

# **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

 **16 JULY 2025**

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### 1. ICG and JCG Conduct Joint Maritime Drill 'Jaa Mata' off Chennai Coast to Boost Bilateral Naval Ties.



In July 2025, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) jointly conducted the maritime exercise 'Jaa Mata' near the Chennai coast in Tamil Nadu, aiming to enhance naval coordination, interoperability, and maritime domain cooperation.

- The exercise titled 'Jaa Mata'—a colloquial farewell phrase meaning “see you later”—was held as part of efforts to deepen mutual operational understanding and maritime synergy between India and Japan. The drill showcased a blend of practical maritime operations, strategic visits, and cultural exchanges between the two navies.

- The drill incorporated coordinated shipboard activities such as firefighting exercises, anti-piracy simulations, boarding operations, and station-keeping. These activities were planned and supervised by the Headquarters, Coast Guard Region (East), under the leadership of Inspector General Dattwinder Singh Saini, Commander of the Eastern Region.

- The joint exercise followed a six-day voyage by the Japan Coast Guard's training ship JCG Vessel Tsukushima, which docked in Chennai between July 7 and July 12, 2025. This visit was a segment of Japan's Global Ocean Voyage Training initiative. Vice Admiral Kanouse Hiroaki, Vice Commandant (Operations) of the JCG, headed the Japanese delegation during the engagement.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) During the port call, Indian and Japanese coast guard officials held a series of high-level interactions that included bilateral meetings, cultural exchanges, and joint briefings focused on standard operating procedures and mission coordination. These discussions were geared toward strengthening ties and enhancing disaster response frameworks and maritime law enforcement practices.
- (ii) The visiting delegation also met with senior Indian Coast Guard leadership, including Director General Paramesh Sivamani, who emphasized India's commitment to a rules-based maritime order. Talks centered on strategic frameworks, interoperability drills, and the use of international maritime law to support regional peace and security.
- (iii) The event marked yet another milestone under the 2006 India–Japan Maritime Cooperation Agreement, aligned with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). With Singapore as the next stop for JCG's training ship, the exercise signaled a continued momentum in Indo-Pacific naval collaboration.

### 2. India's Second-Longest Cable-Stayed Bridge Unveiled Over Sharavathi at Shivamogga.





In mid-July 2025, Union Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari officially unveiled India's second-longest cable-stayed bridge across the Sharavathi backwaters in Shivamogga's Sagara taluk. The 2.44 km structure enhances regional travel, tourism, and economic growth while showcasing advanced engineering.

- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari presided over the inauguration on 14 July 2025, accompanied by fellow Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and senior BJP leader and former Karnataka CM B S Yediyurappa. The ceremony took place between Ambaragodlu and Kalasavalli, and marked the completion of this ₹472–473 crore project.

- Construction began in December 2019 after project clearance in March 2019 by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH). Built by Dilip Buildcon Ltd, the bridge features an extradosed balanced-cantilever design with a 16 m-wide deck—an 11 m carriageway and 1.5 m footpaths on each side—and 96 cables supported by four pylons.

- This landmark truss spans 2.44 km and incorporates 604 box-girder segments on 164 piles (1.8 m diameter). It reduces commute time by around two hours by replacing a daytime-only barge service, thus better linking villages, part of the Malnad region, and facilitating

pilgrims visiting Sigandur Chowdeshwari and Kollur Mookambika temples.

#### Key Points:-

(i) A political controversy emerged as Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and his cabinet stayed away, citing inadequate notice. The Chief Minister released a letter stating that MoRTH had consulted his office only three days earlier and requested a postponement due to prior commitments. Gadkari maintained that formal invitations were issued on 11 July, with follow-up for virtual participation, emphasizing respect for cooperative federalism.

(ii) Beyond its local impact, the project is part of a larger infrastructure push—Gadkari also announced a ₹10,000 crore Belagavi–Hungund–Raichur four-lane corridor, 40% progress on Bengaluru's ring road (₹15,000 crore), and acceleration of the Hassan–Raichur Economic Corridor. He noted that Tumakuru–Shivamogga highway work is nearing completion, set to halve driving time between Bengaluru and Shivamogga.

(iii) As the bridge opens to the public, it is expected to alleviate travel bottlenecks, foster regional economic development, and support tourism in the Sigandur area. With a maintenance plan involving a 10-year initial period followed by bi-annual checks, the bridge is set to be a durable asset enhancing connectivity across Karnataka's Malnad region.

### 3. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Launches India's First Aqua Tech Park in Sonapur, Assam.



In mid-July 2025, Assam's Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma officially inaugurated India's first Aqua Tech Park at Bagibari in Sonapur. This groundbreaking facility pioneers advanced water-technology solutions aimed at modernizing aquaculture, boosting local livelihoods, and reinforcing Assam's vision for sustainable development.

- The ceremony took place on 12 July 2025, and was attended by senior officials including Fisheries Minister Krishnendu Paul, NABARD Chief General Manager Loken Das, and Kolong-Kapili Director Jyotish Talukdar. This initiative represents a collaborative effort among NGO Kolong-Kapili, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA), the state Fisheries Department, and the Selco Foundation.

- The Aqua Tech Park showcases cutting-edge technologies including aquaponics, biofloc systems, ornamental fish breeding, and modern fish feed production, designed to empower fish farmers. These capabilities were highlighted during live demonstrations, providing hands-on training and boosting productivity and income for aquatic cultivators.

- Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma emphasized the park's role in Assam's transformation into a self-reliant ("Atmanirbhar") state, addressing reliance on fish imports, notably from Andhra Pradesh. He commended Kolong-Kapili's 17-year effort since launching its Aquaculture School in 2021—trained thousands in fisheries and integrated agriculture systems—as a catalyst for youth entrepreneurship.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Assam's fisheries output has doubled between 2019 and 2024, reaching 4.99 lakh metric tonnes, elevating the state to fourth-largest fish producer in India. The park is expected to further drive this growth by integrating traditional methods with modern aquaculture technologies.

(ii) The Chief Minister announced support through central schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the Sustainable Wetland and Integrated Fisheries Transformation (SWIFT) project, including an ₹800 crore ADB-backed component and a ₹250 crore JICA-funded initiative. Additionally, ten fishery cluster development projects worth ₹8 crore were rolled out this fiscal.

(iii) Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma also revealed plans to expand infrastructure: two Forced Water Fish Breed Banks at Garukhuti and Goalpara (₹5 crore each), a ₹26 crore modern fish market in Cachar's Silcuri, and a ₹20 crore integrated fish landing centre at Sonarigaon. He urged youth involvement and assured support for fish farmers under the Mukhyamantri Atmanirbhar Asom Abhiyan.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. New Caledonia to Become a “State” Within the French Republic Under Paris Agreement.



In July 2025, France and New Caledonian leaders signed the landmark “Bet on Trust” agreement near Paris, redefining New Caledonia as a constitutionally recognized “State of New Caledonia” within the French Republic. The deal aims to stabilize longstanding tensions and secure international legitimacy.

- The accord emerged after ten days of negotiations initiated in late June and concluded on 12 July 2025 at Bougival, a suburb of Paris. The talks brought together pro-independence and pro-France factions from New Caledonia alongside French officials, including Overseas Territories Minister Manuel Valls and President Emmanuel Macron, who described it as “historic” and an essential step toward respect and unity.

- A pending amendment to Title XIII of the French Constitution would formally enshrine the “State of New Caledonia” status and introduce a distinct Caledonian nationality, held alongside French citizenship. The agreement grants immediate jurisdiction over foreign affairs to local institutions, with future referendums

potentially enabling transfers of authority in defence, justice, currency, and security.

- Crucially, voting eligibility for provincial elections will expand—allowing any resident who has lived in the territory continuously for at least ten years, including those born after 1998, to participate. This electoral reform aims to bridge divides that sparked violent unrest and deadly riots in May 2024, which cost lives and upended local stability.

#### Key Points:-

(i) An accompanying economic recovery package addresses New Caledonia’s nickel-dependent economy, which suffered a 10 percent GDP contraction during unrest. A strategic financial pact includes restoring operations at the shuttered northern nickel processing plant to support local employment and reduce fiscal reliance on mainland France.

(ii) Despite its promise, the agreement has drawn criticism. Some radical independence leaders and civil-society groups argue the deal lacks full inclusion—many pro-independence factions, including detained activist Brenda Wanabo-Ipeze, say it was concluded without their mandate, calling it an inadequate compromise.

(iii) Formal adoption requires French parliamentary approval later in 2025 and a local referendum anticipated in early 2026. If endorsed, New Caledonia’s “Fundamental Law” will redefine its institutions, and may set it on a path to join the United Nations as a distinct member—yet without severing ties with France.

### 2. Delhi Crowned the World’s Most Affordable Student City in QS Best Student Cities 2026.





Delhi has recently earned first place globally for affordability in the QS Best Student Cities 2026 rankings, part of a broader rise by Indian metros. This significant win reflects educational reforms, cost advantages, and rising employer confidence.

- In the latest rankings released on 9 July 2025 by QS Quacquarelli Symonds, Delhi climbed from 117th to 104th place overall and topped the global affordability index with a near-perfect score of 96.5. This evaluation included metrics for living expenses, tuition levels, and scholarship access.
- Mumbai secured the highest overall ranking among Indian cities at 98th, marking a sharp 15-place leap from last year. Bengaluru and Chennai also posted strong gains, advancing to 108th and 128th, respectively. The improvement reflects a “growing global appeal” of India’s higher education hubs.
- Delhi’s rise as the most budget-friendly student city aligns with national reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which focus on internationalization, quality, and research-led development. QS CEO Jessica Turner noted these rankings signify “a structural shift in the country’s higher education landscape”.

### Key Points:-

- Beyond affordability, Delhi and Mumbai broke into the global top 50 in the “Employer Activity” indicator—reflecting strong demand for graduates. Bengaluru surged 41 places to reach 59th in that metric, while Chennai jumped 29 spots, showcasing rising trust in India’s student talent pool.
- The presence of top-tier institutions also supports these results. Delhi hosts prestigious universities like IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Delhi and the University of Delhi. Mumbai features IIT Bombay and University of Mumbai. Bengaluru and Chennai are strong with institutions such as IISc (Indian Institute of Science), IIM (Indian Institute of Management) Bangalore, Anna University, and IIT Madras.
- This year’s QS rankings coincide with India’s landmark achievement in the QS World University Rankings 2026, where a record 54 Indian universities appeared, making India the fourth most represented country globally. IIT Delhi led Indian higher education with its highest-ever placement at joint 123rd.

## BANKING & FINANCE

- UPI–PayNow Cross-Border Remittance Network Expanded: 13 More Indian Banks Added for Seamless India–Singapore Transfers.**



On July 16, 2025, NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), announced that 13 additional Indian banks have been integrated into the UPI-PayNow cross-border remittance network—bringing the total to 19 participating banks—as the service goes live on July 17, 2025.

- The move enables customers of now-included banks such as Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC Bank, and Bank of Baroda to use UPI for real-time fund transfers between India and Singapore. Users can send money from India to Singapore and receive remittances back into any of the 19 Indian participating banks using UPI apps like BHIM, Google Pay, PhonePe, or respective banking apps.

- This expansion builds on an interoperability initiative launched jointly by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) in September 2021. As Asia's first cloud-based real-time cross-border payment system, UPI-PayNow has streamlined remittances for migrant workers, students, and families with negligible cost and instantaneous settlement.

#### Key Points:-

(i) NIPL Managing Director & CEO Ritesh Shukla stated that the network expansion strengthens bilateral financial connectivity, making the platform more inclusive and widely accessible. He emphasized that this expansion enhances security via robust encryption and supports small, frequent remittances that benefit the Indian diaspora in Singapore.

(ii) Outbound remittances from India are supported by seven banks — including Canara Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and State Bank of India — while Singaporean users banking with DBS SG and Liquid Group can initiate transfers to UPI IDs in any of the 19 Indian banks. Recipients in India receive funds instantly through their UPI-linked bank accounts.

(iii) The UPI-PayNow linkage represents a significant milestone in digital financial inclusion. It not only eases cross-border money movement but may serve as a template for extending UPI interoperability to additional countries, potentially under India's ambitious vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

## 2. Groww Mutual Fund Launches India's First Power Sector-Focused ETF and FoF.



In July 2025, Groww Mutual Fund, the asset management arm of Groww investment platform, launched India's first exchange-traded and fund-of-fund schemes dedicated entirely to the power sector. These new schemes, named 'Groww BSE Power ETF' and 'Groww BSE Power ETF FoF', are designed to promote low-cost, power-focused equity investing in India.

- The two new passive investment products were jointly managed by fund managers Nikhil Satam, Akanksha Chauhan, and Shashi Kumari. The New Fund Offer (NFO) for both schemes was opened for subscription on July 18, 2025, and will remain active till August 1, 2025. The schemes are registered under the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and specifically track the BSE Power Index for investment returns.

- The Groww BSE Power ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) directly invests in a basket of power sector-related companies listed in the BSE Power Index. It is targeted at investors seeking long-term capital appreciation through equity investments in the electricity generation, transmission, and infrastructure segments. It allows real-time buying and selling on stock exchanges, making it suitable for portfolio diversification.

- The second product, Groww BSE Power ETF FoF (Fund of Fund), is a mutual fund that invests in the units of the Groww BSE Power ETF. It is ideal for investors who prefer the mutual fund route instead of direct stock market exposure. The product aims to deliver equity-index-based returns while minimizing the hassle of direct ETF trading.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Both funds track the BSE Power Index – Total Return Index (TRI), which reflects

performance from 14 major companies engaged in India's power generation, distribution, and infrastructure. The BSE Power Index offers a cost-effective structure for power-sector exposure, and includes companies like NTPC Limited, Power Grid Corporation of India, Tata Power, and Adani Energy Solutions.

(ii) The schemes have a low minimum investment barrier of Rs. 500 and carry no exit load, making them attractive for retail investors. The launch also aligns with India's growing focus on clean energy, where the power sector is witnessing rapid transformation due to increased demand, favourable government policies, and large-scale investments in Renewable Energy (RE).

(iii) Groww Mutual Fund, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, was established in 2011 and is currently led by CEO Varun Gupta. These new products represent Groww's effort to offer targeted investment opportunities in niche segments like the power sector, while expanding access to passive investing in India.

## ECONOMY & BUSINESS

1. Cypriot and Danish Shipping Firms Pledge ₹10,000 Crore FDI to Elevate Indian Maritime Capacity.





In early July 2025, Cyprus-based Interiorient Navigation Co. Ltd. and Denmark's Danship & Partners Ltd announced a landmark foreign direct investment of ₹10,000 crore into India's shipping sector. This marks the largest-ever FDI in Indian maritime history since the sector opened to 100% foreign investment in 2005.

- The massive investment follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic state visit to Cyprus on 15 June 2025, where maritime cooperation formed a key agenda with President Nikos Christodoulides. Discussions during the visit laid the groundwork for this strategic collaboration.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Under the terms of the agreement, all vessels acquired under this project will be registered under the Indian flag, significantly boosting India's national shipping tonnage. Earnings from the freight movement of India's EXIM (Export-Import) cargo will stay within the domestic economy, strengthening economic retention.

(ii) The collaboration is expected to generate substantial jobs for Indian cadets, trainees, and seafarers, while also enhancing domestic capabilities in maritime logistics. Interiorient, founded in 1979, operates over

100 vessels globally, signaling strong confidence in India's shipping potential.

## 2. S&P Global Report : NSE Ranked 4th Globally in IPO Fundraising in H1-CY25.



In July 2025, S&P Global Market Intelligence released its half-yearly IPO league table, ranking India's National Stock Exchange (NSE) 4th in the world for Initial Public Offering (IPO) fundraising during the first half of Calendar Year 2025 (H1-CY25). The report highlights India's growing capital market strength and NSE's leading role in mobilizing investor interest globally.

- According to the data, NSE mobilized a total of USD 5.51 billion through IPOs during H1-CY25, contributing 8.9% to the global IPO fundraising pool of USD 61.95 billion. This performance underlines India's rising participation in global equity capital markets and strong investor confidence in domestic listings.

- The top three global stock exchanges ahead of NSE in IPO fundraising were the Nasdaq Global Market (USD 12.96 billion), New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) (USD 8.62 billion), and Nasdaq Global Select Market (USD 7.37 billion). NSE's 4th position reflects India's competitiveness in primary market activity.

- Significantly, in terms of the number of IPOs, NSE outperformed all global exchanges by hosting 73 IPOs in H1-CY25. This figure surpasses the 66 IPOs recorded on the Nasdaq Global Market and places NSE at the top in terms of deal volume, according to the S&P Global Market Intelligence data.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Further insights from the report revealed that Indian stock exchanges collectively witnessed 119 IPOs during H1-CY25, raising a total of ₹51,150 crore. This marks a sharp rise in fundraising activity, indicating increased issuer participation and investor appetite in Indian equities.

(ii) This performance also represents a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth in capital raised, with H1-CY24 having seen fundraising of ₹37,682 crore from 157 listings. Despite a lower number of listings in H1-CY25, the significant increase in total funds raised indicates the larger average size of IPOs in the current year.

(iii) This data-driven global recognition by S&P Global underscores the National Stock Exchange of India's growing role in global capital markets and reflects India's position as a robust investment destination for equity market investors.

## APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

### 1. Sabyasachi Couture Appoints Manish Chopra as CEO to Accelerate Digital-Luxury Strategy.



On 14 July 2025, Sabyasachi Couture, a luxury label under the Aditya Birla Group, named Manish Chopra—formerly a senior leader at Shein India—as its new Chief Executive Officer. This move highlights the brand's ambition to deepen its retail and digital presence.

- Manish Chopra brings a strong background in e-commerce and digital-first strategy to Sabyasachi, having led major roles at companies like Meta (Facebook, Instagram), Oracle, and Microsoft Indonesia, as well as entrepreneurial ventures like Zovi.com and Little Internet. His tech-savvy leadership is expected to enhance customer engagement and omnichannel integration.

- His most recent role was at Shein India, a joint venture with Reliance Retail, where he oversaw operations beginning mid-2023. Bringing that experience to Sabyasachi signifies the brand's strategic pivot into agile, digital-first retailing—revitalizing itself after a muted performance in 2024.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Sabyasachi Couture was acquired by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd. (ABFRL) in 2021 when 51% stake was bought for ₹398 crore. ABFRL continues to strengthen

its portfolio with designer and ethnic labels—such as Tarun Tahiliani, Masaba, and Shantanu & Nikhil—while separating its Western-wear arm into Aditya Birla Lifestyle Brands earlier this year.

(ii) Chopra's appointment aligns with ABFRL's broader objective to boost its global footprint in luxury. As Indian luxury apparel is projected to grow from USD 7.5 billion (2024) to USD 10.7 billion by 2033, his leadership is vital for scaling both domestic and international growth.

## 2. Senior IPS Officer Sonali Mishra Appointed as First Woman Director General of Railway Protection Force (RPF).



In July 2025, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of senior IPS officer Sonali Mishra as the first-ever female Director General (DG) of the Railway Protection Force (RPF). This historic appointment marks a significant milestone in the inclusion of women in top leadership roles within India's central armed police forces.

- **Sonali Mishra, a 1993-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, will take charge as DG of RPF following the superannuation of incumbent DG Manoj**

[www.testcloud.in](http://www.testcloud.in)

Yadava on July 31, 2025. She will hold the position until her own retirement on October 31, 2026. At the time of her appointment, she was serving as Additional Director General (ADG) (Selection) in Madhya Pradesh Police.

- **Sonali Mishra has held several pioneering and senior leadership roles, notably becoming the first woman in July 2021 to command a Border Security Force (BSF) unit along the India–Pakistan border in Punjab. She has also served as Inspector General (IG), heading the BSF Intelligence Wing in Kashmir Valley, displaying a record of strategic policing in highly sensitive regions.**

### Key Points:-

(i) In 2023, Mishra was appointed as ADG of Eastern Command of the Border Security Force (BSF) based in Kolkata, West Bengal, further cementing her reputation as one of the most experienced women officers in India's paramilitary forces. Her leadership experience in volatile and complex zones played a crucial role in her selection for RPF.

(ii) She has received prestigious awards, including the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service (PPMDS) in 2020 while serving as IG of BSF Intelligence and Kashmir Frontier, and the Police Medal for Meritorious Service (PMMS) in 2021 for her leadership in the Punjab Frontier. These recognitions highlight her long-standing service excellence and operational success.

(iii) The Railway Protection Force (RPF), headquartered in New Delhi, operates under the Ministry of Railways (MoR) as a central armed police force. Established under the RPF Act of 1957, it is tasked with the protection of railway property and passengers. In 1985, the RPF was officially designated as an "Armed Force of the



Union,” making it a critical force for transport security in India.

### 3. Senior IAS Officer Sanjay Kaul Appointed as MD & CEO of GIFT City, Gandhinagar.



In mid-July 2025, the Government of Gujarat appointed Sanjay Kaul, a 2001-batch Kerala cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GIFT City Company Ltd, Gandhinagar, effective from the date he assumes charge. His tenure is fixed for three years or until further orders.

- Until he formally takes over, retired IAS officer Tapan Ray will continue as Acting MD of GIFT City. The appointment notification was issued by the General Administration Department (GAD), Gujarat government, following a requisition request sent to the Centre earlier in July 2025.

- Currently on central deputation, Sanjay Kaul is serving as Joint Secretary in the Union Ministry of Culture, where he oversees portfolios such as International Cultural Relations, UNESCO and Intangible Cultural Heritage, Libraries & Schemes, and institutes like the Asiatic Society and the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies.

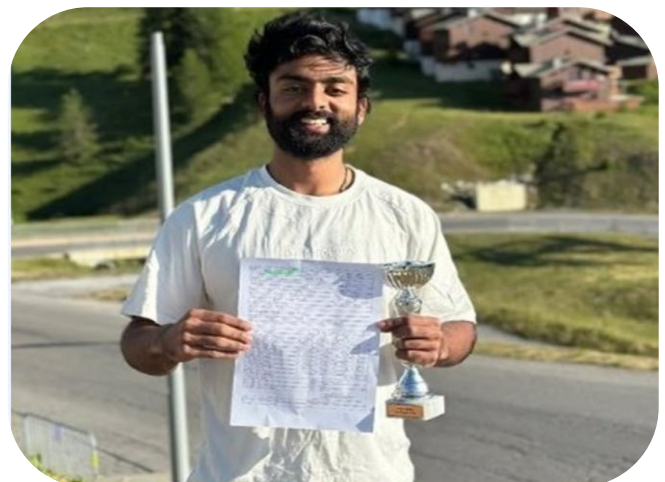
#### Key Points:-

(i) Kaul, originally from Vadodara, Gujarat, had served in Gujarat administration (2011–2016) under inter-state deputation, heading key departments like Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, Gujarat Informatics Ltd, ports, industries, finance, home, and power. His broad administrative experience across governance verticals is considered vital for steering GIFT City’s strategic evolution.

(ii) GIFT City—Gujarat International Finance Tec-City—is India’s first operational greenfield smart city and international financial services centre, envisioned to compete with global hubs like Singapore and Dubai. Established in 2015 and managed by GIFT City Company Ltd under MoU with the Gujarat government, the project has witnessed major growth, including top ranking in fintech and reputational indices as of 2025. Kaul’s appointment is expected to lead the next phase of GIFT City’s global transformation.

## SPORTS

### 1. Tamil Nadu’s Harikrishnan A. Ra. Becomes India’s 87th Chess Grandmaster.



In July 2025, Harikrishnan A. Ra., a 23-year-old chess player from Chennai, Tamil Nadu,

achieved the prestigious Grandmaster (GM) title—India's highest chess title—by securing his third and final GM norm at the La Plagne International Chess Festival in France. With this feat, he has become India's 87th Grandmaster and the third GM from Tamil Nadu in the past two years.

- **Harikrishnan A. Ra. earned his third GM norm after a strategic draw in the ninth round against Indian Grandmaster D. Iniyan, which allowed him to secure a fourth-place finish overall at the La Plagne tournament.**

- **This performance fulfilled the Federation Internationale des Echecs (FIDE – International Chess Federation) criteria of three GM norms and a minimum Elo rating of 2500 points required to qualify as a Grandmaster.**

- **His first GM norm was achieved at the Biel International Chess Festival in Switzerland in July 2023, followed by his second at the Lince Andújar Chess Open held in Spain in June 2025. Harikrishnan had previously been awarded the International Master (IM) title in 2018 and had achieved his first FIDE rating at the age of just 7, making him one of the youngest Indian players to do so at the time. He is currently trained under the guidance of GM R. B. Ramesh at Chess Gurukul Academy, Chennai.**

### Key Points:-

(i) The Grandmaster title is conferred by FIDE, the world governing body of chess headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. The FIDE rating norms must be fulfilled in internationally recognized events. The La Plagne International Chess Festival, where Harikrishnan achieved his final norm, is a FIDE-rated tournament attracting top global talent and is recognized by the All India Chess Federation (AICF) under the Ministry

of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.

(ii) Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur congratulated Harikrishnan, noting India's growing chess talent globally. He also highlighted AICF's recent efforts like scholarships, international coaching, and overseas tournament sponsorships to support rising players.

(iii) India now ranks among the top five nations globally in terms of active Grandmasters, with a surge in titles since 2020. Notably, Viswanathan Anand became India's first Grandmaster in 1988, and Koneru Humpy was the first Indian woman to achieve the GM title in 2002. Harikrishnan's accomplishment reflects the deep chess culture of Tamil Nadu, which has produced several top Indian GMs in recent years.

## AWARDS

**1. President Murmu Confers Kalinga Ratna Award 2024 on Dharmendra Pradhan at Cuttack.**



During the birth anniversary ceremony of 15th-century Odia poet Adikabi Sarala Das on 15 July 2025, President Draupadi Murmu presented the prestigious Kalinga Ratna Award 2024 to Union Minister

Dharmendra Pradhan at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, celebrating contributions to literature and language.

- The event, organized by Sarala Sahitya Sansad, marked the 600th anniversary of Adikabi Sarala Das, author of an Odia rendition of the Mahabharata. During her address, President Murmu highlighted India's cultural richness and linguistic unity, noting that despite national diversity, the country's unity remains strong—a sentiment expressed as, “Our diversity is like a rainbow.”

- While conferring the award, President Murmu emphasized the importance of mother-tongue education as advocated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, stating that learning in one's native language deepens cultural roots and supports the acquisition of additional languages.

- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who received the Kalinga Ratna Award, paid tribute to Odia language and literature. He stated it was an honour “not just for me but for every Odia,” and called for leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital platforms to enhance and globalize the Odia language.

#### Key Points:-

(i) President Murmu also congratulated awardee Bijaya Nayak, recipient of the Sarala Samman, for her outstanding work in Odia short stories. She praised both honourees for enriching Odia literature through their creative contributions.

(ii) The award ceremony coincided with significant heritage celebrations, reaffirming the role of Odisha in preserving India's literary traditions. President Murmu's presence underscored the government's

commitment—through the Ministry of Education—to promote regional languages in alignment with NEP 2020 and broader cultural policies.

(iii) The Kalinga Ratna Award 2024 ceremony follows closely after President Murmu's participation in the 13th convocation of Ravenshaw University on the same day, where she also called for innovation-driven education, emphasizing “job provider” mindsets among graduates.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. Israel Launches Dror-1, a Geostationary Communication Satellite, into Space



In July 2025, Israel launched its advanced next-generation communication satellite Dror-1 into orbit to boost national telecommunication infrastructure. Developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) in collaboration with the Israeli Space Agency, the satellite was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, USA, using a Falcon 9 two-stage rocket by SpaceX.

- Dror-1 was placed into Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO), located around 36,000 km above the Earth's equator. The launch marked SpaceX's 528th overall mission and 88th launch of 2025,



and also the 503rd flight of the Falcon 9 rocket. This makes Dror-1 a significant milestone in Israel's expanding space capabilities.

- Weighing approximately 4.5 tonnes (4,500 kg), Dror-1 was carried aboard a mission termed Commercial GTO-1, which had a wingspan of 17.8 meters and featured 2.8-meter-long antennas for wide coverage.
- The satellite is expected to operate for 15 years, catering to the country's long-term secure communication needs.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Dror-1 is built using indigenous digital systems, geolocation technologies, and flexible reprogrammable payloads, making it a highly advanced satellite for both military and civilian use. It uses cutting-edge signal processing technology that ensures reduced dependence on foreign technologies. It can also be reprogrammed from Earth during its entire lifespan.
- (ii) An estimated USD 200 million has been invested in this mission since 2018, making it one of Israel's most ambitious space communication projects.
- (iii) Dror-1 will serve national interests until at least 2040, and enable secure, high-capacity data transmission across different sectors, including defense and public services.

## 2. China Develops World's Lightest Mind-Controller 'Cyborg Bee' for Insect Navigation.



In July 2025, researchers from the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT), China, led by Professor Zhao Jieliang, have successfully developed the world's lightest brain-control device, named Cyborg Bee, weighing just 74 milligrams (mg). This device enables direct navigation of bees using brain stimulation and opens up new possibilities in micro-robotics and surveillance.

- The Cyborg Bee device is mounted directly on the back of a real bee and interfaces with the insect's nervous system through three ultra-thin electrodes that are inserted into the bee's brain. These electrodes transmit precise electrical pulses that generate sensory illusions, manipulating the bee's movement in mid-air, including turning, moving forward, or reversing.
- The invention was formally documented in the Chinese Journal of Mechanical Engineering, highlighting its experimental validation across nine different pulse patterns. These patterns were synchronized with behavioral responses in both bees and cockroaches, showing consistent command-response accuracy in controlled settings.
- During trials, bees equipped with the device could be directed while flying, and cockroaches responded to commands by walking in pre-defined paths with minimal deviation,

demonstrating the platform's versatility across multiple insect species.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The Cyborg Bee technology is expected to have important applications in search and rescue missions, environmental monitoring, military spying, and hazardous inspections, particularly in areas where conventional drones are inefficient due to size, noise, or restricted access.
- (ii) The researchers emphasized that the device's ultra-lightweight (74 mg) allows for minimal disruption to natural bee behavior, overcoming previous challenges faced by heavier brain-interface devices that interfered with insect flight balance or control.
- (iii) This development marks a significant milestone in neuro-controlled biohybrid robotics, where living organisms are used as carriers for technological payloads, offering a low-energy, silent, and maneuverable alternative to traditional machines in narrow or sensitive environments.

## OBITUARY

### 1. Former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari Passes Away at 82.



On July 13, 2025, Nigeria's former President Muhammadu Buhari passed away at the age of 82 in London, United Kingdom. A prominent military and political figure, Buhari served as Nigeria's President for two consecutive terms from 2015 to 2023, leaving behind a legacy of economic reforms and anti-corruption campaigns.

- **Muhammadu Buhari was born on December 17, 1942, in Daura, located in Katsina State, Nigeria. He initially entered public service through the military, joining the Nigerian Army in 1961 and receiving officer training in several international academies.**
- **His early military experience positioned him as one of the key figures in Nigeria's evolving post-colonial defense and governance structures.**
- **He first rose to national prominence following the 1975 coup that overthrew General Yakubu Gowon. Buhari himself became Head of State through a military coup in December 1983, removing then-President Shehu Shagari. During this military tenure (1983–1985), he enforced strict economic discipline and launched his widely known "War Against Indiscipline" campaign to restore civic responsibility, crack down on corruption, and enhance administrative efficiency.**

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Returning to democratic politics, Muhammadu Buhari became the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and was elected in 2015 after defeating Goodluck Jonathan. This marked the first time in Nigeria's history that an incumbent president was defeated through democratic elections. Buhari was re-elected in 2019 and served a

full two-term presidency until May 2023.

(ii) As President, Buhari implemented major economic policies focused on fiscal discipline, anti-corruption, and security stabilization, particularly in response to terrorism in the northeast. His administration introduced social investment programs, agricultural revival schemes, and measures to reduce dependence on oil exports. He also emphasized regional diplomacy within the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States).

(iii) The current President of Nigeria is Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Adekunle Tinubu, who succeeded Buhari in 2023. Nigeria's capital is Abuja and the national currency is the Nigerian Naira (NGN). Buhari's death marks the end of a long chapter in Nigerian civil and military leadership and has prompted tributes from across Africa and the world.



## Static GK

<b>New Caledonia</b>	Capital: Nouméa	Currency: CFP Franc
<b>Cypriot</b>	Capital: Nicosia	Currency: Euro
<b>National Stock Exchange of India Limited</b>	MD & CEO : Ashishkumar Chauhan	Headquarter : Mumbai
<b>Israel</b>	Prime Minister (PM): Benjamin Netanyahu	Capital: Jerusalem
<b>Nigeria</b>	President : Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Adekunle Tinubu	Capital : Abuja
<b>China</b>	President: Xi Jinping	Official languages: Mandarin, Putonghua
<b>Indian Coast Guard (ICG)</b>	Director General (DG) : Paramesh Sivamani	Headquarters: New Delhi
<b>Karnataka</b>	Chief minister: Siddaramaiah	Governor: Thawar Chand Gehlot
<b>Assam</b>	Chief minister: Himanta Biswa Sarma	Governor: Lakshman Acharya

<b>Groww Mutual Fund</b>	CEO : Varun Gupta	Headquarter : Mumbai
<b>GIFT City Company Limited</b>	Headquarters: Gandhinagar, Gujarat	Established : 2015