC-UL entities to closer supervisory scrutiny because distress in a large and interconnected NBFC can have consequences for the wider financial system.

Why is the Tata Sons Issue Important?

Financial Stability

Tata Sons is connected to a large network of companies across sectors such as automobiles, information technology, steel, aviation, consumer businesses, electronics and infrastructure.

Therefore, the RBI's regulatory treatment of Tata Sons has implications beyond a single corporate entity.

Corporate Governance

A stock-market listing would subject Tata Sons to greater public disclosure, shareholder scrutiny and market-based governance mechanisms.

Ownership Structure

Tata Sons is substantially controlled by Tata Trusts, making the possibility of listing particularly sensitive because a public listing could alter the company's ownership dynamics and governance structure.

Shareholder Value

The Shapoorji Pallonji Group, a significant shareholder in Tata Sons, has supported the possibility of listing. A public listing could potentially provide greater liquidity and price discovery for its stake.

At the same time, the Tata Trusts have concerns about the implications of listing for the group's long-term ownership and philanthropic structure.

Latest Position of the NBFC Upper Layer

The RBI's 2024–25 Upper Layer list contained 15 entities, including Tata Sons, Bajaj Finance, Shriram Finance, Tata Capital, LIC Housing Finance and others.

The 2026 regulatory changes have broadened the framework by bringing qualifying government-owned NBFCs into consideration for the Upper Layer. This is a significant departure from the earlier framework, under which government-owned NBFCs were not placed in the Upper Layer.

Recent reporting on the FY2026–27 list indicates that Tata Sons has been retained while additional public-sector infrastructure financiers have entered the broader Upper-Layer regulatory framework. This means the current framework has become more asset-size driven and principle-based, rather than dependent primarily on the earlier scoring model.

FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 faces demand for JPC scrutiny



Why in the News

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 has become a major point of debate during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. Opposition parties, the Mizoram Chief Minister and church organisations have raised concerns over the proposed changes, particularly the provisions dealing with foreign-funded assets of organisations whose FCRA registration ceases.

Latest update: On 12 August 2026, the Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for detailed examination and recommendations. The referral is intended to allow a clause-by-clause examination of the proposed changes before the legislation moves ahead in Parliament.

The issue has acquired wider political and federal significance after the Council of Churches in Mizoram organised a protest in Aizawl on 11 August 2026, expressing concern that the proposed framework could affect church properties. The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has also passed a resolution opposing the Bill in its present form.

What is the FCRA?

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions and foreign hospitality in India.

Its broad purpose is to ensure that foreign funds are:

- received only by eligible persons and organisations;
- used for the declared purposes;
- properly accounted for and disclosed; and
- not utilised in a manner considered detrimental to national interest.

The Act is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The official FCRA portal currently shows around 14,455 active associations, while 22,498 are listed as cancelled and 15,206 as deemed expired.

Importantly, FCRA does not impose a blanket ban on foreign donations. According to the government, around 16,200 associations were actively registered and received approximately ₹22,963 crore in foreign contribution during 2024–25.

FCRA Registration Regime

An organisation seeking to receive foreign contribution generally needs either:

1. **FCRA Registration**, or
2. **Prior Permission** for receiving a specified foreign contribution for a specified purpose.

FCRA registration is generally valid for five years and has to be renewed.

Organisations receiving foreign contribution are also required to maintain prescribed accounts, file annual returns and comply with restrictions on utilisation of foreign funds. The FCRA framework therefore combines permission, financial disclosure, auditing and regulatory oversight.

What does the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 propose?

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026 and seeks to amend the FCRA, 2010. Its major focus is to create a clearer statutory mechanism for dealing with foreign contributions and assets when an organisation's FCRA certificate is cancelled, surrendered or ceases to remain valid.

1. Designated Authority

The Bill proposes creation of a Designated Authority to supervise, manage and dispose of foreign contribution and assets in specified situations.

This is one of the most significant changes because the existing law provided for vesting of certain assets but did not provide the same level of detailed statutory procedure for their custody, management and disposal.

2. Provisional and Permanent Vesting of Assets

If an organisation's FCRA certificate is cancelled, surrendered or ceases because of non-renewal, its foreign contribution and assets created from such contribution may initially vest provisionally in the Designated Authority.

If the organisation subsequently obtains fresh registration or restores/renews its registration within the prescribed period, the relevant assets and unutilised foreign contribution are to be returned.

However, failure to obtain restoration or fresh registration within the prescribed period could result in permanent vesting.

3. Assets Created Partly Through Foreign Contribution

The proposed framework also covers assets that have been created partly using foreign contribution.

This is significant for institutions such as hospitals, schools, community centres or other infrastructure projects where foreign funds may have constituted only one component of the overall financing.

4. Treatment of Places of Worship

The Bill provides that where an asset vested with the Designated Authority is a place of worship, its religious character is required to be maintained.

However, religious organisations have argued that even with this safeguard, government control over the underlying property could affect the institutional autonomy of faith-based organisations.

5. Key Functionaries

The Bill expands the statutory concept of “key functionaries” who may be held responsible for organisational violations.

This can include directors, partners, trustees, office bearers and other persons responsible for managing or controlling an organisation.

The provision seeks to strengthen individual accountability for FCRA violations while also raising concerns about the extent of liability placed on office bearers.

6. Penalty Rationalisation

The Bill proposes to reduce the maximum imprisonment for contravention of the FCRA from five years to one year, while retaining other forms of penalty.

It also proposes that prior approval of the Central Government would be required before an investigation for an offence under the Act is initiated.

7. Regulation of Prior Permission

The Bill seeks to prescribe timelines within which foreign contribution received under prior permission must be received and utilised.

This aims to prevent foreign funds obtained for a specific project from remaining unused for prolonged periods.

Why is the Amendment Contested?

1. Concern over Government Control of Assets

The most significant criticism relates to the proposed power of the Designated Authority over assets created using foreign contribution.

Critics argue that an organisation could lose control over valuable infrastructure if its FCRA certificate is not renewed, even when the organisation continues to undertake legitimate activities using domestic resources. The government, however, argues that the Bill provides a legal and administrative mechanism for dealing with assets whose ownership and management become uncertain after the FCRA status of an organisation ends.

2. Impact on Civil Society Organisations

Many NGOs depend on foreign contributions for activities such as:

- healthcare;
- education;
- disaster relief;
- environmental conservation;
- poverty alleviation;
- scientific research; and
- community development.

Critics fear that greater regulatory uncertainty could discourage legitimate organisations from receiving foreign funding or undertaking long-term projects.

3. Concerns of Religious and Faith-Based Organisations

Christian organisations and church bodies have been particularly vocal because several faith-based institutions receive foreign contributions for charitable and social activities.

The Council of Churches in Mizoram has opposed the Bill, arguing that the proposed asset-related provisions could affect church properties.

At the same time, the government maintains that FCRA applies uniformly to organisations irrespective of religion and that the objective is transparency, accountability and protection of national interest, rather than targeting any particular community.

4. Federalism Concerns

FCRA is primarily a central regulatory framework, and the proposed role of a centrally designated authority has generated concerns about excessive centralisation.

State governments and organisations argue that assets such as schools, hospitals, charitable institutions and places of worship are often deeply embedded in local communities. Greater central control could therefore create tensions between national regulatory objectives and local institutional autonomy.

5. Natural Justice and Due Process

Another concern is whether sufficient procedural safeguards exist before an organisation's assets are taken under government control.

The JPC can examine questions such as:

- What constitutes adequate grounds for vesting?
- What notice and hearing should be provided?
- How quickly should assets be returned after restoration of registration?
- What appeal or judicial review mechanism should be available?
- How should assets funded partly through domestic and partly through foreign contributions be valued and managed?

These issues make detailed parliamentary scrutiny particularly important.

Government's Rationale

The government argues that the amendments are aimed at closing administrative gaps in the existing FCRA framework rather than prohibiting foreign funding.

According to the government's explanation, the existing Act contained provisions relating to vesting of foreign-funded assets but lacked a comprehensive operational framework for their custody, management and disposal. The 2026 Bill attempts to fill this gap through the Designated Authority mechanism.

The government also stresses that foreign funding can have legitimate developmental uses but must remain transparent and accountable because cross-border financial flows can create risks relating to foreign influence, financial misuse and national security.

Why is JPC Referral Important?

A Joint Parliamentary Committee provides a mechanism for detailed examination of a Bill by Members of Parliament from both Houses.

The referral can help:

1. examine every clause of the Bill in detail;
2. hear views of government departments, civil society organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders;
3. examine constitutional and federal concerns;
4. assess the practical implications of asset vesting;
5. suggest safeguards against arbitrary action; and
6. build greater legislative consensus.

The referral therefore does not mean that the Bill has been rejected. It means that its provisions will undergo additional parliamentary scrutiny before further legislative action. The latest referral on 12 August 2026 follows sustained political and civil-society opposition.

Inquiry committee finds charges proved against Justice Yashwant Varma



Why in the News?

A three-member statutory inquiry committee constituted under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 has found all three charges proved against former High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma in connection with the discovery of burnt and unexplained currency at his official residence in New Delhi in March 2025. The committee's findings have brought the issue of judicial accountability back into focus.

The development is particularly significant because Justice Varma resigned with immediate effect on 9 April 2026, before the inquiry was completed. The committee nevertheless submitted its report to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on 18 May 2026, and the report was subsequently brought before Parliament.

The case has therefore created an unusual constitutional question: Can Parliament continue a removal process

against a judge who has already resigned? The answer is not expressly provided by the existing constitutional and statutory framework, making the Varma case an important test of India's judicial accountability mechanism.

Background of the Case

The controversy originated in March 2025, when a fire broke out at Justice Varma's official residence in New Delhi. During the firefighting operation, burnt currency notes were reportedly found in a storeroom on the premises.

Justice Varma denied knowledge or ownership of the cash and questioned the manner in which the material had been recovered and preserved. The matter subsequently underwent an internal judicial inquiry, following which the process for parliamentary removal was initiated.

In July 2025, Members of Parliament moved motions seeking his removal. The Lok Sabha Speaker admitted the motion and constituted a three-member inquiry committee under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. The statutory committee was eventually reconstituted with Justice Aravind Kumar of the Supreme Court, Justice Shree Chandrashekhar, Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, and senior advocate B.V. Acharya.

The Supreme Court also declined to interfere with the parliamentary inquiry in January 2026, allowing the committee's proceedings to continue.

Judicial Removal Process in India

The Constitution provides judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts with a high degree of security of tenure to protect judicial independence. At the same time, it provides a special mechanism for their removal in cases of proved misbehaviour or incapacity.

1. Initiation of Motion

Under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, a removal motion has to be supported by at least:

- 100 members of the Lok Sabha, or
- 50 members of the Rajya Sabha.

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha may admit or reject the motion.

2. Inquiry Committee

Once a motion is admitted, a three-member committee investigates the allegations. The statutory composition includes:

- a Supreme Court Judge;
- a Chief Justice of a High Court; and
- a distinguished jurist.

In Justice Varma's case, the committee submitted its report to the Lok Sabha Speaker on 18 May 2026. The Lok Sabha Secretariat stated that the report was submitted in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Judges (Inquiry) Act.

3. Parliamentary Stage

If the committee finds the charges proved, Parliament may consider the removal motion. The motion must be passed in each House separately by a special majority consisting of:

- a majority of the total membership of that House, and
- a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting.

4. President's Order

After both Houses adopt the required address in the same parliamentary session, it is presented to the President. The President then issues the order removing the judge.

Thus, judicial removal involves investigation, parliamentary scrutiny and constitutional action, rather than an ordinary disciplinary proceeding.

Constitutional Provisions

• Article 124(4)

Article 124(4) provides the constitutional basis for removal of a Supreme Court judge on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. The same framework is applied to High Court judges through Articles 217 and 218.

• Article 124(5)

It empowers Parliament to regulate by law the procedure for investigation and proof of misbehaviour or incapacity.

• Articles 217 and 218

Article 217 deals with the office of High Court judges, including their appointment, tenure and resignation.

Article 218 applies relevant provisions relating to Supreme Court judges to High Court judges, including the removal mechanism.

- **Article 121**

Article 121 protects judicial independence by restricting discussion in Parliament regarding the conduct of Supreme Court and High Court judges, except when a motion for their removal is under consideration.

What Were the Three Charges Against Justice Varma?

The inquiry committee found all three charges proved.

1. Presence of Unexplained Currency

The committee found the charge relating to the presence of unexplained Indian currency within the official premises to be proved. The issue was not merely the discovery of burnt notes but the inability to satisfactorily account for their presence, source and circumstances.

2. Failure to Preserve Material Evidence

The second charge concerned the handling and preservation of material evidence after the incident. The committee found that there had been a failure to properly preserve crucial evidence and that material connected with the incident was interfered with or removed.

3. Evasive and Misleading Explanations

The third charge related to the explanations and statements given by Justice Varma during the inquiry. The committee found these explanations evasive and unsatisfactory. The panel's conclusion was that the explanations did not adequately account for the circumstances surrounding the cash and the subsequent handling of evidence.

The Major Constitutional Issue: What Happens After Resignation?

This is the most important aspect of the case.

Justice Varma resigned on 9 April 2026, stating that the resignation would take effect immediately. The resignation came while the statutory inquiry was still underway. Earlier reporting had indicated that resignation would ordinarily bring the removal proceedings to an end because the objective of impeachment is to remove a person from an office that he continues to occupy.

However, the inquiry committee completed its work and submitted its report in May. The Speaker subsequently decided that the report would be placed before Parliament, creating a constitutional situation for which there is no clear express statutory answer.

The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 does not expressly state what should happen when a judge resigns after an inquiry has begun but before the parliamentary removal process is completed. This statutory silence is at the heart of the present controversy.

Why Is the Issue Legally Significant?

The removal mechanism is designed to remove a sitting judge. If resignation has already terminated the judge's tenure, there is an obvious conceptual difficulty in subsequently "removing" that person from an office he no longer occupies.

At the same time, automatically ending every inquiry upon resignation could create an accountability loophole. A judge facing serious allegations could potentially resign shortly before the conclusion of proceedings and avoid a formal finding of misconduct.

This tension creates two competing principles:

1. Judicial independence:

Judges must be protected from arbitrary political action, and the removal mechanism must remain strictly constitutional.

2. Judicial accountability:

Resignation should not necessarily become a means of preventing serious allegations from being investigated and placed on the public record.

The Varma case therefore goes beyond one individual. It raises a structural question about how India should balance security of judicial tenure with accountability for judicial misconduct.

Earlier Precedents

- India has previously witnessed situations in which judges resigned while removal proceedings were pending.
- The case of Justice P.D. Dinakaran is particularly relevant. He resigned from the Sikkim High Court in 2011 while impeachment proceedings were

pending, after which the inquiry process was brought to an end.

- Similarly, proceedings involving Justice Soumitra Sen also became significant in discussions about the effect of resignation on parliamentary removal proceedings.

- The Varma case differs because the statutory inquiry committee proceeded far enough to complete its investigation and submit its report after his resignation. This makes the case constitutionally unusual and potentially important for future legislation and judicial accountability.

Science, Technology, Art & Culture

New real-time national portal for organ transplants



Why in the News?

The National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) has launched a real-time national portal and mobile application to streamline organ transplantation by creating a unified waiting list, enabling national swap donations, and improving transparency in organ allocation across the country.

About NOTTO

The National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) is the apex national body under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Established under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994 (amended in 2011), NOTTO coordinates organ procurement, allocation, and transplantation across India.

Its primary functions include maintaining the national waiting list, promoting deceased organ donation, standardising transplant procedures, training healthcare professionals, and coordinating with State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTTOs) and Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (ROTOs).

Key Features of the Portal

- **National Waiting List:** Integrates hospital, State, regional, and national waiting lists into a single digital platform.
- **Real-time Organ Allocation:** Enables transparent, technology-driven allocation of organs across the country.
- **National Swap Donor Pool:** Facilitates matching of incompatible donor-recipient pairs beyond State boundaries, increasing transplant opportunities.
- **Aadhaar-linked Organ Pledge:** Links donor pledges with Aadhaar to improve identity verification and reduce duplication.
- **Outcome Tracking:** Hospitals are required to upload follow-up details to monitor transplant outcomes and ensure accountability.
- **Digital Record Management:** Creates a centralised repository of donor and recipient data for policy planning and research.

How does the Portal Work?

- Patients are registered by authorised transplant hospitals on the portal.
- Organs are allocated through a four-tier hierarchy:
 - Hospital level
 - State level
 - Regional level
 - National waiting list
- **Kidney Allocation:** The donor hospital retains one kidney, while the second is allocated to the nearest compatible government hospital through the portal.

- Supports super-urgent transplant requests for critically ill patients through a dedicated digital mechanism.
- Enables real-time coordination among hospitals, transplant authorities, and organ retrieval teams.

Significance

- Ensures greater transparency, fairness, and equity in organ allocation.
- Expands the pool of compatible donors through nationwide swap transplantation.
- Reduces delays caused by manual coordination and fragmented waiting lists.
- Promotes optimum utilisation of donated organs, minimising wastage.
- Creates a comprehensive national transplant database for monitoring, policy formulation, and research.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making to improve India's organ transplantation ecosystem.
- Strengthens public trust in the organ donation system through transparent digital processes.

Challenges

- **Variation in State Policies:** Different States continue to follow different allocation protocols.
- **Limited Regulatory Powers:** NOTTO coordinates transplantation but cannot mandate uniform allocation rules across all States.
- **Low Deceased Organ Donation Rate:** India continues to have one of the lowest deceased organ donation rates globally, limiting organ availability.
- **Data Quality Issues:** Portal effectiveness depends on timely and accurate data entry by authorised hospitals.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Several districts still lack certified transplant centres and organ retrieval facilities.
- **Awareness and Social Barriers:** Myths, lack of awareness, and cultural beliefs continue to discourage organ donation.

Way Forward

- Develop uniform national organ allocation guidelines in consultation with States.
- Strengthen awareness campaigns to increase deceased organ donation.
- Expand transplant and organ retrieval facilities to underserved regions.
- Ensure regular audits and real-time data validation to maintain portal accuracy.
- Promote interoperability between NOTTO, SOTTOs, and hospital information systems for seamless coordination.
- Enhance training of transplant coordinators and healthcare professionals to improve implementation.

How 'ghost particles' can point the way to spent nuclear fuel



Why in the News

Scientists have achieved the first high-precision measurement of the neutrino signature from spent nuclear fuel, demonstrating that neutrinos can be used to remotely monitor nuclear material without opening storage casks. The breakthrough could significantly strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation efforts by providing a new, tamper-resistant method to verify nuclear fuel inventories.

What is a Neutrino?

- **Ghost particle:** A neutrino is a nearly massless, electrically neutral subatomic particle that interacts only through the weak nuclear force and gravity, making it one of the most elusive particles in nature.

- **Produced in nuclear reactions:** Neutrinos are generated in enormous numbers during nuclear fission, radioactive decay, fusion reactions inside stars (including the Sun), and supernova explosions.
- **Highly penetrating:** Because they interact extremely weakly with matter, trillions of neutrinos pass through the human body every second without causing any effect, making them exceptionally difficult to detect.
- **Three flavours:** Neutrinos exist in electron, muon, and tau flavours and can oscillate (change flavour) as they travel through space, a phenomenon that established that neutrinos possess a tiny but non-zero mass.

What did the Study Achieve?

- **First precise measurement:** Researchers in France successfully carried out the first high-precision measurement of neutrino emissions from spent nuclear fuel, demonstrating the feasibility of monitoring radioactive material using neutrino detectors.
- **Remote verification:** The emitted neutrino signal can be detected without opening, moving, or directly handling the spent fuel, ensuring continuous and non-intrusive verification.
- **Proof of concept:** The study confirms that neutrino detection can distinguish the characteristic emissions from spent nuclear fuel, paving the way for practical safeguard applications.
- **Scientific validation:** The findings were published in a leading peer-reviewed physics journal, providing strong scientific evidence for the technique's reliability.

Why is this Important for Nuclear Non-Proliferation?

- **Supports IAEA safeguards:** The technology can help the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) remotely verify the presence and integrity of spent nuclear fuel during inspections.
- **Detects diversion of nuclear material:** Since plutonium and other fissile isotopes inside spent

fuel produce characteristic neutrino emissions, any unauthorized removal or diversion could alter the detected signal.

- **Non-intrusive and tamper-resistant:** Unlike conventional inspection methods, neutrino monitoring does not require physical access to storage casks and is extremely difficult to manipulate.
- **Continuous monitoring:** Neutrino detectors can potentially provide round-the-clock surveillance, reducing dependence on periodic physical inspections.
- **Enhances transparency:** The technique strengthens confidence in the peaceful use of civilian nuclear programmes, while improving international verification mechanisms under nuclear safeguard agreements.
- **Future applications:** If deployed widely, neutrino-based monitoring could become an important complement to existing nuclear accounting and inspection systems, improving global nuclear security.

Prelims Pointers

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the United Nations' nuclear watchdog responsible for promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and implementing international nuclear safeguards.
- Neutrinos are electrically neutral, nearly massless elementary particles that interact only through the weak nuclear force and gravity.
- There are three flavours of neutrinos—electron, muon, and tau—and they undergo neutrino oscillation, confirming that they have a small but non-zero mass.
- Nuclear reactors and spent nuclear fuel continuously emit neutrinos due to the radioactive decay of fission products.
- Spent nuclear fuel contains plutonium, which can potentially be chemically separated and used in nuclear weapons, making its secure

monitoring essential for non-proliferation efforts.

- Because neutrinos pass through matter almost unhindered, they enable remote and non-destructive monitoring of nuclear material, offering a promising new tool for international nuclear safeguards.

India's first privately-built FFSC rocket engine signals a new dawn in space flight



Why in the News?

Bengaluru-based Astrobase Space Technologies unveiled EVEREST, an 80-tonne-class, fully integrated 800 kN Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC) liquid rocket engine, on 7 August 2026. The engine uses Liquid Oxygen (LOX) and methane as propellants and has been designed and manufactured in India.

The development is significant because FFSC is among the most demanding liquid-rocket-engine architectures. Astrobase's achievement places India among a very small group of countries pursuing this technology.

What is a Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC) Engine?

Full-Flow Staged Combustion is an advanced closed-cycle rocket-engine architecture designed to achieve high efficiency and high chamber pressure.

In a conventional gas-generator engine, a small portion of the propellant is burned separately to drive the turbopumps, with the resulting gases generally discarded. In an FFSC engine, both the fuel and oxidiser streams pass through separate pre-burners before driving their respective turbopumps. The resulting gases are then directed into the main combustion chamber.

Thus, virtually the entire propellant flow ultimately contributes to producing thrust. This architecture can provide:

- Higher propellant efficiency
- Higher chamber pressures
- Lower turbine temperatures
- Potentially better durability and reusability
- Greater scope for efficient operation across different flight conditions

The architecture is extremely challenging because it requires the simultaneous management of oxygen-rich and fuel-rich hot-gas flows, turbomachinery, combustion stability, thermal management and high-pressure materials.

What is LOX-Methane Propulsion?

EVEREST uses LOX-methane, commonly called methalox, as its propellant combination.

- **LOX:** Liquid Oxygen acts as the oxidiser.
- **Methane:** Liquid methane acts as the fuel.

Methane is increasingly attractive for reusable launch vehicles because it burns comparatively cleanly and can result in less combustion residue than kerosene-based fuels. This can potentially simplify engine inspection, refurbishment and turnaround between flights.

Methane also has another strategic attraction for future exploration: it can potentially be produced from locally available resources on Mars, although that application would require technologies for producing both methane and oxygen in situ.

EVEREST: Key Features

Feature	Details
Developer	Astrobase Space Technologies
Location	Bengaluru, Karnataka
Engine cycle	Full-Flow Staged Combustion
Propellant	LOX-Methane
Thrust class	Approximately 800 kN / 80-tonne class
Application	Reusable launch vehicles
Development start	2024

Testing facility	Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh
Manufacturing	Indigenous design and manufacturing
Technology support	IN-SPACe Technology Adoption Fund
Long-term objective	Reusable medium-lift launch capability

Astrobase has been developing the engine since its establishment in 2024. The company has already reported sub-scale hot-fire work and turbopump testing, while full-scale integrated testing is the next major validation stage.

What is IN-SPACe?

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is an autonomous agency under the Department of Space created to facilitate greater participation of non-governmental entities in India's space sector.

It acts as a single-window interface for promoting, facilitating and authorising private space activities.

In June 2026, IN-SPACe selected Astrobase Space Technologies, SatSure Analytics India and TM2SPACE Technologies as the first beneficiaries under its Technology Adoption Fund (TAF). The fund is intended to help Indian non-governmental entities move advanced technologies from development towards commercial deployment.

Why is EVEREST Significant?

1. Advancement in Indigenous Propulsion

Rocket propulsion is among the most difficult technologies in the space sector. The development of an indigenous FFSC engine indicates growing private-sector capability in high-performance propulsion, rather than merely assembling or integrating launch vehicles.

2. Push Towards Reusability

FFSC architecture is particularly attractive for reusable launch vehicles because of its efficiency and potential for repeated operation. If EVEREST successfully completes qualification and flight testing, it could become a key propulsion technology for India's future reusable launch systems.

Astrobase's broader roadmap includes vehicle recovery and orbital-launch demonstrations, although these remain future milestones rather than completed achievements.

3. Strengthening Private-Sector Space Capability

The development illustrates the changing nature of India's space programme. Earlier, high-end launch-vehicle propulsion was overwhelmingly associated with government institutions. The emergence of private firms such as Astrobase, alongside companies such as Skyroot Aerospace and Agnikul Cosmos, indicates the development of a broader **commercial space ecosystem**.

4. Advanced Manufacturing

The project also demonstrates the increasing role of additive manufacturing/3D printing in rocket-engine development. Large and complex engine components can potentially be manufactured with fewer individual parts, shorter development cycles and greater design flexibility.

5. Strategic Autonomy

Indigenous high-thrust propulsion can reduce dependence on foreign technology and strengthen India's ability to independently design, manufacture and operate future launch vehicles.

This is particularly important as access to space increasingly becomes a strategic capability involving communications, navigation, Earth observation, scientific missions and national security.

Private Space Sector in India

India's private space sector received a major policy push through the 2020 space-sector reforms, which opened activities beyond the traditional government-dominated model.

The Indian Space Policy 2023 further established a framework for greater participation of non-governmental entities across the space value chain, including launch vehicles, satellites, space applications and associated services.

Important institutional actors include:

- **ISRO:** India's national space agency and primary public-sector space technology institution.

- **IN-SPACE:** Facilitates, promotes and authorises private participation.
- **NSIL:** The commercial arm of the Department of Space responsible for commercialising space technologies and services.
- **Private startups:** Companies such as Astrobase, Skyroot Aerospace and Agnikul Cosmos are expanding indigenous capabilities in propulsion and launch systems.

Challenges Ahead

Despite its technological promise, EVEREST faces several important challenges before it can become a proven operational propulsion system.

- **Full-scale testing:** An unveiled engine is not equivalent to a flight-qualified engine. Long-duration hot-fire tests, repeated firings and qualification campaigns are essential.
- **Reliability:** Reusable launch vehicles require engines capable of surviving repeated thermal and mechanical stresses while maintaining consistent performance.
- **Combustion and turbomachinery complexity:** FFSC involves demanding oxygen-rich and fuel-rich operating environments, requiring sophisticated materials, seals, cooling systems and control mechanisms.
- **Vehicle integration:** Successfully developing the engine is only one component of developing a launch vehicle. Tanks, stages, avionics, guidance

systems, recovery systems, ground infrastructure and launch operations must also be developed and qualified.

- **Schedule risk:** The company's ambitious development timeline will depend on successful testing and qualification. Therefore, projected flight dates should be treated as targets rather than established outcomes.

Broader Significance for India

EVEREST represents more than the development of another rocket engine. It reflects the emergence of a new private-sector propulsion capability in India's space ecosystem.

Its importance can be understood at three levels:

- **Technological:** It pushes Indian private industry towards sophisticated closed-cycle propulsion.
- **Economic:** Indigenous propulsion can create demand for specialised manufacturing, advanced materials, electronics, software and precision engineering.
- **Strategic:** A stronger domestic launch ecosystem can improve India's independent access to space and support future commercial, scientific and strategic missions.

If the engine successfully progresses from demonstration hardware to reliable flight-qualified propulsion, it could become an important building block for India's future reusable launch vehicles.

Security Issues

For first time in 50 years, DGP sets foot on former Maoist bastion in Telangana



Why in the News

For the first time in nearly five decades, the Indian national flag was hoisted at Karregutta Hills on the Telangana–Chhattisgarh border after the area, once considered a major Maoist stronghold, came under effective government control.

On 10 August 2026, Telangana Director General of Police C.V. Anand visited Karregutta and hoisted the Tricolour at the approximately 650-foot-high hill. The forested region had historically been used by CPI (Maoist) cadres and was regarded as one of the heavily mined areas under Maoist influence.

The development is significant in the context of Operation Kagar, the intensified anti-Maoist campaign that contributed to the rapid weakening of the insurgent organisation in Telangana and neighbouring areas.

Telangana had already declared itself free of Maoist armed activity in April 2026 after 42 cadres surrendered, taking the cumulative number of Maoists who surrendered before Telangana Police between 2024 and 2026 to 761.

At the national level, the Union government declared that India had achieved a major milestone towards becoming Naxal-free on 31 March 2026, following years of security operations, development interventions and surrender-and-rehabilitation measures.

What is Operation Kagar?

Operation Kagar is a major coordinated counter-insurgency campaign undertaken by security forces against the CPI (Maoist) and its armed networks in the forested areas of central India, particularly the Bastar region and adjoining areas.

The operation represents a shift from merely containing Maoist influence towards systematically dismantling the organisation's territorial, military and leadership structures.

Key Features

1. Multi-agency operation:

The campaign involves coordination among the Central Armed Police Forces, State Police, specialised units and intelligence agencies.

2. Focus on Maoist strongholds:

Operations have particularly targeted difficult forested and hilly terrain where Maoist groups historically maintained camps, weapons stores and operational bases.

3. Intelligence-led operations:

Improved intelligence gathering, surveillance and coordination have enabled security forces to identify Maoist hideouts and movement corridors more effectively.

4. Surrender and rehabilitation:

Security operations have been complemented

by policies encouraging cadres to abandon violence and return to mainstream society.

5. Development as a security strategy:

Expansion of roads, telecommunications, schools, banking facilities, healthcare and administrative presence is intended to reduce the governance vacuum historically exploited by extremist groups.

The broader government strategy has therefore combined security, development, technology, financial disruption and rehabilitation, rather than relying exclusively on armed operations.

Who are the CPI (Maoist)?

The Communist Party of India (Maoist) is a banned Left-Wing Extremist organisation that seeks to overthrow the Indian state through armed revolutionary struggle.

It emerged in 2004 through the merger of the People's War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC).

The organisation operates through a combination of:

- An underground political structure.
- The People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) as its armed wing.
- Regional and state-level committees.
- Local armed formations and village-level networks.

The CPI (Maoist) historically exploited difficult terrain, weak state presence, tribal grievances and inadequate connectivity to establish influence across parts of the so-called Red Corridor.

Leadership

The organisation's former General Secretary Muppala Lakshmana Rao, alias Ganapati, was its longest-serving General Secretary.

Another major leader was Nambala Keshava Rao, alias Basavaraju, who succeeded Ganapati as General Secretary and was killed in a security operation in May 2025.

The loss of senior leadership, combined with large-scale surrenders and arrests, severely weakened the organisation's command structure.

What happened at Karregutta?

1. DGP's visit

Telangana DGP C.V. Anand entered the Telangana side of Karregutta with a substantial contingent of police and revenue personnel.

The visit had a strong symbolic dimension because the area had historically been regarded as a Maoist-controlled or highly sensitive zone.

2. Hoisting of the Tricolour

The national flag was hoisted at Karregutta after almost 50 years.

The symbolism is important: an area that had once represented the territorial influence of an armed insurgent organisation was being publicly marked by the presence of the Indian state.

3. From security zone to development zone

Authorities are now looking beyond security operations towards normalisation and development.

Earlier in April 2026, Telangana Police had described Karreguttalu as a Maoist-free zone and announced plans to develop the region as a tourism destination. Infrastructure projects, including roads and a police outpost, were also planned to improve connectivity and security.

4. Tourism potential

The area possesses significant forest and scenic value. The government's plan to develop tourism represents a broader transition:

Maoist stronghold → secured territory → connected region → development and tourism zone

This illustrates how restoration of security can create conditions for economic activity and public access in previously inaccessible areas.

What is the Current Status of Maoist Decline?

The decline of Left-Wing Extremism has accelerated significantly since 2025.

1. Large-scale Surrenders

Telangana witnessed a particularly significant surrender movement.

In April 2026, 42 cadres, including senior commanders, surrendered before Telangana Police. They handed over 36 firearms, more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition and 800 grams of gold. The surrender took the cumulative

number of Maoists who had surrendered to Telangana Police since 2024 to 761, along with 302 firearms.

Earlier, in February 2026, four senior CPI (Maoist) leaders—including Politburo member Tippiri Tirupathi alias Devuji and Central Committee member Malla Raji Reddy alias Sangram—also surrendered, further weakening the organisation's leadership structure in Telangana.

2. Telangana Declared Maoist-Free

On 10 April 2026, Telangana Police declared the State free from Maoist armed activity following the surrender of 42 cadres.

The Telangana State Committee of the CPI (Maoist) was described by police as effectively dismantled.

3. National-Level Decline

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, India reached a major milestone on 31 March 2026, with the government declaring the country effectively free from Left-Wing Extremism.

Government data show the scale of the decline:

- LWE-related incidents fell from 870 in 2014 to 234 in 2025.
- Fatalities declined from 310 in 2014 to 100 in 2025.
- Thousands of cadres surrendered during 2024–March 2026.

4. Collapse of Senior Leadership

The loss of senior commanders has affected the CPI (Maoist)'s ability to:

- Coordinate armed units.
- Recruit new cadres.
- Maintain communication between regional committees.
- Obtain weapons and logistical support.
- Sustain operations across different States.

The surrender of senior leaders has been particularly significant because it provides security agencies with intelligence about organisational structures, weapons caches and operational networks.

Rehabilitation and Surrender Policy

The decline in Maoist activity cannot be attributed only to encounters and arrests. Surrender and rehabilitation

have become an important component of the government's counter-LWE strategy.

Under the broader rehabilitation framework, surrendered cadres can receive:

- Immediate financial assistance.
- Monthly support during rehabilitation.
- Incentives linked to weapons surrendered.
- Skill development and vocational training.
- Assistance for reintegration into civilian life.
- Support for employment and livelihood opportunities.

The Union government's June 2026 assessment stated that 3,927 cadres surrendered between 2024 and March 2026, while 2,337 surrendered during 2025 alone.

This indicates that the strategy is not merely aimed at eliminating armed cadres but also at reducing the recruitment pool and facilitating reintegration.

Why is the Decline of Maoism Significant?

1. Internal Security

The decline of LWE reduces the threat to civilians, police personnel, infrastructure and public institutions in affected regions.

2. Improved Governance

Once security improves, government officials can enter remote areas more regularly, allowing better delivery of:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Banking
- Welfare schemes
- Roads
- Telecommunications
- Administrative services

3. Infrastructure Development

Improved security facilitates the construction of roads, bridges, mobile towers and other infrastructure in areas that were previously inaccessible because of security threats.

4. Tribal Development

Many Maoist-affected regions have large tribal populations. Improved connectivity and government access can help integrate remote tribal communities into mainstream economic and administrative systems.

However, development must also remain participatory and sensitive to tribal rights, forest rights and local livelihood concerns to ensure that the restoration of security translates into sustainable peace.

5. Economic Opportunities

The transition of places such as Karregutta from conflict zones to potential tourism and development zones demonstrates the possibility of converting previously inaccessible regions into productive economic spaces.

Challenges Ahead

Despite the dramatic decline, the end of large-scale Maoist violence does not automatically mean the disappearance of all underlying vulnerabilities.

1. Maintaining Security

Security forces must continue intelligence and surveillance operations to prevent the regrouping of small armed cells.

2. Preventing Re-emergence

A security vacuum could allow extremist networks to attempt a comeback. Continued government presence is therefore essential.

3. Rehabilitation of Surrendered Cadres

Successful rehabilitation requires more than financial assistance. Former cadres need employment, education, counselling, social acceptance and long-term livelihood opportunities.

4. Development with Tribal Participation

Development projects in forest and tribal areas should balance economic development with environmental protection and constitutional protections for tribal communities.

5. Winning the Peace

The most important challenge after defeating an insurgency is consolidating peace.

Roads, schools, hospitals, markets, communication networks and effective local governance must follow security operations. Otherwise, a temporary security victory may not automatically produce durable peace.

Overall Significance

The hoisting of the Tricolour at Karregutta after nearly five decades is more than a symbolic event. It represents the transformation of a region once associated with

Maoist influence into an area where the State is seeking to establish security, connectivity, administration and development.

Operation Kagar, combined with intelligence-led security operations, infrastructure expansion and surrender-and-rehabilitation policies, has contributed to a historic weakening of the CPI (Maoist). Telangana's 761 cumulative surrenders since 2024 and its declaration as free from Maoist armed activity illustrate the scale of this transformation.

Navy to lease two new MQ-9B Sea Guardian unmanned aircraft from US firm



Why in the News?

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a ₹1,943 crore contract with General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI) for the lease of two MQ-9B Sea Guardian remotely piloted aircraft for the Indian Navy for a period of 30 months. With this arrangement, the Navy's leased fleet of High-Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) remotely piloted aircraft systems will increase from two to four.

What is the MQ-9B Sea Guardian?

The MQ-9B Sea Guardian is a maritime surveillance variant of the MQ-9B family of remotely piloted aircraft developed by GA-ASI. It is designed for long-duration operations at high altitudes and can monitor large geographical areas without requiring frequent landing and refuelling.

The platform belongs to the category of HALE RPAS, meaning that it combines high-altitude operations with long endurance. This makes it particularly suitable for maritime surveillance, where naval forces often need to

monitor vast stretches of ocean continuously for extended periods.

Its major functions include:

- Intelligence gathering and surveillance.
- Maritime reconnaissance.
- Monitoring of ships and other maritime activity.
- Detection and tracking of potential threats.
- Support for search and surveillance missions.
- Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness.
- Precision-strike capability when configured and authorised for such operations.

The aircraft can carry a range of advanced sensors and surveillance payloads, allowing it to collect information over extensive maritime areas and transmit data to command and control networks.

Understanding HALE RPAS

HALE stands for High Altitude Long Endurance, while RPAS refers to a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System.

Unlike conventional aircraft that require a pilot onboard, an RPAS is operated by trained personnel from a ground control station. However, the aircraft itself can fly for long durations while carrying specialised sensors and communication equipment.

The two characteristics are particularly important:

1. High Altitude

Operating at high altitudes allows the aircraft's sensors to cover a much larger area. This improves the ability to observe shipping routes, coastlines and areas of strategic interest.

2. Long Endurance

Long endurance enables the aircraft to remain airborne for extended periods. As a result, fewer aircraft are required to maintain continuous surveillance compared with conventional aircraft that have shorter flight durations.

For a country such as India, with a coastline of over 7,500 km, island territories and extensive maritime interests, persistent airborne surveillance is strategically valuable.

What is Maritime Domain Awareness?

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) refers to the effective understanding of activities and developments in the maritime environment that could affect a

country's security, safety, economy or marine environment.

Modern MDA requires the integration of information from multiple sources, including:

- Coastal surveillance radars.
- Satellites.
- Automatic Identification System (AIS) data.
- Naval ships and patrol aircraft.
- Underwater sensors.
- Intelligence networks.
- Remotely piloted aircraft and other airborne surveillance platforms.

The objective is to create a comprehensive picture of activities occurring at sea. This is particularly important for identifying suspicious vessels, monitoring shipping routes, detecting potential security threats and supporting search-and-rescue operations.

HALE aircraft such as the Sea Guardian can act as an important airborne layer within this wider surveillance architecture.

Why is India Leasing Additional MQ-9B Sea Guardians?

The decision to lease two additional aircraft addresses India's immediate requirement for long-endurance maritime surveillance.

One of the major reasons is to bridge the capability gap until the larger fleet of 31 MQ-9B aircraft being acquired by India is progressively delivered and operationalised.

The leased aircraft also provide other advantages:

- First, they offer an immediately available surveillance capability without waiting for the complete acquisition and induction process associated with a new fleet.
- Second, they allow Indian Navy personnel to gain additional operational experience in flying, maintaining and integrating HALE remotely piloted systems.
- Third, experience gained from the leased platforms can support the development of operational procedures, maintenance practices, training systems and command-and-control structures for the future MQ-9B fleet.

The Navy has already operated leased MQ-9A Sea Guardian-type platforms since 2020, providing India with valuable experience in the use of long-endurance unmanned systems for maritime surveillance.

How Will the Additional Aircraft Strengthen the Indian Navy?

The increase in leased HALE systems from two to four will improve operational flexibility.

With only a limited number of aircraft, maintaining persistent surveillance over multiple maritime sectors simultaneously can be challenging because aircraft require maintenance, crew changes and operational downtime.

The additional platforms can help address this challenge by allowing the Navy to allocate aircraft across different areas of responsibility.

This could strengthen India's ability to:

- Conduct simultaneous surveillance over the eastern and western maritime regions.
- Maintain a more persistent watch over important areas of the Indian Ocean Region.
- Improve early detection of suspicious or potentially hostile maritime activity.
- Support naval operations with real-time intelligence and reconnaissance.
- Monitor strategic sea lanes and approaches to India's coastline.
- Enhance coordination with other elements of India's maritime surveillance network.

The development is particularly relevant as the Indian Ocean has become an increasingly important arena of strategic competition, commercial shipping and naval activity.

The 2024 India-US MQ-9B Agreement

India has also entered into a major agreement for the acquisition of 31 MQ-9B remotely piloted aircraft systems for its armed forces. The deal, valued at approximately \$3.5 billion, represents one of India's most significant acquisitions of high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned platforms.

The proposed distribution of the aircraft is intended to support the requirements of all three services, with the

Indian Navy receiving the largest share because of its extensive maritime surveillance responsibilities.

The MQ-9B acquisition is expected to provide India with a common long-endurance unmanned capability that can support both maritime and land-based operations.

Boost to Maintenance and Domestic Manufacturing

An important feature of the larger MQ-9B programme is the plan to establish a Global Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility in India.

Such a facility could support the maintenance and long-term sustainment of the Indian fleet while also contributing to the development of India's defence aerospace ecosystem.

The agreement also provides for:

- Greater participation of Indian industry in the supply chain.
- Indigenous sourcing of selected components.
- Assembly and manufacturing-related activities in India.
- Development of technical and maintenance capabilities.
- Opportunities for domestic companies in the defence aerospace sector.

These provisions are aligned with India's broader Atmanirbhar Bharat and defence indigenisation objectives, which seek to reduce long-term dependence on foreign suppliers while strengthening domestic defence manufacturing capabilities.

Strategic Significance

The leasing of two additional MQ-9B Sea Guardians should be viewed as more than a temporary expansion of the Navy's unmanned aircraft fleet. It represents an effort to maintain and expand India's surveillance capability during the transition towards a much larger permanent fleet of MQ-9B systems.

The aircraft can strengthen India's ability to maintain persistent awareness across the Indian Ocean, where threats can emerge over vast distances and conventional platforms cannot remain continuously deployed everywhere.

As the Navy expands its network of satellites, coastal radars, patrol aircraft, warships and unmanned systems,

HALE RPAS are likely to become an increasingly important component of India's layered maritime surveillance architecture.

China completes first stage of 'military base' at disputed South China Sea reef



Why in the News?

China has completed the first phase of large-scale land reclamation and construction at Antelope Reef in the disputed Paracel Islands in the northern South China Sea. Satellite imagery reviewed by Reuters shows that the reef has been transformed into a large artificial island, with early signs of harbour, aviation and other supporting infrastructure.

About Antelope Reef

Antelope Reef is located in the **Paracel Islands**, a group of islands, reefs and banks in the northern part of the South China Sea. The Paracels are geographically distinct from the Spratly Islands, which lie further south and are also the site of extensive territorial disputes and military construction.

The feature is known by different names:

- **China:** Lingyang Jiao
- **Vietnam:** Đá Hải Sâm
- **Taiwan:** Lingyang Reef

China currently occupies Antelope Reef, but Vietnam continues to assert its sovereignty over the Paracel Islands. Taiwan also maintains a claim over the feature.

What Has China Built on Antelope Reef?

China has undertaken extensive dredging and land reclamation, transforming the reef into a major artificial land feature.

- **Scale of reclamation**

The reclaimed island is nearly 6 km long. The latest available assessments indicate that the reclaimed area is approximately 1,490 acres, placing Antelope Reef close in scale to some of China's largest artificial outposts in the South China Sea.

For comparison, the reclaimed land at Antelope is substantially larger than Woody Island, China's traditional administrative and military centre in the Paracels, which AMTI estimated at about 890 acres.

- **Harbour and maritime infrastructure**

Satellite imagery has revealed a 680-metre wharf facing a deep-water harbour. Such infrastructure could support the deployment and resupply of a wide range of vessels, including coast guard ships, naval auxiliaries and potentially other military platforms.

The development of a protected harbour is strategically important because it would allow China to maintain a more persistent maritime presence in the northern South China Sea.

- **Aviation infrastructure**

Construction has begun in the southeastern part of the reclaimed island, including a helicopter pad.

More significantly, satellite analysis by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) at CSIS has identified excavation and land shaping along a straight section of the island that appears consistent with preparations for a future runway. The work is still incomplete, and no paving had been laid at the time of the August 2026 analysis. However, the dimensions of the developing strip resemble the width and layout of runways at other Chinese military outposts in the South China Sea.

Timeline of the Construction

The rapid expansion of Antelope Reef has taken place over a relatively short period.

- Major dredging reportedly began around late 2025.
- Satellite monitoring recorded extensive reclamation activity during the following months.
- By August 2026, dredgers and barges had largely departed after at least six months of sustained work.

- Imagery from 19 July 2026 showed construction activity, including the helicopter facility.
- By mid-August, satellite analysis detected excavation consistent with possible runway construction.
- On 17 August 2026, new construction was also observed on nearby Yagong Island, raising the possibility of a wider network of facilities rather than an isolated installation.

What is the Strategic Importance of the Paracel Islands?

The Paracels occupy an important position in the northern South China Sea.

China has controlled the entire island group since 1974, when it expelled forces of the former South Vietnam. Vietnam, however, continues to claim sovereignty over the entire archipelago.

The islands provide China with a forward position between its mainland and the wider South China Sea.

They can potentially support:

- Maritime surveillance
- Air operations
- Naval logistics
- Coast guard deployments
- Intelligence gathering
- Missile and air-defence systems
- Monitoring of foreign military activity

The existing Chinese network in the Paracels already includes Woody Island, which has hosted fighter aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems, and Triton Island, where extensive surveillance infrastructure has been reported.

Why Could Antelope Reef Become More Important Than Existing Chinese Outposts?

Antelope Reef offers China an opportunity to create a much larger and potentially more defensible facility than several of its existing positions in the Paracels.

Its large reclaimed area could eventually accommodate a combination of:

- A long runway
- Aircraft hangars
- Helicopter facilities
- Naval berthing infrastructure

- Radar and early-warning systems
- Communications facilities
- Fuel and ammunition storage
- Air-defence systems

If completed with a major runway and supporting infrastructure, Antelope could significantly expand China's ability to operate aircraft and naval assets from the northern South China Sea.

Military planners may also find the Paracels more attractive than the Spratlys for certain strategic assets because they are closer to the Chinese mainland and easier to reinforce and defend. Reuters reported that analysts believe assets such as H-6 strategic bombers could potentially be based in the Paracels rather than at more exposed facilities further south.

Link with Taiwan

The location of Antelope Reef gives the construction a significance that extends beyond the South China Sea territorial disputes.

The northern South China Sea could become an important operational area during a conflict involving Taiwan. A large Chinese air and naval facility in the Paracels could contribute to:

- Surveillance of regional sea lanes
- Tracking of United States and allied forces
- Air and maritime patrol operations
- Early warning against approaching forces
- Protection of Chinese naval movements
- Expansion of China's operational depth south of the mainland

A network linking Antelope Reef with nearby facilities such as Yagong Island could provide additional surveillance and warning capabilities. However, analysts have cautioned that it is still too early to determine the exact military function of the new structures on Yagong.

What is a Naval Bastion?

A naval bastion is a relatively protected maritime area in which a country attempts to secure and defend its strategic submarines, particularly nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

The concept is based on keeping these submarines within areas where friendly naval, air and surveillance

forces can help protect them from enemy submarines and anti-submarine warfare operations.

For China, the South China Sea could potentially serve as such a protected operating area.

A major facility at Antelope Reef could contribute to this strategy by supporting:

- Underwater surveillance
- Maritime patrols
- Anti-submarine warfare operations
- Monitoring of foreign naval forces
- Protection of approaches to Chinese submarine operating areas

Analysts have suggested that a strengthened surveillance network could make operations more difficult for U.S. and Vietnamese submarines active in the region.

Importance for Nuclear Deterrence

The possible development of a submarine bastion has implications beyond conventional naval competition.

Ballistic missile submarines form an important component of a country's nuclear second-strike capability. Their survivability ensures that a nuclear-armed state retains the ability to retaliate even after suffering a major attack.

Therefore, infrastructure that improves the protection, surveillance and operational security of such submarines can strengthen the credibility of nuclear deterrence.

If Antelope Reef eventually becomes part of a broader surveillance and military network supporting Chinese submarine operations, it could increase the strategic complexity of the South China Sea.

China's Official Position

China has not formally acknowledged that it is constructing a new military base at Antelope Reef.

Chinese state media and commentators have presented the development as supporting civilian functions such as:

- Weather forecasting
- Scientific research
- Fisheries-related activities
- Maritime safety and protection

A Chinese scholar writing in the state-run *China Daily* in June described the construction as peaceful and constructive rather than militarisation.

However, the physical infrastructure being developed has clear potential dual-use applications. A deep-water harbour, long wharf, helicopter facilities and possible runway could support civilian activities, but they could also substantially improve China's military and coast guard capabilities.

The eventual purpose of the facility will depend on the infrastructure added during the next stages of construction.

Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea

The South China Sea contains overlapping territorial and maritime claims.

Paracel Islands

- Controlled by China
- Claimed by Vietnam
- Also claimed by Taiwan

China has controlled the entire Paracel group since 1974, while Vietnam continues to oppose Chinese construction and asserts sovereignty over the islands.

Spratly Islands and surrounding waters

The Spratlys and surrounding maritime areas involve overlapping claims by:

- China
- Vietnam
- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Brunei
- Taiwan

China's construction at Antelope Reef therefore occurs within a wider regional environment of competing sovereignty claims, military modernisation and maritime competition.

The Emerging Role of Yagong Island

A significant recent development is the appearance of new installations on Yagong Island, located approximately 14 km northeast of Antelope Reef.

Satellite imagery from 17 August 2026 showed new structures whose final purpose remains unclear. Security analysts have suggested that they could eventually develop into an early-warning or radar facility supporting operations at Antelope Reef.

If this assessment proves correct, it would indicate that China is developing not just a single artificial island, but a broader network of mutually supporting facilities in the Crescent Group of the Paracels. At present, however, this remains an analytical assessment rather than a confirmed Chinese deployment.

Why Does Antelope Reef Matter?

The development of Antelope Reef is important for several reasons:

1. **Expansion of Chinese military reach:** It could provide China with a major new air and naval operating position in the northern South China Sea.
2. **Strategic relevance to Taiwan:** The facility's location could make it useful for surveillance and military operations during a Taiwan-related contingency.
3. **Maritime surveillance:** A network of radar, sensors and patrol assets could improve China's ability to monitor foreign naval activity.
4. **Support for submarine operations:** The facility could contribute to efforts to create more secure operating areas for China's strategic submarines.
5. **Pressure on rival claimants:** The expansion reinforces China's physical control over disputed territory claimed by Vietnam.
6. **Challenge for the United States and its allies:** A new major Chinese facility would add another defended location that foreign forces would need to monitor or account for during any regional crisis.
7. **Continuation of South China Sea militarisation:** The project demonstrates that infrastructure competition in the disputed waterway remains active despite the absence of open conflict.

Trivia

Rising private R&D spending should be channelled into manufacturing



Why in the News

For the first time, private industry has overtaken the government as the largest source of Research and Development (R&D) expenditure in India, accounting for 51.8% of the country's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) in 2023–24. The shift reflects the growing role of Indian industry in driving innovation, although India's overall R&D investment remains well below that of leading global economies.

What does the R&D Data Show?

- **Private sector leads:** Private industry contributed 51.8% of India's total R&D expenditure in 2023–24, surpassing government spending for the first time.
- **Low R&D intensity:** India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) stands at only 0.84% of GDP, indicating limited investment in innovation.
- **Global comparison:**
 - South Korea: 4.94% of GDP
 - United States: 3.45%
 - China: 2.58%
 - India: 0.84%
- **Limited research workforce:** India has only 354 researchers per million population, significantly lower than advanced innovation-driven economies.

- **Need for higher investment:** Experts emphasize that India must substantially increase R&D spending to achieve its ambitions of becoming a developed economy and a global technology leader.

Why Should R&D Focus on Manufacturing?

- **Higher value addition:** Greater investment in research enables industries to move from low-value assembly to the production of high-technology and knowledge-intensive products.
- **Import substitution:** Indigenous research helps develop critical technologies and components domestically, reducing dependence on imports in sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, defence, and pharmaceuticals.
- **Employment generation:** Innovation-driven manufacturing creates high-skilled jobs, enhances productivity, and strengthens the industrial workforce.
- **Boosts exports:** Technology-intensive products improve India's competitiveness in global markets and increase the share of high-value exports.
- **Supports national initiatives:** Strong industrial R&D complements flagship programmes such as Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Digital India, and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme.
- **Strategic self-reliance:** Domestic technological capabilities reduce vulnerability to global supply-chain disruptions and strengthen economic and national security.

What Institutional Support Exists?

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

- **Established under:** Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023.
- **Corpus:** ₹50,000 crore over five years.
- **Objective:** Promote research, innovation, and collaboration among academia, industry, government, and research institutions.
- **Key Functions:**

- Mobilise private sector investment in scientific research.
- Coordinate and streamline research funding across institutions.
- Promote interdisciplinary and translational research.
- Strengthen university-based research and innovation capacity.
- Foster industry-academia partnerships to commercialise research outcomes.
- Build a globally competitive innovation ecosystem in India.

Challenges to India's R&D Ecosystem

- Low public and private investment compared to global standards.
- Weak industry-academia collaboration, limiting technology transfer.
- Shortage of researchers and inadequate research infrastructure.
- Limited commercialisation of research through patents and startups.
- Regional disparities, with research concentrated in a few institutions and states.

Way Forward

- Increase GERD to at least 2% of GDP over the medium term.
- Encourage greater private sector participation through tax incentives, innovation grants, and venture funding.

- Strengthen collaboration between universities, research laboratories, startups, and industry.
- Expand investment in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, quantum technologies, clean energy, and advanced materials.
- Improve research infrastructure, attract global talent, and promote commercialization of indigenous innovations.

Prelims Pointers

- GERD (Gross Expenditure on Research and Development): Total national expenditure on R&D expressed as a percentage of GDP.
- Private industry became India's largest R&D spender for the first time in 2023–24, contributing 51.8% of GERD.
- India's GERD is 0.84% of GDP, well below major innovation economies.
- Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) was established under the ANRF Act, 2023 and has a planned corpus of ₹50,000 crore over five years.
- ANRF replaced the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) as India's apex research funding body.
- Strengthening R&D is critical for achieving technological self-reliance, manufacturing competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth.

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