WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPILATION

15 Aug – 21 Aug 2026

UPSC EDITION

29 key articles · 13 categories · 7 days

Curated from official releases, national dailies and ministry sources

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1. National

1 article

PM Unveils 'Saptadhara' Seven-Stream Roadmap in 80th Independence Day Address

15 Aug

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation from the Red Fort on 15 August 2026, India's 80th Independence Day.
- The centrepiece of the roughly 75-minute address was 'Saptadhara' — seven streams of national strength meant to drive India to Viksit Bharat by 2047.
- The seven streams are manufacturing, agriculture and food processing, technology and innovation, Gati Shakti, defence, the green and blue economy, and soft power.
- It was his 13th consecutive Independence Day address, the second-longest such run after Jawaharlal Nehru's 17.
- The celebrations carried the theme 'Yuva Shakti for Viksit Bharat@2047' and included the first-ever Red Fort rendition of Vande Mataram.

QUICK FACTS

Occasion	India's 80th Independence Day, 15 August 2026, Red Fort, Delhi
Speaker	Prime Minister Narendra Modi, delivering his 13th consecutive Independence Day address
Record context	Jawaharlal Nehru holds the longest run at 17 consecutive addresses (1947-1963)
Duration	about 75 minutes — his shortest Independence Day speech in four years
Theme of the celebrations	'Yuva Shakti for Viksit Bharat@2047'
Headline announcement	'Saptadhara', seven streams of national strength
Cultural first	Vande Mataram rendered from the Red Fort, marking 150 years of the national song
Claim highlighted	25 crore people have come out of poverty
Ceremonial	21-gun salute by the 1721 Field Battery (Ceremonial) using indigenous 105 mm Light Field Guns; guard of honour from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Delhi Police

2. International

3 articles

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir Elected 23rd President of Bangladesh

20 Aug

- Veteran Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was elected the 23rd President of Bangladesh on 20 August 2026 in a vote of Members of Parliament held inside the Jatiya Sangsad.
- He polled 255 votes against 88 for Colonel (retd) Oli Ahmad of the Liberal Democratic Party; 343 of the 349 eligible MPs cast valid votes and the result was announced by Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin.
- It was Bangladesh's first contested presidential election in 35 years - since 1991 the head of state had generally been chosen by consensus.
- The office fell vacant when the 22nd President, Mohammed Shahabuddin, resigned on 24 July 2026 citing ill health; Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed acted as President until the election.
- Alamgir, 78, was the BNP's longest-serving Secretary General and took the oath on 21 August 2026 at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban in Dhaka.

QUICK FACTS

Elected	Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, 23rd President of Bangladesh
Date of election	20 August 2026; oath taken 21 August 2026
Result	255 votes against 88 for Oli Ahmad (Liberal Democratic Party)
Turnout	343 valid votes cast out of 349 eligible MPs; six did not vote
Venue	chamber of the Jatiya Sangsad, Dhaka; voting from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Result announced by	Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin
Oath venue	Darbar Hall, Bangabhaban - the President's official residence in Dhaka
Predecessor	Mohammed Shahabuddin (22nd President, April 2023 - 24 July 2026)

Tanker With 16 Indians Hijacked in Gulf of Aden as Somali Piracy Resurges

20 Aug

- On 20 August 2026 the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported that a tanker transiting westwards in the Gulf of Aden had been boarded by six armed persons about 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla, Yemen, and was being redirected towards Somalia.
- The vessel, reported as the Seamull and also listed as Sibu 1, is a tanker of about 32,238 DWT and 25 years of age, sailing under an Eritrean flag that has been reported as false; it has been under United States sanctions since December 2025 over the carriage of Iranian petroleum.
- It carried 20 crew, of whom 16 were Indian nationals, along with one Syrian, one Sudanese and one Iraqi; Indian authorities reported the Indian crew members safe.
- It was the second hijacking in the region within days: the Cameroon-flagged general cargo ship Lutuf was seized on 17 August 2026 by eight armed men off Marraya on the Puntland coast of Somalia, with six Indians among its ten crew - taking the number of Indian seafarers held on the two vessels to 22.
- UKMTO is a British Royal Navy-sponsored organisation set up in Dubai in 2001 and moved to Portsmouth in 2014; it is the primary point of contact between merchant vessels and military forces in West Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

QUICK FACTS

Date and place	20 August 2026, about 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla in Yemen's Hadhramaut, in the Gulf of Aden; distress calls were broadcast between 10:10 and 10:12 local time
UKMTO statement	the tanker had been boarded by six armed persons who were in control of the vessel and redirecting it to Somalia
Vessel	tanker reported as Seamull, also listed as Sibu 1; about 32,238 DWT, 25 years old, sailing under an Eritrean flag reported as false
Crew	20 in all, including 16 Indians, one Syrian, one Sudanese and one Iraqi; Indian crew reported safe
Second incident in days	the Cameroon-flagged cargo ship Lutuf was hijacked on 17 August 2026 off Marraya, Puntland, by eight armed men operating from a mothership, with six Indians among ten crew
UKMTO	British Royal Navy-sponsored, formed in Dubai in 2001, relocated to Portsmouth in 2014, staffed by 15 civilian watchkeepers and three managers

Iran and Oman Agree on Strait of Hormuz Shipping Route Map

15 Aug

- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei announced on 15 August 2026 that Iran and Oman had agreed on a shipping route map for the Strait of Hormuz after weeks of technical negotiations.
- The talks followed a memorandum of understanding on safe navigation signed on 18 June 2026, and involved Iran's foreign, defence, security and environment authorities along with Omani representatives.
- Tehran described the arrangement as an independent bilateral understanding between the two coastal states that does not alter either country's sovereignty over the waterway.
- Iran said a full return to normal commercial shipping still depends on the United States lifting its naval blockade and ending military pressure, and on compensation for what it called breaches of commitments.
- The International Maritime Organization had cited 65 confirmed vessel incidents and 17 seafarer deaths in the Strait of Hormuz and the wider Middle East by 11 August 2026.

QUICK FACTS

Announced on	15 August 2026, by Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei
Parties	Iran and Oman — the two coastal states bordering the Strait of Hormuz
Subject	a shipping route map for traffic through the Strait
Origin	a memorandum of understanding on safe navigation routes signed on 18 June 2026
Status	agreement reached on the route map; the wording of a joint Tehran-Muscat statement was still being discussed
Iran's condition for full normalcy	an end to the US naval blockade and military pressure, plus compensation

3. Economy

3 articles

Centre Notifies Rs 62,500 Crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme for Five Years

21 Aug

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology notified the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) with an outlay of Rs 62,500 crore.
- The scheme runs for five years, from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31, and pays incentives on eligible sales at differentiated rates of 2.25 to 5 per cent.
- An additional incentive of up to 1.5 per cent is available for sourcing key components and sub-assemblies domestically.
- It has two target segments - TS1 for mobile phone manufacturing and TS2 for Indian mobile phone brands, with Indian brands exempt from any threshold sales volume.
- The Government expects about Rs 39 lakh crore of cumulative production and around 60,000 direct jobs over the five years.

QUICK FACTS

Scheme	Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)
Notified by	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
Outlay	Rs 62,500 crore
Tenure	five years, FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31
Incentive on eligible sales	2.25 per cent to 5 per cent, at differentiated rates
Extra incentive	up to 1.5 per cent for domestic sourcing of key components and sub-assemblies

- Two target segments - TS1 (mobile phone manufacturing) and TS2 (Indian mobile phone brands)
- Union Cabinet had approved the scheme on 16 July 2026

Retail Sugar Price Climbs to Rs 55.70 a Kg; Centre Rejects Ethanol Link

20 Aug

- Retail sugar prices in India rose from Rs 48.18 per kg on 20 July 2026 to Rs 55.70 per kg on 20 August 2026, according to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- The Ministry set out five reasons for the rise - lower domestic production, weather damage to the cane crop, festive-season demand, tighter global supplies, and speculation and hoarding - and expressly rejected the argument that diversion of sugarcane to ethanol was responsible.
- Sugar output for the season is now estimated at about 30.6 million tonnes against an initial estimate of 34.3 million tonnes, the shortfall being attributed to Red Rot and Top Borer disease and to waterlogging from excess rainfall.
- International prices moved from USD 474 a tonne on 30 June 2026 to USD 552 a tonne on 20 August 2026, a rise of more than 16 per cent.
- The government's case is that the share of sugar diverted to ethanol has fallen from about 12 per cent in 2022-23 to around 9 per cent in 2025-26, and that roughly three-fourths of India's ethanol now comes from grains, mainly maize, rather than from sugarcane.

QUICK FACTS

Retail sugar price	Rs 48.18 per kg on 20 July 2026, Rs 55.70 per kg on 20 August 2026
Estimated sugar production for the season	about 30.6 million tonnes, against an initial estimate of 34.3 million tonnes
World prices	USD 474 a tonne on 30 June 2026 to USD 552 a tonne on 20 August 2026, up more than 16 per cent
Share of sugar diverted to ethanol	about 12 per cent in 2022-23, around 9 per cent in 2025-26

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution cited five causes and rejected the ethanol-diversion explanation
- Crop damage attributed to Red Rot and Top Borer disease and to waterlogging from excess rainfall
- A stock limit of 400 tonnes was imposed on sugar dealers across the country until 30 November

White House Report Places India in Tier 1 of China Transhipment Network

15 Aug

- The White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy released a report titled 'The Great Transshipment Scam' on 13 August 2026, naming more than 40 countries as part of a 'shadow transhipment network' for Chinese goods.
- India was placed in Tier 1, labelled 'Diversified Scale Leaders', alongside Canada, the European Union, Israel, Japan, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan.
- The report singled out India's Pune-Gujarat-Chennai industrial belt as a route for China-linked pumps and compressors entering the US market.
- US Commerce Department analysis cited in the report estimated about $67 billion of US-bound goods were transhipped from China via Mexico, India and Vietnam in 2025, costing an estimated $28 billion in tariff revenue.
- The Global Trade Research Initiative rebutted the India charge with trade data showing large independent Indian exports in the same product categories.

QUICK FACTS

Report	'The Great Transshipment Scam: Global Evasion and Economic Costs'
Published by	White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy (OTMP), headed by trade adviser Peter Navarro
Release date	13 August 2026
Scope	more than 40 countries flagged for elevated illegal transhipment risk
India's classification	Tier 1, 'Diversified Scale Leaders'
Other Tier 1 names	Canada, the European Union, Israel, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan
Tier 2	Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand, described as 'closely integrated' with China
Tier 3	Cambodia, Panama and the UAE, flagged for 'weak customs enforcement'
India-specific charge	the Pune-Gujarat-Chennai belt as a corridor for pumps and compressors (HS codes 8413-8414)
Enforcement plan	artificial-intelligence systems to detect, track and penalise shipments routed through such networks

4. Polity & Governance

7 articles

Union Cabinet Approves High Court Bench for Ladakh

20 Aug

- The Union Cabinet on 20 August 2026 approved the establishment of a bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The decision was announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who said it would spare litigants in Ladakh long journeys to reach the High Court.
- The High Court presently functions from Srinagar and Jammu; the Ladakh bench will be its third location.
- Parliament data dated 30 July 2026 recorded 44,557 cases pending before the High Court, of which more than 6,100 had been pending for over ten years.
- Ladakh has been a separate Union Territory since 31 October 2019 under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, but has continued to share a High Court with Jammu and Kashmir.

QUICK FACTS

Decision	Union Cabinet approval for a bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in Ladakh
Date	20 August 2026
Announced by	Union Home Minister Amit Shah
Existing seats of the High Court	Srinagar and Jammu; Ladakh will be the third
Pending cases before the High Court	44,557 (Parliament data dated 30 July 2026)
Cases pending over ten years	more than 6,100
Court infrastructure in Ladakh	only five of ten subdivisions had it - Zanskar, Sankoo, Khaltsi, Nubra and Drass (Law Ministry reply, late 2025)

– Ladakh became a Union Territory on 31 October 2019

Supreme Court Sets Up Five-Member Panel to Probe Police Excesses in Student Protests

20 Aug

- The Supreme Court uploaded an order on 20 August 2026 constituting a five-member High-Powered Enquiry Committee (HPEC) to conduct an independent fact-finding probe into alleged police excesses during student protests.
- The order was passed on 18 August 2026 by a three-judge bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana.
- The committee is chaired by retired Supreme Court judge Justice R. Subhash Reddy and includes two former High Court judges, a former CBI Director and a retired Director General of Police.
- It covers the student demonstrations of 20 July 2026 at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and in Bihar, linked to protests over alleged examination paper leaks including NEET.
- The panel must treat alleged targeted violence, harassment and molestation of female protesters as its top priority and submit periodic interim findings instead of one final report.

QUICK FACTS

Body	High-Powered Enquiry Committee (HPEC), five members, constituted by the Supreme Court of India
Order passed	18 August 2026; uploaded: 20 August 2026
Bench	CJI Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi, Justice V. Mohana
Chairperson	Justice R. Subhash Reddy, former judge of the Supreme Court
Events covered	student demonstrations of 20 July 2026 at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, and in Bihar
Trigger of the protests	allegations of paper leaks in examinations including NEET
Reporting pattern	periodic interim findings, not a single final report
Next listing before the Supreme Court	10 September 2026

Nine-Judge Bench Refines the 1978 'Triple Test' for Defining Industry

20 Aug

- A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court delivered judgment on 20 August 2026 on the meaning of 'industry' under Section 2(j) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.
- By a 5:4 majority the Bench held that the classic 'triple test' laid down in Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board v. A. Rajappa (1978) requires further refinement.
- By a separate 6:3 majority the Bench held that the reference seeking reconsideration of the 1978 judgment was validly made and maintainable.
- The reformulated test will operate prospectively; pending disputes under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 will continue to be decided on the original 1978 definition.
- The Court held that the 1978 interpretation will not govern the term 'industry' under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020.

QUICK FACTS

Judgment date	20 August 2026; verdict reserved on 19 March 2026 after three days of continuous arguments
Bench strength	nine judges, led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant
Provision at issue	Section 2(j), Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, which defines 'industry'
Precedent revisited	Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board v. A. Rajappa (1978), a seven-judge decision
Split on merits	5:4 in favour of refining the triple test
Split on maintainability of the reference	6:3 in favour
Dissenting on merits	Justices B.V. Nagarathna, Dipankar Datta, Ujjal Bhuyan and Joymalya Bagchi
Reference case	State of Uttar Pradesh v. Jai Bir Singh

District Collectors Empowered to Grant Citizenship Under CAA in 8 States and UTs

19 Aug

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified the Citizenship (Third Amendment) Rules, 2026, empowering District Collectors to receive, scrutinise and decide citizenship applications under Section 6B of the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The change applies in eight States and Union Territories - Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and the non-tribal areas of Assam and Tripura.
- A separate MHA order of 19 August 2026 transfers pending Section 6B applications from the Empowered Committees and District Level Committees to the Collectors concerned.
- Collectors may now verify documents, hold any inquiry they consider necessary, administer the Oath of Allegiance and grant citizenship to applicants found fit and proper - replacing the committee mechanism set up on 11 March 2024.

- The notification also rescinded two administrative orders dated 20 February 2026 and 2 March 2026, while saving everything already done under them.

QUICK FACTS

Instrument	Citizenship (Third Amendment) Rules, 2026, notified by the Ministry of Home Affairs
Provision affected	Section 6B of the Citizenship Act, 1955, inserted by the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019
New deciding authority	the District Collector
Coverage	Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and the non-tribal areas of Assam and Tripura
Mechanism replaced	Empowered Committees and District Level Committees introduced on 11 March 2024
Companion order	MHA order of 19 August 2026 transferring pending applications to Collectors
Rescinded	administrative orders of 20 February 2026 and 2 March 2026, with actions already taken saved

Supreme Court Upholds Hanging as India's Lawful Mode of Execution

18 Aug

- On 18 August 2026 the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of execution by hanging, dismissing a public interest litigation that challenged it as cruel and violative of dignity under Article 21.
- A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta held that the petitioner had placed no material sufficient to displace the three-judge precedent in Deena v. Union of India (1983).
- The provision upheld is Section 393(5) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which corresponds to Section 354(5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- The Court noted that Parliament consciously retained hanging while overhauling the criminal laws, and that Law Commission reports are recommendatory and cannot override a statute.
- The Court clarified that its dismissal does not foreclose future constitutional scrutiny if compelling scientific or medical evidence displaces the factual basis of Deena.

QUICK FACTS

Date of order	18 August 2026
Bench	Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta (two judges)
Petitioner	advocate Rishi Malhotra, by way of public interest litigation
Provision upheld	Section 393(5), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (earlier Section 354(5), CrPC 1973)
Precedent relied on	Deena v. Union of India (1983), a three-judge bench, later affirmed in Shashi Nayar v. Union of India (1992)
Ground of challenge	right to die with dignity under Article 21
Alternative sought	lethal injection, electrocution, lethal gas or shooting
Court's caveat	the dismissal does not bar a future challenge on stronger scientific evidence

Supreme Court Issues Directions to Curb Black Money and Voter Inducement in Elections

17 Aug

- On 17 August 2026 the Supreme Court issued a set of directions to curb the use of unaccounted cash and voter inducement in elections, in State of Karnataka and Another v. Prathik Parasrampuria.
- The bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N. Kotiswar Singh held that a choice influenced by external inducement is no longer the voter's own choice, and that black money in elections strikes at the core of democracy.
- Key directions: cash or asset seizures must be reported to the jurisdictional District Magistrate or court within 24 hours with written reasons showing a prima facie electoral nexus, and seizures above Rs 10 lakh must be forwarded to income-tax authorities.

- Investigating officers must endeavour to complete investigations within one year of FIR registration, with quarterly status reports to the Election Commission through nodal officers, and High Courts may designate special courts for the speedy trial of cases against candidates and sitting legislators.
- Crucially, withdrawal of a criminal case against an election candidate now requires the approval of the concerned High Court; a compliance report is due by 18 November 2026.

QUICK FACTS

Judgment date	17 August 2026
Case	State of Karnataka and Another v. Prathik Parasrampuria
Citations	2026 INSC 868; 2026 LiveLaw (SC) 816; 2026 SCC OnLine SC 1587
Bench	Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice N. Kotiswar Singh
Origin	an appeal against a Karnataka High Court order quashing a 2014 FIR over cash allegedly hoarded for bribing voters
Seized in the search	Rs 20,48,355 in cash, along with a laptop, cheque books, loose cheque leaves and a pen drive

- The FIR was registered on 11 April 2014 under Sections 171-E and 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860
- The Court widened the case beyond the FIR and issued notice to the Election Commission of India, the Union Government and all States and Union Territories
- Data before the Court from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections: 3,87,430 FIRs, of which 1,66,044 - about 42.9 per cent - ended in conviction
- Compliance report to be filed by 18 November 2026

Amicus Tells Supreme Court 4,192 Criminal Cases Pending Against MPs and MLAs

17 Aug

- An affidavit by amicus curiae Vijay Hansaria told the Supreme Court that 4,192 criminal cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs were pending as of July 2026.
- The data was filed in the long-running public interest litigation of Ashwini Upadhyay seeking speedy trials of legislators, in which the Court had ordered dedicated special courts in 2017.
- 251 of 543 Lok Sabha members and 75 of 233 Rajya Sabha members have declared criminal cases; 14 of 28 Chief Ministers face criminal charges.
- Special courts disposed of 1,243 cases in 2025 but 1,050 fresh cases were registered, so the backlog barely moves; Uttar Pradesh alone has 1,171 pending trials.

QUICK FACTS

What	a status affidavit by the amicus curiae on criminal cases against legislators, reported on 17 August 2026
Filed by	senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, amicus curiae, through advocate Sneha Kalita
In which case	the public interest litigation of Ashwini Upadhyay seeking expeditious trial of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs
Headline finding	4,192 cases pending against sitting and former legislators as of July 2026
Origin of the special courts	the Supreme Court's order of 14 December 2017, which directed dedicated fast-track courts for legislators' cases
Monitoring	on 9 November 2023 the Court directed High Courts to constitute special benches to supervise these trials

- The affidavit runs to 96 pages and is filed periodically to track whether the special-court experiment is working

5. Defence

1 article

DRDO Invites Private Firms as Development-cum-Production Partners for Missiles

18 Aug

- DRDO issued an Expression of Interest on 18 August 2026 through Research Centre Imarat, Hyderabad, inviting Indian private firms to become long-term partners in missile and guided bomb production.
- The proposal uses the Development-cum-Production Partner model: DRDO keeps design and development, the private partner takes prototype integration, qualification and series production.
- It covers strategic weapon systems including the Agni series, submarine-launched systems and hypersonic missiles under development.
- Applicants must hold defence manufacturing and PESO licences, show a net worth above Rs 34 crore and profitability in at least two of the last five years, with a minimum annual turnover of Rs 100 crore.
- DRDO plans to select at least two companies for each weapon project, with bulk production orders of 50 to 100 units; proposals close on 24 September 2026 after a technical discussion on 2 September.

QUICK FACTS

Issued by	DRDO, through Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, for the Missile and Strategic Systems cluster
Date	18 August 2026
Instrument	Expression of Interest (EoI) to shortlist Development-cum-Production Partners (DcPPs)
Systems covered	Agni-series missiles, future strategic variants, submarine-launched systems, hypersonic missiles and guided bombs
Eligibility	defence manufacturing licence and PESO licence; net worth above Rs 34 crore; profit in at least two of the last five years; minimum annual turnover of Rs 100 crore
Partners per project	at least two companies
Production scale	bulk orders of 50 to 100 units
Timeline	technical discussion on 2 September 2026; proposals close 24 September 2026

6. Science & Tech

4 articles

WHO Sends 70,000 Ervebo Doses to DR Congo Amid Fastest Ebola Outbreak on Record

20 Aug

- The World Health Organization and its partners announced on 20 August 2026 that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will receive 70,000 doses of the Ervebo Ebola vaccine.
- Of these, 50,000 doses go to front-line and health workers on WHO expert advice, while 20,000 are reserved for a Phase 3 trial testing whether the vaccine works against the Bundibugyo virus driving the outbreak.
- The outbreak, declared in mid-May 2026 and now spread across six provinces of eastern Congo, had recorded 5,208 confirmed cases and 2,476 deaths, and is spreading about three times faster than the 2014-16 West Africa epidemic.
- Ervebo is licensed against Zaire ebolavirus, not Bundibugyo virus, so its use here rests on early laboratory and animal data suggesting it may offer some cross-protection.
- A first consignment of 16,250 doses reached Kinshasa on 22 August 2026.

QUICK FACTS

Announced by	the World Health Organization and partners, on 20 August 2026.
Quantity	70,000 doses of Ervebo for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Split	50,000 doses for front-line and health workers; 20,000 for a Phase 3 clinical trial against the Bundibugyo virus.
Manufacturer of Ervebo	Merck.

- The outbreak was declared in mid-May 2026 and now covers six provinces of eastern Congo.
- Ebola was first identified in 1976, in southern Sudan and in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

QpiAI Opens 8-Inch Quantum Chip Foundry in Bengaluru Under National Quantum Mission

17 Aug

- QpiAI inaugurated an 8-inch quantum processing unit manufacturing facility at Jakkur, Bengaluru, on 17 August 2026.
- The foundry is Phase 2 of the company's 70,000 sq ft research centre and can fabricate flip-chip superconducting processors of up to 128 physical qubits.
- Lithography, etching, patterning, assembly and packaging will all be carried out on site, keeping quantum hardware production within India.
- Phase 3 targets a single QPU with 10,000 physical qubits, using 3D chip-stacking.
- QpiAI is one of eight startups selected under the National Quantum Mission, approved in 2023 with an outlay of about Rs 6,003.65 crore.

QUICK FACTS

Capacity	flip-chip superconducting processors of up to 128 physical qubits, plus peripheral chips and sensors
On-site processes	lithography, etching, patterning, assembly and packaging
Phase 3 target	a single QPU carrying 10,000 physical qubits

- Facility inaugurated at Jakkur, Bengaluru, on 17 August 2026
- An 8-inch (200 mm) quantum processing unit fabrication line, described as Asia's largest quantum chip foundry
- Phase 2 of QpiAI's 70,000 square foot research and development centre

Draft SHANTI Act Rules Open Nuclear Power to Private and Foreign Players

15 Aug

- The Department of Atomic Energy issued draft rules under the SHANTI Act, 2025 on 14 August 2026, setting out how private and foreign players may enter nuclear power.
- The SHANTI Act repealed the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, ending roughly six decades of exclusive state control.
- A single composite licence will cover construction, ownership, operation and decommissioning, and cannot be split; foreign-designed reactors must be certified in their country of origin.
- Foreign direct investment of up to 49% is permitted through joint ventures, and operators must hold insurance or financial security against nuclear damage.
- The government told the Lok Sabha on 12 August 2026 that India is targeting 100 GWe of nuclear capacity by 2047 under the Nuclear Energy Mission.

QUICK FACTS

Law	Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025
Presidential assent	20 December 2025, by President Droupadi Murmu
Draft rules issued by	Department of Atomic Energy, on 14 August 2026
Laws repealed	Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010
Foreign investment	up to 49% FDI through joint ventures
Licence design	one composite licence covering building, owning, operating and decommissioning — it cannot be applied for, granted or split activity by activity
Capacity target	100 GWe by 2047 under the Nuclear Energy Mission (stated in the Lok Sabha on 12 August 2026)
Interim build-out	indigenous 700 MWe reactors plus five Small Modular Reactors by 2033
First private movers	Adani Power incorporated Rawatbhata-Raj Atomic Energy Ltd and Coastal-Maha Atomic Energy Ltd on 2 May 2026

VIHAAN: India's Indigenous Broadband Networking Chip Clears First-Pass Silicon

15 Aug

- Chennai-based fabless startup Aheesa Digital Innovations achieved first-pass silicon success for VIHAAN, an indigenous broadband networking System-on-Chip, announced by MeitY on 15 August 2026.
- VIHAAN is built on the open RISC-V architecture and runs on C-DAC's indigenous 64-bit VEGA processor core, and is designed for fibre-to-the-home routers and optical network terminals.
- The chip was developed with support from the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme under the Semicon India Programme; production tape-out is targeted for 2027.

QUICK FACTS

Chip	VIHAAN, a broadband networking System-on-Chip (SoC) for optical fibre customer premises equipment
Designer	Aheesa Digital Innovations, a fabless semiconductor startup based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu
Processor core	VEGA, the indigenous 64-bit RISC-V processor developed by C-DAC
Backing	Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme of MeitY, under the Semicon India Programme
Milestone	first-pass silicon success announced on 15 August 2026; the chip was taped out on 26 January 2026
Next step	production tape-out targeted for 2027

7. Environment

2 articles

E20 Petrol Goes Nationwide: The Legacy-Fleet and Fuel-Quality Debate

18 Aug

- E20 - petrol blended with 20 per cent anhydrous ethanol at a minimum Research Octane Number of 95 - became mandatory nationwide from 1 April 2026, notified on 17 February 2026.
- Unblended petrol (E0) has been withdrawn from retail pumps, leaving no lower-blend option for older vehicles.
- About 240 million of India's roughly 310 million petrol vehicles - close to 77 per cent, mostly two-wheelers - predate the April 2023 cut-off for E20-ready hardware.
- India reached 20 per cent average ethanol blending by March 2025, five years ahead of its original 2030 target.
- SIAM sent the government a communication on fuel contamination on 28 July 2026 and withdrew it in early August, saying the figures needed authentication, while reaffirming support for the programme.

QUICK FACTS

Programme	Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme; 20 per cent blending reached by March 2025

- E20 = petrol blended with 20 per cent anhydrous ethanol, minimum Research Octane Number (RON) 95
- Nationwide mandatory sale from 1 April 2026; notification issued 17 February 2026
- Pure unblended petrol (E0) phased out from retail outlets
- Only vehicles manufactured after April 2023 carry factory-fitted ethanol-compatible fuel systems
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has told Parliament that no formal inter-ministerial assessment has quantified how much of the fleet is genuinely E20-compatible

BRICS Environment Ministers Reject EU Carbon Border Tax as Protectionist

18 Aug

- The 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi adopted a Joint Ministerial Statement on 18 August 2026 opposing the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).
- The statement called carbon border adjustment mechanisms 'unilateral, punitive, discriminatory and protectionist' and said they undermine developing countries' climate efforts.
- The meeting was held under India's BRICS Chairship 2026 and was led by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav; four knowledge compendiums were also launched.
- The ministers sought greater climate finance, including a tripling of adaptation finance by 2035 and more grants and concessional funding.
- CBAM entered its definitive phase on 1 January 2026 and covers iron and steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen and electricity.

QUICK FACTS

Event	12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting, New Delhi
Date	18 August 2026, under India's BRICS Chairship 2026
Chaired by	Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Outcome	Joint Ministerial Statement adopted by consensus, plus the launch of four knowledge compendiums
Target of the statement	the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)
Language used	'unilateral, punitive, discriminatory and protectionist' measures not in line with international law
Climate finance ask	triple adaptation finance by 2035, with more grants and concessional finance
India's Chairship theme	'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability'

- Supported by ministers and senior representatives of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the UAE, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia

8. Schemes & Committees

2 articles

West Bengal Rolls Out Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, the Last State to Join

16 Aug

- West Bengal rolled out the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana from 16 August 2026, the day being observed in the State as Ayushman Diwas.
- It is the 36th and last State or Union Territory to implement AB-PM-JAY, having stayed outside the scheme since its launch in 2018.
- The State estimates around 1.5 crore families, nearly 6 crore people, will be covered, with about 1,930 hospitals empanelled.
- A parallel State scheme, the Mukhyamantri Swasthya Bima Yojana, covers eligible residents who do not qualify under AB-PM-JAY.
- The existing Swasthya Sathi scheme will run alongside for two to three months, with phased withdrawal after a review of operations and hospital empanelment.

QUICK FACTS

Rollout date in West Bengal	16 August 2026, observed as Ayushman Diwas
Position	36th State/UT to implement AB-PM-JAY, and the last to join
Coverage claimed by the State	about 1.5 crore families, nearly 6 crore people
Hospitals empanelled in the State	about 1,930
Annual cover	Rs 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation
State companion scheme	Mukhyamantri Swasthya Bima Yojana for residents not covered by AB-PM-JAY
Transition	Swasthya Sathi to run in parallel for two to three months before phased withdrawal

– Eligible families recorded by the National Health Authority at the MoU stage: about 1.43 crore

PM Announces Rs 85,000 Crore for Samudra Manthan Offshore Exploration Scheme

15 Aug

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an allocation of Rs 85,000 crore for Samudra Manthan in the 80th Independence Day address from the Red Fort on 15 August 2026.
- Samudra Manthan is the National Offshore Exploration Scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, approved by the Union Cabinet on 31 July 2026 as a Central Sector Scheme running up to FY 2030-31 with an outlay of Rs 84,084 crore.
- The Union Government will bear up to 50% of the cost of drilling deepwater exploration wells, sharing the exploration risk that has kept private capital away.
- Offshore areas restricted as 'no-go' have been cut from 13.67 lakh sq km to 24,832 sq km, opening roughly 99% of India's coastal waters to exploration.
- The scheme is expected to catalyse reserve accretion of over 600 Million Metric Tons of Oil Equivalent (MMTOE).

QUICK FACTS

Scheme name	Samudra Manthan — National Offshore Exploration Scheme, named after the churning of the ocean in Indian legend.
Ministry	Petroleum and Natural Gas. Type: Central Sector Scheme (fully funded by the Union Government).
Cabinet approval	31 July 2026, outlay Rs 84,084 crore, running up to FY 2030-31.
Government support	up to 50% of the cost of drilling deepwater exploration wells.
Expected outcome	reserve accretion of over 600 MMTOE.

– Announced allocation on 15 August 2026 from the Red Fort: Rs 85,000 crore for accelerated implementation.

9. Agreements & MoUs

2 articles

India and Japan Sign Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security

20 Aug

- India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation in New Delhi on 20 August 2026.
- It was signed during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi.
- The arrangement frames cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.
- It covers maritime domain awareness, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, reciprocal logistics and port access.
- The two sides also agreed to work on undersea mine countermeasures, a ship repair arrangement and joint naval shipbuilding and design.

QUICK FACTS

Instrument	Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation
Signed	New Delhi, 20 August 2026
Signatories	Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (India) and Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi (Japan)
Services covered	Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force
Scope	maritime domain awareness, search and rescue, HADR, ship visits, joint exercises, personnel exchange, reciprocal logistics
Additional areas	undersea mine countermeasures, ship repair arrangement, joint naval shipbuilding and design under Make in India
Strategic frame	Free and Open Indo-Pacific; India's MAHASAGAR vision

India and Mauritius Sign Five-Year Fuel Pact; IOC to Meet Entire Import Need

20 Aug

- On 20 August 2026, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri met Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam in Port Louis, where a government-to-government MoU on oil and gas cooperation was exchanged and a long-term fuel supply agreement was concluded.
- The five-year sales and purchase agreement is between Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) and the State Trading Corporation (STC) of Mauritius, under which IOCL will supply the island's entire import requirement of motor spirit (petrol), high speed diesel and aviation turbine fuel.
- It is the first long-term supply agreement concluded by an Indian public sector oil marketing company outside South Asia in recent years.
- The G2G MoU covers petroleum product supply, training and capacity building for Mauritian officials, and cooperation in biofuels.
- On 21 August, Puri and Mauritius Energy and Public Utilities Minister Patrick Gervais Assirvaden broke ground on a 27,500-tonne (27.5 TMT) marine bunker fuel storage facility of IndianOil (Mauritius) Ltd at Mer Rouge, Port Louis, and jointly launched a Biofuels Country Landscape policy framework developed under the Global Biofuels Alliance.

QUICK FACTS

Indian signatory	Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL); Mauritian signatory: State Trading Corporation (STC), the state importer of petroleum products
Duration	five years; coverage: the entire import requirement of Mauritius for petrol (motor spirit), diesel (high speed diesel) and aviation turbine fuel

- Date of the meeting and exchange of documents: 20 August 2026, Port Louis, during Hardeep Singh Puri's 20-21 August official visit to Mauritius
- Alongside it, a government-to-government MoU on oil and gas cooperation was exchanged with Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam
- First long-term supply agreement by an Indian PSU oil marketing company outside South Asia in recent years

– Groundbreaking on 21 August for a 27.5 TMT marine bunker fuel storage facility at Mer Rouge, Port Louis, developed by IndianOil (Mauritius) Ltd at an investment of about USD 25 million

10. Summits & Conferences

1 article

UNCCD COP17 Opens in Ulaanbaatar Under the Theme Restoring Land, Restoring Hope

17 Aug

- The 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification opened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 17 August 2026 and runs to 28 August.
- The theme is 'Restoring Land, Restoring Hope'; Mongolia is the first country in East and Central Asia to host a UNCCD COP.
- Nearly 77 per cent of Mongolia's land is degraded, making the host itself a case study in the convention's subject.
- The UNCCD has 197 Parties - 196 countries and the European Union - and is the only legally binding international agreement on sustainable land management.
- Its central goal is Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030; India hosted COP14 in New Delhi in 2019.

QUICK FACTS

Event	17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UNCCD
Venue and dates	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 17 to 28 August 2026
Theme	'Restoring Land, Restoring Hope'
Parties	197 - 196 countries plus the European Union

- Mongolia is the first country in East and Central Asia to host a UNCCD COP
- Nearly 77 per cent of Mongolia's land is degraded

11. Ranks & Reports

1 article

NITI Aayog Report Finds 8.7 Crore Young Indians Outside Work, Study or Training

20 Aug

- NITI Aayog's report 'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047' estimates that 8.7 crore Indians aged 15 to 29 are neither in education, employment nor training - the NEET group.
- That is about 11 per cent of the 15-29 age group; roughly 88 per cent of NEET youth are engaged in domestic work and caregiving.
- The report finds that only 8.25 per cent of graduates work in roles that match their qualifications, pointing to a weak link between formal education and employability.
- It recommends universal General Employability and Entrepreneurship Skills from Class 6 to Class 12 and structured vocational 'Kaushal Tracks' from Class 9, noting that fewer than one in 12 secondary schools currently offer vocational subjects.
- Other recommendations include making apprenticeships a primary route to employment, a unified digital tracking system for learner records, industry-aligned specialisations in higher education, and skills-first hiring in place of degree filters.

QUICK FACTS

Report	'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', released by NITI Aayog in August 2026
NEET youth	8.7 crore Indians aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training
Share	about 11 per cent of the 15-29 age group
Data source	78th round of the National Sample Survey, conducted in 2021
NITI Aayog	set up 1 January 2015; Chairperson is the Prime Minister; Vice-Chairperson Ashok Kumar Lahiri

- About 88 per cent of NEET youth are engaged in domestic work and caregiving
- Only 8.25 per cent of graduates are employed in roles matching their qualifications
- Fewer than one in 12 secondary schools currently offer vocational subjects

12. Awards & Honours

1 article

National Sports Awards 2025: 17 Arjuna Awards, No Khel Ratna Recipient

18 Aug

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2025 on 18 August 2026.
- Seventeen athletes were selected for the Arjuna Award, including chess players Divya Deshmukh and Vidit Gujarathi and high jumper Tejaswin Shankar.
- No sportsperson was chosen for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award, India's highest sporting honour, for 2025.
- Former footballer I. Arumainayagam received the Arjuna Award (Lifetime), and five coaches received the Dronacharya Award across the regular and lifetime categories.
- The Army Paralympic Node, Pune won the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2025; the list was finalised by a committee chaired by Justice (Retd.) Arun Kumar Mishra.

QUICK FACTS

Arjuna Award	17 sportspersons across athletics, badminton, boxing, chess, hockey, kabaddi, rowing, shooting and para-sport
Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna	no recipient selected for 2025
Arjuna Award (Lifetime)	I. Arumainayagam, football
Dronacharya Award	3 coaches in the regular category, 2 in the lifetime category
Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar	Army Paralympic Node, Pune

- Announced on 18 August 2026 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for the award year 2025
- Selection committee chaired by Justice (Retd.) Arun Kumar Mishra, former judge of the Supreme Court of India

13. History & Culture

1 article

Vande Mataram Sung From Red Fort for First Time as National Song Turns 150

15 Aug

- Vande Mataram was rendered from the ramparts of the Red Fort for the first time during India's 80th Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 2026.
- The rendition marked the 150th year of the national song, which Bankim Chandra Chatterjee first published in his journal Bangadarshan in 1875.
- A year-long nationwide commemoration approved by the Union Cabinet runs from 7 November 2025 to 7 November 2026.
- Rabindranath Tagore set the song to music and sang it at the 1896 Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress.
- The Constituent Assembly in 1950 gave Vande Mataram equal honour and status with the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana.

QUICK FACTS

Composer/author	Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay)
First published	1875, in Bankim's own Bengali journal Bangadarshan
Novel it belongs to	Anandamath, serialised from 1881 and published as a book in 1882
Constituent Assembly, 1950	accorded 'equal honour and status' with Jana Gana Mana
Year-long commemoration	7 November 2025 to 7 November 2026, inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 7 November 2025
First-ever rendition from the Red Fort	15 August 2026, India's 80th Independence Day

- Set to music and first sung at a Congress session: Rabindranath Tagore, 1896 Calcutta session
- Congress Working Committee resolution of 29 October 1937: only the first two stanzas to be used at public functions
- Union Cabinet approved nationwide 150th-anniversary celebrations on 1 October 2025