

Weekly Current Affairs 28 June to 4th July 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Corporate Mitra Scheme for MSME Support

In the News: The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has moved ahead with the Corporate Mitra Scheme, announced in the Union Budget 2026-27, to create a trained pool of para-professionals for MSMEs. The scheme is designed to provide affordable support in compliance, GST, accounting, financial guidance and secretarial services, especially in Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

Key Points:

- **Purpose of the Scheme:** Corporate Mitras will assist MSMEs in regulatory compliance, GST, accounting, cost accounting, financial guidance and secretarial services. The scheme seeks to reduce the professional-service gap faced by small enterprises outside major metropolitan centres.
- **Training Structure:** The programme will have a total duration of 12 months. It includes six months of academic learning of about 150 hours and six months of on-the-job training with professional firms.
- **Initial Intake:** The scheme will begin with 2,000 participants. Out of these, 200 seats have been earmarked for participants from the North Eastern Region.
- **Eligibility and Fee:** Candidates must be Indian nationals and up to 30 years of age. Graduates and final-year students can apply, and the fee has been fixed at ₹3,000 plus GST, with concessions for women, North Eastern candidates, Himalayan-region candidates and candidates from specific Union Territories.
- **Implementing Institutions:** The scheme will be implemented with the involvement of ICAI, ICSI and ICoAI through the Swayam Plus portal. These professional institutes will support course delivery, certification and on-the-job training arrangements.

On the amended FCRA Rules, the fallout

In the News: The Ministry of Home Affairs notified the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026, tightening the compliance framework for NGOs receiving foreign funds. The amended rules require NGOs to specify their approved activities and the States or Union Territories where they will operate. The changes have triggered debate over transparency, regulatory control and the autonomy of civil society organisations.

Key Points:

- **Purpose and Area Disclosure:** NGOs must now choose their objectives from a predefined list of purposes and specify the States or Union Territories where they intend to operate. The approved purposes cover areas such as religious, educational, cultural, economic and social activities.
- **One-Year Requirement for Existing NGOs:** NGOs that already hold FCRA licences have been asked to submit details of their purpose and area of operation to the Union government within one year. This brings existing registered organisations under the revised disclosure framework.
- **Stricter Reporting Norms:** Annual returns will now have to include detailed activity reports along with financial statements. Organisations receiving funds through intermediary or donor-advised routes must disclose the ultimate source of the contribution.
- **Religious Activities and Proselytisation:** The rules define permitted religious activities such as upkeep of places of worship, religious education and preservation of scriptures. However, activities involving proselytisation have been excluded from the permitted list.
- **Political and Civil Society Response:** The changes have drawn criticism from opposition leaders and civil society groups. Concerns have been raised that the new framework may increase administrative burden and affect the independence of NGOs, while the government has defended stricter regulation as necessary for transparency and traceability of foreign contributions.

Govt. to launch affordable digital health management system for small clinics across India

In the News: The Union Health Ministry is set to launch e-Sushrut@Clinic, a lightweight, cloud-based Hospital Management Information System for small outpatient clinics. Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda will launch it as part of a wider set of digital health initiatives on 29 June 2026 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Key Points:

- **What is e-Sushrut@Clinic:** e-Sushrut@Clinic is a simplified HMIS developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing. It has been designed for small clinics, primary health centres, health and wellness centres, sub-centres and private outpatient facilities.
- **Core Functions:** The platform will automate patient registration, billing, MIS reporting, speech-to-text documentation and clinical decision support. It has been designed to work with minimal technical expertise, making it suitable for smaller healthcare facilities.
- **ABDM Integration:** The system is linked with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission ecosystem. Health Professional Registry and Health Facility Registry integration will be part of onboarding, and only registered healthcare professionals will be able to use the platform.
- **Current Onboarding Status:** More than 800 health facilities have already been onboarded on e-Sushrut@Clinic. Official data also stated that over 680 health records had been generated on the platform before the wider rollout.
- **Cost and Support Model:** The platform is priced at ₹499 per month for up to five users. Under the NHA-C-DAC partnership, users will receive a subsidy of ₹200, reducing the effective monthly cost to ₹299, with the first three months offered free.

Delhi EV Policy 2026 Approved by Delhi Cabinet

In the News: The Delhi Cabinet approved the Electric Vehicle Policy 2026, with implementation likely from July 1, 2026, subject to the Lieutenant Governor's approval. The policy will remain in force until March 31, 2030, and carries a planned outlay of around Rs 15,000 crore over four years. It aims to accelerate the shift towards clean and zero-emission transport in the national capital.

Key Points:

- **Policy Duration:** The policy is planned for a four-year rollout from July 2026 to March 2030. Its main objective is to reduce vehicular pollution and build a stronger electric mobility ecosystem in Delhi.
- **Financial Support:** EV cars priced up to Rs 30 lakh have been exempted from registration fees and road taxes. The policy also provides a Rs 1 lakh incentive for purchasing new EV cars after scrapping old ones.
- **Subsidy Structure:** Electric two-wheeler buyers will get Rs 30,000 subsidy, while electric three-wheeler buyers will get Rs 50,000 subsidy in the first year. Hybrid vehicles have been kept outside the subsidy framework.
- **Registration Shift:** The policy mandates that only electric two-wheelers can be registered in Delhi from April 2028. This marks a phased transition away from fossil-fuel-based personal mobility.
- **Infrastructure Push:** The Delhi government plans major spending on charging infrastructure and tax waivers. The policy combines consumer incentives, infrastructure creation, and regulatory shifts to support EV adoption.

Rajasthan and Haryana Sign Historic Yamuna Water Project Agreement: Key Features, Benefits and Significance Explained

In the News: Rajasthan and Haryana signed an agreement in New Delhi for the construction and implementation of the Yamuna Water Project. The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil. The project aims to resolve a nearly three-decade-old water-sharing issue between the two states.

Key Points:

- **Basis of Agreement:** The project is linked to the 1994 Memorandum of Understanding on sharing utilisable surface waters of the Upper Yamuna Basin. It will help Rajasthan use its allocated share of Yamuna water through a planned underground pipeline system from the Western Yamuna Canal.
- **Water Supply Plan:** Around 580 Million Cubic Metres of water will be supplied from the Yamuna Canal to Rajasthan from July to October. The water will be carried through three underground pipelines, each having a diameter of more than 3.6 metres.
- **Beneficiary Areas:** The project will supply drinking water to Sikar, Churu and Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan. It will also benefit the Bhiwani and Fatehabad areas of Haryana, making it a joint water-security initiative.
- **Groundwater Recharge:** The agreement provides for the storage of unused rainwater in large ponds. This is expected to support groundwater recharge and improve drinking water availability in arid and semi-arid regions.
- **Administrative Framework:** The agreement covers cost-sharing, water allocation, release protocols, maintenance and monitoring systems. It also includes transparency measures and a dispute-resolution mechanism for smoother implementation.

Project BRAHMANK of BRO Marks 16th Raising Day: Strengthening India's Border Infrastructure

In the News: Project BRAHMANK of the Border Roads Organisation celebrated its 16th Raising Day on 29 June 2026 at Ranaghat in Arunachal Pradesh. The project has completed 15 years of service in strengthening strategic infrastructure and connectivity in the eastern border region. It works under BRO, which functions under the Ministry of Defence.

Key Points:

- **Location and Area of Work:** Project BRAHMANK is responsible for road infrastructure in Siang, East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Shi-Yomi districts of Arunachal Pradesh. It also covers parts of Dhemaji district in Assam, making it important for connectivity in difficult terrain.
- **Infrastructure Responsibility:** The project maintains and develops about 811 km of roads and nearly 86 bridges. These structures include culverts, steel bridges and major arch bridges used for civilian as well as strategic movement.
- **Major Engineering Works:** Its important works include the 100-metre steel arch bridge over Siyom Nallah. Another major structure is the 165-metre PSC bridge over Simang Nallah on the Along-Yingkiong Road.
- **FY 2025-26 Achievements:** During 2025-26, Project BRAHMANK inaugurated 13 bridges with a total span of 390 metres. It also blacktopped 61 km of roads to NHDL specifications and developed helipads to improve regional connectivity.
- **Raising Details:** Project BRAHMANK was raised on 29 June 2011 at Ranaghat in East Siang district. It became fully functional on 3 December 2011 and has since supported Armed Forces mobility and village connectivity.

India's First Offshore Airport Approved in Maharashtra: Location, Features, Benefits & Key Details

In the News: Maharashtra has approved the preparation of a Detailed Project Report for India's first offshore airport. The proposed airport is planned near Kore Beach in Palghar district, off Maharashtra's western coast. It is expected to become the third major airport serving the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Key Points:

- **Proposed Location:** The airport is planned near Kore Beach in Palghar district, close to the Vadhavan Port region. The site is significant because Palghar is emerging as a major infrastructure corridor north of Mumbai.
- **Offshore Airport Model:** An offshore airport is built on reclaimed land or an artificial island in the sea. This model is used where land availability is limited and urban airports face capacity pressure.
- **Capacity and Role:** The proposed airport is designed to handle around 90 million passengers annually. It is expected to ease pressure on Mumbai airport and complement the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport.
- **Connectivity Links:** The state has also asked officials to examine an extension of the Uttan-Virar Sea Link for connectivity to the airport site. The airport is planned along with Vadhavan Port and other transport links, strengthening multimodal connectivity.

Nadaprabhu Kempe Gowda

In the News: The Vice-President of India paid tribute to Nadaprabhu Sri Kempe Gowda on his 517th Birth Anniversary on 27 June 2026 in Bengaluru. Kempe Gowda is remembered as the founder of Bengaluru and a major figure in Karnataka's history. His legacy was highlighted in relation to urban planning, inclusive governance and environmental conservation.

Key Points:

- **Historical Identity:** Nadaprabhu Kempe Gowda was a 16th-century ruler associated with the Vijayanagara Empire. He is widely credited with founding Bengaluru and shaping its early urban structure.
- **Urban Planning Legacy:** Kempe Gowda laid the foundation for planned urban development through markets, neighbourhoods, water systems and public spaces. His approach reflected early ideas of organised city-building and civic administration.
- **Inclusive Governance:** The Vice-President noted that Kempe Gowda envisioned a city where farmers, traders, artisans, scholars and people of different faiths could prosper together. This inclusive vision is linked with Bengaluru's present identity as a diverse urban centre.
- **Environmental Contribution:** Kempe Gowda's planning placed importance on water bodies and public water systems. This makes his legacy relevant to discussions on sustainable urban growth and water conservation.

India's Unemployment Rate Falls to 8-Year Low in 2025

In the News: India's unemployment rate fell to 3.1% in 2025, the lowest level recorded in eight years. The finding is based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2025 released by the National Statistics Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The data is important because it reflects trends in employment, labour force participation, regular wage work, youth unemployment and gender-based labour indicators.

Key Points:

- **Data Source and Survey Period:** The unemployment figure comes from the Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report, 2025. The report covers January 2025 to December 2025 and is the first comprehensive PLFS annual report based on a calendar-year survey period. The survey covered over 2.70 lakh households and more than 11.48 lakh persons across rural and urban India.
- **Unemployment Rate:** The unemployment rate in usual status for persons aged 15 years and above stood at 3.1% in 2025. The male unemployment rate declined marginally from 3.3% in 2024 to 3.1% in 2025, while the female unemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.1%. Rural unemployment was lower at 2.4%, while urban unemployment stood at 4.8%.
- **Youth and Educated Unemployment:** Youth unemployment in the 15 to 29 age group declined to 9.9% in 2025 from 10.3% in 2024. Rural youth unemployment fell to 8.3%, while urban youth unemployment declined to 13.6%. Unemployment among educated persons with secondary education and above also reduced to 6.5% in 2025 from 7.0% in 2024.
- **Labour Participation and Employment Type:** The labour force participation rate for persons aged 15 years and above stood at 59.3% in 2025. The worker population ratio was estimated at 57.4%. The share of regular wage and salaried employment increased to 23.6% in 2025 from 22.4%, while self-employment declined from 57.5% to 56.2%.
- **Gender and State-Level Concerns:** The national trend shows improvement, but state-level data reveals concerns in urban female unemployment. Bihar, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh saw a rise in urban female unemployment over the longer period from 2017-18 to 2025. At the all-India level, urban female unemployment declined from 10.8% to 6.4% over the same period.

VB-G RAM G Act 2025 Comes into Force from July 1

In the News: The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, came into force across rural India from July 1, 2026. The Act replaces the earlier MGNREGA framework with a revised statutory rural employment system. It provides eligible rural households a statutory entitlement to 125 days of guaranteed wage employment.

Key Points:

- **Full Name and Legal Status:** VB-G RAM G stands for Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin). The Act received presidential assent in 2025 and has been described as a statutory overhaul of the Mahatma Gandhi National

Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. It is linked with rural employment, livelihood security, accountability and durable asset creation.

- **Employment Guarantee Increased:** Under MGNREGA, eligible rural households were guaranteed at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year. The VB-G RAM G Act increases this entitlement to 125 days. The provision for unemployment allowance, when work is not provided within the prescribed period, has also been retained.
- **Revised Wage Rates:** The Government notified revised wage rates for all States and Union Territories under the new Act. No notified daily wage will be below ₹300 anywhere in the country. The national average notified wage has increased from ₹298.8 per day to ₹327.4 per day, reflecting a wage enhancement of more than 10%.
- **Funding Pattern and State Role:** The Act changes the funding structure by making it a centrally sponsored scheme. The fund-sharing pattern is 60:40 for most states and 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan states. States are required to notify schemes consistent with the Act within six months of its commencement.
- **Implementation and Digital Platform:** The national rollout includes distribution of Rural Employment Guarantee Cards, launch of the VB-G RAM G software platform and release of implementation-related publications. The national launch programme was scheduled in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh. The Act also emphasises local planning, technology-based monitoring and creation of durable rural assets.

Ahead of 8th CPC, experts explain why India's public sector compensation is higher than reported

In the News: The debate around government compensation has intensified as India prepares for the Eighth Central Pay Commission. Experts have argued that India's official pay and pension numbers do not fully capture the actual cost of public sector workers. The concern is that contract workers, scheme workers, autonomous institutions and fragmented budget heads may leave the real compensation bill understated.

Key Points:

- **8th Central Pay Commission Background:** The Union Cabinet approved the Terms of Reference of the 8th Central Pay Commission on October 28, 2025. The Commission is a temporary body with a Chairperson, one part-time member and one Member-Secretary. It is required to submit its recommendations within 18 months from the date of its constitution.
- **Official Compensation Data:** The central government's pay and pension expenditure averaged about 2.4% of GDP between 2015-16 and 2020-21. For states, the 2022-23 figure was around 2.5% of GDP. Experts argue that these figures mainly capture permanent employees and do not fully include workers engaged through contracts, schemes and institutions outside standard payrolls.
- **Contract and Scheme Workers:** Contract workers engaged in government functions such as maintenance, data entry and security are often outside headline salary figures. At the central level, contract workers grew to 76% of the permanent workforce in 2020-21. Scheme workers such as ASHAs, PM-POSHAN cook-cum-helpers and Anganwadi workers are also often classified through honoraria rather than regular salary heads.
- **Fragmented Reporting:** Salary grants to autonomous institutions such as AIIMS, IITs, IIMs, regulatory bodies and research agencies are recorded separately from regular government salaries. More than 350 such institutions received about ₹60,000 crore as salary grants in 2024-25. Municipal corporation employees at the state level also remain outside many state salary accounts.
- **Adjusted Compensation Estimate:** After adding contract worker pay, scheme worker honoraria, autonomous institution salaries and separately reported Railway and Post pensions, the central government's compensation bill rises from 2.4% to 3.8% of GDP. Including public sector enterprise employees takes it to 4.6%. Experts argue that better classification is needed for fiscal transparency and realistic assessment of public finances.

MECON Achieves Miniratna Category-I Status: A Major Boost for India's Public Sector

In the News: The Ministry of Steel granted Miniratna Category-I status to MECON Limited on 1 July 2026. MECON is a Schedule 'A' Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Steel. The recognition came after the company fulfilled the financial criteria prescribed by the Department of Public Enterprises, including continuous profits and positive net worth.

Key Points:

- **Status Granted:** MECON Limited has been granted Miniratna Category-I status by the Ministry of Steel. The status gives greater financial and operational autonomy to the company's Board. It allows MECON to take faster decisions on investments, modernisation and business expansion.
- **Financial Performance:** MECON reported continuous profits during the last three financial years. Its Profit Before Tax stood at ₹77.62 crore in FY 2023-24, ₹32.08 crore in FY 2024-25 and ₹104.53 crore in FY 2025-26. The company also reported a positive net worth of ₹535.42 crore as on 31 March 2026.
- **About MECON:** MECON Limited was established in 1959 and is headquartered in Ranchi, Jharkhand. It is a major engineering, consultancy, project management and contracting organisation. It has played an important role in India's steel sector and has also diversified into mining, infrastructure, power, oil and gas.
- **Meaning of Miniratna Category-I:** Miniratna status is granted to profit-making Central Public Sector Enterprises that meet prescribed performance criteria. Category-I companies receive greater autonomy than ordinary CPSEs in areas such as capital expenditure and project decisions. This helps strong public sector companies function with more flexibility.

What is MANAS?

In the News: MANAS, or Madak Padarth Nishedh Asoochna Kendra, is the National Narcotics Helpline of India. It was launched on 18 July 2024 under the Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, in collaboration with the Digital India Corporation. In July 2026, it was highlighted again as a digital platform supporting drug reporting, counselling and rehabilitation services.

Key Points:

- **Full Form and Nodal Agency:** MANAS stands for Madak Padarth Nishedh Asoochna Kendra. It functions under the Narcotics Control Bureau, which works under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The platform was developed with support from the Digital India Corporation.
- **Purpose of the Platform:** MANAS allows citizens to report drug trafficking, peddling, illegal cultivation and other narcotics-related activities. It is designed as a secure and confidential reporting system. It also helps people affected by substance abuse access counselling and rehabilitation support.
- **Access Channels:** The platform can be accessed through the national helpline number 1933, the MANAS portal, email and the UMANG app. It provides round-the-clock access from anywhere in India. Counselling-related calls can also be transferred to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment helpline 14446.
- **Digital Governance Features:** MANAS uses digital ticket generation and workflow management to improve coordination. Reports can be logged, registered, tracked and sent to the concerned agencies. The system connects citizens with NCB Zonal Units and Anti-Narcotics Task Forces across States and Union Territories.
- **Public Outreach:** The platform supports the wider goal of a Nasha Mukh Bharat. It encourages citizen participation in reporting drug-related activities and seeking professional help. Awareness activities through MyGov and digital campaigns are also used to involve youth and the general public.

16th India-Japan Annual Summit 2026

In the News: The 16th India-Japan Annual Summit was held in New Delhi on July 2, 2026, between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi. The summit reaffirmed the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Major outcomes covered economic security, AI, energy resilience, mobility, defence technology and people-to-people ties.

Key Points:

- **Major outcome documents:** India and Japan announced key documents on economic security, artificial intelligence and energy resilience. The economic security declaration focuses on semiconductors, critical minerals, ICT, AI, clean energy and pharmaceuticals. These areas reflect the growing strategic nature of India-Japan cooperation.

- **AI and technology cooperation:** The AI joint statement aims to upgrade cooperation into a strategic research and development partnership. It builds on the India-Japan AI Initiative and covers the AI technology stack. Joint work on large language models was also reflected through institutional and private-sector MoUs.
- **Energy and green economy:** The Joint Statement on Energy Resilience covers strategic stockpiling and reserve mechanisms for crude oil and petroleum products. A Cooperative Biogas for Growth initiative was also announced, with a target linked to 1,000 biogas and organic fertilizer plants in India.
- **Defence and Indo-Pacific:** The leaders agreed to deepen security cooperation under the revised Japan-India security framework. Defence equipment and technology cooperation, including progress on the UNICORN naval antenna system, was welcomed. Both sides also connected Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific approach with India's MAHASAGAR vision.
- **Investment and mobility:** Japan noted that investment commitments worth 2 trillion yen had already been made under the larger 10 trillion yen private investment target. The Next Generation Mobility Partnership covers rail, automotive, roads, aviation, shipbuilding, ports, logistics and urban development.

VIJAY Roadmap for Indian Army

In the News: General Dhiraj Seth, after taking charge as the 31st Chief of Army Staff, unveiled the "VIJAY" roadmap for the Indian Army. The roadmap aims to build a technology-enabled, future-ready Army capable of operating across multiple domains. It is aligned with the Defence Ministry's Decade of Transformation, 2023 to 2032.

Key Points:

- **Meaning of VIJAY:** VIJAY stands for Vigilance, Innovation, Jointness and Integration, Atmanirbharta and Yodha First. The acronym reflects the Army Chief's priority areas for modernisation, readiness and soldier-centric transformation. Each pillar links operational preparedness with technological change.
- **Vigilance and readiness:** The "V" in VIJAY refers to vigilance along borders and against emerging threats. It highlights the need for constant alertness and high operational readiness. This is important in the context of changing threats, contested borders and faster battlefield decision-making.
- **Innovation and transformation:** The "I" stands for innovation in doctrine and technological solutions. The roadmap gives importance to adapting to the changing character of warfare. It points towards digitisation, new-age systems and battlefield transformation rather than only manpower-based preparedness.
- **Jointness and integration:** The "J" focuses on complete synergy with the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy. It supports the larger shift towards integrated operations and theatre-oriented thinking. The roadmap also recognises military-civil fusion and a whole-of-nation approach to national security.
- **Atmanirbharta and Yodha First:** The "A" stands for building a self-reliant Army through indigenous capabilities and technologies. The "Y" places the soldier at the centre, from Agniveers to veterans. Training standards, technological skills, welfare and professional growth are central elements of this pillar.

Akal Takht vs Punjab govt: How Nehru-Tara Singh pact set a precedent in legislating Sikh affairs

In the News: Sri Akal Takht Sahib challenged Punjab's new anti-sacrilege law and summoned Sikh Ministers and legislators over the issue. The dispute centres on whether the Punjab government should have consulted Sikh religious institutions before legislating on matters linked to Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The 1959 Nehru-Tara Singh Pact has returned to the debate as a historical precedent on non-interference in Sikh religious affairs.

Key Points:

- **The present law:** The law in question is the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026. It amends a 2008 state law dealing with publication, storage and circulation of copies of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Akal Takht objected to the law being passed without consultation with Sikh bodies.
- **Role of Akal Takht and SGPC:** Akal Takht is the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs and is located opposite Sri Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. The SGPC is the apex body managing Sikh places of worship in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh. Their institutional roles are central to questions on Sikh religious administration.

- **Nehru-Tara Singh Pact, 1959:** The pact arose after the Punjab government moved to amend the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925, without consulting the SGPC. On April 12, 1959, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru assured Master Tara Singh that there would be no state interference in Sikh religious affairs. The agreement was verbal, but later correspondence supported its existence.
- **Main objections to the 2026 law:** The Akal Takht objected to changes in terminology, the definition of “custodian,” unique identification numbers for copies of the scripture, public online records and unilateral rule-making power. It argued that matters of maryada and religious terminology fall within Sikh religious authority.
- **Constitutional angle:** The debate involves the boundary between state regulation and religious autonomy. Article 25(2)(a) allows regulation of secular or financial activities linked with religion, while Article 26 protects religious denominations in managing their own affairs. The issue therefore combines religious freedom, minority institutions and legislative competence.

Centre Amends Drugs Rules 1945 for Advanced Therapies

In the News: The Union Government amended the Drugs Rules, 1945 to bring advanced medical products under stronger regulatory oversight. The amendment covers cell or stem cell-derived products, gene therapeutic products and xenografts. These products will now fall under the Centrally License Approving Authority framework for uniform regulation.

Key Points:

- **Notification details:** CDSCO listed G.S.R. 530(E), dated June 29, 2026, for inclusion of additional items under CLAA in the Drugs Rules, 1945. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced the amendment on July 2, 2026. The change expands the scope of central-state regulatory oversight.
- **Products now covered:** The amendment brings cell or stem cell-derived products, gene therapeutic products and xenografts under the CLAA framework. Examples include stem cell-based regenerative treatments, CAR-T cell therapies, gene replacement and gene-editing products. Xenografts include animal tissue-derived products such as heart valves used in human transplantation.
- **Existing CLAA categories:** Before this amendment, the CLAA framework already covered specified critical drugs and biological products. These included vaccines, large-volume parenterals such as IV solutions above 100 ml, and recombinant DNA-based medicines. The new amendment adds advanced therapy products to this regulated category.
- **Regulatory purpose:** These therapies are complex, specialised and rapidly evolving areas of medical science. The amendment aims to ensure patient safety through enhanced scrutiny. It also seeks uniformity in regulatory standards across states by combining Central and State licensing oversight.

Eight Traditional Himachal Products Secure GI Tags, Strengthening Heritage and Rural Economy

In the News: Eight traditional products of Himachal Pradesh have received Geographical Indication registration, raising the state's total GI-tagged products to 17. The newly recognised products cover food, agriculture, textiles, jewellery and metal craft, reflecting the state's regional diversity and traditional production systems. The registrations were secured through the Himachal Pradesh Council for Science, Technology and Environment.

Key Points:

- **New GI Products:** The eight products are Seabuckthorn or Chharma of Spiti, Salooni Safed Makka, Chamba Metal Art, Sirmauri Loiya, Kinnauri Topi, Sepuvadi of Mandi, Kinnauri Apple and Kinnauri Jewellery. These products represent both agricultural and handicraft-based heritage.
- **State Tally:** With these additions, Himachal Pradesh now has 17 GI-registered products. Earlier GI products from the state included Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Chamba Rumal, Kinnauri Shawl, Kangra Painting, Himachali Kalazeera, Himachali Chulli Oil, Chamba Chappal and Lahauli knitted products.
- **Institutional Role:** HIMCOSTE played a key role in securing the registrations. Such bodies help document traditional knowledge, prepare applications, coordinate with producers and support post-registration branding.
- **GI Law:** GI protection in India is governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. The Act provides legal protection to goods whose quality, reputation or features are linked to a specific geographical origin.

- **Rural Economy Angle:** GI recognition can improve product identity, marketability and protection against imitation. It is especially relevant for artisans, farmers, weavers and local producer groups because it supports branding, value addition and rural entrepreneurship.

India Launches e-OCI Card: How OCI Cardholders Can Download and Use the New Digital OCI Card

In the News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the FCRA 2.0 Portal and the Electronic Overseas Citizen of India Card in New Delhi on 30 June 2026. The e-OCI Card is meant to make OCI services fully digital and easier for more than 50 lakh OCI cardholders.

Key Points:

- **What is e-OCI:** The Electronic Overseas Citizen of India Card allows applicants to complete the OCI process online. The process includes application submission, document upload and downloading the digitally generated OCI card after approval.
- **Existing Cardholders:** Existing OCI cardholders can obtain the e-OCI Card digitally in most cases without a fresh application or physical verification. The system also removes the need to re-issue the OCI booklet after a new passport is issued after the age of 20 years, though passport details must be updated online.
- **Travel and Verification:** The digital card is aimed at reducing the risk of loss or damage to physical documents. It is also linked with real-time verification and digital immigration systems, which can help speed up identity checks at airports.
- **OCI Status:** OCI is not Indian citizenship and does not amount to dual citizenship. OCI cardholders do not get voting rights, cannot become members of legislatures, cannot hold constitutional posts and cannot acquire agricultural land, farmhouse or plantation property in India.
- **Related Digital Reform:** The launch took place along with the FCRA 2.0 Portal. The FCRA portal seeks to reduce paperwork, speed up applications and enable real-time monitoring of foreign contributions through an end-to-end digital system.

INSA Proposes a Unified National Energy Framework

In the News: The Indian National Science Academy, through its Centre for Science, Technology, Innovation and Policy, released a May 2026 policy brief titled “A Unified National Energy Policy Framework for India: Adequacy, Access, Affordability, and Appropriate Sustainability.” The brief argues that India needs integrated energy planning to meet its energy self-reliance goal by 2047 and net-zero target by 2070.

Key Points:

- **Four Pillars:** The framework is built around four pillars: Adequacy, Access, Affordability and Appropriate Sustainability. These pillars seek to connect supply security, reliable access, consumer protection and long-term environmental responsibility.
- **Energy Dependence:** The policy brief notes India’s structural dependence on imported fuels, including crude oil, natural gas and coal. It argues that the absence of a unified energy policy architecture weakens India’s long-term energy security.
- **Grid and Integration Issue:** The brief states that India’s immediate energy risk is not only generation capacity but also grid stability and system integration. It highlights transmission bottlenecks, underused gas-based power assets and coal logistics issues.
- **Key Recommendations:** The recommendations include diversified energy partnerships, storage solutions, grid modernisation, clean cooking access, carbon markets, blended green finance and protection for vulnerable consumers. These recommendations are arranged across the four pillars.
- **Implementation Horizon:** The policy brief divides action into immediate, medium-term and long-term priorities. Immediate priorities include strengthening grids, pipelines and storage, scaling renewables and decentralised energy, and beginning governance reforms.

INTERNATIONAL

Seychelles Confers Guardian of the Blue Horizon Award

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Guardian of the Blue Horizon Presidential Distinction by Seychelles President Dr. Patrick Herminie on 28 June 2026. The honour recognises his work in climate action, Blue Economy, sustainable ocean management and support for Small Island Developing States. This is the first time that this distinction has been bestowed.

Key Points:

- **Award and Recipient:** The award was presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a special ceremony in Seychelles. It was conferred by President Dr. Patrick Herminie. The recognition highlights India's growing role in environmental action and sustainable development across the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Reason for the Honour:** The distinction recognises PM Modi's green leadership, promotion of the Blue Economy and commitment to sustainable management of ocean resources. It also acknowledges his support for developing countries and Small Island Developing States. These are important themes in India's climate and ocean diplomacy.
- **First-Time Distinction:** PIB noted that this is the first time the Guardian of the Blue Horizon honour has been bestowed. The timing is significant as India and Seychelles are marking 50 years of diplomatic relations. The award also reinforces the environmental dimension of bilateral ties.
- **Major Indian Initiatives Mentioned:** The honour refers to India's initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, Mission LiFE, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam and the International Big Cat Alliance. These initiatives reflect India's focus on climate action, sustainable lifestyles and ecological conservation.

India and Seychelles Expand Maritime Security Partnership

In the News: India and Seychelles expanded their maritime security partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's State Visit to Seychelles from 27 to 29 June 2026. India handed over the Made-in-India Fast Patrol Vessel PS Lespwar to the Seychelles Coast Guard. The visit coincided with Seychelles' Golden Jubilee National Day celebrations, where PM Modi was the Guest of Honour.

Key Points:

- **Handover of PS Lespwar:** Prime Minister Modi handed over the Made-in-India Fast Patrol Vessel PS Lespwar to Seychelles President Dr. Patrick Herminie. The ceremony took place at the Seychelles Coast Guard Base in Victoria. The vessel will support maritime security and Coast Guard operations.
- **Built by Goa Shipyard Limited:** PS Lespwar was built by Goa Shipyard Limited. The vessel is expected to enhance Seychelles' maritime surveillance and strengthen patrolling in its Exclusive Economic Zone. This is important because Seychelles has a large maritime zone compared to its land area.
- **Additional Assistance:** India also handed over six ambulances, 10 utility vehicles and five Laser Radial class boats. These assets support both development and security requirements of Seychelles. The assistance reflects India's broader capacity-building role in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **MAHASAGAR Vision:** The assistance has been linked to India's MAHASAGAR vision, which stands for Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. The vision focuses on peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean. Seychelles remains a key maritime partner under this approach.
- **Wider Agreements:** During the visit, India and Seychelles signed agreements covering digital payments, healthcare, agriculture, extradition, maritime cooperation, infrastructure financing and space cooperation. Important outcomes included an MoU for UPI implementation in Seychelles, an Extradition Treaty and cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space.

Italy Becomes the UNESCO World Heritage Capital with 61 Protected Sites

In the News: Italy has reaffirmed its position as the country with the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with 61 properties on the World Heritage List. UNESCO's official data shows 55 cultural and 6 natural properties in Italy. The country also has 31 sites on the Tentative List for future consideration.

Key Points:

- **Global Leadership:** Italy has 61 UNESCO World Heritage properties, the highest count for any country. This makes Italy a major centre of cultural heritage, conservation, and heritage tourism.
- **Site Composition:** Italy's 61 properties include 55 cultural and 6 natural sites. Cultural sites include historic centres, archaeological areas, religious monuments, landscapes, and architectural heritage.
- **UNESCO Convention:** Italy ratified the World Heritage Convention on June 23, 1978. Ratification is important because only States Parties to the Convention can nominate properties for inscription.
- **Important Examples:** Italy's listed sites include Venice and its Lagoon, the Archaeological Areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata, Mount Etna, the Dolomites, and Via Appia Regina Viarum.
- **Tentative List:** Italy also has 31 properties on the Tentative List. A site must normally be placed on the Tentative List before it can be nominated for the World Heritage List.

Sushruta Statue Unveiled in Edinburgh

In the News: The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in Scotland unveiled a bronze sculpture of Maharishi Sushruta, widely regarded as the Father of Surgery. The statue has been added to the College's Heritage Collection and recognises the ancient Indian contribution to surgical knowledge. The event also marked the launch of new legacy initiatives connected with surgical education and global collaboration.

Key Points:

- **Statue and Venue:** The statue of Maharishi Sushruta was unveiled at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Scotland. It has been installed in the College's historic Playfair Hall/Auditorium as part of its heritage collection. The bronze statue weighs around 90 kg and was unveiled as a tribute to India's ancient medical traditions.
- **About Sushruta:** Maharishi Sushruta is associated with ancient Indian medicine and is widely remembered as the Father of Surgery. He is linked with the Sushruta Samhita, a classical Sanskrit medical treatise. The text is important for the history of surgery, surgical instruments, skin grafting and reconstructive procedures.
- **Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh:** The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, commonly known as RCSEd, was founded in 1505. It is regarded as the oldest surgical college in the world and is a major institution for surgical education, training and professional standards. Its location is Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom.
- **Donor and Associated Initiatives:** The sculpture was gifted to RCSEd by Professor Chandra Cheruvu and his family. Along with the statue, the College also announced the Cheruvu Family Professional Development Grants to support training and international development opportunities for surgeons. An annual Sushruta Lectureship was also announced to focus on medicine, surgery, ethics, compassion, leadership and global health.

Why the US Supreme Court struck down Trump's birthright citizenship order

In the News: The US Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's birthright citizenship executive order in *Trump v. Barbara*. The 6-3 ruling held that children born in the United States to parents who are unlawfully or temporarily present are still "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States. The Court said such children are citizens at birth under the Fourteenth Amendment's Citizenship Clause.

Key Points:

- **Executive Order No. 14160:** President Trump issued Executive Order No. 14160 on January 20, 2025, titled *Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship*. The order said that children born to parents unlawfully or temporarily present in the US would not qualify for citizenship. The order was challenged on the ground that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment and the Immigration and Nationality Act.

- **Fourteenth Amendment Clause:** The Fourteenth Amendment states that all persons born or naturalised in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction are citizens. The Court interpreted “subject to the jurisdiction” as covering children born on US soil to undocumented or temporary-status parents. It rejected the argument that such children fall outside US jurisdiction merely because their parents are not citizens or permanent residents.
- **Reliance on Wong Kim Ark:** The ruling reaffirmed the 1898 precedent of *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*. That case recognised birthright citizenship for a person born in the US to foreign parents. Chief Justice John Roberts said the Court saw no reason to depart from the long-standing understanding that the rule protects children born in the US and subject to its legal authority.
- **Executive Power Limited:** The Court held that citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution cannot be narrowed through an executive order. The ruling blocked the administration’s attempt to change the meaning of birthright citizenship through presidential direction to federal agencies. It reinforced the principle that constitutional rights cannot be revised by executive action alone.

UN Sustainable Development Report 2026

In the News: The Sustainable Development Report 2026 was released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The report assesses countries’ progress towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2026 edition noted that global SDG progress remains significantly off track, with only 16 per cent of targets projected to be achieved by the deadline.

Key Points:

- **About the Report:** The Sustainable Development Report has tracked SDG progress since 2016. It includes the SDG Index and Dashboards, which rank UN Member States on their progress towards the SDGs. The report complements official SDG indicators and voluntary national reviews.
- **Global Ranking:** Finland topped the 2026 SDG Index with a score of 87.40. Sweden ranked second and Denmark ranked third. The overall score is interpreted as a percentage of progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs.
- **India’s Performance:** India achieved its highest-ever position in the SDG Index 2026. It ranked 94th out of 169 countries with an SDG Index score of 68.3. India improved from its previous position and was noted among major economies showing strong rank gains since 2015.
- **Major Findings:** The report found that SDG progress remains slow globally. It highlighted rising geopolitical tensions, global instability and the need to accelerate implementation before 2030. The 2026 edition also included new surveys on government SDG efforts and public views on SDG challenges.

Project UNICORN: India and Japan's 1st-Ever Joint Defence Co-development Project

In the News: India and Japan advanced their first defence co-development project linked to the UNICORN mast system for Indian Navy ships. The project gained renewed attention during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s visit to India in July 2026. The cooperation builds on the Memorandum of Implementation signed in Tokyo on 15 November 2024.

Key Points:

- **Full Form and Purpose:** UNICORN stands for Unified Complex Radio Antenna. It is an integrated mast system with communication equipment for naval platforms. The system helps improve the stealth characteristics of warships by reducing radar visibility.
- **India-Japan Agreement:** A Memorandum of Implementation was signed between India and Japan at the Embassy of India in Tokyo on 15 November 2024. The agreement provides for co-development of UNICORN masts for fitment on Indian Navy ships. It is regarded as the first case of co-development and co-production of defence equipment between the two countries.
- **Role of BEL and Japan:** The Indian Navy is pursuing the induction of the advanced system. Bharat Electronics Limited will co-develop the system in India with Japanese collaboration. Japan will contribute advanced design expertise, while India will focus on integration and co-production.

- **Technology Features:** The UNICORN system integrates multiple antennas into a single mast structure. This reduces the number of exposed antennas and lowers the radar signature of naval platforms. It supports better communication management and improves the stealth profile of ships.

International Booker Prize Renamed as Bukhman International Booker Prize with Doubled Prize Money

In the News: The Booker Prize Foundation announced that Bukhman Philanthropies will fund the International Booker Prize for the next 10 years. The award will be named the Bukhman International Booker Prize, and the winning prize money will double from £50,000 to £100,000. The amount will continue to be split equally between the winning author and translator.

Key Points:

- **New Name and Funding:** The International Booker Prize will be named the Bukhman International Booker Prize in recognition of Bukhman Philanthropies' decade-long partnership. The organisation has committed £1.4 million per year to support the prize and translated fiction ecosystem.
- **Prize Money Structure:** The winning title will now receive £100,000, shared equally between the author and translator. Shortlisted titles will continue to receive £5,000, divided as £2,500 for the author and £2,500 for the translator.
- **Eligibility of the Prize:** The prize recognises fiction translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland. For the 2027 cycle, eligible works must be published between May 1, 2026 and April 30, 2027.
- **2027 Judging Panel:** The 2027 judging panel will be chaired by Katie Kitamura. Other judges include Patrick McGuinness, Caleb Azumah Nelson, Olga Ravn and Tessa Thompson, making the panel significant from literature and arts-current affairs angles.
- **Literary Importance:** Since 2016, the International Booker Prize has recognised winners across 11 different languages. Several authors connected with the prize later received the Nobel Prize in Literature, including Annie Ernaux, Jon Fosse, Han Kang, Olga Tokarczuk and László Krasznahorkai.

US Independence Day: How the American Revolution led to the making of the United States

In the News: The United States celebrates Independence Day on July 4 every year to mark the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. In 2026, the day carries added significance as it marks the 250th anniversary of American independence. The American Revolution transformed 13 British colonies into a new republic and later shaped modern constitutional government.

Key Points:

- **Declaration of Independence:** The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The document announced the political separation of the 13 colonies from Great Britain and became the founding document of the United States.
- **Role of the Second Continental Congress:** The Congress appointed a Committee of Five to draft the Declaration. The committee included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman, with Jefferson preparing the main draft.
- **Foreign Alliance and War:** The Declaration allowed the colonies to present themselves as an independent nation and seek foreign support. The U.S. alliance with France became a major factor in the Revolutionary War against Britain.
- **Treaty of Paris, 1783:** The Treaty of Paris formally ended the American Revolutionary War. Britain recognised U.S. independence and accepted boundaries that helped define the territorial foundation of the new country.
- **From Confederation to Constitution:** The Articles of Confederation served as the first constitution of the United States and remained in force from 1781 to 1789. Weaknesses in this arrangement later led to the Philadelphia Convention and the adoption of the present U.S. Constitution.

India and Mali Launch First Export Promotion Forum to Strengthen Trade and Investment Ties

In the News: India and Mali held the inaugural India–Mali Forum for the Promotion of Exports to deepen bilateral trade and investment cooperation. The two-day forum was held in Bamako under the theme “Reinforcing Trade and Strategic Partnerships.”

Key Points:

- **Venue and Organisation:** The forum was held in Bamako and was jointly organised by Mali’s Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Embassy of India in Bamako and the Malian Agency for the Promotion of Exports. It was presided over by Mali’s Prime Minister of the Transition Government, Major General Abdoulaye Maïga.
- **Indian Delegation:** The Indian delegation was led by Amit Kumar, Joint Secretary, FT-Africa, Department of Commerce. India’s Ambassador to Mali, Dr. N. Nandakumar, represented the Indian Mission during the forum.
- **Trade Data:** India–Mali bilateral trade crossed US\$326.61 million in FY 2025–26, recording 55 per cent growth over the previous year. Mali’s main exports to India include raw cotton, finished leather, cashew, lead, gum arabic and sesame.
- **India’s Exports:** India’s major exports to Mali include pharmaceuticals, cotton fabrics, two-wheelers, three-wheelers and bicycles. India’s Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme has been cited as a major factor supporting trade growth.
- **Priority Sectors:** Both sides identified cotton and textiles, mining and energy, agro-industry and shea processing, pharmaceuticals, health and education as priority sectors. Mali also announced a dedicated investment forum for 3–4 December 2026.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Sunil Bharti Mittal Honoured with 2026 USISPF Leadership Award

In the News: Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, was honoured with the 2026 Leadership Award by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum. The award was presented at the IX USISPF Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. He was recognised for transforming India’s telecom sector and strengthening economic ties between India and North America.

Key Points:

- **Awarding Organisation:** USISPF stands for the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum. It works to deepen commercial, strategic and policy engagement between India and the United States.
- **Reason for Honour:** Mittal was recognised for his role in building Bharti Enterprises and transforming India’s telecommunications landscape. His contribution to India-US and India-North America economic engagement was also highlighted.
- **Other Awardees:** The 2026 Leadership Awards were also presented to Christopher T. Calio, Chairman and CEO of RTX, and V. Prem Watsa, Chairman and CEO of Fairfax Financial Holdings. The awards recognised business leadership connected with the India-US economic corridor.
- **Summit Context:** The award was given during the IX USISPF Leadership Summit, held in Washington, DC. The summit focused on strengthening the US-India strategic partnership, including trade, technology, defence and investment cooperation.
- **About Sunil Bharti Mittal:** Sunil Bharti Mittal is the Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, the group behind Bharti Airtel. His work is closely associated with India’s telecom expansion, mobile connectivity growth and the emergence of Indian companies in global communication markets.

ENVIRONMENT

India’s First 3D-Printed Artificial Reefs

In the News: Tamil Nadu is set to deploy India’s first 3D-printed artificial reef modules off the Ramanathapuram coast under the second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. The project will be used as a pilot to study the

performance of six new reef designs. It aims to support marine habitat restoration, improve fish stocks and strengthen coastal biodiversity.

Key Points:

- **Location:** The reef modules will be deployed in coastal waters off the Ramanathapuram coast in Tamil Nadu. They are expected to be placed around two nautical miles offshore. This region has been selected as part of Tamil Nadu's artificial reef programme.
- **Developing Agencies:** The modules were developed by Chennai-based startup Tvasta, an IIT Madras-incubated company. The project also involves the Visakhapatnam Regional Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. ICAR-CMFRI has provided technical inputs for marine ecosystem suitability.
- **Design Features:** Each module weighs about one tonne and has complex shapes, crevices, folds and attachment surfaces. These features are intended to provide better shelter and settlement space for marine organisms. The modules are made without iron reinforcement and are designed to improve porosity.
- **Scheme Linkage:** Artificial reefs are promoted under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana to rejuvenate coastal fisheries. The Department of Fisheries has stated that these structures help rebuild fish stocks and enhance marine biodiversity. Tamil Nadu has the highest listed number of artificial reef sites under PMMSY among the coastal states shown on the official PMMSY portal.

APPOINTMENTS

General Dhiraj Seth Takes Charge as Chief of Army Staff

In the News: General Dhiraj Seth took charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff on June 30, 2026. He succeeded General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired after more than four decades of service. General Seth was serving as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff before taking over the top Army post.

Key Points:

- **New Army Chief:** General Dhiraj Seth has become the 31st Chief of the Army Staff of India. The Chief of the Army Staff heads the Indian Army and advises the government on Army-related operational and strategic matters. His appointment came into effect from the afternoon of June 30, 2026.
- **Predecessor:** He succeeded General Upendra Dwivedi, who had taken over as the 30th Chief of the Army Staff in June 2024. General Dwivedi retired on June 30, 2026, after completing his tenure. The change of command took place at a time of continuing military modernisation and restructuring.
- **Service Background:** General Seth belongs to the Armoured Corps and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986. He is reported to be the first officer from the Armoured Corps to head the Indian Army since General Shankar Roy Chowdhary, who retired in 1997.
- **Previous Appointments:** Before becoming Army Chief, he served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff. He has also held senior command appointments, including Southern Command and South Western Command. These commands have major operational relevance because of their location and responsibilities.
- **Decorations and Rank:** General Dhiraj Seth's decorations include PVSM, UYSM and AVSM. These honours reflect distinguished service in the armed forces. His appointment is significant for questions related to defence appointments, service hierarchy and recent changes in India's military leadership.

SCIENCE AND TECH

China's LineShine Becomes World's Fastest Supercomputer

In the News: The 67th TOP500 list was announced at the ISC 2026 conference in Hamburg on June 23, 2026. China's LineShine debuted at No. 1, replacing the U.S.-based El Capitan as the world's most powerful supercomputer on the High Performance Linpack benchmark. LineShine achieved 2.198 Exaflop/s and is installed at the National Supercomputing

Centre in Shenzhen.

Key Points:

- **TOP500 Ranking:** TOP500 ranks the world's most powerful supercomputers mainly using the High Performance Linpack benchmark. The list is updated twice a year, generally in June and November.
- **System Details:** LineShine was built by the Shenzhen Cloud Computing Center and is based on the custom Chinese LingKun platform. It uses 13.79 million cores, 304-core LX2 processors, LingQi interconnect, and Kylin OS.
- **Performance Milestone:** LineShine became the first TOP500 system to exceed two exaflops of sustained double-precision performance using only CPUs. It also drew around 42.2 megawatts of power.
- **Other Benchmarks:** LineShine also secured the No. 1 position on the HPCG ranking with 22.00 HPCG-Petaflop/s. However, it ranked fourth on HPL-MxP, which measures mixed-precision performance.
- **Global Top Five:** The top five systems in the June 2026 TOP500 list were LineShine, El Capitan, Frontier, Aurora, and JUPITER Booster. China returned to the top position for the first time since 2017.

What is GAGAN? India's Indigenous GPS Augmentation System Explained

In the News: GAGAN was highlighted in July 2026 as India's indigenous satellite-based navigation system for safer aviation. The system gained attention after DGCA successfully conducted India's first satellite-based landing system approach on a commercial jet aircraft using GAGAN in June 2026. It is jointly developed by ISRO and the Airports Authority of India.

Key Points:

- **Full Form and Nature:** GAGAN stands for GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation. It is a Satellite-Based Augmentation System that improves GPS signals by giving real-time correction and integrity information for navigation.
- **Developing Agencies:** The system has been developed jointly by the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Airports Authority of India. Its main use is civil aviation navigation, especially safe aircraft movement and landing across Indian airspace.
- **System Architecture:** GAGAN works through 15 Indian Reference Stations, 2 Indian Master Control Centres, 3 Indian Land Uplink Stations, 4 communication networks, and 3 geostationary satellites carrying GAGAN payloads. GSAT-8, GSAT-10 and GSAT-15 are associated with GAGAN payloads.
- **GAGAN and NavIC:** GAGAN is different from NavIC. NavIC is India's independent regional navigation satellite system, while GAGAN improves GPS accuracy for aircraft navigation and landing.
- **Wider Applications:** Though developed mainly for aviation, GAGAN also supports maritime navigation, road transport, railways, disaster management, telecommunications, surveying and mapping. It is also recognised as the first SBAS certified for the equatorial region.

What is the India, Malaysia and Singapore Submarine Cable Project?

In the News: A new submarine cable system named India-Southeast Asia or I-2SEA was announced in July 2026 to connect India, Malaysia and Singapore. The consortium includes Lightstorm, Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications, with NEC Corporation as the system supplier. It is expected to strengthen data connectivity between India and Southeast Asia.

Key Points:

- **Project Name and Route:** The project is called I-2SEA, short for India-Southeast Asia submarine cable system. It will connect India with Malaysia and Singapore through a high-capacity undersea fibre-optic cable.
- **Length and Landing Points:** The cable system will extend for about 3,600 km. It will connect India's growing data centre locations such as Hyderabad and Chennai with Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, with Indian landings including Machilipatnam and South Chennai.
- **Consortium and Supplier:** The project is being built by a consortium comprising Lightstorm, Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications. NEC Corporation has signed the supply contract for the submarine fibre-optic cable system.
- **Operational Timeline:** The system is scheduled to begin operations in 2029, with several reports identifying Q4 2029 as the targeted service-readiness period. This timeline is important because submarine cable projects require route planning, marine surveys, manufacturing and seabed installation.

What is Skyroot's Vikram-1 Mission?

In the News: Skyroot Aerospace announced the launch window for Vikram-1 from 12 July to 4 August 2026. The mission is named Mission Aagaman and is planned from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. It is set to become India's first privately built orbital rocket mission.

Key Points:

- **Developer and Mission Name:** Vikram-1 has been developed by Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace. The first test flight has been named Mission Aagaman, marking the company's move from suborbital demonstration to an orbital launch attempt.
- **Launch Vehicle Features:** Vikram-1 is a seven-storey, multi-stage launch vehicle. It uses a carbon-composite structure and is designed to carry payloads of up to 350 kg to low Earth orbit.
- **Launch Site:** The mission will lift off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, India's main spaceport. The rocket was reported to be stacked and ready at the launch site, with the final launch date depending on weather, safety conditions and range clearance.
- **Mission Objective:** The main objective is to collect in-flight performance data from propulsion, guidance and stage separation systems. The flight will help validate design parameters for future Vikram launch vehicles.
- **Earlier Milestone:** Skyroot earlier launched Vikram-S in November 2022, which was a suborbital mission. Vikram-1 is more significant because it is intended to place payloads into orbit, making it a major step for India's private space industry.

Microsoft Partners Lightstorm to Build I-2SEA Undersea Cable Linking India and Southeast Asia

In the News: Lightstorm announced the launch of the India–Southeast Asia (I-2SEA) Submarine Cable System with Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications. The cable will connect India with Malaysia and Singapore to support AI, cloud and hyperscale data workloads. It is planned as a major digital infrastructure project for the India–Southeast Asia corridor.

Key Points:

- **Project and Partners:** I-2SEA will be built under a Joint Build Agreement involving Lightstorm, Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications. NEC Corporation has been appointed as the system supplier, while ASEAN Cables Pte Ltd will act as the marine installation partner.
- **Route and Connectivity:** The cable will connect India, Malaysia and Singapore. In India, it will have dual landings, including Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh and a new landing location in South Chennai, improving connectivity to Hyderabad and Chennai data clusters.
- **Technical Features:** The cable system is expected to be about 3,600 km long and targeted to be Ready-for-Service in Q4 2029. It has been designed for high-capacity, low-latency transmission across the Singapore-Malaysia-Hyderabad corridor.
- **AI and Cloud Relevance:** I-2SEA is intended to support hyperscalers, GPU infrastructure providers and enterprises using AI training and inference workloads. Its design reflects the growing role of submarine cables in cloud computing, artificial intelligence and cross-border data flows.
- **Submarine Cable Context:** Undersea cables carry nearly 95% of global internet traffic, making them critical for digital trade, data centres and internet resilience. India currently has 17 active submarine cables, and additional systems are planned to support rising data demand.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Statistics Day 2026: Theme, History, Significance, and Why Administrative Data Matters

In the News: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation celebrated the 20th Statistics Day on June 29, 2026, at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The 2026 theme was "Unlocking the Potential of Administrative Data." The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, a pioneer of statistics

and economic planning in India.

Key Points:

- **Historical Background:** Statistics Day has been observed every year since 2007. It aims to create awareness about the role of statistics in socio-economic planning, public policy, and national development.
- **2026 Theme:** The theme “Unlocking the Potential of Administrative Data” highlights the value of data generated through administrative processes. Such data can improve evidence-based policymaking and governance.
- **Data Governance Focus:** The theme stresses data quality, interoperability, integration, and governance frameworks. These elements are needed to produce timely, reliable, and granular official statistics.
- **Institutional Details:** The event was organised by MoSPI and was inaugurated by Dr. P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. The session also included senior representatives from MoSPI and the National Statistical Commission.
- **Publications and Award:** MoSPI planned to release publications including SDG National Indicator Framework reports, a Handbook on Harmonisation of Datasets, and MoSPI’s Vision Document 2026-2031. The Sukhatme National Award in Statistics was also scheduled to be conferred.

GST Day 2026: 9 Years of India’s Landmark Tax Reform Explained

In the News: India observed GST Day on July 1, 2026, marking nine years since the Goods and Services Tax came into force on July 1, 2017. The observance highlighted GST as one of India’s most important indirect tax reforms. It also underlined the role of GST in creating a common national market, improving tax compliance and strengthening Centre-State coordination.

Key Points:

- **GST Launch and Objective:** GST was launched on July 1, 2017, after the Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016. It aimed to replace multiple indirect taxes with a unified tax system. The reform is associated with the idea of “One Nation, One Tax”.
- **Taxes Subsumed:** GST subsumed several central and state-level indirect taxes into one common framework. It reduced the problem of cascading taxation, where tax was charged on tax at different stages. This helped simplify the indirect tax structure for goods and services.
- **GST Council:** The GST Council is a constitutional body under Article 279A of the Constitution. It is a joint forum of the Centre and the States. The Union Finance Minister serves as the Chairperson of the Council.
- **Digital Tax Administration:** GST has increased the use of digital systems in tax administration. Important features include the GSTN portal, e-invoicing, pre-filled returns and digital invoice matching. These measures have improved transparency and compliance.
- **Recent GST Reforms:** The recent phase of GST reforms focused on simplification of rates and easier compliance. The structure was simplified mainly around the 5% and 18% slabs, with a higher rate for luxury and sin goods. The reforms also aimed to support MSMEs, startups and ordinary taxpayers.

National Doctors’ Day 2026: Theme, History, Significance and Why India Celebrates It on July 1

In the News: India observed National Doctors’ Day on July 1, 2026, to honour the contribution of doctors and healthcare professionals. The day is linked to Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, whose birth and death anniversaries both fall on July 1. The 2026 theme focused on the well-being of doctors and the challenges faced by medical professionals.

Key Points:

- **Date and Historical Link:** National Doctors’ Day is observed in India every year on July 1. The date commemorates Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, who was born on July 1, 1882, and died on July 1, 1962. India began observing the day in 1991.
- **About Dr B.C. Roy:** Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy was a noted physician, public leader and former Chief Minister of West Bengal. He played an important role in the development of medical institutions and public health. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1961.
- **Theme 2026:** The widely cited theme for National Doctors’ Day 2026 was “Behind the Mask: Who Heals the Healers?”. The theme focused on the emotional, mental and physical stress faced by doctors. It highlighted the need to recognise doctors as individuals who also require care and support.

- **Healthcare Workforce Context:** India has a large network of allopathic and AYUSH doctors serving public and private healthcare systems. The doctor-population ratio is an important indicator of healthcare access. It is frequently discussed in the context of health infrastructure and public health planning.

ECONOMY

RBI's New Integrated Ombudsman Scheme Comes into Effect from 1 July

In the News: The Reserve Bank of India's Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2026 came into effect on 1 July 2026. It replaces the earlier 2021 scheme and provides a single grievance redressal mechanism for customers of covered RBI-regulated entities. The scheme is cost-free, faster in structure, and based on a non-adversarial complaint resolution process.

Key Points:

- **Scheme Objective:** RB-IOS 2026 aims to resolve customer complaints involving deficiency in service by regulated entities. It follows the "One Nation One Ombudsman" approach, meaning customers do not need to approach a specific Ombudsman office.
- **Covered Entities:** The scheme covers banks, eligible NBFCs, non-bank Prepaid Payment Instrument issuers, and Credit Information Companies. Certain NBFC categories such as Housing Finance Companies, Core Investment Companies, IDF-NBFCs and Primary Dealers are excluded.
- **Complaint Process:** A customer must first complain to the concerned regulated entity. If no reply is received within 30 days, or the reply is unsatisfactory, the complaint can be filed with the RBI Ombudsman within 90 days from the relevant date.
- **Filing Channels:** Complaints can be filed through the RBI Complaint Management System portal, by email to crpc@rbi.org.in, or by sending the complaint form to the Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre in Chandigarh. The complaint status can also be tracked online using the complaint number.
- **Compensation and Appeal:** There is no limit on the amount involved in a dispute brought before the Ombudsman. Compensation can go up to ₹30 lakh for consequential loss and up to ₹3 lakh for time loss, expenses, harassment or mental anguish. Appeals against an Award may be filed within 30 days.

SPORTS

Ben Stokes Announces Retirement from International Cricket, to End England Career After Trent Bridge Test

In the News: The England and Wales Cricket Board announced that Ben Stokes would retire from international cricket at the conclusion of the 3rd Rothesay Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge. The announcement also ended his tenure as England Men's Test captain. His international career began with England's white-ball teams in 2011.

Key Points:

- **Final Match:** Stokes' final international appearance was scheduled to be the third Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge. The venue is located in Nottingham and is one of England's major Test centres.
- **Career Timeline:** Stokes began his international career in 2011 and made his Test debut in December 2013 at Adelaide during the Ashes. He became England's Test captain in April 2022.
- **Major Performances:** His unbeaten 84 in the 2019 ICC World Cup Final helped England force a Super Over against New Zealand. His 135 not out at Headingley in the 2019 Ashes is regarded as one of England's greatest Test innings.
- **All-round Record:** Stokes was a left-handed batter and right-arm pace bowler. Reuters noted that he scored more than 10,000 runs and took more than 300 wickets across his international career.
- **Legacy:** The ECB described him as one of England's greatest cricketers and a defining player of his generation. His career combined batting, bowling, captaincy, and match-winning performances across formats.

Australia Clinch Record Seventh ICC Women's T20 World Cup Title

In the News: Australia won the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 by defeating England by seven wickets in the final at Lord's on 5 July 2026. This was Australia's seventh Women's T20 World Cup title and its 14th women's World Cup title overall.

Key Points:

- **Final Result:** England scored 150/4, and Australia chased the target by reaching 153/3 in 17.1 overs. The chase became the highest successful run chase in a Women's T20 World Cup final.
- **Venue and Opponent:** The final was played at Lord's Cricket Ground in London, with England playing as host nation. Australia's win also ended England's unbeaten home World Cup record in women's cricket.
- **Beth Mooney's Role:** Beth Mooney anchored Australia's chase with 64 off 49 balls and was named both Player of the Match and Player of the Tournament. This was her second Player of the Tournament award at a Women's T20 World Cup after 2020.
- **Australia's Record:** Australia now has seven Women's T20 World Cup titles along with seven Women's ODI World Cup titles. This makes Australia the most successful team in women's ICC global tournaments.
- **Tournament Note:** Australia remained unbeaten through the tournament. The final also featured an important 100-run stand between Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield, which put Australia firmly ahead in the chase.

