WEEKLY PIB COMPILATION

22 Aug – 31 Aug 2026

UPSC EDITION

19 key articles · 9 categories · 10 days

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Tap a category to jump to it.

1. International

1 article

India-Uzbekistan ties elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership; $5 billion trade target by 2030

30 Aug

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to Uzbekistan on 29-30 August 2026 at the invitation of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev; it was his fourth visit to the country.
- In the 15th year of the bilateral Strategic Partnership, the two sides elevated it to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Bilateral trade, which has crossed USD 1 billion, is now targeted at USD 5 billion by 2030, backed by a Foreign Ministers-led oversight mechanism and an Inter-Governmental Commission raised to ministerial level.
- Eleven agreements were exchanged, including a Letter of Intent to conserve the Buddhist sites of Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa at Termez, and a Gujarat-Samarkand sister-region pact.
- Announcements included a USD 1 million grant for Aral Sea afforestation, 100 Lal Bahadur Shastri Hindi scholarships, an ICCR Sanskrit Chair at Tashkent, and a UPI-UZQR payments tie-up; the Prime Minister was conferred the 'Oliy Darajali Do'stlik' Order, Uzbekistan's highest honour for foreign leaders.

QUICK FACTS

Visit	State Visit to Uzbekistan, 29-30 August 2026; talks at Kuksaroy Presidential Palace, Tashkent.
Status upgrade	Strategic Partnership (15 years old) elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
Trade	crossed USD 1 billion; new target USD 5 billion by 2030. A Joint Feasibility Study on an India-Uzbekistan Preferential Trade Agreement has been concluded and ministries were directed to take next steps in a time-bound manner.
New machinery	a Foreign Ministers-led mechanism to oversee implementation; the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation raised to ministerial level; a Joint Working Group on non-tariff and investment barriers.
Honour	'Oliy Darajali Do'stlik' Order (Order of Highest Friendship) conferred on the Prime Minister — Uzbekistan's highest honour for foreign leaders.
Defence	Joint military exercise 'Dustlik', latest edition held in Namangan Region, Uzbekistan, in April 2026; Joint Working Groups on Military Cooperation and on Counter Terrorism continue.
Energy	progress noted on the long-term arrangement for supply of uranium from Uzbekistan to India; cooperation agreed on critical and strategic minerals, geology, mining and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

– Uzbekistan marked the 35th anniversary of its independence two days after the visit (Independence Day, 1 September).

2. Economy

3 articles

India's Real GDP Grows 7.8% in Q1 FY 2026-27; Nominal Growth at 10.3%

31 Aug

- MoSPI released the Quarterly Estimates of GDP for Q1 (April-June) of FY 2026-27, the first quarterly release compiled fully on the new base year 2022-23.
- Real GDP is estimated at Rs 81.36 lakh crore against Rs 75.46 lakh crore a year earlier — growth of 7.8%; nominal GDP is Rs 88.27 lakh crore against Rs 80.00 lakh crore, growth of 10.3%.
- Real Gross Value Added grew faster than GDP, at 8.2%, reaching Rs 73.82 lakh crore; nominal GVA grew 11.5% to Rs 80.53 lakh crore.
- The new series uses the double deflation approach for manufacturing GVA, deflating output and intermediate consumption separately with Producer Price Indices.
- The Prime Minister called the 7.8% growth a 'herculean feat' achieved despite oil price shocks and supply chain disruptions; the Q2 estimates are due on 30 November 2026.

QUICK FACTS

Release	Quarterly Estimates of GDP for Q1 (April-June), FY 2026-27, by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
Real GDP (constant 2022-23 prices)	Rs 81.36 lakh crore, against Rs 75.46 lakh crore in Q1 FY 2025-26 — growth 7.8%
Nominal GDP (current prices)	Rs 88.27 lakh crore, against Rs 80.00 lakh crore — growth 10.3%
Real GVA	Rs 73.82 lakh crore, against Rs 68.21 lakh crore — growth 8.2%
Nominal GVA	Rs 80.53 lakh crore, against Rs 72.24 lakh crore — growth 11.5%
Method	Benchmark-Indicator methodology, following the IMF's Quarterly National Accounts Manual, 2017
Next release	Q2 (July-September) FY 2026-27 estimates on 30 November 2026

- New series of annual and quarterly GDP with base year 2022-23 was released on 27 February 2026; Provisional Estimates for 2025-26 followed on 5 June 2026
- Manufacturing GVA now uses double deflation — output and intermediate consumption deflated separately using PPIs
- 'Sources and Methods', the full methodology volume for the new series, is scheduled for release by September 2026

Sugar Prices Jump 15.6% in a Month; Centre Caps Dealer Stocks

26 Aug

- Retail sugar prices rose from Rs 48.18 per kg on 20 July 2026 to Rs 55.70 per kg on 20 August 2026 — about 15.6% in a month — against a long-run rise of only about 3% a year between August 2024 and July 2026.
- Sugar production in the current season is now expected at around 306 lakh metric tonnes against an initial estimate of about 343 LMT, hit by Red Rot and Top Borer disease and by waterlogging from excess rainfall.
- The Centre has imposed a 400-tonne stock limit on sugar dealers from 1 August to 30 November 2026, capped bulk consumers at 15 days of consumption from 1 September 2026, and allowed duty-free import of 10 lakh MT of raw sugar.
- Mills and states have been advised to start crushing from 15 October 2026, which should lift October output from the usual 3-4 lakh MT to more than 10 lakh MT.
- The government rejects ethanol diversion as the cause: sugar diverted to ethanol fell from about 12% in 2022-23 to about 9% in 2025-26, and nearly three-fourths of India's ethanol now comes from grains, mainly maize.

QUICK FACTS

Sugar exports	8 lakh MT in 2025-26, against 0.47 lakh MT in 2016-17; main destinations Sri Lanka, West Asia and East Africa

- India is the world's second-largest sugarcane producer
- The sector supports nearly 5 crore farmers and around 5 lakh workers in sugar factories and allied industries

- Sugarcane production reached 500 MMT in 2025-26 (Third Advance Estimate, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare) — about 43.5% higher than the 348.44 MMT of 2015-16
- Area under sugarcane rose from 49.27 lakh hectares in 2015-16 to 58.87 lakh hectares in 2025-26
- Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are the top sugarcane-producing states
- FRP for sugar season 2026-27 (October-September): Rs 365 per quintal at a basic recovery rate of 10.25% — up Rs 135 from the Rs 230 per quintal at 9.5% recovery fixed for 2016-17
- Annual sugar production averages 300-340 lakh MT; domestic consumption is 280-290 lakh MT
- 97% of 2025-26 season cane dues had been paid to farmers as of 20 August 2026
- Global sugar deficit for 2026-27 estimated at about 33 lakh MT

National Shipping Board's First Sagar Samvad Proposes 100 New Ships in Five Years

25 Aug

- The National Shipping Board (NSB) held its first 'Sagar Samvad' in New Delhi, themed 'Charting the Roadmap Towards Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047'.
- Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal chaired the inaugural edition, launched the Board's first official website and received its annual report for 2025-26 from NSB Chairperson Sameer Kumar Khare.
- An NSB panel proposed a five-pillar roadmap — fiscal reform, assured cargo support, access to competitive financing, regulatory streamlining and ease of doing business — which it argued could add 100 ships to India's fleet within five years.
- Minister of State Shantanu Thakur said India pays close to $75 billion a year in freight to foreign shipping lines to move cargo including crude oil, gas, coal and urea; panellists said flying the Indian flag is 16 to 20 per cent costlier than operating under a foreign one.
- Sonowal said port capacity is being quadrupled to 10,000 million tonnes a year by 2047, and acknowledged the Rs 10,000 crore Container Manufacturing Assistance Scheme, under which Maersk is now ordering containers built in India.

QUICK FACTS

Event	the inaugural 'Sagar Samvad' (meaning 'ocean dialogue') of the National Shipping Board, held at the Civil Services Officers Institute, Vinay Marg, New Delhi.
Theme	'Charting the Roadmap Towards Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047'.
NSB motto used as the theme line	'Wisdom in the Ocean, Progress in the Nation'.
Chaired by	Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, who launched the Board's first official website.
NSB Chairperson	Sameer Kumar Khare, who submitted the Board's annual report for 2025-26 and its subcommittee reports; the Board was reconstituted in May 2025.
Also present	Vijay Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
Sessions	'Maritime Labour Force: Opportunities and Challenges', chaired by Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Labour and Employment and Youth Affairs and Sports; and 'Augmentation of Indian Tonnage: Opportunities and Challenges', presided over by Shantanu Thakur, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
Its mandate	advise the government on shipping policy, tonnage, seafarer welfare and port-linked maritime development.
Five-pillar roadmap proposed	fiscal reform, assured cargo support, access to competitive financing, regulatory streamlining, and ease of doing business.
Target attached to the roadmap	100 additional ships in India's fleet within five years.
Annual freight paid to foreign shipping lines	close to $75 billion, for cargo including crude oil, gas, coal and urea.
Cost gap	operating under the Indian flag is 16 to 20 per cent costlier than under a foreign flag.
Container Manufacturing Assistance Scheme	Rs 10,000 crore; Maersk is now ordering containers built in India.
Port capacity target	10,000 million tonnes a year by 2047, a quadrupling.

- The NSB is a statutory advisory body first constituted in 1958 and now functioning under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 and the new National Shipping Board Rules.

3. Banking & Finance

2 articles

PMJDY at 12: 59.09 Crore Accounts, Rs 3.17 Lakh Crore Deposits, 41.29 Crore RuPay Cards

27 Aug

- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana completed 12 years, having been launched on 28 August 2014 as India's National Mission for Financial Inclusion under the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.
- As on 19 August 2026 the scheme had 59.09 crore accounts holding deposits of Rs 3,16,514 crore — an average of Rs 5,356 per account — against 14.72 crore accounts in 2015.
- Women hold 32.92 crore accounts (55.7%) and 45.95 crore accounts (77.8%) are in rural and semi-urban areas; 13.14 crore are urban and metropolitan.
- 41.29 crore free RuPay debit cards have been issued to account holders, each carrying an inbuilt accident cover whose premium is borne by the National Payments Corporation of India.
- The scheme anchors the JAM (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile) trinity that routes Direct Benefit Transfers, and doubles as the gateway to PMJJBY, PMSBY, Atal Pension Yojana and MUDRA credit.

QUICK FACTS

Scheme	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), described by the Government as the National Mission for Financial Inclusion
Launched	28 August 2014; announced by the Prime Minister in the Independence Day address of 15 August 2014
Nodal ministry	Ministry of Finance; implementing department: Department of Financial Services
Accounts as on 19 August 2026	59.09 crore (14.72 crore in 2015)
Deposits as on 19 August 2026	Rs 3,16,514 crore (Rs 15,670 crore in March 2015)
Average deposit per account	Rs 5,356, up 3.4 times over 12 years
Women account holders	32.92 crore (55.7%); rural and semi-urban accounts: 45.95 crore (77.8%); urban and metropolitan: 13.14 crore
RuPay cards issued to PMJDY holders	41.29 crore
Account type	Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account with no minimum balance requirement and no maintenance charge
Overdraft	up to Rs 10,000 to one account holder per household, after six months of satisfactory operation

- Guinness World Records recognised 1,80,96,130 accounts opened in a single week during the launch drive
- Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary marked the anniversary; the scheme now enters its 13th year

UPI completes ten years: 24,162 crore transactions in FY 2025-26, live in 11 countries

24 Aug

- The Unified Payments Interface completed ten years of operation, with the Ministry of Finance dating the decade from its public launch on 25 August 2016; it was first run as a pilot in April 2016 with 21 member banks.
- Annual transaction volume grew from 1.78 crore in FY 2016-17 to over 24,162 crore in FY 2025-26 — an almost 13,000-fold rise at a CAGR of 188 per cent — while annual value rose from Rs 0.07 lakh crore to about Rs 314 lakh crore, a more than 4,000-fold rise at a CAGR of 155 per cent.
- July 2026 was UPI's largest month on record: 2,366 crore transactions worth Rs 29.88 lakh crore, with 741 banks live on the platform.
- UPI accounted for 84 per cent of India's digital payment transactions in FY 2025-26 and about 49 per cent of global real-time payment volume in 2025, a share the IMF recorded in its June 2025 report on retail digital payments.
- UPI is now live in 11 foreign countries for acceptance and/or cross-border remittances, Greece and the Maldives being the most recent additions.

QUICK FACTS

Pilot launch	April 2016 with 21 member banks. Public rollout: August 2016, when participating banks put UPI-enabled apps on the Google Play Store. The Ministry of Finance dates the tenth anniversary to 25 August 2016.
First month of public operation (August 2016)	about 90,000 transactions. FY 2025-26: 24,162 crore transactions.
Daily average in 2026	about 66 crore transactions.
Banks live on UPI	21 at the April 2016 launch, 44 in FY 2016-17, 703 by FY 2025-26 and 741 as on July 2026 — covering public sector, private, small finance, payments and cooperative banks.
Countries where UPI is live	United Arab Emirates, France, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Singapore, Mauritius, Qatar, Cambodia, Greece and Maldives.

- UPI is a real-time retail payment system built and operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), under the regulatory oversight of the Reserve Bank of India.
- It lets a single mobile application operate multiple bank accounts, works round the clock, and uses two-factor authentication with end-to-end encryption.
- Each participating bank acts as a Remitter PSP (outgoing transactions) and/or Beneficiary PSP (incoming), with NPCI monitoring performance metrics.
- Person-to-merchant (P2M) payments make up 63 per cent of transaction volume; person-to-person (P2P) transfers make up 71 per cent of transaction value.
- 86 per cent of P2M transactions and 59 per cent of P2P transactions are below Rs 500.

4. Polity & Governance

1 article

Bihar and Jharkhand sign Sone river water-sharing MoU, ending 25-year dispute

31 Aug

- Bihar and Jharkhand signed a Memorandum of Understanding on sharing the waters of the Sone river, in the presence of Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah, resolving a dispute the release describes as nearly 25 years old.
- Also present were Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil, the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar and the Union Home Secretary.
- The agreement is expected to secure irrigation and drinking water for the Bihar districts of Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur, Aurangabad, Arwal, Gaya and Patna, and for Palamu, Garhwa and adjoining areas of Jharkhand.
- This is the FOURTH inter-state water agreement of 2026 brokered through the Inter-State Council mechanism, after the Narmada Award dues settlement (7 July 2026), the Rajasthan-Haryana Yamuna Water Project agreement (29 June 2026) and the six-state Kishau Multipurpose Project consensus (16 June 2026).
- The significance for polity is the route taken: a negotiated MoU under the Inter-State Council (Article 263) rather than adjudication by a tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

QUICK FACTS

What was signed	a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Bihar and Jharkhand on the sharing of Sone river water.
Signed in the presence of	Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah. Also present - Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary, Union Minister for Jal Shakti C.R. Patil, the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar and the Union Home Secretary.
Bihar districts named as beneficiaries	Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur, Aurangabad, Arwal, Gaya and Patna.
Jharkhand areas named as beneficiaries	Palamu, Garhwa and other regions.
Institutional route	the Inter-State Council, the Article 263 body whose Standing Committee is chaired by the Union Home Minister - not an Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal.
Count for the year	the fourth inter-state water agreement of 2026 reached through this route.
The Sone	rises in the Amarkantak plateau in Madhya Pradesh, runs about 784 km, and is the second-largest southern (right-bank) tributary of the Ganga after the Yamuna, joining the Ganga about 30 km upstream of Patna.

- Age of the dispute, as stated in the release: nearly 25 years - that is, dating to around the creation of Jharkhand out of Bihar in November 2000.

5. Science & Tech

3 articles

NM-ICPS: 25 Innovation Hubs and 4 Translation Research Parks Power India's Cyber-Physical Systems Push

31 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder set out the status of India's Cyber-Physical Systems ecosystem, built around the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS), implemented by the Department of Science and Technology.
- The Union Cabinet approved NM-ICPS in 2018 with an outlay of Rs 3,660 crore; 25 Technology Innovation Hubs have been set up as Section 8 companies inside premier academic institutions.
- In 2025 four high-performing hubs were upgraded to Technology Translation Research Parks — IIT Kanpur (cybersecurity), IISc Bengaluru (robotics and AI systems), IIT (ISM) Dhanbad (mining technologies) and IIT Indore (digital healthcare).
- As of August 2026 the Mission reports 1,146 technologies enabled, 1,329 technology products, 1,136 start-ups and spin-offs incubated, 5,824 CHANAKYA fellowships and 200 international collaborations.
- BharatGen, supported under NM-ICPS and led by IIT Bombay, adds a sovereign multilingual AI layer; its Param-2 foundation model has 17 billion parameters and covers all 22 Scheduled languages.

QUICK FACTS

Mission	National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)
Implementing department	Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology
Progress as of August 2026	1,146 technologies enabled, 1,329 technology products, 1,136 start-ups and spin-offs, over 24,000 jobs, 2.46 lakh professionals trained, 5,824 fellowships, 200 international collaborations
TIH mandate spans four areas	technology development; human resource and skill development; innovation, entrepreneurship and start-ups; international collaborations

- Approved by the Union Cabinet in 2018; outlay Rs 3,660 crore; the Mission's active period has been extended to December 2027 without additional financial implication
- 25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs), each registered as a Section 8 (not-for-profit) company and hosted by a premier academic institution
- 4 Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRPs) selected in 2025: IIT Kanpur, IISc Bengaluru, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, IIT Indore
- CHANAKYA = Comprehensive and Holistic Advancement of National Knowledge Yield and Analytics — the Mission's fellowship programme for UG, PG, PhD and post-doctoral researchers

Notifications Issued for All Six Pillars of the Semicon 2.0 Scheme

31 Aug

- Notifications for all six pillars of the Semicon 2.0 Scheme were issued, with Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw setting out the government's plan for the next phase of India's semiconductor ecosystem.
- The six pillars — Design; Machines and Materials; Setting up more Fabs; Strengthening the ATMP/OSAT industry; Research and Development; and Talent Development — cover 10 categories in all and extend fiscal and infrastructure support across the whole value chain.
- The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is the nodal agency: it will invite applications, carry out technical and financial appraisal, recommend applicants and oversee implementation, with C-DAC assisting on the design and deployment categories.
- Projects will generally run up to six years, the scheme stays open for applications for three years, and a mid-term assessment follows after three years of implementation.
- Vaishnaw said India met its target of 85,000 semiconductor engineers in four years against a ten-year timeline and has set a fresh target of one lakh more, that students from Tier-II and Tier-III cities have designed over 250 chips, and that the ecosystem is expected to create 50,000-60,000 direct jobs.

QUICK FACTS

Scheme	Semicon 2.0 — the successor to the Semicon India Programme, with notifications for all six pillars issued on 31 August 2026
Ministry	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), which makes the budgetary provisions for fiscal support
Nodal agency	India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) — invites applications, appraises them technically and financially, recommends applicants and oversees implementation; disbursement is done by the nodal agency
Implementation partner	C-DAC may assist ISM on the design and deployment categories
Structure	six pillars covering 10 categories
Project duration	generally up to six years
Application window	the scheme initially stays open for applications for three years
Review	a mid-term assessment after three years of implementation, or as required
New instrument	ISM may announce semiconductor deep-tech awards from 2026 to promote niche innovation
Stated purpose	economic growth and national security through semiconductor supply-chain resilience and technological leadership in critical sectors

India's nuclear programme: 24 reactors, 8.78 GW and a 100 GW target for 2047

28 Aug

- Two PIB Backgrounders issued on 28 August 2026 set out India's nuclear energy programme in full — the safety and regulatory architecture in one, the indigenous technology roadmap in the other.
- India operates 24 nuclear power reactors across seven sites with an installed capacity of 8.78 GW; nine reactors totalling 7.5 GW are under construction, preparations continue for 10 more units, and 10 indigenous PHWRs have been approved in fleet mode.
- The Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat targets 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047; the Union Budget 2025-26 allocated Rs 20,000 crore for indigenous Small Modular Reactors, with at least five to be operational by 2033.
- The Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam attained first criticality in April 2026, formally opening the second stage of the three-stage programme Homi Bhabha proposed in 1954.
- Nuclear technology now also feeds healthcare, crop breeding, food irradiation, rare-earth analysis, semiconductor-grade materials and, since 2026, hydrogen production using nuclear process heat at Kalpakkam.

QUICK FACTS

AERB radiation dose limits	1 mSv per year for members of the public; for radiation workers, an average of 20 mSv per year over five years, a cumulative ceiling of 100 mSv and a maximum of 30 mSv in any single year.

- India operates 24 nuclear power reactors across seven sites, total installed capacity 8.78 GW (PIB Backgrounder, 28 August 2026).
- Nine reactors with a combined 7.5 GW are under construction; 10 indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors have been approved in fleet mode and pre-project work is on for two 500 MWe Fast Breeder Reactors.
- Nuclear power in India began with the Tarapur Atomic Power Station in 1969.
- The SHANTI Act, 2025 — Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India — received Presidential assent on 20 December 2025 and replaces both the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.
- The Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat targets 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047.
- Union Budget 2025-26 allocated Rs 20,000 crore for research, design, development and deployment of indigenous Small Modular Reactors; at least five are to be operational by 2033.
- India follows a closed nuclear fuel cycle — spent fuel is reprocessed and the residual high-level waste is immobilised, an approach dictated by the three-stage programme.
- Every nuclear power plant has a 16-kilometre Emergency Planning Zone and an Environmental Survey Laboratory monitoring air, water, soil, vegetation and food.

6. Environment

1 article

India reports 21.76 mn ha restored in 2011-2020 at UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar

24 Aug

- At the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said India brought 21.76 million hectares under restoration during 2011-2020, generating about 1.22 billion person-days of employment.
- The figures come from India's Second Progress Report on the Bonn Challenge, covering 2011-2020; India's Bonn Challenge pledge, made in 2015 and later enhanced, stands at 26 million hectares by 2030.
- The next reporting cycle, for 2021-2025, is being carried out with the ICFRE Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management and IUCN, and will measure area restored, financial flows and employment generated.
- At a separate ministerial dialogue on innovative financial mechanisms, India argued that land restoration finance must be diversified, adequate, predictable and sustained, and pointed to its blended green-finance framework, Sovereign Green Bonds, the Green Credit Programme and the compensatory afforestation regime.
- India's delivery vehicles named at COP17 were the Green India Mission, CAMPA-funded compensatory afforestation, the Nagar Van Yojana for urban greening, and watershed, agroforestry and soil and water conservation work.

QUICK FACTS

Event	17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UNCCD, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 17-28 August 2026, under the theme 'Restoring Land. Restoring Hope'.
Employment generated over that period	approximately 1.22 billion person-days.
India's Bonn Challenge commitment	made in 2015 and subsequently enhanced to 26 million hectares by 2030 — the figure the Prime Minister announced at UNCCD COP14 in New Delhi in 2019, raising it from 21 million hectares.
Next reporting cycle	2021-2025, with the ICFRE Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management and IUCN, measuring area restored, financial flows and employment.

- India's Second Progress Report on the Bonn Challenge covers 2011-2020 and records 21.76 million hectares brought under restoration.
- The assessment counts restoration across forests, agriculture, soil and water conservation and other land-use systems, not forest area alone.
- The side event at which the figures were presented was organised by IUCN.
- Under the Green Credit Programme, credits are issued after five years of restoration and on achieving at least 40 per cent canopy density, and may be used once for compensatory afforestation, statutory plantation or CSR obligations.

7. Schemes & Committees

5 articles

Per Drop More Crop Covers 115 Lakh Hectares Under Micro Irrigation

29 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder issued on 29 August 2026 records that the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme has brought more than 115 lakh hectares under micro irrigation as of July 2026 — about 8.11% of India's net sown area.
- Central assistance of Rs 8,123.24 crore has been released under PDMC over the last three years. During 2025-26, Rs 8,957.72 crore was released or sanctioned for PM-RKVY, of which Rs 3,226.36 crore was dedicated to PDMC.
- Assistance covers up to five hectares per beneficiary — 55% for small and marginal farmers and 45% for other farmers — and the same land becomes eligible again after seven years.
- In 2025-26 the scheme benefited 12.30 lakh farmers, around 20% of them women; Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan recorded the largest covered areas.
- Revised guidelines remove the earlier ceiling on spending for water storage and conservation works such as diggis and farm ponds under the scheme's 'Other Interventions' component.

QUICK FACTS

Scheme	Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) — a centrally sponsored scheme promoting micro irrigation at farm level.
Nodal ministry	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
Coverage	over 115 lakh hectares under micro irrigation as of July 2026, roughly 8.11% of India's net sown area.
Subsidy pattern	55% financial assistance to small and marginal farmers, 45% to other farmers, for a maximum of five hectares per beneficiary.
Two supported systems	drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation.
Context	over 80% of India's available water is used for irrigation, while only about 50% of net sown area has irrigation facilities.
Beneficiaries in 2025-26	12.30 lakh farmers, about 20% of them women.

- Implemented as a component of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) since 2022-23.
- Repeat assistance for the same parcel of land is allowed after seven years.
- Central funds released in the last three years: Rs 8,123.24 crore.

PMFBY Completes a Decade: 92.46 Crore Applications Insured, Rs 2.06 Lakh Crore Paid

29 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder issued on 29 August 2026 reports that from Kharif 2016 to Rabi 2025-26, more than 92.46 crore farmer applications have been insured under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and over 26.33 crore applications have received claims exceeding Rs 2.06 lakh crore.
- The Union Budget 2026-27 allocates Rs 12,200 crore to PMFBY, which is being implemented by 25 States and Union Territories in Kharif 2026.
- Farmers pay a maximum of 2% of the sum insured for kharif foodgrain and oilseed crops, 1.5% for rabi and 5% for commercial and horticultural crops; the balance premium is shared by the Centre and states 50:50, and 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan States and UTs.
- As of 27 August 2026, Kharif 2026 enrolment stands at 241.38 lakh farmers covering 278.12 lakh hectares, already above the Kharif 2025 figures of 229.77 lakh farmers and 269.38 lakh hectares.
- West Bengal rejoined the scheme from Kharif 2026 and Bihar has decided to implement it from Rabi 2026-27, following Andhra Pradesh (Kharif 2022) and Jharkhand (Kharif 2024).

QUICK FACTS

Scheme	Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), launched on 18 February 2016 and first implemented from the Kharif 2016 season.
Nodal ministry	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
Budget 2026-27 allocation	Rs 12,200 crore.
Implementing States/UTs in Kharif 2026	25.
Farmer premium	2% (kharif foodgrains and oilseeds), 1.5% (rabi foodgrains and oilseeds), 5% (commercial and horticultural crops).
Premium subsidy sharing	Centre and state 50:50; 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan States/UTs.
Coverage stages	prevented sowing, standing crop yield loss, mid-season adversity, localised calamities and post-harvest losses.
Post-harvest cover	crops in 'cut and spread' condition in the field are covered for up to 14 days after harvest against specified cyclonic and unseasonal rain events.

- Cumulative record (Kharif 2016 to Rabi 2025-26): 92.46 crore farmer applications insured; 26.33 crore applications paid claims of over Rs 2.06 lakh crore.
- Prevented sowing claims are capped at 25% of the sum insured.
- Both loanee and non-loanee farmers are covered; on average about 50% of enrolled farmers over the decade have been voluntary non-loanee farmers.
- Tenant farmers and sharecroppers are eligible; more than 1.44 crore such farmers have been enrolled cumulatively since 2018.

e-Shram Portal Completes Five Years With 31.89 Crore Registered Unorganised Workers

25 Aug

- The e-Shram portal, run by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, completes five years on 26 August 2026; it was launched on 26 August 2021 and built India's first Aadhaar-authenticated National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW).
- Every registered worker receives a unique 12-digit Universal Account Number (UAN). Registrations stood at 31.89 crore as on 18 August 2026, with women forming 54.28 per cent of registrants and men 45.72 per cent.
- The e-Shram One-Stop Solution, launched on 21 October 2024, converted the registry into a service-delivery platform that now carries 15 social security and welfare schemes, including PM-SYM, PMSBY, PMJJBY, NSAP, ONORC and PMAY-Gramin.
- Roughly 11.5 lakh gig and platform workers have registered, giving the government its first national roster of this workforce; multilingual access in 22 languages, powered by Bhashini, was added in 2025.
- Registration is free, one-time and open to any unorganised worker aged 16 and above who is not an income-tax payer and not a member of EPFO or ESIC.

QUICK FACTS

Portal	e-Shram, launched 26 August 2021 by the Ministry of Labour and Employment; developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), which functions under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and was set up in 1976.
What it created	the National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) — India's first Aadhaar-authenticated database of this workforce.
Identifier	a unique 12-digit Universal Account Number (UAN) for every registrant.
Registrations	31.89 crore as on 18 August 2026.
Gender split	women 54.28 per cent, men 45.72 per cent.
Age profile (as on 20 August 2026)	16-18 years 0.08 per cent; 18-40 years 55.21 per cent; 40-50 years 24.18 per cent; above 50 years 20.53 per cent.
Largest occupational groups	agriculture, domestic and household work, construction, and apparel.
States with the highest registrations	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
Eligibility	unorganised worker aged 16 or above, not an income-tax payer, and not a member of EPFO or ESIC.
Registration routes	the e-Shram portal itself, Common Service Centres (CSCs) or State Seva Kendras. Most registrations have come through CSCs, followed by self-registration. Registration is free of cost.
Documents needed	Aadhaar number (for Aadhaar eKYC) and a mobile number, preferably Aadhaar-linked.
e-Shram One-Stop Solution	launched 21 October 2024, aligned with the Union Budget 2024-25 vision of delivering labour services through a single digital platform; carries 15 welfare schemes.
Gig and platform workers registered	about 11.5 lakh.
Languages	22, enabled in 2025 through Bhashini, the National Language Translation Mission platform formed in July 2022 under MeitY.

PIB Backgrounder maps India's regenerative agriculture push: schemes, coverage and outlays

23 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder released on 23 August 2026 sets out how central schemes are pushing Indian farming towards regenerative practices - natural farming, agroforestry, micro-irrigation, integrated farming systems and scientific soil management.
- Natural farming clusters covered 8.80 lakh hectares with 18.19 lakh farmers enrolled, and 18,786 clusters had been formed as of 5 March 2026 under the National Mission on Natural Farming.
- Per Drop More Crop had covered about 109 lakh hectares as of May 2026 with Rs 26,325 crore of central assistance released, and 25.89 crore Soil Health Cards had been generated as of 13 March 2026.
- The document distinguishes regenerative agriculture from sustainable agriculture: sustainable farming aims to maintain existing conditions, regenerative farming aims to actively improve soil health, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Agriculture and allied sectors recorded decadal growth of 4.45 per cent during FY16-FY25, the highest of any recent decade, but the Backgrounder argues that sustaining it depends on rebuilding soil health.

QUICK FACTS

Document	PIB Backgrounder, 'Rebuilding Farming Systems: Regenerative Agriculture for a Resilient India', 23 August 2026.
Natural farming clusters	18,786 formed, 8.80 lakh hectares, 18.19 lakh farmers enrolled (as of 5 March 2026).
Community Resource Persons trained under NMNF	33,676, at Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Agricultural Universities and local natural farming institutions.
Per Drop More Crop	about 109 lakh hectares covered (as of May 2026); Rs 26,325 crore central assistance released.
Soil Health Cards	25.89 crore generated since inception (as of 13 March 2026); 7.17 lakh demonstrations on balanced fertiliser use; 70,002 Krishi Sakhis trained.
Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana	16.90 lakh hectares covered since inception (as of 31 October 2025).
Rainfed Area Development	Rs 2,251.98 crore central assistance, 9.53 lakh hectares, 15.73 lakh farmers (as of December 2025).
Agroforestry component	Rs 78.31 crore sanctioned to 27 States/UTs during 2025-26 (as on 31 October 2025); 135 new nurseries; 176.59 lakh saplings raised in 614 existing nurseries, benefiting about 25,693 farmers.
SDG linkage stated in the document	SDG 13 (Climate Action), Target 13.1 on resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards.

- Six principles of regenerative agriculture listed: minimise soil disturbance, protect living roots of perennial crops, maintain soil cover, integrate livestock, limit chemical inputs, enhance biodiversity.
- Agriculture and allied sectors decadal growth, FY16-FY25: 4.45 per cent.

NADCP: 147.16 crore FMD doses given, outbreaks down from 132 to 40

22 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder dated 22 August 2026 reviewed the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), launched in September 2019 to control and eradicate Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis through nationwide vaccination and surveillance.
- Cumulative FMD vaccination under the programme has reached 147.16 crore doses benefiting 8.04 crore farmers; reported FMD outbreaks fell from 132 in 2019 to 40 in 2025 and Brucellosis outbreaks from 22 to 15 over the same period.
- NADCP targets 100% FMD vaccination of all susceptible livestock twice a year, and a single lifetime Brucellosis vaccination for female bovine calves aged 4-8 months.
- NADCP, the Livestock Health and Disease Control component and the Pashu Aushadhi initiative have been subsumed into one umbrella scheme, the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP), whose budget outlay for 2026-27 is Rs 2,010 crore.
- Over 39.00 crore livestock had been registered on the Bharat Pashudhan Portal by July 2026, each animal carrying a unique 12-digit Tag ID.

QUICK FACTS

Programme	National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), launched September 2019.
Diseases targeted	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis, both of bovines and other livestock.
Nodal department	Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
Vaccination norm	FMD - biannual mass vaccination of all susceptible bovines and small ruminants; Brucellosis - one-time lifetime dose to female bovine calves aged 4-8 months.
Cumulative FMD doses	147.16 crore, benefiting 8.04 crore farmers.
Vaccinator remuneration	minimum Rs 3 per vaccination dose.
FMD outbreaks	132 (2019) to 40 (2025). Brucellosis outbreaks: 22 (2019) to 15 (2025).
Umbrella scheme now	Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP); outlay for FY 2026-27 is Rs 2,010 crore.
Digital backbone	Bharat Pashudhan Portal under the National Digital Livestock Mission; 39.00 crore-plus animals registered by July 2026, each with a 12-digit Tag ID.
Field delivery	4,019 Mobile Veterinary Units across 29 States and UTs, reachable on toll-free 1962; 136 lakh farmers benefited and 276 lakh animals treated.
Livestock base	535.78 million animals including 302.79 million bovines, as per the 20th Livestock Census (2019).

- NSP antibody prevalence (a marker of field-virus circulation): 20.8% in 2019 to 8.1% in 2025.
- No FMD outbreak caused by serotype Asia-1 has been reported in India for the last three years (as of the August 2026 backgrounder).

8. Ranks & Reports

2 articles

Higher education GER touches 30% in 2023-24; universities up 69.6% in a decade

30 Aug

- A PIB Backgrounder issued on 30 August 2026 compiles a decade of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data, from 2014-15 to 2023-24.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education rose from 23.7% in 2014-15 to 30% in 2023-24, against the National Education Policy 2020 target of 50% by 2035.
- Universities grew from 760 to 1,289 (69.6%) and total enrolment from 3.42 crore to 4.50 crore (31.5%).
- Gender Parity Index improved from 0.92 to 1.08, with female GER (31.2%) above male GER (28.9%) for the seventh consecutive year.
- OBC enrolment share rose the most among social categories, from 32.8% to 40.1%.

QUICK FACTS

Source	PIB Backgrounder, 30 August 2026, built on All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data of the Ministry of Education.
Comparison period	2014-15 to 2023-24.
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), higher education	23.7% (2014-15) -> 29.5% (2022-23) -> 30% (2023-24).
Universities	760 -> 1,289 (+69.6%). Colleges: 38,498 -> 48,246 (+25.3%). Standalone institutions: 12,276 -> 15,221 (about +24%).
Total enrolment	3.42 crore -> 4.50 crore (+31.5%). Teachers: 14.73 lakh -> 17.32 lakh (+2.59 lakh, about +17.6%).
NEP 2020 target	GER of 50% in higher education by 2035.

– AISHE has been conducted annually by the Ministry of Education since 2010-11; its first reference date was 30 September 2010.

NITI Aayog Skilling Blueprint Clarifies 8.7 Crore NEET Youth Are Not Unemployed

25 Aug

- NITI Aayog released 'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', a blueprint for a skilling architecture aligned to the goals of a developed India by 2047.
- The report identifies five key segments of learners and workforce, one of which is NEET youth in the 15-29 age group — Not in Education, Employment or Training.
- NITI Aayog clarified that the report's figure of 8.7 crore NEET youth has been misread as a count of the unemployed. NEET refers to those NOT SEEKING employment; the unemployed form a separate category drawn from a different population base, so the figure cannot be added to the unemployment rate.
- The NEET estimate rests on the NSS 78th Round, collected in FY 2020-21 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when education and employment were disrupted; the youth NEET percentage is significantly lower in the most recent PLFS round (PLFS 2025).
- Ahead of the report's publication, the government had already begun implementing its key reforms through the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, including the Rs 600 crore Integrated Scheme in Skilling Architecture (ISSA) announced in the Union Budget 2026-27.

QUICK FACTS

Report	'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', released by NITI Aayog.
What it does	provides a blueprint for a skilling architecture aligned to the needs of Viksit Bharat.
Segments identified	five key segments of learners and workforce, including NEET youth aged 15-29.
The five NEET sub-categories used	engaged in voluntary work or a household enterprise; attending to domestic duties; unable to work due to a health condition; spending leisure time; and others.
Figure at issue	8.7 crore NEET youth — misinterpreted in some quarters as a measure of unemployment.
Data source	NSS 78th Round, collected during FY 2020-21, in the COVID-19 pandemic.
NITI Aayog's caveat	pandemic-year data may deviate from the normal trajectory; the youth NEET percentage is significantly lower in PLFS 2025.
Scheme announced ahead of the report	Integrated Scheme in Skilling Architecture (ISSA), Rs 600 crore, Union Budget 2026-27, implemented through the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
ISSA's purpose	strengthen convergence across education, skilling, employment and lifelong learning systems.
NITI Aayog	the National Institution for Transforming India, established on 1 January 2015, replacing the Planning Commission.
PLFS	introduced in 2017-18, replacing quinquennial NSSO Employment-Unemployment Surveys; from January 2025 its survey period shifted from the July-June cycle to the January-December calendar year.

– NEET expands to Not in Education, Employment or Training — and in this report covers those NOT SEEKING employment.

9. History & Culture

1 article

Sarnath Becomes India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site

26 Aug

- The Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 25 July 2026 at the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Busan, South Korea.
- It is India's 45th World Heritage property, taking the country's tally to 37 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed site — sixth in the world and second in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The inscribed property has two components: the Chaukhandi Stupa, and the Archaeological Remains of Sarnath, which include the Dhamek Stupa, Dharmarajika Stupa, Mulagandhakuti Vihara and the Ashokan Pillar.
- Sarnath was nominated under criteria (iii) and (vi) — enduring spiritual significance as one of the four principal Buddhist pilgrimage destinations, and direct association with the Buddha's first sermon.
- The site had been on India's Tentative List since 1998; the nomination dossier went to the Committee in January 2025, followed by an eighteen-month process including an ICOMOS evaluation mission.

QUICK FACTS

Property inscribed	Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath, Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh
Date and forum	25 July 2026, 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Busan, Republic of Korea
India's tally	45 properties — 37 cultural, 7 natural, 1 mixed
India's position	6th globally, 2nd in the Asia-Pacific region
Criteria used	(iii) and (vi) of the World Heritage Convention
Two components	Chaukhandi Stupa + Archaeological Remains of Sarnath
Advisory body that evaluated it	ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)

- On India's Tentative List since 1998; nomination submitted January 2025
- World Heritage List size as of July 2026: 1,273 properties across 173 countries — 991 cultural, 240 natural, 42 mixed
- States Parties to the 1972 Convention as of October 2024: 196
- India's Tentative List now stands at 69 properties