

Weekly Current Affairs 16th August to 22nd August 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

India social media now resemble China's tightly controlled cyberspace

In the News: A recent The Hindu editorial raised concerns over increasing governmental control and regulatory pressure on social-media platforms in India, comparing the trend with China's tightly regulated cyberspace. The immediate context included the summoning of senior Meta officials after Facebook temporarily restricted a video message posted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The issue has renewed debate over intermediary liability, online censorship and freedom of expression.

Key Points:

- **Section 79 of the IT Act:** Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 grants conditional safe-harbour protection to online intermediaries for content posted by third parties. The protection is available when intermediaries follow prescribed due-diligence requirements and comply with lawful directions.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 regulate social-media intermediaries and digital-media platforms. They prescribe obligations relating to grievance redressal, user complaints, due diligence and handling of unlawful content.
- **Section 69A:** Section 69A of the Information Technology Act empowers the Central Government to block public access to online information on specified grounds. These include sovereignty and integrity of India, defence, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States and public order.
- **Freedom of Speech:** Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression. Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions on specified grounds, making online-content regulation an important issue in constitutional law.
- **Shreya Singhal Judgment:** In *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* (2015), the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act as unconstitutional for violating freedom of speech. The judgment, however, upheld the constitutional validity of the blocking mechanism under Section 69A subject to statutory safeguards.

India at 80, democracy in search of renewal

In the News: India observed its 80th Independence Day on August 15, 2026, completing 79 years since independence in 1947. A recent commentary titled *India at 80, a Democracy in Search of Renewal* examined the functioning of democratic institutions, constitutional values, political accountability and social fraternity. The occasion has brought renewed attention to India's democratic and constitutional journey.

Key Points:

- **Constitutional Journey:** The Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution on November 26, 1949, while it came into force on January 26, 1950. India consequently became a sovereign democratic republic governed by a written Constitution and a parliamentary system.
- **Election Commission:** Article 324 of the Constitution vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission of India. It conducts elections to Parliament, State Legislatures and the offices of the President and Vice-President.
- **Universal Adult Suffrage:** Article 326 provides for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage. The voting age was reduced from 21 years to 18 years through the 61st Constitutional Amendment Act, 1988.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** The Supreme Court propounded the Basic Structure Doctrine in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* in 1973. Parliament may amend the Constitution under Article 368, but it cannot destroy basic constitutional features such as democracy, judicial review and constitutional supremacy.

- **Grassroots Democracy:** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, enacted in 1992, provided constitutional status to Panchayats and Municipalities respectively. Parts IX and IX-A of the Constitution provide the framework for democratic decentralisation in rural and urban India.

BJP Announces New National Team Under Nitin Nabin: Full List of Leaders and Key Appointments

In the News: The Bharatiya Janata Party announced a new national team of office-bearers on 17 August 2026 under party president Nitin Nabin. The restructuring includes 13 national vice-presidents, eight national general secretaries and 16 national secretaries, besides new appointments to the party's frontal organisations, media and social-media teams.

Key Points:

- **National Vice-Presidents:** Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Tirath Singh Rawat, Ram Madhav, Baijayant Jay Panda, D. Purandeshwari, Rekha Verma, Varshaben Doshi, Bharti Pravin Pawar, Manpreet Singh Badal, Lal Singh Arya, M. Nagaraja, Tariq Mansoor and Madhuchandra Kar were named national vice-presidents.
- **National General Secretaries:** Vinod Tawde, Sunil Bansal, Biplab Kumar Deb, Smriti Irani, Satish Poonia, Gajendra Patel, Harish Dwivedi and Sanjay Bhatia were appointed national general secretaries. B.L. Santhosh continues as National General Secretary (Organisation).
- **National Secretaries:** The 16 national secretaries include Kavita Patidar, K. Surendran, Bhola Singh, Pradip Varma, Jagdish Patel, Sandeep Pathak, Phangnon Konyak, Sangeeta Yadav, Anil Antony, M. Venkateshan, Manoj Tigga, Siddharth Shambhu, Swadesh Singh, Mriganka Deo Barman, Rohan Gupta and Jai Prakash.
- **Other Key Appointments:** Piyush Goyal has been appointed national treasurer, while Tarun Chugh is Central Office in-charge. Sambit Patra continues as North-East Coordinator, and Anil Baluni remains the national media convenor.
- **Morcha Leadership:** Hemang Joshi heads the Yuva Morcha, Roop Kumari Choudhary the Mahila Morcha, Amarpal Maurya the OBC Morcha, Bansilal Gurjar the Kisan Morcha, Shivesh Kumar Ram the SC Morcha, Mannalal Rawat the ST Morcha and Kunwar Basit Ali the Minority Morcha.

National Cooperative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026

In the News: The National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was passed by Parliament in August 2026 and subsequently received Presidential assent. It became the National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2026, modifying the NCDC Act, 1962.

Key Points:

- **Expanded Mandate:** The amendment broadens NCDC's mandate from financing programmes in specified sectors to planning, promoting and financing wider forms of cooperative development.
- **Direct Financial Assistance:** NCDC can provide loans and grants directly to cooperative societies and other eligible entities engaged in cooperative development.
- **Investment Powers:** With approval from the Central Government, NCDC can participate in the share capital of cooperative societies and other entities involved in cooperative development.
- **Broader Sectoral Coverage:** The definition of foodstuffs has been expanded to include processed food and other edible products. Certain restrictions related to rural areas have also been removed.
- **About NCDC:** NCDC is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Cooperation and was established under the National Co-operative Development Corporation Act, 1962.

India Sets Up Panel to Review Teesta Barrage Project Amid China-Bangladesh Cooperation

In the News: India has constituted a high-powered committee to examine the restoration and future management of the Teesta Barrage Project in West Bengal. The move comes amid increasing China-Bangladesh technical cooperation relating to management and restoration projects on the Teesta River.

Key Points:

- **High-Powered Committee:** The 12-member committee was constituted in July 2026 and is chaired by the Chairman of the Central Water Commission. Representatives from Sikkim and West Bengal are also included.
- **Six-Month Mandate:** The committee has been given six months to examine water use, future demand, siltation, water availability, climate impacts and strengthening of barrage infrastructure.
- **River Basin Management:** The panel will examine regulation of water releases from upstream dams and storage facilities and measures to improve the carrying capacity of the Teesta and its drainage channels.
- **China-Bangladesh Dimension:** China has agreed to extend technical cooperation to Bangladesh in relation to management and restoration work concerning the Teesta River.
- **About the Teesta:** The Teesta originates in the Himalayan region, flows through Sikkim and West Bengal and enters Bangladesh. It is important for irrigation, hydropower and flood management.

Indian Army Chief Dhiraj Seth Gets Nepal's Honorary General Rank

In the News: Indian Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth was conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army on 17 August 2026. Nepal President Ram Chandra Paudel presented the honour during a ceremony at Sheetal Niwas in Kathmandu.

Key Points:

- **Honorary Rank:** General Seth received the rank of Honorary General of the Nepali Army from President Ram Chandra Paudel, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Nepali Army.
- **Long-Standing Tradition:** India and Nepal have followed the practice of conferring honorary general ranks on each other's army chiefs since 1950.
- **Official Visit:** The honour was conferred during General Seth's official visit to Nepal at the invitation of Nepal's Army Chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel.
- **India's Army Chief:** General Dhiraj Seth assumed charge as India's 31st Chief of the Army Staff on 30 June 2026, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi.
- **Military Relationship:** India and Nepal maintain close defence ties through training programmes, military exchanges and institutional contacts.

India-USN EOD Exercise 2026 Concludes in Kochi

In the News: The 8th edition of the Indian Navy-US Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Exercise 2026 was held from 10-14 August 2026 at the Southern Naval Command, Kochi, Kerala. The five-day bilateral engagement brought together specialist diving and EOD teams of the two navies. It focused on improving interoperability and responses to complex maritime explosive threats.

Key Points:

- **8th Edition and Venue:** The 2026 exercise was the eighth edition of this specialised bilateral naval engagement. It was hosted by the Southern Naval Command at Kochi, an important training establishment of the Indian Navy.
- **Main Training Areas:** The exercise featured Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, cross-training, equipment demonstrations and scenario-based practical drills. Training addressed underwater mines, unexploded ordnance and other maritime explosive hazards.
- **Use of Advanced Technology:** The exercise included demonstrations of modern EOD technologies, including Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs). Such systems allow underwater inspection and handling of dangerous objects while reducing risk to divers.
- **Objective of the Exercise:** A major objective was to enhance interoperability and operational synergy between specialist Indian and US naval teams. Mine clearance and port security are important for maintaining safe maritime trade routes and naval operation.

NTA Introduces Four-Tier Question Paper Checks

In the News: The National Testing Agency (NTA) has announced a major overhaul of its question-paper preparation system by introducing four levels of scrutiny before an examination. The agency has also removed around 600 experts

from its panels and begun inducting new specialists. The changes follow concerns over errors and irregularities in major national examinations.

Key Points:

- **Four-Tier Scrutiny:** Every NTA question paper will now undergo four levels of checking before being used in an examination. The aim is to identify factual, technical and quality-related problems before papers reach candidates.
- **Restructuring of Expert Panels:** Around 600 experts have been removed from existing NTA panels, with new specialists being onboarded. This forms part of a wider attempt to strengthen accountability in question-setting and examination management.
- **Reason for Reforms:** The overhaul follows controversies surrounding major examinations, including NEET-UG and UGC-NET, which raised questions regarding examination integrity and errors. The reforms are intended to restore candidate confidence in the national testing system.
- **Security Measures:** Security around NTA's operations is also being strengthened, with CISF security planned for NTA offices. The objective is to improve protection of sensitive examination-related material and institutional infrastructure.
- **About NTA:** NTA was established by the Ministry of Education as an independent and autonomous testing organisation under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. It conducts standardised entrance and eligibility examinations for higher-education institutions.

Supreme Court on Electoral Black Money

In the News: The Supreme Court of India has held that state governments must obtain the approval of the concerned High Court before criminal cases involving electoral malpractices are withdrawn. Such cases may include allegations involving black money and other unfair means during elections. The ruling seeks to prevent politically motivated withdrawal of sensitive election-related cases after a change of government.

Key Points:

- **High Court Approval Required:** State governments can no longer facilitate withdrawal of such electoral-malpractice prosecutions without scrutiny by the relevant High Court. The safeguard is aimed at preventing arbitrary closure of politically sensitive criminal proceedings.
- **Why the Court Intervened:** The Court took note of the practice of election-related cases being dropped after a change in political dispensation. The decision strengthens judicial oversight over cases involving allegations of unfair electoral practices.
- **BNSS Provision:** Section 360 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 deals with withdrawal from prosecution. It allows a Public Prosecutor or Assistant Public Prosecutor to seek withdrawal before judgment, subject to the consent of the court.
- **Representation of the People Act:** The Representation of the People Act, 1951 is the principal legislation dealing with conduct of elections, electoral offences and corrupt practices. Section 123 defines various corrupt practices, including bribery.

SC Directs Nationwide Protection of Elephant Corridors

In the News: The Supreme Court of India has directed the Union government to undertake a nationwide survey of elephant corridors and identify obstructions affecting the natural movement of elephants. The Court observed that States and Union Territories cannot block recognised elephant corridors merely on the ground of possible harm to persons or property. The directions were issued while hearing a matter concerning human-elephant conflict.

Key Points:

- **Nationwide Survey:** The Union government has been asked to identify barriers such as walls, trenches and other physical obstructions constructed along elephant corridors. The report must also indicate measures taken by States to maintain unhindered elephant movement.

- **Court Bench:** The matter was heard by a Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana. The Court stressed that elephant corridors are essential ecological pathways and should not be obstructed.
- **Human-Elephant Conflict Measures:** The Court also expressed concern over methods such as burning mashaals, fireballs, iron spikes and hulla parties used to drive elephants away. It sought measures to prevent practices that can injure or disrupt migrating elephants.
- **Elephant Corridors in India:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has ground-validated 150 elephant corridors across 15 States. West Bengal had the highest number, with 26 corridors identified in the 2023 national assessment.
- **Conservation Framework:** Elephant corridors connect fragmented habitats and help maintain movement between feeding, breeding and forest areas. India has also established 33 Elephant Reserves in 14 major elephant States to strengthen habitat conservation and reduce human-elephant conflict.

Cabinet Approves Permanent Ladakh Bench for J&K High Court

In the News: The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of a permanent Bench of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The move is intended to improve access to High Court-level justice for residents of the geographically remote UT, who currently depend mainly on the Jammu and Srinagar wings.

Key Points:

- **Common High Court:** Section 75 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 provides for a common High Court for the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The new Ladakh Bench does not create a separate High Court for Ladakh.
- **Existing Judicial Structure:** The High Court presently functions through its Jammu and Srinagar wings. The Ladakh Bench will provide an additional judicial location, reducing the need for litigants from Leh, Kargil and adjoining areas to travel outside the UT.
- **J&K Reorganisation:** The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 reorganised the former State into the UT of Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature and the UT of Ladakh without a legislature. Both Union Territories came into existence on October 31, 2019.
- **Name of the Court:** In 2021, the common court was formally renamed the **High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh** through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2021.

Centre empowers DCs in six border states, UTs to grant citizenship to eligible applicants

In the News: The Union Home Ministry notified the Citizenship (Third Amendment) Rules, 2026, authorising District Collectors in six border States and the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to deal with specified applications for citizenship by registration or naturalisation. The States covered are Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Assam and Tripura.

Key Points:

- **States and UTs Covered:** The notified arrangement covers Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, along with Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Tribal areas of Assam and Tripura have been kept outside the notified arrangement.
- **Legal Framework:** Indian citizenship is governed principally by the **Citizenship Act, 1955** and the Citizenship Rules, 2009. Section 5 deals with citizenship by registration, while Section 6 provides for citizenship by naturalisation.
- **Role of Collectors:** The Collector may scrutinise documents, conduct necessary inquiries, administer the prescribed oath of allegiance and assess whether an applicant satisfies the applicable legal conditions.
- **CAA Linkage:** Citizenship applications under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 are made under Section 6B of the Citizenship Act. It covers Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who satisfy the prescribed conditions.

Social Security, Retirement & Pension Schemes 2026

In the News: Official data released in 2026 highlighted the continued expansion of India's pension system through contributory retirement schemes, employment-linked pensions and tax-funded social assistance. The National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana have recorded substantial growth in subscribers and assets under management.

Key Points:

- **National Pension System:** The NPS is a market-linked, defined-contribution pension system regulated by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority. It had more than 2.17 crore subscribers and assets worth approximately ₹15.95 lakh crore as of March 31, 2026.
- **Unified Pension Scheme:** The UPS became operational on April 1, 2025, as an option for eligible Central Government employees covered under the NPS. It provides an assured, inflation-linked payout subject to prescribed service and contribution conditions.
- **Atal Pension Yojana:** APY primarily supports workers in the unorganised sector by providing a guaranteed monthly pension of ₹1,000 to ₹5,000 from the age of 60. Its enrolment reached 8.96 crore by March 31, 2026.
- **Other Pension Frameworks:** The Employees' Pension Scheme covers eligible organised-sector workers, while the National Social Assistance Programme provides tax-funded support to vulnerable elderly persons, widows and persons with disabilities.

Supreme Court Reduces Practice Period for Judicial Service

In the News: The Supreme Court reduced the mandatory legal-practice requirement for candidates seeking recruitment as Civil Judges (Junior Division) from three years to one year. It retained the principle that judicial officers require professional exposure but introduced intensive training and supervised clerkship after selection.

Key Points:

- **Revised Requirement:** For recruitment notifications issued on or after April 1, 2027, candidates must possess at least one year of active legal practice before appearing for the Civil Judge examination.
- **Transitional Relaxation:** Candidates covered by recruitment notifications issued between May 20, 2025 and March 31, 2027 may apply without completing the practice requirement. If selected, they will initially serve as trainee judicial officers.
- **Training and Clerkship:** Selected candidates must complete one year of intensive training at a State Judicial Academy, followed by one year of structured clerkship. The clerkship will be divided between the district judiciary and the concerned High Court.
- **Split Verdict:** The decision was delivered by a three-judge Bench comprising CJI Surya Kant and Justices A.G. Masih and K. Vinod Chandran. Justice Chandran dissented, while the majority directed that the new framework may be reviewed after gaining sufficient institutional experience.

PM-AASHA Scheme Receives ₹7,200 Crore for 2026–27

In the News: The Union Government allocated ₹7,200 crore to the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan for 2026–27. The scheme strengthens the implementation of Minimum Support Prices, protects farmers against distress sales and helps stabilise consumer prices.

Key Points:

- **Umbrella Framework:** PM-AASHA was launched in September 2018 to bring different agricultural price-support mechanisms under a unified framework. Its major components are PSS, PSF, PDPS and MIS.
- **Price Support Scheme:** PSS enables government agencies such as NAFED and NCCF to procure notified pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP when market prices fall below the notified support price.
- **Alternative Support:** Under PDPS, eligible farmers receive part of the difference between the MSP and the market price without physical procurement. MIS protects growers of perishable commodities that are generally outside the MSP framework.
- **Digital Reforms:** Aadhaar-enabled authentication and platforms such as e-NAM, e-Samridhi and e-Samyukti have been integrated to improve farmer registration, transparency, direct payments and procurement efficiency.

Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission

In the News: The Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) was recently highlighted by the Government for promoting livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurship among India's tribal population. As of August 2026, 4,172 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) have been sanctioned, benefiting around 12.48 lakh tribal members.

Key Points:

- **Objective:** PMJVM aims to strengthen tribal entrepreneurship by promoting value addition, processing, branding and marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP), agricultural products and other tribal products. It seeks to increase income by shifting tribal communities from sellers of raw produce to value-adding entrepreneurs.
- **Nodal Ministry and Implementing Agency:** The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs through the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED). TRIFED facilitates market access, enterprise development, branding and marketing of tribal products.
- **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras:** VDVks organise tribal beneficiaries into community-based groups for processing and value addition of forest and agricultural produce. As of 31 July 2026, 2,911 VDVks were functional, with reported sales of around ₹168 crore.
- **Scale of Coverage:** A total of 4,172 VDVks, covering approximately 12.48 lakh beneficiaries, have been sanctioned across 28 States and Union Territories under PMJVM. The sanctioned amount reported in August 2026 was about ₹619.17 crore.
- **MFP and Tribal Economy:** Minor Forest Produce is an important source of income for many Scheduled Tribe households. PMJVM also supports an MSP-based mechanism for MFP, helping reduce distress sales and improve returns for tribal forest gatherers.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran and Oman Reach Deal on Strait of Hormuz

In the News: Iran announced in August 2026 that it had reached an agreement with Oman on a shipping-route map through the Strait of Hormuz following technical negotiations between the two coastal States. The development is important because Hormuz is one of the world's most sensitive maritime and energy chokepoints. The agreement on shipping routes, however, does not by itself ensure complete restoration of normal commercial traffic.

Key Points:

- **Geographical Location:** The Strait of Hormuz separates Iran from Oman's Musandam Peninsula. It connects the **Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman**, which subsequently opens into the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean.
- **Energy Chokepoint:** Before recent disruptions, approximately one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments passed through the Strait of Hormuz. Disruptions therefore have direct consequences for oil prices, LNG supplies, shipping costs and energy-importing economies.
- **Iran-Oman Maritime Role:** Iran controls the northern coastline of the Strait, while Oman occupies its southern side through the Musandam Peninsula. Their geographical position has made coordination between Tehran and Muscat important for maritime navigation and shipping arrangements.

- **International Maritime Organization:** The IMO is a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for the safety and security of international shipping and prevention of marine pollution. Traffic-separation arrangements are used in congested waterways to regulate ships travelling in opposite directions.
- **UNCLOS and International Straits:** Part III of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea deals with straits used for international navigation. UNCLOS was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1994, establishing the principal international legal framework governing maritime zones and navigational rights.

Iran Criminalises Interviews with US and Israeli Media

In the News: Iran's Parliament approved the general framework of a bill on August 16, 2026 aimed at restricting communication with foreign organisations regarded as hostile to the Islamic Republic. The proposed measure covers interviews with US- and Israeli-linked media organisations and provides criminal penalties for certain unauthorised interactions. The proposal is not yet final law and requires further parliamentary consideration and Guardian Council approval.

Key Points:

- **Proposed Media Restrictions:** The draft legislation seeks to criminalise interviews and certain communications with media organisations designated as hostile. Reported provisions provide imprisonment of between six months and two years for some unauthorised media interactions.
- **Islamic Consultative Assembly:** Iran's national legislature is officially called the Islamic Consultative Assembly, commonly known as the Majlis. Members are elected, but candidates contesting parliamentary elections undergo institutional vetting within Iran's political system.
- **Guardian Council:** Iran's Guardian Council consists of 12 members. Six Islamic jurists are appointed by the Supreme Leader, while six legal jurists are elected by Parliament from candidates nominated by the head of the judiciary.
- **Legislative Review:** Bills adopted by the Majlis are reviewed by the Guardian Council for consistency with the Constitution and Islamic law. The Council can return legislation to Parliament when it finds provisions inconsistent with either requirement.
- **Political Structure of Iran:** Iran combines elected institutions such as the President and Parliament with powerful unelected institutions headed by the Supreme Leader. The Supreme Leader is Iran's highest political and religious authority and exercises significant powers over defence, security and major State institutions.

Indian tricolour hoisted atop Seattle's iconic Space Needle in historic first

In the News: The Indian Tricolour was hoisted atop Seattle's iconic Space Needle on August 15, 2025, for the first time in the landmark's history during celebrations of India's 79th Independence Day. The event involved the Consulate General of India in Seattle and local representatives. It formed part of wider cultural and diplomatic celebrations involving the Indian diaspora in the US Pacific Northwest.

Key Points:

- **Historic Flag Hoisting:** The August 15, 2025 ceremony marked the first time that the Indian national flag was raised atop the Space Needle. King County and the cities of Seattle, Bellevue, Spokane and Tacoma also issued proclamations connected with India's Independence Day celebrations.
- **About the Space Needle:** The Space Needle was constructed as the centrepiece of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, whose theme was "The Age of Space." The structure is about 605 feet high and officially opened on April 21, 1962.
- **Indian Consulate in Seattle:** India announced the establishment of a new consulate in Seattle during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US visit in June 2023. It began operations in November 2023 and became India's sixth consulate in the United States at the time.
- **Consular Jurisdiction:** The Seattle Consulate serves nine US States—Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. Its establishment expanded India's diplomatic and consular presence in the Pacific Northwest.

- **India-US Diaspora Relations:** The Pacific Northwest hosts a substantial Indian-origin community, particularly in technology, business and professional sectors. Public Independence Day celebrations and diplomatic outreach form part of India's wider people-to-people engagement with the United States.

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- **Military Relationship:** India and Nepal maintain close defence ties through training programmes, military exchanges and institutional contacts.

India-Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XV 2026

In the News: An Indian Army contingent departed for Thailand in August 2026 to participate in the 15th edition of Exercise MAITREE, the bilateral joint military exercise between India and Thailand. MAITREE-XV is aimed at strengthening defence cooperation, interoperability and mutual understanding between the Indian Army and Royal Thai Army.

Key Points:

- **15th Edition:** MAITREE-XV represents the 15th edition of the India-Thailand joint military exercise. It forms an important component of regular military-to-military engagement between the two countries.
- **Participating Forces:** The exercise is conducted between the Indian Army and the Royal Thai Army. Its primary objective is to improve joint operational skills, interoperability and professional understanding between troops of both countries.
- **Exercise Began in 2006:** Exercise MAITREE was instituted in 2006 and has developed into an important bilateral defence-training mechanism. Earlier editions have been conducted alternately in India and Thailand.
- **Operational Focus:** Previous editions have prominently focused on counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in jungle, urban and semi-urban environments. Training has included joint planning, tactical drills, surveillance and coordinated field operations.
- **Previous Edition:** MAITREE-XIV was held at the Joint Training Node, Umroi, Meghalaya, from 1-14 September 2025. It focused on company-level counter-terrorism operations in semi-urban terrain under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

US Sanctions ICC President and Senior Trial Lawyer

In the News: The United States imposed sanctions on International Criminal Court President Tomoko Akane of Japan and Senior Trial Lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal on 18 August 2026. The action was announced under Executive Order 14203, which provides for sanctions relating to the ICC. The move further intensified tensions between Washington and the Hague-based court.

Key Points:

- **Officials Sanctioned:** Tomoko Akane, a Japanese judge, serves as President of the ICC, while Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal is a senior trial lawyer associated with the Court's prosecution work. The United States accused them of participating in proceedings involving nationals of non-member countries.
- **Nature of Sanctions:** The measures can freeze property and financial assets under US jurisdiction and restrict access to the American financial system. They form part of a wider US sanctions programme targeting certain ICC officials and activities.
- **About the ICC:** The International Criminal Court was created under the Rome Statute of 1998 and began functioning in 2002. Based in The Hague, Netherlands, it prosecutes individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- **US Position:** The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute and maintains that the ICC cannot exercise jurisdiction over US nationals without American consent. Washington has similarly opposed certain ICC proceedings involving Israel, another non-party to the Statute.
- **International Reaction:** The ICC condemned the sanctions as an attack on judicial independence, while Japan described the action against Akane as "very unfortunate." UN Secretary-General António Guterres also expressed serious concern over the new measures.

Putin Visits Iturup Island Amid Japan-Russia Dispute

In the News: Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Iturup Island on 13 August 2026, triggering a strong diplomatic protest from Japan. Iturup, known as Etorofu in Japan, forms part of a group of islands administered by Russia but claimed by Japan. The longstanding territorial dispute has prevented Moscow and Tokyo from concluding a formal post-World War II peace treaty.

Key Points:

- **Putin's Visit:** Putin visited a fish-processing facility, hospital and school on Iturup during his trip to Russia's Far East. Russian state media described it as his first personal visit to the disputed Kuril island chain.
- **Four Disputed Territories:** Japan's claim covers Etorofu/Iturup, Kunashiri/Kunashir, Shikotan and the Habomai islets. Japan collectively refers to them as the Northern Territories, while Russia treats them as part of the southern Kuril Islands.
- **Historical Background:** Soviet forces took control of the islands in the closing stages of World War II in 1945. Japan has continued to claim sovereignty over the territories, while Russia maintains that its control resulted legitimately from the outcome of the war.
- **Japan's Protest:** Japan summoned the Russian ambassador following Putin's visit. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi called the visit "absolutely unacceptable" and reiterated Tokyo's claim over the islands.
- **Peace Treaty Issue:** Russia and Japan have never concluded a formal peace treaty ending their World War II hostilities because of the territorial dispute. Relations have become more strained since Japan imposed sanctions on Russia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir Elected Bangladesh President

In the News: Bangladesh's Parliament elected veteran Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader **Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir** as President. He secured 255 votes against 88 for his rival, in Bangladesh's first contested presidential election since 1991.

Key Points:

- **Method of Election:** Under Article 48 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the President is elected by members of Parliament. This differs from India's system, where the President is elected through an electoral college.
- **Term of Office:** Article 50 provides that the President holds office for **five years** from the date of assuming office. No person can serve as President for more than two terms.
- **Constitutional Position:** Bangladesh follows a parliamentary system in which the presidency is largely ceremonial and executive government is headed by the Prime Minister. The President generally acts on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- **Supreme Command:** Article 61 of the Constitution states that the supreme command of Bangladesh's defence services is vested in the President, with its exercise regulated by law.
- **Historic Election:** The 2026 election was the first contested presidential election in Bangladesh since October 1991. Presidential elections in the intervening period had largely been uncontested.

India and Japan Sign Maritime Security Pact

In the News: India and Japan strengthened their defence partnership on August 20, 2026, during talks between Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** and Japanese Defence Minister **Shinjiro Koizumi** in New Delhi. The two sides signed a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation aimed at expanding operational coordination in the Indo-Pacific.

Key Points:

- **Areas of Cooperation:** The maritime arrangement covers Maritime Domain Awareness, information sharing, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and greater interaction between the Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.
- **Strategic Partnership:** India-Japan relations were elevated to a **Special Strategic and Global Partnership** in 2014. Defence and maritime cooperation have since become important pillars of bilateral relations.
- **Logistics Agreement:** India and Japan signed the **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA)** in September 2020. It facilitates reciprocal logistical support between the armed forces of the two countries.
- **Major Exercises:** **JIMEX** is the bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. **Dharma Guardian** is an army exercise, while **Veer Guardian** involves the two air forces.
- **Indo-Pacific Link:** The latest engagement highlighted convergence between India's maritime vision and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific approach, including cooperation in naval shipbuilding and defence technology.

China's Chang'e-7 Mission Targets Moon's South Pole

In the News: China is preparing to launch Chang'e-7, its most technologically complex robotic lunar mission, to explore the Moon's south-polar region. The mission will search for water ice and survey the region's environment, terrain and natural resources.

Key Points:

- **Mission Configuration:** Chang'e-7 will use an orbiter, lander, rover and specialised hopping probe. This combination will allow orbiting, landing, surface movement and exploration of difficult crater terrain.
- **Search for Water:** The hopping probe will carry a water-molecule analyser and attempt to enter permanently shadowed craters. These extremely cold regions may have preserved water ice and volatile compounds for billions of years.
- **Importance of Lunar Ice:** Accessible water could provide drinking water and oxygen for astronauts and may be converted into rocket propellant. It could therefore reduce dependence on supplies transported from Earth.
- **China's Lunar Programme:** Chang'e-7 and the proposed Chang'e-8 mission are expected to support China's plan for a crewed lunar landing before 2030 and the development of an international lunar research station. The mission also carries instruments developed through international cooperation. China National Space Administration

Türkiye Seeks Interpol Red Notice for Netanyahu

In the News: Türkiye announced that it would seek an Interpol Red Notice for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and another defendant in connection with a Turkish criminal case concerning the interception of a Gaza-bound humanitarian flotilla. Interpol has not yet issued the requested notices.

Key Points:

- **Flotilla Case:** The proceedings concern the interception of vessels belonging to the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters while activists were attempting to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza.
- **Turkish Proceedings:** Turkish authorities stated that arrest warrants had been issued against Netanyahu and another suspect in a case involving 35 defendants. The allegations include genocide, crimes against humanity and torture; Israel denies the accusations.
- **Nature of Red Notice:** A Red Notice is a request to police authorities worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a wanted person pending extradition. It is an international alert and not an arrest warrant. Interpol: Red Notices
- **Interpol's Role:** Interpol independently reviews each request for compliance with its Constitution and rules. Even if a notice is issued, individual member countries determine its legal effect and whether their authorities may arrest the person concerned.

Sophie Adenot Becomes First French Woman to Walk in Space

In the News: European Space Agency astronaut Sophie Adenot became the first French woman to perform a spacewalk on 18 August 2026. She conducted the spacewalk outside the International Space Station (ISS) along with NASA astronaut Anil Menon, spending 6 hours and 23 minutes outside the station.

Key Points:

- **Historic First:** The spacewalk, officially designated US EVA-97, was Sophie Adenot's first extravehicular activity. Her achievement made her the first French woman to conduct a spacewalk, marking an important milestone for French and European human spaceflight.
- **Spacewalk Partner:** Adenot conducted the EVA with NASA astronaut Anil Menon from the International Space Station. The operation began when their spacesuits switched to battery power and lasted for 6 hours and 23 minutes.
- **Purpose of EVA:** Their main task was to work on the faulty Space-To-Ground Antenna 2 (SGANT-2). This system supports communication and data transmission between the ISS and mission controllers on Earth.
- **Mission Outcome:** Adenot and Menon successfully removed the malfunctioning antenna. However, problems involving stuck bolts and connectors prevented them from installing the replacement antenna during the same spacewalk.
- **Organisation to Remember:** Sophie Adenot is an astronaut of the European Space Agency (ESA). For examinations, ESA should not be confused with the European Union; it is an independent intergovernmental organisation devoted to space exploration and research.

Turkey Seeks Interpol Red Notice for Netanyahu

In the News: Türkiye announced in August 2026 that it would seek an INTERPOL Red Notice against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in connection with a Turkish criminal case relating to the interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla. The request is subject to review by INTERPOL and should not be interpreted as a Red Notice already having been issued.

Key Points:

- **Türkiye's Move:** Turkish Justice Minister Akın Gürlek announced that Türkiye would seek an INTERPOL Red Notice in connection with arrest warrants issued in the domestic case. The case concerns events surrounding the interception of activists attempting to deliver aid to Gaza.
- **What is a Red Notice?:** An INTERPOL Red Notice is a request to law-enforcement authorities worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar legal proceedings. It is based on a warrant or judicial order from the requesting jurisdiction.
- **Not an Arrest Warrant:** A Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant. INTERPOL cannot compel any country to arrest a person; each member country decides what legal effect to give the notice according to its domestic laws.
- **INTERPOL:** INTERPOL stands for the International Criminal Police Organization. It facilitates cooperation and information sharing among national police organisations but does not itself prosecute individuals or send officers to make arrests.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

210 Indian Peacekeepers Receive UN Medal in South Sudan

In the News: A total of 210 Indian peacekeepers were awarded the United Nations Medal in Juba, South Sudan, on 17 August 2026 for their service with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The group included six women and seven staff officers. The recognition highlighted India's continuing contribution to UN peacekeeping operations.

Key Points:

- **UN Medal Recipients:** The 210 Indian personnel serving under UNMISS received the medal in recognition of their peacekeeping service in South Sudan. The contingent included both operational personnel and staff officers, including six women peacekeepers.
- **About UNMISS:** The United Nations Mission in South Sudan was established in July 2011 through UN Security Council Resolution 1996 (2011). Its headquarters is located in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.
- **UNMISS Mandate:** The mission's major responsibilities include protection of civilians, monitoring human rights and supporting peace and stability. Its mandate was reprioritised after conflict erupted in South Sudan in 2013.
- **India's Peacekeeping Contribution:** India has contributed personnel to UN peacekeeping for more than seven decades. In July 2026, India stated that its cumulative contribution was nearly 300,000 deployments across about 50 missions, with around 4,300 personnel then serving in active missions.
- **South Sudan:** South Sudan became independent from Sudan on 9 July 2011, becoming the world's newest sovereign State at the time. UNMISS was established alongside the country's transition to independence to support peace, security and institution-building.

Two Mumbai Doctors To Receive Nishan-e-Imtiaz

In the News: Pakistan has announced the posthumous conferment of the **Nishan-e-Imtiaz** on Mumbai-based Parsi physicians **Dr Jal Rattanji Patel** and **Dr Jal Daeboo**, who treated Muhammad Ali Jinnah before Partition. The awards are scheduled to be formally presented on Pakistan Day, March 23, 2027.

Key Points:

- **Recipients:** Dr Jal Rattanji Patel was a physician associated with Jinnah's treatment, while Dr Jal Daeboo was a radiologist. Both were associated with Bombay, present-day Mumbai, and have been honoured posthumously.
- **Jinnah's Illness:** Historical accounts state that the doctors examined Jinnah during the 1940s and were aware that he was suffering from advanced tuberculosis. They maintained the confidentiality of his medical condition.
- **Historical Timeline:** Pakistan came into existence in August 1947, while Muhammad Ali Jinnah died on **September 11, 1948**. His serious illness remained largely outside public knowledge during the period preceding Partition.

- **Award Calendar:** Pakistan traditionally announces major national civil awards on its Independence Day, August 14, with the formal investiture generally taking place on **Pakistan Day, March 23** of the following year.
- **Book Connection:** The secrecy surrounding Jinnah's illness was discussed in **Freedom at Midnight**, written by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, which covers Partition and the transfer of power in 1947.

Ashutosh Parida to Receive 47th Sarala Puraskar

In the News: Odia poet, essayist and former CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology scientist Dr Ashutosh Parida has been selected for the 47th Sarala Puraskar. He will receive the award for his poetry collection Bishwas De Pruthwi.

Key Points:

- **Award-Winning Work:** Bishwas De Pruthwi, published by Prabha Publication in 2024, was selected from seven literary works that reached the final stage of evaluation.
- **Awarding Institution:** The Sarala Puraskar is presented annually by the Indian Metals Public Charitable Trust, commonly known as IMPaCT, for outstanding literary achievement in Odia.
- **Prize and Ceremony:** Parida will receive a cash award of ₹7 lakh, a citation and a copper plaque at an award ceremony scheduled to be held in Bhubaneswar on October 25, 2026.
- **Kala Samman:** Odissi maestro Guru Durga Charan Ranbir and sculptor and art educator Damodar Behera were selected for the 2026 Ila-Bansidhar Panda Kala Samman. Each will receive ₹2.5 lakh, a citation and a copper plaque.

National Teachers Awards 2026 for 48 Teachers

In the News: The Government of India announced the selection of 48 school teachers for the National Teachers' Awards 2026. President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to confer the awards on 5 September 2026, on the occasion of Teachers' Day, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Key Points:

- **Number of Awardees:** A total of 48 school teachers have been selected for 2026, comprising 26 men and 22 women. The selected teachers represent 27 States, 7 Union Territories and 6 Central Government organisations.
- **Organising Authority:** The awards are organised by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education. They recognise teachers who have contributed significantly to improving school education and enriching the lives of their students.
- **Selection Process:** The 48 awardees were chosen through a three-stage selection process — District, State and National levels. The process involves online self-nomination followed by evaluation and selection by designated committees and the national-level mechanism.
- **Teachers' Day:** The awards are traditionally associated with 5 September, observed as Teachers' Day in India. The date marks the birth anniversary of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, philosopher, educationist and the second President of India.

OBITUARY

Sajjan Kumar dies: What Nanavati Commission said about his role in 1984 riots

In the News: Former Congress MP **Sajjan Kumar**, who was serving life imprisonment in cases arising from the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, died on August 20, 2026, at the age of 80. He had been convicted in multiple cases connected with the violence.

Key Points:

- **1984 Violence:** The anti-Sikh violence erupted after Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984**, by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Large-scale attacks against Sikhs subsequently occurred in Delhi and several other places.

- **Nanavati Commission:** The Justice G.T. Nanavati Commission of Inquiry was constituted in **May 2000** to investigate the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. It was headed by Justice G.T. Nanavati, a retired Supreme Court judge, and submitted its report in 2005.
- **Finding on Sajjan Kumar:** The Commission stated that there was credible material against Sajjan Kumar and recommended examination of cases in which he had been specifically named but where no chargesheet had been filed.
- **2018 Conviction:** In December 2018, the Delhi High Court sentenced Kumar to life imprisonment in a case involving the killing of five Sikhs and the burning of a gurdwara during the 1984 violence.
- **Second Life Sentence:** In February 2025, a Delhi court imposed another life sentence on Kumar for the killing of **Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh** on November 1, 1984.

ENVIRONMENT

Hara Mangrove Forests

In the News: Iran's Hara mangrove forests came into focus after oil pollution reached parts of the mangrove ecosystem around Qeshm Island in August 2026. Iranian environmental authorities collected water and sediment samples and began assessing the affected areas, while investigations into the precise source of the pollution continued.

Key Points:

- **Location:** The Hara mangrove ecosystem lies around Qeshm Island and the Khuran Straits in southern Iran, adjoining the Persian Gulf. It includes mangrove forests, mudflats, tidal creeks and shallow saline waters.
- **Important Mangrove Species:** The forests are dominated by *Avicennia marina*, commonly called the grey mangrove and locally known as *Hara*. The species is well adapted to highly saline water and the hot, arid climatic conditions of the Persian Gulf.
- **UNESCO Recognition:** Hara is included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. It was designated as a Biosphere Reserve in 1976, making UNESCO-MAB an important exam linkage.
- **Ramsar Status:** The Khuran Straits, encompassing extensive mangrove and intertidal habitats, were designated a Ramsar Site on 23 June 1975. It is Ramsar Site No. 50 and covers approximately 100,000 hectares.
- **Ecological Importance:** Mangroves provide nursery grounds for marine organisms, support migratory and nesting waterbirds and protect coastlines from erosion. The Khuran ecosystem is particularly important for herons, shorebirds and the endangered Dalmatian pelican.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Subhas Chandra Bose Death Anniversary 2026: Biography and Legacy

In the News: 18 August 2026 marks 81 years since the reported death of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in 1945. The widely accepted account states that he died following an air crash at Taihoku, present-day Taipei, although the circumstances surrounding his death have remained a subject of debate.

Key Points:

- **Early Life:** Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, now in Odisha. He emerged as one of the prominent leaders of India's freedom struggle.
- **Congress Leadership:** Bose served as President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939. Differences with the Congress leadership later resulted in his resignation.
- **Forward Bloc:** He established the All India Forward Bloc in 1939 to consolidate nationalist and left-oriented political forces.
- **INA and Azad Hind:** Bose became closely associated with the Indian National Army and established the Provisional Government of Free India, or Azad Hind Government, in Singapore in 1943.
- **Continuing Legacy:** Bose's birth anniversary on 23 January is observed by the Government of India as **Parakram Divas**. His contribution to India's freedom movement continues to hold an important place in national history.

Sadbhavana Diwas 2026: How Rajiv Gandhi Became PM and Shaped Modern India

In the News: Sadbhavana Diwas is observed annually on 20 August, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was born on 20 August 1944. In 2026, the day marks his 82nd birth anniversary. The observance promotes national integration, communal harmony and peaceful resolution of differences through constitutional means.

Key Points:

- **Purpose of Sadbhavana Diwas:** The day promotes emotional unity and communal harmony regardless of caste, creed, religion, region or language. The Sadbhavana pledge also calls for resolving differences through dialogue and constitutional methods without violence.
- **From Pilot to Politics:** Rajiv Gandhi initially worked as a pilot with Indian Airlines and was a reluctant entrant into politics. Following the death of his younger brother Sanjay Gandhi in 1980, he entered active politics and subsequently won the Amethi Lok Sabha seat.
- **Becoming Prime Minister:** Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister on 31 October 1984, following the assassination of his mother, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. At the age of 40, he became India's youngest Prime Minister and remained in office until 2 December 1989.
- **1984 Electoral Mandate:** Soon after taking office, Rajiv Gandhi led the Congress in the general election of December 1984. The party won a record 401 of 508 Lok Sabha seats, giving his government one of the largest parliamentary mandates in India's history.
- **Modernisation Agenda:** His tenure placed considerable emphasis on science, technology, modern communications and higher education. Government historical profiles associate his administration with efforts to accelerate technological modernisation and prepare India for a more technology-oriented economy and society.

SPORTS

National Sports Awards 2025 Announced: Key Winners List

In the News: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2025 on 18 August 2026. A total of 17 sportspersons were selected for the Arjuna Award, one for the Arjuna Award (Lifetime), while five coaches were chosen for Dronacharya honours. Significantly, no sportsperson was selected for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award for 2025.

Key Points:

- **No Khel Ratna for 2025:** No athlete was selected for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna, India's highest sporting honour. This is only the third such instance since the award was instituted in 1991–92, after 2008 and 2014.
- **Key Arjuna Award Winners:** Among the prominent Arjuna awardees are Tejaswin Shankar (Athletics), Vidit Gujrathi (Chess), Divya Deshmukh (Chess) and Lalremsiami (Hockey). In total, 17 athletes were selected for the Arjuna Award.
- **Historic Honour for Mizoram:** Indian women's hockey player Lalremsiami became the first sportsperson from Mizoram to be selected for the Arjuna Award. The achievement marked an important milestone for sport in the state.
- **Lifetime and Other Awards:** Former Indian footballer I. Arumainayagam, a member of India's 1962 Asian Games gold-medal-winning team, received the Arjuna Award (Lifetime). Five coaches were selected for Dronacharya Awards, while the Army Paralympic Node, Pune was chosen for the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar.
- **Major Award Categories:** The Khel Ratna recognises spectacular and outstanding sporting performance, while the Arjuna Award honours consistent outstanding performance. The Dronacharya Award recognises coaches producing international-level sporting achievements, while the Arjuna Award (Lifetime) honours long-term contribution to sports.