

Weekly Current Affairs 19th July to 25th July 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Police action forces end to tribal protest against MP's Ken-Betwa project after 15 days

In the News: Madhya Pradesh Police cleared a protest site near Kupa village in Chhatarpur district on July 19, 2026, ending a 15-day agitation against the Ken-Betwa Link Project and other irrigation projects. Protest leader Amit Bhatnagar, who had been fasting for 14 days, was taken to a hospital, while nearly 150 demonstrators were moved from the site. The protesters had raised concerns regarding land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation.

Key Points:

- **Location and Nature of Protest:** The agitation began on July 3 on the banks of the Barana River near Kupa village in Chhatarpur district. It was led mainly by tribal women and included jal satyagraha, symbolic funeral pyres and a symbolic hanging protest.
- **Police and Administrative Action:** Police personnel detained Amit Bhatnagar and removed the protesters in an early-morning operation. The administration said the action was necessary because rising river levels and an under-construction bridge posed a safety risk to those present at the site.
- **Demands of Protesters:** Project-affected families alleged irregularities in land acquisition records, Gram Sabha proceedings and the distribution of compensation. They sought fresh surveys, correction of compensation records and adequate rehabilitation before displacement. The district administration rejected the allegations and said genuine complaints were being examined.
- **About the Ken-Betwa Link Project:** The project will transfer water from the Ken River to the Betwa basin through the Daudhan Dam, a connecting canal and associated structures. It is the first river-interlinking project under the National Perspective Plan to reach the implementation stage and covers parts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Cost and Expected Benefits:** The project has an estimated cost of ₹44,605 crore and is scheduled for completion by March 2030. It is expected to provide annual irrigation to 10.62 lakh hectares, drinking water to about 62 lakh people, 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.

Madhya Pradesh Cabinet approves UCC draft bill for presentation in State Assembly

In the News: The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet unanimously approved the draft Uniform Civil Code Bill on July 19, 2026. The Bill is scheduled to be introduced in the State Assembly during its Monsoon Session. It proposes common rules governing marriage, divorce, succession, inheritance, adoption and live-in relationships.

Key Points:

- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 44 of the Constitution, contained in the Directive Principles of State Policy, states that the State shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens throughout India. A UCC seeks common civil rules in personal matters without replacing criminal laws or general public laws.
- **Drafting and Consultation:** The proposed law was prepared by a seven-member high-level committee following consultations across all 51 districts of Madhya Pradesh. The committee also examined the UCC frameworks adopted by other States before submitting its recommendations.
- **Marriage and Divorce Provisions:** The draft mandates monogamy across religious communities and fixes the minimum marriage age at 21 years for men and 18 years for women. Registration of marriages and divorces would be compulsory, while oral divorce and decisions of informal community councils would have no legal validity.
- **Live-in Relationships:** Couples would be required to register a live-in relationship within one month of beginning to live together. Children born from such relationships would be treated as legitimate and would have inheritance rights, while an abandoned woman could seek maintenance through a competent court.
- **Exemptions and Succession Rights:** Scheduled Tribes and communities whose customary rights are protected under Part XXI of the Constitution have been excluded from the proposed law. The draft also provides equal inheritance rights to sons and daughters and equal treatment of widows and widowers in succession matters.

PIL interpreted wrongly; Sonam's health is fine, there was no need for Govt intervention, says Gitanjali

In the News: Gitanjali J. Angmo, wife of activist Sonam Wangchuk, said that the authorities had wrongly interpreted an earlier public interest litigation concerning his health. She maintained that Wangchuk's condition did not require his removal from the protest site and challenged his continued hospitalisation at Safdarjung Hospital. On July 19, 2026, the Delhi High Court declined to order his immediate discharge or transfer to a private hospital.

Key Points:

- **Background of the Hunger Strike:** Sonam Wangchuk began an indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar on June 28, 2026. He was supporting students protesting alleged irregularities in competitive examinations and was also raising issues concerning Ladakh's environment, culture and public welfare.
- **Earlier PIL and Court Direction:** On July 16, a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court directed the government to arrange daily medical examinations and provide necessary assistance based on doctors' advice. Neither Wangchuk nor Angmo was a party to the PIL in which this direction was issued.
- **Objection Raised by Gitanjali Angmo:** Angmo argued that the earlier order permitted health monitoring but did not authorise forcible removal, involuntary hospitalisation or restriction of access to lawyers and private doctors. Her petition sought Wangchuk's discharge or transfer to a medical facility chosen by him and his family.
- **Delhi High Court's Decision:** Justice Mini Pushkarna held that the government's action could not, at that stage, be described as arbitrary because it had been taken to protect Wangchuk's life during a prolonged fast. The court noted that he was not formally under detention and that the treatment administered to him had been given with his consent.
- **Legal Issues Involved:** The proceedings raised questions concerning personal liberty, bodily autonomy, informed medical consent and the State's responsibility to protect life. The court issued notices to the Centre, Delhi Police and Safdarjung Hospital and directed them to submit their responses within three days.

NIA chargesheets top CPI (Maoist) leader for waging war against India

In the News: The National Investigation Agency filed a supplementary chargesheet against C.P. Moideen, also known as Girish, before the NIA Special Court in Hyderabad. He was accused of participating in a CPI (Maoist) conspiracy to wage war against the Government of India. The charges were filed under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and the Indian Penal Code.

Key Points:

- **Position in the Organisation:** According to the NIA, Moideen was a Special Zonal Committee member of the Western Ghats Special Zonal Committee of CPI (Maoist). He allegedly became its secretary after the arrest of Central Committee member Sanjoy Deepak Rao in September 2023.
- **Alleged Operational Role:** Moideen was accused of supervising People's Liberation Guerrilla Army squads operating in the Kerala-Karnataka-Tamil Nadu tri-junction. The agency also alleged that he organised recruitment, promoted Maoist ideology and planned attacks against security personnel.
- **Background of the Case:** Telangana Police originally registered the case following the arrest of Sanjoy Deepak Rao in Hyderabad in September 2023. Arms, ammunition, fabricated identity documents and Maoist literature were reportedly recovered during the arrest, after which the NIA took over the investigation.
- **Arrest of Moideen:** Kerala Police took Moideen into custody in August 2024, and the NIA formally arrested him in January 2025 in case RC-01/2024/NIA/HYD. The supplementary chargesheet formed part of the agency's investigation into attempts to rebuild the organisation's armed and urban networks.
- **NIA and CPI (Maoist):** The NIA was constituted under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008, to investigate and prosecute offences affecting India's sovereignty, security and integrity. CPI (Maoist), together with its formations and front organisations, is listed as a terrorist organisation under the UAPA.

Madhya Pradesh Archaeology Department Collects Rare 1857 Mutiny Records

In the News: The Madhya Pradesh Archaeology Department has collected several rare historical documents, including a record connected with the Revolt of 1857 bearing the signature of Tatya Tope. The collection also contains an original portrait of Rani Lakshmibai and several old manuscripts, maps and paintings. The documents were collected under the Union Government's Gyan Bharatam Mission for their preservation and digitisation.

Key Points:

- **Rare Tatya Tope Document:** The collection includes a document associated with the Revolt of 1857 and bearing Tatya Tope's signature. The department stated that it was the first such signed document to be formally identified and documented. It had earlier been preserved by a heritage trust after being received from the former princely State of Shivpuri.
- **Gyan Bharatam Mission:** The documents were collected under the Gyan Bharatam Mission, which encourages citizens and institutions to register rare manuscripts for preservation and digitisation. The original records are returned to their owners after documentation. District-level committees were constituted to identify and verify historically valuable material.
- **Submissions from Madhya Pradesh:** Madhya Pradesh received approximately 34 lakh submissions, of which around 12 lakh had been verified. This was reported to be the highest number of submissions among Indian States. Specialists used palaeography, the study of historical handwriting, to determine the age and authenticity of the records.
- **Portrait of Rani Lakshmibai:** An original portrait of Rani Lakshmibai, believed to have been commissioned by the queen herself, was also identified. The painting dates to around 1853 and was prepared using natural colours, gold and intricate artistic techniques. It had remained preserved in a museum in Datia without receiving wider recognition.
- **Other Historical Discoveries:** The collection includes a 70-page manuscript of Rasikpriya, composed by Keshavdas in the Braj language, and an old circular map depicting Jambu Dweep. It also contains a compendium dated 1877 with portraits and information about 62 rulers, along with manuscripts relating to Jain cosmology and traditional cartography.

What Is Shabdlok? India's First Immersive Language Museum Explained

In the News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the first phase of Shabdlok, also called the Museum of Word, in Kolkata on July 19, 2026. Located within the National Library campus, it has been described as India's first immersive museum devoted to languages, scripts and literary traditions. The project has been developed under the Union Ministry of Culture.

Key Points:

- **Location and Institution:** Shabdlok is housed in the historic Belvedere House on the National Library campus in Kolkata. The National Library functions under the Ministry of Culture and traces its origins to the Calcutta Public Library, established in 1836.
- **Coverage of Indian Languages:** The museum presents the history, development and present status of languages. These include the 22 languages recorded in the Census of India 2011, along with several historical languages that are no longer commonly spoken.
- **Nine Thematic Galleries:** Its galleries include First Word, My Mother Tongue, Navrasa, Journey of Languages, Honouring the Legends, Oral Traditions, Performing Traditions, Global Dialogue and Public Library Movement. They trace the development of speech, scripts, literature and communication across different periods.
- **Immersive Presentation:** The museum uses audio-visual displays, interactive installations, augmented and virtual reality, gesture-reading sensors and acoustically designed spaces. Its exhibits include inscriptions, copper plates, Bhojpatra manuscripts, handwritten texts and printed books.
- **Project Development:** The project has an estimated outlay of ₹41 crore and is being implemented in phases. The first phase covers approximately 2,282 square metres, while later phases are expected to include additional galleries, projection mapping and visitor facilities.

Is staging a protest legal in India: What rights, restrictions the law gives

In the News: The legality of public protests came under discussion after police stopped a march towards Parliament in New Delhi on July 20, 2026. Authorities stated that permission had not been granted and prohibitory orders were operating in the New Delhi district. The incident renewed attention on the constitutional right to protest and the restrictions that may be imposed upon it.

Key Points:

- **Constitutional Protection:** The right to protest is derived mainly from Article 19(1)(a), which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, and Article 19(1)(b), which protects the right to assemble peacefully and without arms. These guarantees are available to citizens but are not absolute.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** Freedom of speech may be restricted on grounds listed in Article 19(2), including public order, security of the State, sovereignty and integrity of India, decency and incitement to an offence. Peaceful assembly may be restricted under Article 19(3) in the interests of public order and national integrity.
- **Police Permission:** Authorities may regulate the location, route, duration and size of demonstrations under state police laws and local regulations. Prior permission is commonly required for rallies, processions and demonstrations to manage traffic, security, emergency access and competing use of public spaces.
- **Section 163 of BNSS:** Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which replaced Section 144 of the CrPC, permits urgent preventive orders where danger, obstruction or disturbance of public tranquillity is anticipated. Such orders may temporarily prohibit assemblies, marches or gatherings in specified areas.
- **Judicial Position:** The Supreme Court has held that public streets cannot be occupied indefinitely and that protests may be confined to identified locations. Violent demonstrations, armed gatherings, destruction of property and prolonged obstruction of roads fall outside the protection available to peaceful democratic protest.

India's First AI-Powered Bird Sanctuary Announced

In the News: The Maharashtra government has approved a ₹45-crore Eco-Nature Park at the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary near the Bhandup Pumping Station in Mumbai. The project will contain what is being described as India's first artificial intelligence-based bird detection and monitoring centre. The sanctuary itself is not new; the AI-enabled conservation and visitor facility is the new component.

Key Points:

- **Project Area and Funding:** The Eco-Nature Park will be developed over approximately 20.09 hectares along the Thane Creek shoreline. Only about 0.35 hectares will be used for tourism infrastructure to minimise disturbance to the wetland, mangroves and bird habitats. The ₹45-crore allocation will come from the District Planning Committee fund.
- **AI-Based Monitoring:** The proposed centre will use artificial intelligence to identify bird species, record their movements and monitor migration patterns in real time. It is expected to maintain digital biodiversity records and reduce exclusive dependence on manual bird counts conducted by field personnel. Monitoring facilities are planned along a 1.5-km stretch.
- **Visitor Facilities:** The project will include a 2.16-km mangrove nature trail, elevated viewing decks, birdwatching towers, a butterfly garden and a nature interpretation centre. A jetty, lecture hall and low-impact visitor facilities are also proposed to support environmental education, research and regulated eco-tourism.
- **Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary:** The sanctuary was notified in 2015 and covers approximately 16.90 square kilometres. It contains about 896 hectares of mangrove cover and supports more than 200 species of resident and migratory birds. Lesser flamingos arrive in large numbers during the migratory season.
- **Ramsar Recognition:** Thane Creek is listed as Ramsar Site No. 2490 and has an official Ramsar designation date of 13 April, 2022. Ramsar sites are wetlands recognised as being of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971.

Centre Announces 50% Quota for Ex-Agniveers in CAPFs

In the News: The Ministry of Home Affairs announced that 50% of vacancies in specified entry-level posts in the Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Rifles will be reserved for former Agniveers. Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai provided the information in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on July 21, 2026.

Key Points:

- **Posts Covered:** The reservation applies to the recruitment of Constable (General Duty) in the CAPFs and Rifleman in the Assam Rifles. A separate recruitment category called “Ex-Agniveer” has been created for eligible candidates who complete their period of service under the Agnipath scheme.
- **Reservation and Age Relaxation:** Ex-Agniveers will receive reservation in 50% of the vacancies notified for the specified posts. They will receive a three-year relaxation in the prescribed upper age limit. Candidates belonging to the first batch of Ex-Agniveers will receive a five-year relaxation beyond the prescribed upper age limit.
- **Exemption from Recruitment Tests:** Eligible former Agniveers will be exempted from the Physical Standards Test, Physical Efficiency Test and written examination. Their military training and service experience will consequently be recognised during recruitment to the designated CAPF and Assam Rifles posts.
- **Dedicated Coordination Wing:** The Ministry of Home Affairs has established a dedicated Ex-Agniveer Wing to coordinate the progression and recruitment of former Agniveers. No candidate had entered the recruitment process under the new arrangement when the announcement was made because the first Agniveer batch had not completed its four-year engagement.
- **Agnipath Scheme:** The Union Cabinet approved the Agnipath scheme on June 14, 2022, for recruitment below the officer rank in the Army, Navy and Air Force. Agniveers serve for four years, after which up to 25% of each batch may be enrolled in the regular armed forces cadre. The CAPF reservation concerns post-service employment and is separate from military retention.

Index of Core Industries with Base Year 2022-23

In the News: The Office of the Economic Adviser under DPIIT released the revised Index of Core Industries on July 20, 2026, with 2022–23 as the new base year. It replaces the earlier series based on 2011–12. The first release under the revised series showed core-sector production growing by 5% in June 2026.

Key Points:

- **Compiling Authority:** The Index of Core Industries is compiled monthly by the Office of the Economic Adviser in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. DPIIT functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The provisional index is normally released on the twentieth day of the following month.
- **Nine Core Industries:** Iron ore has been added as the ninth core industry because of its extensive use in industrial production. The revised basket consists of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement, electricity and iron ore. The earlier series contained eight industries.
- **Revised Sectoral Weights:** Electricity has the highest weight at 30.932%, followed by refinery products at 22.572% and steel at 17.584%. The weights of crude oil, coal, iron ore, cement, natural gas and fertilisers are 7.430%, 5.596%, 4.905%, 4.410%, 3.841% and 2.731%, respectively.
- **Methodological Changes:** Gross production data will now be used for the steel index instead of net production data. Only raw coal has been retained, while washed coal and coal middlings have been removed to prevent double counting. The revised weights have been derived from the corresponding items in the IIP 2022–23 series.
- **June 2026 Performance:** The overall index grew by 5% in June 2026, compared with 3.2% in May. Iron ore recorded the highest growth at 43.9%, while electricity and cement each grew by 9.8%. Natural gas, crude oil, refinery products and fertilisers registered negative growth, while April–June cumulative growth stood at 3.6%.

National Investment Policy for Urea-2026

In the News : The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the National Investment Policy for Urea-2026 for Atmanirbhar Bharat, known as NIPU-2026. The policy seeks to attract fresh investment in gas-based urea manufacturing and increase domestic production. It was proposed by the Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

Key Points

- **Objective of the Policy:** NIPU-2026 covers the establishment of new gas-based urea manufacturing units in India. It aims to narrow the gap between domestic production and demand, which is currently met through imports. Greater indigenous capacity is expected to improve the reliability of fertiliser supplies.
- **Return on Equity:** The policy introduces a Return on Equity band ranging from a minimum of 12% to a maximum of 16%. This provides investors with a defined return framework while limiting excessive subsidy liabilities. Fixed and variable production costs will also be treated separately to improve transparency.
- **Foreign Exchange Protection:** Fixed costs initially linked to foreign currency will be converted into Indian rupees after four years. The conversion will be based on the prevailing exchange rate at that time. This provision reduces prolonged foreign-exchange exposure for both investors and the government.
- **Expected Financial Savings:** The revised cost and return structure is expected to save more than ₹250 crore for every plant established under NIPU-2026 compared with NIP-2012. The savings would arise from greater cost transparency and better management of investment-related risks. The framework also seeks to make new plants commercially viable.
- **Background of Urea Production:** India has 33 operational urea manufacturing units with a total reassessed or installed capacity of 269.42 lakh metric tonnes. Under NIP-2012, six new units were established—four through joint ventures of nominated public-sector companies and two by private companies. The investment window under NIP-2012 expired in October 2019.

The many benefits of replacing paper notes with plastic ones

In the News: Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited invited global expressions of interest for polymer substrate sheets carrying embedded security features. The initial requirement is 68,000 reams for two denominations, although the denominations and circulation timeline have not been officially specified. The development indicates preparations for field trials rather than an immediate replacement of existing paper notes.

Key Points

- **Greater Durability:** Polymer banknotes are more resistant to tearing, folding, moisture and routine wear than cotton-based paper notes. International experience indicates that they can last at least two-and-a-half times longer. Their longer circulation life reduces the frequency with which damaged notes must be withdrawn and replaced.
- **Protection against Counterfeiting:** Polymer substrates can incorporate transparent windows, metallic images and other security elements that are difficult to reproduce accurately. Countries using polymer notes have reported a decline in counterfeiting after introducing improved security features. Their surface also supports more advanced machine-readable authentication features.
- **Lower Life-Cycle Costs:** A polymer note may initially cost more to manufacture than a paper note, but it remains usable for a considerably longer period. Fewer replacements can reduce printing, transportation, sorting and disposal expenses over time. Longer life also allows currency presses to manage printing capacity more efficiently.
- **Cleaner and Better-Quality Currency:** Polymer absorbs less moisture and dirt than traditional banknote paper and can remain in better condition during circulation. It is less vulnerable to damage from accidental washing and humid conditions. This helps maintain the quality of cash handled by citizens, banks and cash-processing machines.
- **Currency-Issuing Framework:** BRBNMPL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India and operates banknote printing facilities at Mysuru and Salboni. Section 22 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 gives the RBI the sole right to issue banknotes. Under Section 25, the design, form and material of banknotes require Central Government approval after considering the RBI Central Board's recommendations.

Samudra Pradakshina: India's First Tri-Service All-Women Sailing Expedition Creates History

In the News: Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh flagged-in Samudra Pradakshina, India's first Tri-Service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition, on July 22, 2026. Nine women officers returned to Mumbai aboard IASV Triveni after completing a 314-day voyage covering nearly 25,500 nautical miles across four oceans. The expedition had been flagged off from Mumbai on September 11, 2025.

Key Points:

- **Mission Profile:** The expedition brought together nine women officers from the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force. They sailed for more than ten months on the Indian Army Sailing Vessel Triveni, demonstrating coordinated planning and teamwork among the three Services.
- **Circumnavigation Requirements:** The crew crossed every meridian of longitude, crossed the Equator twice and passed the International Date Line. It also rounded the three major capes—Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope—fulfilling internationally recognised circumnavigation criteria.
- **IASV Triveni:** Triveni is an indigenously built sailing vessel measuring about 50 feet in length. The successful voyage highlighted India's domestic vessel-building capacity and the ability of the armed forces to undertake extended oceanic expeditions with shore-based logistical support.
- **Cape Horn Achievement:** The crew crossed the difficult Drake Passage and successfully rounded Cape Horn, one of the most demanding maritime routes in the world. This achievement earned the officers membership of the recognised fraternity of "Cape Horners".

What is Rule 267 in Rajya Sabha?

In the News: Opposition members submitted notices under Rule 267 during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in July 2026. They sought a discussion on the NEET controversy, alleged police action against student protesters and the detention of opposition leaders. The Deputy Chairman stated that the rule had been accepted only on rare occasions.

Key Points:

- **Meaning of Rule 267:** Rule 267 forms part of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States. It permits a member, with the consent of the Chairman, to move that a particular rule be suspended temporarily in its application to a motion.
- **Listed Business Requirement:** The formal text requires the motion to relate to the business listed before the Rajya Sabha for that day. If the House carries the motion, the concerned procedural rule remains suspended for the time being.
- **Role of the Chairman:** A member cannot invoke Rule 267 automatically; the consent of the Rajya Sabha Chairman is necessary before the motion can be moved. The Chairman examines whether the notice satisfies the procedural conditions and is connected with the day's listed business.
- **Amendment in 2000:** The present wording of Rule 267 came into effect on July 1, 2000. The amendment was intended to ensure that a request for suspension of rules remained relevant to the List of Business placed before the House.
- **Not an Adjournment Motion:** Rule 267 is not the Rajya Sabha equivalent of an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha. An adjournment motion interrupts normal business to discuss a definite urgent matter and may involve criticism of the government, while Rule 267 formally concerns the temporary suspension of a procedural rule.

Internet Shutdowns in India

In the News: Mobile internet services were reportedly suspended in parts of central Delhi on July 23, 2026, during large student-led protests. The disruption affected ordinary communication as well as digital payments used by shops, restaurants and street vendors. The incident renewed debate over the legality, necessity and economic consequences of internet shutdowns.

Key Points:

- **Meaning of an Internet Shutdown:** An internet shutdown is an intentional disruption of internet or electronic communication services for a specific population, geographical area or period. It may involve mobile data, broadband services or particular communication platforms.
- **Present Legal Framework:** Internet suspensions are governed by Section 20 of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, read with the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024. The 2024 Rules replaced the earlier Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services Rules, 2017.
- **Competent Authority and Duration:** A suspension order must ordinarily be issued by the Union Home Secretary or the State Home Secretary, with reasons recorded in writing. It must identify the geographical area, the service to be suspended and a duration not exceeding 15 days. The order must also be published.
- **Review Mechanism:** A copy of the order must be sent to the appropriate Review Committee within 24 hours. The committee must meet within five days and may set aside an order that does not comply with Section 20 of the Telecommunications Act.
- **Supreme Court Guidelines:** In *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020)*, the Supreme Court held that indefinite internet suspension is impermissible. Shutdown orders must be published, remain open to judicial review and satisfy the test of proportionality, since speech and professional activity conducted through the internet are protected under Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(g).
- **Recent Data:** According to Access Now, India recorded 65 internet shutdowns in 2025 across 12 States and Union Territories—the country's lowest annual figure since 2017. The reported causes included protests, communal violence, conflict and sensitive religious events.

What new fast-track courts can address: Lapses in exam leak probes, weak legal provisions

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced fast-track courts for examination paper-leak cases on July 23, 2026. The Delhi High Court subsequently designated a court at the Rouse Avenue Courts to hear cases under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, along with connected offences.

Key Points:

- **Purpose of the Courts:** Fast-track courts are intended to conduct trials within shorter timelines by giving priority to designated categories of cases. They do not create separate offences but accelerate proceedings under the Public Examinations Act and other applicable criminal laws.
- **Low Conviction Record:** An Indian Express investigation examined 45 major examination leaks between 2002 and 2025, each affecting at least one lakh candidates. Only two of these cases had resulted in convictions, indicating serious weaknesses in investigation and prosecution.
- **Investigative Lapses:** Courts have rejected closure reports or acquitted accused persons because of inadequate evidence and procedural deficiencies. In the 2016 Karnataka PUC Chemistry paper-leak case, 19 accused were acquitted in 2024 after the court identified serious shortcomings in the investigation.
- **Public Examinations Act, 2024:** The central law came into force on June 21, 2024, and targets organised unfair means in examinations conducted by specified public authorities. Organised crime under the Act may attract imprisonment of five to ten years, a minimum fine of ₹1 crore and attachment of institutional property.
- **Delay in Trials:** The 2006 Railway Group-D examination case had undergone 142 hearings between 2012 and 2026 but remained at the witness stage. Dedicated courts can reduce such delays through continuous hearings, stricter scheduling and quicker examination of witnesses.
- **Technology and Supply-Chain Gaps:** Modern leak networks use Bluetooth devices, remote-access software and compromised printing or logistics firms. Faster trials must therefore be supported by digital forensics, secure printing arrangements, proper preservation of electronic evidence and a reliable chain of custody.

What Is BHAVYA Rasayan Scheme? Cabinet Clears New Chemical Parks Initiative Schem

In the News: The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan, or BHAVYA-Rasayan Scheme, on July 24, 2026. The initiative seeks to establish three dedicated chemical parks with modern common infrastructure. The scheme was originally announced in the Union Budget 2026–27.

Key Points:

- **Meaning and Objective:** BHAVYA-Rasayan stands for Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan. It aims to develop three integrated chemical parks that provide plug-and-play facilities to chemical and petrochemical companies, reducing project costs and improving manufacturing competitiveness.
- **Financial Outlay and Duration:** The scheme has a total allocation of ₹3,030 crore and will operate for five years from FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31. Of this, ₹3,000 crore is earmarked for infrastructure and utilities, while ₹30 crore is reserved for administrative expenditure.
- **Centre-State Funding Pattern:** The Union Government may provide a grant of up to ₹1,000 crore per chemical park. The concerned state government must contribute at least ₹500 crore, making the parks collaborative projects involving both levels of government.
- **Selection and Land Requirements:** The parks will be developed by state governments through the Challenge Route, under which competing proposals will be evaluated. Each park must have at least eight square kilometres, or approximately 2,000 acres, of contiguous and encumbrance-free land.
- **Common Infrastructure Facilities:** The parks will include Common Effluent Treatment Plants, hazardous-waste treatment facilities, solvent-recovery systems, pipelines, water distribution, steam networks and warehouses. These shared facilities are intended to improve environmental compliance, exports, import substitution and integration into global value chains.

SC Restricts Social Media Posting of Court Proceedings

In the News: The Supreme Court issued an interim order restricting the unauthorised circulation of audio-video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media and other digital platforms. Prior permission from the competent court authority is now required. The Court clarified that ordinary news reporting of proceedings remains unaffected.

Key Points:

- **Scope of the Restriction:** The order prohibits the extraction, modification, dissemination, reposting, uploading and monetisation of court-proceeding recordings without permission. It applies to audio and video material from both the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- **Permission Authorities:** Permission relating to Supreme Court proceedings must be obtained from the Secretary General of the Supreme Court. For High Court proceedings, the competent authority is the Registrar General of the concerned High Court.
- **Bench and Nature of Order:** The interim direction was issued by a three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana. The matter arose from a public interest litigation concerning selective editing and monetisation of courtroom videos.
- **News Reporting Not Prohibited:** The Court expressly clarified that the order should not be interpreted as a gag order on freedom of speech or press. Journalists may continue reporting court proceedings, but unauthorised reproduction or circulation of audiovisual recordings remains restricted.
- **Concerns Behind the Order:** The petition highlighted the circulation of selective and decontextualised courtroom clips, which may distort judicial exchanges and weaken public confidence. The Court also issued notices to High Courts and social-media intermediaries, including Meta and X.

Early Release Policy for Elderly and Terminally Ill Prisoners

In the News: The Supreme Court directed all states and Union Territories to formulate comprehensive policies for the early, premature or compassionate release of elderly and terminally ill prisoners. The policies must be prepared within three months. The judgment linked humane prison treatment with the right to dignity under Article 21.

Key Points:

- **Constitutional Basis:** The Court held that constitutional rights do not cease to operate inside prisons. Continued incarceration of vulnerable prisoners without a structured and humane release mechanism may violate the right to life and dignity guaranteed under Article 21.
- **Eligibility and Definitions:** States and Union Territories must clearly define eligibility conditions and procedural requirements for compassionate release. The policies must also incorporate a uniform and precise definition of “terminal illness” to prevent arbitrary or inconsistent decisions.
- **NALSA's Role:** The case arose from a petition filed by the National Legal Services Authority, or NALSA, under Article 32. Its nationwide campaign identified 5,393 vulnerable prisoners, including 1,886 undertrials and 3,507 convicted prisoners.
- **Age Criterion and Medical Boards:** The proceedings particularly concerned convicted prisoners above 70 years of age and prisoners suffering from terminal illnesses. States are expected to establish reliable medical-certification mechanisms so that claims of serious illness are assessed objectively.
- **Use of the e-Prisons Portal:** Applications may be processed through the e-Prisons portal using automated alerts, deadline monitoring and compliance reports. The Centre, NIC, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law and Justice must provide technical assistance while protecting prisoners’ personal and medical data.

Supreme Court Bars Unauthorized Sharing of Live-Streamed Court Proceedings on Social Media

In the News: The Supreme Court passed an interim order restricting the unauthorized extraction, editing, uploading, reposting, dissemination or monetization of audio-video recordings of court proceedings. Prior permission from the Supreme Court or the concerned High Court is now required before such recordings can be shared on social media or other digital platforms.

Key Points:

- **Scope of the Restriction:** The order covers transmitting, storing, uploading, posting, reposting, editing and monetizing clips obtained from live-streamed judicial proceedings. Permission must be secured from the court whose proceedings are involved or from its authorized judicial officials.
- **Reason Behind the Order:** The Court noted that selectively edited courtroom exchanges were being circulated with sensational or biased commentary. Such clips may remove statements from their legal context, misrepresent judicial observations and undermine the dignity and integrity of court proceedings.
- **Live Streaming and Open Justice:** The order does not discontinue the live streaming of hearings. Live streaming promotes transparency and public access, while the restriction regulates the subsequent misuse of recordings on commercial and social-media platforms.
- **Swapnil Tripathi Judgment:** In *Swapnil Tripathi v. Supreme Court of India* (2018), the Supreme Court supported live streaming of proceedings in matters of constitutional and national importance. It linked public access to judicial proceedings with the open-court principle and access to justice.
- **Constitutional Examination Link:** The Supreme Court is a “court of record” under Article 129 of the Constitution and possesses the power to punish for contempt. High Courts enjoy a similar status under Article 215, making judicial dignity, accurate reporting and courtroom decorum important constitutional concepts.

Cabinet Clears Tougher Anti-Paper Leak Bill: Up to 10-Year Jail, ₹10 Crore Fine

In the News: The Union Cabinet approved proposed amendments to the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, to impose tougher punishment for examination paper leaks and organized cheating. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 proposes imprisonment of up to ten years, fines reaching ₹10 crore, asset confiscation and time-bound trials.

Key Points:

- **Legislative Status:** Cabinet approval does not itself make the proposal a law. The Amendment Bill must be passed by both Houses of Parliament and receive the President’s assent before its provisions become legally enforceable.

- **Enhanced Punishment:** The proposed law provides imprisonment extending to ten years and substantially higher fines for serious offences. Organized paper-leak networks, institutions, examination centres and service providers may face fines of up to ₹10 crore and confiscation of assets linked to the offence.
- **Time-Bound Investigation and Trial:** Investigations are proposed to be completed within two months. Special Fast Track Courts may conduct day-to-day hearings, with a mechanism aimed at completing trials and delivering judgments within three months.
- **Meaning of Unfair Means:** The 2024 Act covers question-paper or answer-key leaks, unauthorized possession of papers, tampering with OMR sheets, manipulation of computer systems, fake examinations, fake admit cards and deliberate violation of security arrangements.
- **Examinations Covered:** Authorities listed under the central law include UPSC, SSC, Railway Recruitment Boards, IBPS and the National Testing Agency. Central government departments and other authorities notified by the government may also be brought within its scope.

INTERNATIONAL

India Tightens Tax Treaty Rule with Sri Lanka

In the News: India has notified a protocol amending its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with Sri Lanka. The amendment introduces a Principal Purpose Test, allowing tax authorities to refuse treaty benefits where securing a tax advantage was among the principal purposes of an arrangement. The protocol entered into force on June 19, 2026.

Key Points:

- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement:** A DTAA allocates taxing rights between two countries and prevents the same income from being taxed twice. It may provide reduced withholding-tax rates or exemptions for eligible residents earning cross-border income.
- **Principal Purpose Test:** Under the PPT, treaty relief may be denied when it is reasonable to conclude that obtaining the relief was one of the principal purposes of a transaction or arrangement. Relief may still be granted when it remains consistent with the object and purpose of the treaty provision.
- **Prevention of Treaty Shopping:** Treaty shopping involves routing investments or income through an entity located in a treaty country mainly to obtain lower taxes or exemptions. The revised provision enables authorities to examine the commercial substance and genuine economic purpose of such arrangements.
- **Effective Application:** The revised rule will apply in India to income arising from financial year **2027-28 onwards**. Businesses and investors using the India-Sri Lanka treaty will therefore need to demonstrate valid commercial reasons for their structures and transactions.
- **Alignment with BEPS Framework:** The amendment does not change existing tax rates or impose a new tax. It brings the bilateral treaty closer to the OECD-G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting framework, particularly Action 6 concerning the prevention of inappropriate treaty benefits.

UK Appoints Kanishka Narayan as First AI Minister

In the News: The United Kingdom appointed Kanishka Narayan as Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence. The appointment was made by new British Prime Minister Andy Burnham as part of a wider reshuffle, in which he appointed Jonathan Reynolds as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade and dissolved the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), merging it into the Business and Trade department, with the Culture department taking on digital transformation and online harms.

Key Points:

- **Cabinet Status:** Narayan will attend meetings of the UK Cabinet, although he holds the rank of Minister of State rather than Secretary of State. His position has been placed across two departments to coordinate AI policy throughout the government.

- **Previous Ministerial Role:** He had served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for AI and Online Safety since September 7, 2025. His earlier responsibilities covered the AI Security Institute, semiconductors, intellectual property, online safety and technology-led economic growth.
- **Parliamentary Profile:** Narayan belongs to the Labour Party and has represented the Vale of Glamorgan constituency since the July 2024 general election. His victory made him the first person from an ethnic-minority background elected as an MP from Wales.
- **Institutional Arrangement:** The Cabinet Office supports the Prime Minister and coordinates policies across government departments. Narayan's joint appointment indicates that artificial intelligence will be handled as a cross-government subject involving public administration, regulation, economic policy and innovation.
- **Role of the AI Minister:** The portfolio covers the development and adoption of artificial intelligence, AI security and the growth of the technology sector. It also involves oversight of policies concerning intellectual property, emerging technologies and the safe deployment of AI systems.

India Joins WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement

In the News: India deposited its Instrument of Acceptance of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies on July, 2026. With this step, India formally became a party to the agreement. The treaty seeks to restrict subsidies associated with destructive and unsustainable marine fishing practices.

Key Points:

- **Origin of the Agreement:** The agreement was adopted by consensus at the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference in June 2022. It entered into force on September 15, 2025, after formal acceptance by two-thirds of WTO members.
- **Major Prohibitions:** WTO members cannot provide subsidies to vessels or operators engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The agreement also restricts subsidies for fishing overfished stocks and for unregulated fishing in parts of the high seas.
- **Scope of the Treaty:** The agreement primarily covers marine wild-capture fishing and fishing-related activities conducted at sea. Inland fishing and aquaculture, including a substantial part of India's shrimp-production sector, remain outside its scope.
- **Protection of Indian Fishers:** India stated that the agreement protects the interests of traditional and small-scale fishing communities. India's fisheries sector is dominated by smaller operators and is not a major participant in distant-water industrial fishing.

France Bans Social Media for Children Under 15

In the News: The French Parliament approved legislation on July 2026, prohibiting children below the age of 15 from accessing major social media platforms. The measure is intended to come into force from September, 2026. It forms part of France's effort to protect minors from cyberbullying, addictive digital behaviour and harmful online content.

Key Points:

- **Age Restriction:** Children below 15 will not be permitted to create or operate accounts on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook. Educational, scientific and certain public-interest digital services may remain outside the prohibition.
- **Age-Verification System:** Social media companies will have to introduce reliable age-verification mechanisms approved by France's data-protection authority. Platforms will also be required to deactivate existing accounts belonging to users below the prescribed age within four months.
- **Mobile Phones in Schools:** The legislation also extends restrictions on mobile-phone use to high schools. France had earlier prohibited mobile phones in primary and middle schools, making the new measure part of a broader policy on children's digital exposure.
- **Legal and Regulatory Position:** The law may be examined by France's Constitutional Council before its full implementation. Its enforcement provisions must also remain compatible with the European Union's Digital Services Act and data-protection rules.

- **International Context:** France has become one of the first European countries to adopt a nationwide statutory social media age limit. Australia had earlier introduced a broader restriction preventing children below 16 from holding accounts on major social media platforms.

BRICS Network University Expands Thematic Cooperation

In the News: India hosted the BRICS Network University Conference on Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Systems on July 20, 2026, followed by the International Governing Board meeting on July 21. The meetings were organised under India's BRICS Presidency 2026. Member countries supported further academic cooperation and considered creating a new thematic group on traditional and indigenous knowledge systems.

Key Points:

- **New Thematic Area Proposed:** Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Systems were proposed as a new International Thematic Group under the BRICS Network University. The proposal received broad support, although member countries will continue consultations before its formal adoption.
- **Areas of Cooperation:** The proposed thematic group will focus on mapping, documenting and preserving traditional knowledge. It will also promote responsible digital dissemination, community ownership, ethical governance and equitable sharing of benefits arising from such knowledge.
- **Use of Emerging Technologies:** Participants discussed the responsible application of Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies in preserving indigenous knowledge. Safeguards concerning community rights, authenticity and responsible access were emphasised during the deliberations.
- **About BRICS Network University:** BRICS NU was established through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2015. It is a network of higher education institutions rather than a single university and supports joint postgraduate programmes, collaborative research and student and faculty mobility.
- **Thematic Groups and Action Plan:** Its six original areas were BRICS Studies, Economics, Energy, Computer Science and Information Security, Ecology and Climate Change, and Water Resources and Pollution Control. The Governing Board also reviewed the BRICS Network University Action Plan for 2025–2028 and adopted an International Governing Board Declaration.

How the new US tariffs stack India against its competitors

In the News: The US administration under Donald Trump has shifted its tariff strategy after earlier IEEPA-based tariffs were ruled illegal by the US Supreme Court in February 2026. The new tariff action has been framed under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 and covers 60 economies over forced-labour import enforcement concerns. India has been placed in the 10% tariff tier, giving it a relative advantage over some competitors but not all.

Key Points:

- **Legal Basis:** The new tariff framework is based on Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows action against unfair foreign practices affecting US commerce. This is important because the earlier IEEPA route faced judicial invalidation. For exams, remember the shift from IEEPA to Section 301
- **India's Tariff Rate:** India has been placed in the 10% tariff category along with countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the UK. This was linked to India's adoption of a forced-labour import prohibition.
- **Competitor Positioning:** India has an edge over economies placed in the 12.5% tariff category, including several major manufacturing competitors. However, it does not get a tariff advantage over Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan or Sri Lanka, which are also in the 10% group.
- **Textile Concern:** Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia are expected to receive tariff-rate quotas for certain textile and apparel exports using US cotton or textile inputs. India's exclusion from such planned TRQs may reduce its advantage in labour-intensive export sectors.

BRICS Summit 2026: India Invites Bangladesh as Special Guest While Hosting Key Ministerial Meetings

In the News: India invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to participate as a special guest at the 18th BRICS Summit, scheduled in New Delhi on September 12–13, 2026. The invitation forms part of India's outreach to neighbouring countries and regional organizations while it holds the BRICS Chairship for 2026.

Key Points:

- **India's 2026 Chairship:** India assumed the rotating BRICS Chairship in 2026. Its official theme is "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," highlighting institutional reform, technological cooperation, sustainable development and Global South priorities.
- **18th BRICS Summit:** The leaders' summit is scheduled to be held in New Delhi on September 12 and 13, 2026. As chair, India is responsible for coordinating the summit agenda, ministerial meetings, working groups and the final leaders' declaration.
- **Bangladesh's Participation:** Bangladesh has been invited as an outreach or special-guest participant and not as a full BRICS member. The invitation is also significant because Bangladesh holds an important position in BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal regional grouping headquartered in Dhaka.
- **Ministerial Engagements:** India hosted the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting on May 14–15, 2026, chaired by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Meetings of national security advisers, health officials, energy ministers and other sectoral groups are also part of the annual chairship process.
- **Static BRICS Facts:** The first BRIC leaders' summit was held at Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009, while South Africa joined the grouping in 2011. The BRICS-founded New Development Bank was established in 2014 and has its headquarters in Shanghai, China.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

James Gray to Receive Locarno Film Festival's Honorary Career Pardo Award

In the News: American filmmaker James Gray will receive the Pardo alla Carriera at the 79th Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland. The award ceremony is scheduled to be held at Piazza Grande on August 9, 2026. The honour recognises Gray's contribution to contemporary cinema and his distinctive body of work.

Key Points:

- **Official Award Title:** The honour is officially known as the Pardo alla Carriera, or Career Leopard, and is presented in association with Ascona-Locarno Tourism. It recognises film personalities whose creative contributions have influenced cinema and the collective imagination.
- **Locarno Film Festival:** The festival was established in 1946 and is held annually in Locarno, Switzerland. Its highest competitive honour is the Golden Leopard, awarded to the best film in the festival's international competition.
- **James Gray's New Film:** Following the award ceremony, Gray will present his 2026 film Paper Tiger. The film features Adam Driver, Miles Teller and Scarlett Johansson in prominent roles.
- **Festival Retrospective:** The tribute will include screenings of selected films from Gray's career, including We Own the Night and Two Lovers. The filmmaker will also participate in a public conversation about his work and cinematic influences.
- **Previous Recipients:** Earlier recipients of the career honour include Costa-Gavras, Tsai Ming-liang, Shah Rukh Khan and Jackie Chan. Shah Rukh Khan received the award in 2024, while Jackie Chan was honoured in 2025.

APPOINTMENTS

Naresh Pal Gangwar Appointed Higher Education Secretary

In the News: The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has appointed senior IAS officer Naresh Pal Gangwar as Secretary, Department of Higher Education. He succeeds Vineet Joshi, who has been transferred as Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The appointments were notified on July 23, 2026.

Key Points:

- **Officer Profile:** Naresh Pal Gangwar is a 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service officer of the Rajasthan cadre. Before this appointment, he served as Secretary of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- **Administrative Experience:** Gangwar has held senior positions in the Rajasthan government and the Union government. He previously served as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, dealing with pollution control and hazardous substances.
- **Educational Background:** He holds a B.Tech. in Electronics and Communication from the University of Roorkee and an M.Tech. in Communication from IIT Delhi. He also holds a master's degree in Economics from the University of Rajasthan.
- **Department of Higher Education:** The department functions under the Ministry of Education and deals with policy concerning universities and higher educational institutions. Its administrative domain includes central universities, IITs, NITs and institutions associated with the University Grants Commission.
- **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet:** The ACC approves appointments to several senior posts in the Union government. Its composition includes the Prime Minister and the Union Minister of Home Affairs.

ENVIRONMENT

White-bellied Heron

In the News: The proposed 1,200 MW Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project on the Lohit River in Arunachal Pradesh has received in-principle forest clearance. Conservationists have raised concerns because the project landscape contains habitats of the critically endangered White-bellied Heron. The project involves the diversion of nearly 869 hectares of forest land.

Key Points:

- **Species Profile:** The White-bellied Heron is scientifically known as *Ardea insignis* and belongs to the family Ardeidae. It is also called the Imperial Heron and is distinguished by its dark-grey body and contrasting white underparts.
- **Conservation Status:** The species is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List because of its extremely small and declining population. It is also included in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Habitat and Distribution:** It inhabits undisturbed rivers, wetlands and freshwater ecosystems in the eastern Himalayan foothills. Its surviving population is principally distributed across Bhutan, north-eastern India and northern Myanmar.
- **Kalai-II Project:** The THDC India Limited project is proposed in Anjaw district on the Lohit River, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra. It is designed as a run-of-the-river project involving a concrete gravity dam and an underground powerhouse.
- **Major Threats:** River regulation, hydropower construction, hunting, sand and gravel extraction, forest loss and human disturbance threaten the species. The Forest Advisory Committee has required special conservation measures for its habitat and review of the wildlife management plan by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Bharat Green Hydrogen Summit 2026

In the News: The second edition of the Bharat Green Hydrogen Summit was held on July 23, 2026, at FICCI Federation House in New Delhi. Organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the summit carried the theme "Positioning India as a Global Hydrogen Hub." It brought together government representatives, industries, investors and technology providers.

Key Pointers:

- **Summit Focus:** Discussions covered demand creation, cost competitiveness, domestic electrolyser manufacturing, hydrogen hubs and export infrastructure. Affordable renewable electricity, financing, skilled manpower and technological innovation were also major subjects.

- **Green Hydrogen:** Green hydrogen is commonly produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen through electrolysis powered by renewable electricity. It can reduce emissions in sectors where complete electrification is difficult, including steel, fertilizers, refining and long-distance transport.
- **National Mission:** The Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission on January 4, 2023. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is responsible for its overall coordination and implementation.
- **Financial Outlay:** The Mission has an initial outlay of ₹19,744 crore. Of this amount, ₹17,490 crore has been allocated to the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition, or SIGHT, programme.
- **2030 Target:** The Mission envisages at least five million metric tonnes of annual green-hydrogen production capacity by 2030. It is also expected to support approximately 125 GW of additional renewable-energy capacity and promote production, utilisation and export of hydrogen derivatives.

Spain Declares National Emergency as Wildfires Sweep Europe

In the News: Spain declared a national emergency in July 2026 after severe wildfires spread near Madrid, Ávila and other regions. Extreme heat, dry vegetation and simultaneous fires overwhelmed regional capabilities, forcing evacuations and the deployment of national and international firefighting resources.

Key Points:

- **National Emergency Declaration:** Under Spain's National Civil Protection System, the declaration places overall coordination under the Interior Minister. It permits centralized deployment of personnel, aircraft, military units and resources from different public administrations.
- **Causes and Severity:** High temperatures, drought, strong winds and dried vegetation contributed to the rapid spread of the fires. Spain recorded dozens of major fires and more than 150,000 hectares of burned land during the 2026 season, significantly exceeding the corresponding 2025 figures.
- **Military Emergencies Unit:** Spain deployed the Unidad Militar de Emergencias, or UME, to assist civilian firefighting agencies. The UME is a permanent joint military force created in 2005 to provide rapid assistance during wildfires, floods, earthquakes and other major emergencies.
- **European Assistance:** Spain received aircraft, personnel and equipment through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. The mechanism coordinates disaster assistance among participating countries, while the rescEU reserve supplies additional firefighting aircraft and emergency resources.
- **EFFIS and Copernicus:** The European Forest Fire Information System provides near-real-time information, fire-danger forecasts and historical wildfire data. EFFIS operates under the Copernicus Emergency Management Service and supports authorities across Europe and neighbouring regions.

SCIENCE AND TECH

New Exoplanet Discovered Around Beta Pictoris

In the News: Astronomers announced the discovery of Beta Pictoris d, the third known planet orbiting the young star Beta Pictoris, in July 2026. The planet was identified through observations made by the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope and the James Webb Space Telescope. It had remained hidden in archival observations for more than a decade.

Key Points:

- **Beta Pictoris System:** Beta Pictoris is a young star located approximately 63 light-years from Earth in the constellation Pictor. It is surrounded by a prominent disk of dust and planetary debris and was already known to host Beta Pictoris b and Beta Pictoris c.
- **Discovery Method:** One team detected the planet using the ERIS instrument on ESO's Very Large Telescope and later traced it in older SPHERE observations. A separate team used the Near-Infrared Spectrograph Integral Field Unit aboard the James Webb Space Telescope to isolate the chemical signature of its atmosphere.

- **Physical Features:** Beta Pictoris d is a gas giant estimated to have about 2.4 times the mass of Jupiter. It is around 100 times fainter than Beta Pictoris b and is among the least massive exoplanets detected through ground-based direct imaging.
- **Orbit:** The planet follows the widest orbit among the three known planets in the system. Estimates place it roughly 25–30 astronomical units from its star, within the inner boundary of the surrounding debris disk.
- **Scientific Importance:** Beta Pictoris is only the second planetary system known to contain at least three directly imaged planets. The presence of Beta Pictoris d may help explain the sharp inner edge and other unusual structures observed in the system's debris disk.
- **New Detection Technique:** Beta Pictoris d became the first directly imaged planet discovered primarily through moderate-resolution spectroscopy. The method identifies atmospheric molecules while filtering out scattered light from the star and surrounding dust.

DRDO Successfully Conducts Maiden Flight Test of Kusha)Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile

In the News: DRDO successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the Kusha Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile from APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast on July 23, 2026. The missile intercepted an electronic target simulating a high-speed and high-altitude aerial threat. The test marks a major step in India's indigenous long-range air-defence capability.

Key Points:

- **Missile System:** Kusha is a Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile system developed for air-defence roles. It is designed to neutralise threats such as fighter aircraft, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and large enemy aircraft across a wide range and altitude envelope.
- **Test Location:** The maiden flight test was conducted from APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha. This island is a major missile-testing range and frequently appears in defence-related current affairs questions.
- **Indigenous Development:** The missile, radar, command-and-control centre and other weapon-system elements have been developed by DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners. This strengthens the broader Atmanirbhar Bharat push in defence manufacturing.

India Orders GitHub to Remove Bitchat App Over Security Concerns

In the News: The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre directed GitHub to remove or disable access to repositories associated with Bitchat, a decentralized messaging application. Authorities cited security concerns arising from its ability to facilitate anonymous communication without conventional internet, mobile-network or centralized-server infrastructure.

Key Points:

- **How Bitchat Works:** Bitchat enables nearby devices to communicate through Bluetooth Low Energy mesh networking. Messages can move from one device to another through peer-to-peer relays, allowing communication even when internet and cellular services are unavailable.
- **Developer and Platform:** Bitchat was developed by Jack Dorsey, co-founder and former CEO of Twitter. Its source code was hosted on GitHub, the Microsoft-owned software-development platform widely used for storing and collaboratively developing open-source projects.
- **Agency Involved:** The direction was issued by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre, commonly called I4C, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Approved in 2018, I4C became an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs on July 1, 2024.
- **Section 79 of the IT Act:** The notice reportedly relied on Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Under this provision, an intermediary may lose safe-harbour protection if it fails to expeditiously remove unlawful material after receiving legally valid notice from the government or a competent court.
- **Section 79 and Section 69A:** Section 79 primarily concerns intermediary liability and safe-harbour protection. Section 69A separately empowers the government to block public access to online information on specified grounds such as sovereignty, national security, public order and friendly relations with foreign states.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026: Honouring India's Bravehearts and the Legacy of Operation Vijay

In the News: India observed the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26, 2026, commemorating the country's victory in the 1999 Kargil War. The day honours the soldiers who fought under Operation Vijay to recapture strategic mountain positions occupied by Pakistani forces and intruders.

Key Points:

- **Date and Significance:** Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed annually on July 26 because Indian forces successfully completed the eviction of intruders from occupied positions in 1999. The conflict lasted for more than two months in the high-altitude Kargil, Dras, Batalik and Mushkoh sectors.
- **Operation Vijay:** The Indian Army's campaign to reclaim the occupied heights was called Operation Vijay. The Indian Air Force joined through Operation Safed Sagar on May 26, 1999, while the Indian Navy deployed forces to create strategic pressure in the maritime domain.
- **Strategic Geography:** The infiltrators occupied commanding heights overlooking the Srinagar-Leh Highway, an important road connecting Kashmir with Ladakh. India conducted its military campaign without crossing the Line of Control, strengthening international support for its position.
- **Major Battles and Honours:** Tololing was recaptured on June 13, while Tiger Hill was recaptured on July 4, 1999. Four soldiers received the Param Vir Chakra for their actions in the conflict, while nine were awarded the Maha Vir Chakra and 55 received the Vir Chakra.
- **Legacy and 2026 Commemoration:** Lessons from Kargil emphasized jointness, intelligence coordination, surveillance, high-altitude capability and defence modernization. In 2026, commemorative initiatives included the Shaurya Vijay Yatra from the National War Memorial in New Delhi to the Kargil War Memorial at Dras.

STATIC

Birth Anniversary of Mangal Pandey

In the News: India observed the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Mangal Pandey on July 19, 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to him and recalled his courage and role in challenging British authority. Mangal Pandey is remembered as one of the earliest figures associated with the Revolt of 1857.

Key Points:

- **Birth and Early Life:** Mangal Pandey was born on July 19, 1827, in Nagwa village in present-day Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. He later joined the military establishment of the British East India Company.
- **Military Service:** He served as a sepoy in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry regiment of the East India Company's Bengal Army. His actions at Barrackpore became an important immediate precursor to the wider uprising of 1857.
- **Barrackpore Incident:** On March 29, 1857, Mangal Pandey attacked British officers at the Barrackpore military cantonment near Kolkata. He was arrested after the incident and subsequently tried by a military court.
- **Cartridge Controversy:** Discontent among Indian soldiers intensified over the introduction of Enfield rifle cartridges, which were believed to be greased with cow and pig fat. Soldiers had to bite open the cartridges, offending the religious beliefs of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys.
- **Execution and Legacy:** Mangal Pandey was executed at Barrackpore on April 8, 1857, shortly before the revolt began at Meerut on May 10. The Government of India issued a commemorative postage stamp in his honour in 1984.

Lokmanya Tilak Jayanti 2026

In the News: Lokmanya Tilak Jayanti was observed on July 23, 2026, marking the 170th birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. National leaders paid tribute to his contribution to the freedom struggle, political awakening and the demand for Swaraj. Tilak was born on July 23, 1856, in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.

Key Points:

- **Nationalist Leader:** Bal Gangadhar Tilak was popularly called “Lokmanya”, meaning accepted or honoured by the people. Along with Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, he formed the nationalist trio known as Lal-Bal-Pal.
- **Newspapers:** Tilak helped establish *Kesari*, a Marathi newspaper, and *The Mahratta*, an English weekly, in 1881. These publications criticised colonial policies and spread nationalist and political ideas among Indian readers.
- **Cultural Mobilisation:** He promoted the public celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi from 1893 and used cultural gatherings to encourage unity and political participation. He also promoted the Shivaji festival as a platform for nationalist mobilisation.
- **Home Rule Movement:** Tilak established his Home Rule League at Belgaum in April 1916, while Annie Besant organised a separate league later that year. Both organisations demanded self-government for India within the British constitutional framework.
- **Mandalay Imprisonment:** Following his 1908 sedition conviction, Tilak was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment in Mandalay, Burma. During this period, he wrote *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya*, which emphasised Karma Yoga and the philosophy of action.

SPORTS

FIFA World Cup 2026 Final: Spain Defeats Argentina as Torres Scores Winner

In the News: Spain won the FIFA World Cup 2026 by defeating defending champion Argentina 1-0 in the final on July 19, 2026. The match was played at the New York New Jersey Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Substitute Ferran Torres scored the only goal in the 106th minute of extra time, securing Spain’s second men’s World Cup title.

Key Points:

- **Final Result:** The match remained goalless during the regulation 90 minutes and proceeded to extra time. Ferran Torres scored the decisive goal in the 106th minute to give Spain a 1-0 victory. Argentina had been reduced to ten players before Spain secured the winning goal.
- **Spain’s Second World Cup Title:** This was Spain’s second FIFA World Cup triumph, following its first championship in 2010. In the 2010 final at Johannesburg, Spain defeated the Netherlands through Andrés Iniesta’s extra-time goal. The 2026 victory placed Spain among the nations that have won the men’s World Cup more than once.
- **Historic Double for Spain:** Spain became the first country to hold the FIFA Men’s World Cup and FIFA Women’s World Cup titles simultaneously. Its women’s team had won the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup by defeating England in the final.
- **Ferran Torres’ Achievement:** Ferran Torres became only the second substitute to score the winning goal in a FIFA World Cup final. The first was Germany’s Mario Götze, who scored against Argentina in the 2014 final. Torres had entered the 2026 final as a substitute before producing the decisive finish.
- **About the 2026 Tournament:** The 2026 FIFA World Cup was jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico and was the first edition to feature 48 teams. Spain completed the tournament unbeaten and conceded only one goal across eight matches, setting a new defensive record for a World Cup champion.

Next FIFA World Cup 2030: Hosts, Dates, Qualified Teams, Format

In the News: The FIFA World Cup 2030 will mark the centenary of the men’s World Cup, whose inaugural edition was held in Uruguay in 1930. Morocco, Portugal and Spain will serve as the principal hosts, while Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay will stage one centenary match each. The tournament is scheduled to conclude on July 21, 2030.

Key Points:

- **Principal Host Countries:** Most matches will be staged in Morocco, Portugal and Spain. Their joint candidature was approved by acclamation at an Extraordinary FIFA Congress attended virtually by all 211 FIFA member associations in December 2024.

- **Centenary Matches:** Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay will each host one opening-stage match. Uruguay was selected because it hosted and won the first FIFA World Cup in 1930, while Argentina was the inaugural runner-up and Paraguay houses the CONMEBOL headquarters.
- **Tournament Dates:** The centenary ceremony and South American matches are planned for June 8 and 9, 2030. The principal opening ceremony and opening matches in Morocco, Portugal or Spain are scheduled for June 13 and 14, while the final will be held on July 21.
- **Qualified Teams:** Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay have secured automatic qualification because of their hosting responsibilities. As of July 2026, the remaining participating teams had not been determined through confederation qualification competitions.
- **Competition Format:** The approved arrangement continues with 48 teams and 104 matches, following the expanded format introduced in 2026. A proposal to increase the centenary edition to 64 teams has been discussed, but it had not received FIFA approval as of July 2026.

Sharma Breaks Sachin Tendulkar's Record with Historic First-Ever Indian ODI Century at Lord's

In the News: Rohit Sharma scored 138 runs from 110 balls against England in the third ODI at Lord's on July 19, 2026. He became the first Indian men's batter to register an ODI century at the ground. Despite his innings, India lost the match by 27 runs and the three-match series by 2-1.

Key Points:

- **Historic Lord's Innings:** Rohit struck 17 fours and five sixes during his 138-run innings. He became the first Indian men's player to score an ODI hundred at Lord's, widely known as the "Home of Cricket".
- **Age Record:** At 39 years and 80 days, Rohit became the oldest Indian to score an ODI century. He surpassed Sachin Tendulkar, who was 38 years and 327 days old when he recorded his final ODI hundred.
- **Centuries as an Opener:** The innings was Rohit's 46th international century while opening the batting. He moved past Tendulkar's previous Indian record of 45 international centuries as an opener.
- **Record in England:** Rohit completed his eighth ODI century in England, drawing level with former England opener Marcus Trescothick. Joe Root remained ahead of them with ten ODI centuries scored in England.
- **About Lord's:** Lord's Cricket Ground is located in St John's Wood, London, and has occupied its present site since 1814. It is owned by the Marylebone Cricket Club, which is also the guardian of the Laws of Cricket.

Commonwealth Games, 2026

In the News: India has announced its contingent for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, scheduled in Glasgow, Scotland, from July 23 to August 2, 2026. Official releases initially listed 124 competitors, while a later Indian Olympic Association communication referred to a 126-member team. Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and boxer Lovlina Borgohain have been selected to lead India during the opening ceremony.

Key Points:

- **Glasgow 2026:** The event will be the 23rd edition of the Commonwealth Games. Glasgow is hosting the competition for the second time after the 2014 Games, with events being conducted across four principal venues.
- **Contingent Strength:** A Press Information Bureau release listed 126 athletes, 78 men and 48 women, within a 191-member. Some reports described it as a 120-member contingent, while a subsequent IOA release used the figure of 126 for the overall Indian team.
- **Ceremonial Leaders:** Olympic medallists Mirabai Chanu and Lovlina Borgohain have been named India's flag and baton bearers for the opening ceremony on July 23. Chanu competes in weightlifting, while Borgohain represents India in boxing.
- **Sports and Para Sports:** India will participate in disciplines including athletics, boxing, weightlifting, judo, gymnastics, cycling, lawn bowls and swimming. The contingent also includes athletes in para athletics, para swimming, para powerlifting, para cycling and wheelchair basketball.

- **Team Officials and Ceremonial Kit:** Tennis administrator Rohit Rajpal has been appointed Chef de Mission, with Ravi Bengani serving as Deputy Chef de Mission. India's ceremonial apparel includes a jute-viscose fabric developed through collaboration among the National Jute Board, NIFT New Delhi and Gloster Jute Mills.

Commonwealth Games Mascots: Complete History from 1970 to Glasgow 2026

In the News: The Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games began on July 23, 2026, with Finnie, a Glaswegian unicorn, serving as the official mascot. The Games will continue until August 2, 2026. Finnie's appearance has renewed interest in the history of Commonwealth Games mascots, which began with unofficial characters in 1970.

Key Points:

- **Unofficial Mascots:** Edinburgh 1970 introduced Wee Mannie, a haggis character, but it was never officially adopted. The Scottish team instead used Dunky Dick, a large teddy bear. Christchurch 1974 had Shiwi, a sheepskin kiwi, as another unofficial mascot.
- **First Official Mascots:** Keyano, a grizzly bear, became the first official Commonwealth Games mascot at Edmonton 1978. It was followed by Matilda the kangaroo at Brisbane 1982, Mac the Scottish Terrier at Edinburgh 1986 and Goldie the kiwi at Auckland 1990.
- **Mascots from 1994 to 2002:** Victoria 1994 selected Klee Wyck, an orca, while Kuala Lumpur 1998 chose Wira, a Bornean orangutan. Manchester 2002 introduced Kit, a Devon Rex cat, accompanied by a character called Mad Ferret.
- **Mascots from 2006 to 2022:** Melbourne 2006 featured Karak, a red-tailed black cockatoo, and Delhi 2010 introduced Shera, a Bengal tiger. Clyde, a thistle, represented Glasgow 2014; Borobi, a koala, represented Gold Coast 2018; and Perry the Bull represented Birmingham 2022.
- **Finnie at Glasgow 2026:** Finnie is a unicorn, the national animal of Scotland, and is named after Glasgow's Finnieston Crane. The character was developed with contributions from young people in Glasgow and represents the city's sporting energy, culture and identity.

Commonwealth Games 2026 Medals Tally: Check complete list

In the News: The 23rd Commonwealth Games are being held in Glasgow from July 23 to August 2, 2026. As per the July 25, 2026 update, Australia was leading the medals table, while India had opened its account with one bronze medal. India's first medal came through Jhandu Kumar in men's heavyweight para powerlifting.

Key Points:

- **Top of the Table:** Australia led the tally with 6 gold, 2 silver and 5 bronze medals, making a total of 13 medals. Nigeria stood second with 3 gold, 3 silver and 0 bronze medals, while Scotland was third with 2 gold, 2 silver and 0 bronze medals.
- **India's Position:** India was placed joint ninth with 0 gold, 0 silver and 1 bronze medal. The medal came in para powerlifting, showing the growing importance of para sports in India's Commonwealth Games performance.
- **India's First Medal:** Jhandu Kumar won bronze in the men's heavyweight para powerlifting event. He finished with 130.9 points after successful lifts of 181 kg and 190 kg, narrowly missing a Games record attempt at 196 kg.
- **Host Country:** Glasgow in Scotland is hosting the 2026 edition. Scotland's strong early performance placed it third in the medal table, which is relevant because host nations often perform strongly due to home conditions and targeted preparation.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Becomes Youngest Player to Score a T20I Fifty

In the News: India's Vaibhav Sooryavanshi became the youngest player to score a half-century in men's T20I cricket during the first T20I against Zimbabwe at Harare on July 23, 2026. He scored his maiden T20I fifty off just 18 balls. India won the match by seven wickets.

Key Points:

- **Record Created:** Sooryavanshi achieved the record at 15 years and 118 days. He broke the previous record held by Louis Bruce of Gibraltar, who had scored a T20I fifty at 16 years and 56 days.
- **Match Details:** The record came in the first T20I of a three-match series between India and Zimbabwe at Harare Sports Club. India chased a target of 126 with more than six overs remaining.
- **Innings Impact:** His fifty came off only 18 balls and included four fours and four sixes. The innings showed aggressive intent and helped India secure an easy win in the series opener.
- **Wider Career Context:** Sooryavanshi had earlier been part of India's youth cricket success and had scored 175 off 80 balls at Harare in the ICC Under-19 World Cup Final in January 2026. This makes him important for exam questions on emerging Indian sportspersons.

