

# **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**19 JULY 2025**



## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### 1. Arjun Ram Meghwal Inaugurates 'Mahila Aarogyam Kaksh' for Women Employees at Shastri Bhawan on 18 July 2025.



On 18 July 2025, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law & Justice, inaugurated Mahila Aarogyam Kaksh—a health, fitness, and wellness centre exclusively for women employees of the Department of Legal Affairs—within Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi under the Ministry of Law & Justice

- A previously unused garage at Shastri Bhawan has been repurposed into a vibrant space featuring gym equipment and a private lactation room for nursing mothers. The symbolic transformation signifies a shift toward gender-sensitive design in government workplaces.

- This first-of-its-kind facility formalises employee wellness within government corridors, aligning with national initiatives like the Fit India Movement and Viksit Bharat vision. It aims to promote physical fitness, mental well-being, and work-life balance among women officers.

- In his address, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal emphasized that women's health is crucial for an inclusive and progressive India. He praised

the initiative as aligned with PM Narendra Modi's "Hum Fit Toh India Fit" campaign and encouraged its full utilization.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Dr. Anju Rathi Rana, Law Secretary, emphasized that women often tend to neglect their own health due to competing responsibilities. She stated that the establishment of the 'Mahila Aarogyam Kaksh' serves as a vital reminder that self-care is not an act of selfishness but a cornerstone of true empowerment. She also reiterated the Department of Legal Affairs' unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment for women.

(ii) Officials noted that the Kaksh represents more than a facility—it signals a cultural transformation, from bureaucratic zones to human-centric environments acknowledging employees' holistic needs.

(iii) This centre is expected to serve as a blueprint for replication across ministries, with plans for collaboration via the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT). It is part of India's effort toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health and gender equality.

### 2. PM Modi Launches ₹7,200 Crore Infrastructure Package in Motihari, Bihar.





On 18 July 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for infrastructure projects worth over ₹7,200 crore in Motihari, East Champaran, Bihar. These strategic developments spanned rail, road, IT, fisheries, and rural housing sectors, aimed at regional economic growth.

- Prime Minister Modi dedicated several major rail initiatives, including the doubling of the Darbhanga–Narkatiaganj line (₹4,080 crore), a segment of the Darbhanga–Samastipur project, and automatic signaling upgrades between Samastipur–Bachhwara and Bhatni–Chhapra Gramin routes. These enhancements will significantly increase train frequency and operational efficiency.

- Modi flagged off four Amrit Bharat Express trains connecting key regional corridors: Rajendra Nagar (Patna)–New Delhi, Bapudham Motihari–Anand Vihar, Darbhanga–Lucknow (Gomti Nagar), and Malda Town–Lucknow via Bhagalpur, improving both passenger convenience and regional connectivity.

- He inaugurated the four-laning of the Ara bypass (NH-319) and the Parariya–Mohania section (₹820 crore), part of NH-319 linking to the Golden Quadrilateral. In addition, a two-lane with paved shoulders was launched

from Sarwan to Chakai on NH-333C to support inter-state freight movement.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Narendra Modi opened a new Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) facility in Darbhanga and a startup incubation centre in Patna, aiming to foster local IT/ITES/ESDM industry growth, support startups, and integrate Bihar into India's digital and innovation ecosystem.

(ii) The PM inaugurated several fisheries projects under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), including modern hatcheries, ornamental fish units, and feed mills.

(iii) Additionally, ₹160 crore was released for 40,000 rural housing beneficiaries under PM Awaas Yojana-Gramin, ₹400 crore for 61,500 women-led self-help groups under DAY-NRLM, and the handing over of keys to 12,000 rural homes—all emphasizing inclusive development.

### 3. Dr. Jitendra Singh Launches NSCSTI 2.0 to Modernize Civil Services Training Under Mission Karmayogi.



On 18 July 2025, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for

Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Science & Technology, and more, launched the updated National Standards for Civil Services Training Institutions (NSCSTI) 2.0 at the Civil Services Officers' Institute (CSOI), Delhi, to modernize civil service training.

- NSCSTI 2.0, developed by the Capacity Building Commission (CBC) under Mission Karmayogi, reduces evaluation metrics from 59 to 43. It shifts focus to outcome-based and hybrid training models, enabling institutes to evaluate performance clearly and efficiently.
- Built on consultations with over 160 Civil Service Training Institutes (CSTIs) and domain experts, this framework supports Central, State, and Urban Local Body (ULB) institutes, making it adaptable and performance-focused across governance ecosystems.
- NSCSTI 2.0 embraces AI-enabled assessments, hybrid learning tools, and integrates the Karmayogi Competency Model (KCM), Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Amrit Gyaan Kosh (AGK) knowledge repository—aiming for a future-ready, citizen-centric bureaucracy.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized removal of silos between public and private sectors, allowing best practices from both sectors to enrich civil training. He cited parallels with the Aspirational Districts Programme to promote cooperative, competitive federalism.
- (ii) Mission Karmayogi's success has drawn interest from countries like Bangladesh, South Africa, and Maldives, reinforcing India's role as a global leader in civil services reform. NSCSTI 2.0 strengthens this governance diplomacy.
- (iii) With 195+ CSTIs accredited under

NSCSTI in two years, the revamped 2.0 framework reactivates the accreditation portal, fosters cross-institutional learning, and reframes accreditation as a driver of innovation and training excellence.

#### 4. ASI Declares Mizoram's 'Lungphun Ropui' as Monument of National Importance.



In July 2025, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture (MoC), officially declared Lungphun Ropui in Lianpui village, located in Champhai district, Mizoram, as a Monument of National Importance (MNI). This designation is made under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act, 1958).

- Lungphun Ropui becomes the second menhir site in Mizoram to receive the recognition of National Importance, following the earlier recognition of Vangchhia (also known as Kawthchhuah Ropui). This highlights the cultural and archaeological significance of menhir sites in the region.

- In addition to declaring the site as an MNI, the ASI plans to improve the infrastructure around Lungphun Ropui by adding fences, paths, restrooms, and drinking water facilities. These

measures aim to protect the site's heritage while enhancing tourism in the area.

- Lungphun Ropui is named after its founder and Lusei chief, Lianpuia, who established the village in the early 18th century. This village has a rich cultural and historical heritage, contributing significantly to the understanding of the Mizo people's roots.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The village of Lungphun Ropui was initially established at Mualbaw before relocating to its present location. This movement of the village reflects the changing dynamics of the area and the significance of the site over time.
- (ii) Lungphun Ropui is renowned for its menhirs, which are carved stone structures. These menhirs are considered vital for understanding the cultural and historical practices of the Mizo people, especially prior to the arrival of Christianity.
- (iii) At present, the site is home to more than 170 engraved menhirs, depicting images of warriors, hunting scenes, music, and communal legends. These carvings serve as an important link to the cultural practices and beliefs of the Mizo community.

#### 5. DGFT Launches 'Trade Connect' e-Platform at 71st India International Garment Fair and 16th Toy Biz International Expo in New Delhi.



In July 2025, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), officially launched its new digital initiative, the “Trade Connect” e-Platform, during two major business exhibitions—the 71st India International Garment Fair (IIGF) and the 16th Toy Biz International Expo.

- The 71st edition of the India International Garment Fair (IIGF) was inaugurated on July 1, 2025, by Union Minister of State (MoS) Pabitra Margherita, representing the Ministry of Textiles (MoT) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- The inauguration took place at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in New Delhi, one of India's largest exhibition spaces.
- The 16th Toy Biz International Expo 2025 was organized by the Toy Association of India and held from July 4 to July 7, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. This expo served as a crucial platform for connecting Indian toy manufacturers with international buyers and boosting exports under the ‘Make in India’ and ‘Toyconomy’ missions.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The “Trade Connect” e-Platform, unveiled by DGFT during these events, is a



centralized digital system aimed at streamlining international trade for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). It offers a one-stop hub for accessing real-time trade data, certification services, tariff-related information, and eCommerce support for Indian exporters.

(ii) The platform functions as an integrated trade intelligence and facilitation portal. It enables exporters to receive live updates on international market trends, upcoming trade fairs, and government certifications, helping Indian businesses to make timely and informed decisions in the global export landscape.

(iii) Additionally, the "Trade Connect" portal also acts as a secured electronic system for the issuance and verification of both preferential and non-preferential certificates of origin (CoO), simplifying the process for exporters and aligning with the government's focus on ease of doing business and digital governance.

Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee (WHC), held in Paris, France from July 6 to 16, 2025, a total of 26 new sites were inscribed into the World Heritage List. The session was chaired by Professor Nikolay Nenov of Bulgaria and brought together representatives from over 170 countries.

● The 2025 WHC session resulted in the addition of 26 new cultural and natural sites, comprising 21 cultural, 4 natural, and 1 mixed heritage site. These inclusions pushed the total number of inscribed sites globally to 1,248, including the extension of two previously listed sites. This expansion underscores UNESCO's commitment to preserving both tangible and intangible global heritage.

● India marked a significant achievement during the session, with the Maratha Military Landscapes being recognized as the 44th World Heritage Site from the country. These landscapes reflect the strategic architecture and historical valor of the Maratha empire across multiple forts and regions, showcasing India's rich military and cultural history.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. UNESCO WHC Adds 26 New Sites to World Heritage List at 47th Session in Paris, France.



At the 47th session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

#### Key Points:-

(i) Africa saw a major milestone as four new sites were added to the list, raising the continent's total to 112 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This included first-time entries from Guinea-Bissau (Omati Minho) and Sierra Leone (Gola-Tiwai), marking their official debut in the world heritage framework. These recognitions bring long-overdue attention to Africa's environmental and cultural richness.

(ii) The committee also made a notable decision to delist three African sites due to severe threats and neglect. These included the Rainforests of the Atsinanana

(Madagascar), Abu Mena (Egypt), and the Old Town of Ghadames (Libya), which were removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger, highlighting challenges in heritage preservation under conflict and environmental degradation.

(iii) A third of the newly added sites were prehistoric in nature, such as the Perucacu River Canyon in Brazil, the Megaliths of Carnac in France, and Petroglyphs on the Bangudae Stream in South Korea. These sites offer invaluable insights into early human civilization and are significant for both archaeological and cultural research.

## MOUs and Agreement

### 1. DoP Signs MoU with AMFI to Streamline KYC Verification of Mutual Fund Investors.



On 17 July 2025, the Department of Posts (DoP), under the Ministry of Communications, inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) in Mumbai, aiming to streamline Know Your Customer (KYC) processes for over 24 crore mutual fund folios via India's postal network.

- The MoU was signed in Mumbai by Manisha Bansal Badal, General Manager (Business

Development), DoP, and V. N. Chalasani, Chief Executive of AMFI, marking a historic partnership between a public infrastructure network and the mutual fund industry.

- This agreement will utilize over 1.64 lakh post offices nationwide to support KYC operations for approximately 24.13 crore mutual fund folios—including 19.04 crore under equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes.

- With rapid industry growth—adding 4 million investors in FY23, 6.9 million in FY24, and 9.7 million in FY25—the initiative aims to simplify KYC compliance for both new and legacy investors, particularly in underserved areas.

### Key Points:-

(i) Trained India Post staff will assist mutual fund investors by helping fill KYC (Know Your Customer) forms, verifying and attesting documents, and forwarding them to Asset Management Companies (AMCs). AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India) will coordinate with KYC Registration Agencies (KRAs) to complete the verification process.

(ii) This MoU reinforces the government's commitment to broaden financial inclusion, especially in semi-urban and rural India, by leveraging the extensive postal reach to bridge compliance gaps and boost investor confidence.

(iii) The one-year agreement—valid from July 2025 and renewable—includes strict provisions for SEBI compliance, data confidentiality, and secure handling of customer documents, positioning it as a scalable model for future public-private financial services collaborations.

## APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

### 1. Yulia Anatoliivna Svyrydenko Appointed as New Prime Minister of Ukraine.



In July 2025, Yulia Anatoliivna Svyrydenko was appointed as the new Prime Minister (PM) of Ukraine by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), replacing Denys Shmyhal. She became the second woman PM of Ukraine after securing 262 out of 450 votes.

- Yulia Svyrydenko was previously the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Ukraine. Her appointment as Prime Minister was backed by a majority of lawmakers, with 262 voting in favor, 22 against, and 26 abstaining during the parliamentary session held in Kyiv.
- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy nominated Svyrydenko for the Prime Ministerial post after Denys Shmyhal's resignation. This change is part of a major leadership reshuffle amid Ukraine's ongoing war with Russia, aimed at strengthening domestic policy and international relations.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Yulia Anatoliivna Svyrydenko is a trained economist who started her public service career in 2015 as the Head of Economic Development for Chernihiv Oblast. Since 2021, she has held key roles including

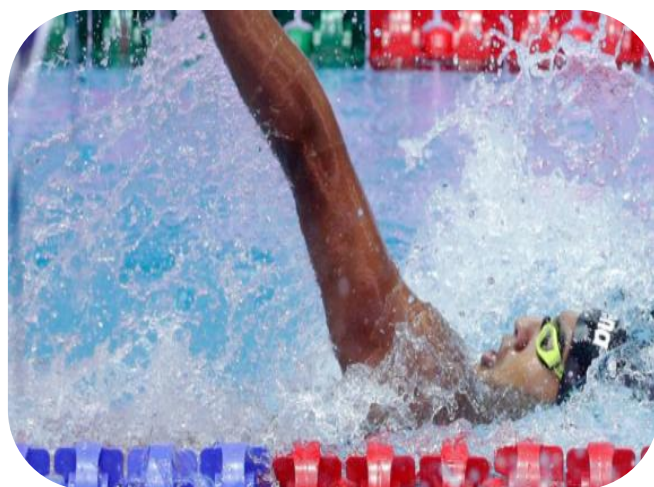
Deputy Head of the Presidential Office and First Deputy PM, leading reforms in economic recovery and governance.

(ii) As the First Deputy PM, she was instrumental in launching initiatives on post-war reconstruction, boosting international investment, enhancing defense capabilities, and implementing programs for citizen support. She also played a pivotal role in negotiating economic diplomacy, especially with the United States.

(iii) Alongside her appointment, Denys Shmyhal has been made Minister of Defence, and Rustem Umerov, the former Defence Minister, is now Ambassador to the United States. Ukraine's capital remains Kyiv, and its national currency is the Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH).

## SPORTS

### 1. Srihari Nataraj & B. Benediction Rohit Set New Swimming Benchmarks at World University Games.



At the 2025 FISU World University Games in Berlin (17–23 July 2025), Indian swimmers Srihari Nataraj and Benediction Rohit set impressive new national benchmarks. Nataraj etched his name by posting India's best-ever



times in both the 100m freestyle (49.46s) and the 200m freestyle (1:48.11).

- In a stellar performance, Srihari Nataraj clocked 49.46 seconds in the men's 100m freestyle heats—shaving off 0.01 seconds from Virdhawal Khade's 2008 record of 49.47 seconds—thereby establishing India's fastest time ever in the event.
- Building on his earlier success, Nataraj bettered his own national best in the 200m freestyle semis with a time of 1:48.11 seconds, improving from his heats time of 1:48.22 seconds, reflecting remarkable consistency and growth.
- His impressive swims—12th position in 100m—secured semifinal berths in both races. Though narrowly missing finals, these results also helped Nataraj achieve B-qualification standards for the upcoming World Aquatics Championships.

### Key Points:-

- Earlier in the competition, B. Benedict Rohit also delivered a standout performance by establishing a national best in the 50m butterfly, securing 13th place overall and emulating Nataraj's record-setting prowess.
- These back-to-back benchmark performances underscore India's growing presence in global swimming. Srihari Nataraj now holds four national records, spanning the sprint and longer freestyle distances, marking a renaissance in the sport.
- Born in 2001 in Bengaluru, Srihari is a two-time Olympian—Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024—coached by Nihar Ameen. His dominance at the 38th National Games and now at the Universiade point to a rising star in international swimming.

## AWARDS

**1. HDFC Bank Report : Sashidhar Jagdishan Emerges as India's Highest-Paid Banker in FY25 with ₹12.08 Cr Salary.**



According to the annual report released in July 2025 by HDFC Bank Limited, Sashidhar Jagdishan, its Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), has emerged as the highest-paid banker in India for the Financial Year 2024–25 (FY25). His total compensation stood at ₹12.08 crore, marking a 12% increase over the previous fiscal year.

- Sashidhar Jagdishan's FY25 compensation of ₹12.08 crore comprises both salary and non-salary components. His base salary was supplemented with 2.12 lakh shares under the Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP), valued at approximately ₹42.4 crore at current market rates. This package reflects HDFC Bank's commitment to performance-driven leadership rewards.
- Despite being the highest-paid banker overall, Jagdishan was the second-highest-paid bank CEO in FY25. The top spot among CEOs went to Ashok Vaswani, MD & CEO of Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL), who earned a total compensation of ₹12.95 crore, including 18,580

ESOPs worth ₹4 crore. Vaswani assumed the CEO role in January 2024.

- Ashok Vaswani's compensation package in FY25 reflected a significant jump from his initial salary. During the last quarter of FY24, Vaswani earned only ₹1.62 crore post-appointment. His FY25 package makes him the highest-paid bank CEO in the country, surpassing his peers in both salary and equity-based incentives.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Amitabh Chaudhary, MD & CEO of Axis Bank, earned ₹9.11 crore in FY25, showing a 5.4% decline from FY24. Along with his salary, he was granted 2.69 lakh ESOPs valued at ₹30 crore. Despite the decline, his total compensation remained among the highest in the banking sector.

(ii) Other leading bank CEOs in the FY25 compensation list include V. Vaidyanathan of IDFC First Bank and Sandeep Bakhshi of ICICI Bank. Vaidyanathan earned ₹5.54 crore in salary and 20,626 ESOPs worth ₹18 crore, reflecting a 4.5% year-on-year increase. Meanwhile, Bakhshi received ₹9.96 crore in annual salary, with ESOP values yet to be publicly disclosed.

(iii) This report highlights growing trends of ESOP-linked incentives and performance-based compensation in India's banking leadership. With increasing emphasis on wealth creation through equity, top Indian banks are aligning CEO pay structures with shareholder value and long-term institutional goals.



In June 2025, Forbes unveiled its annual "50 Richest Self-Made Women on Earth" list. Two Indian entrepreneurs—Falguni Nayar, founder-CEO of Nykaa, and Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder-chairperson of Biocon—secured 31st and 32nd positions, with net worths of USD 3.4 billion and USD 3.3 billion, respectively.

- Forbes' 2025 ranking featured only 13 countries, yet India stood out with two self-made women—Nykaa's Falguni Nayar and Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw—breaking into the elite list at 31st and 32nd ranks, underscoring India's rise in female entrepreneurship.

- From Investment Banker to Beauty Mogul Born in Mumbai in 1963, Falguni Nayar pursued finance at IIM Ahmedabad, later joining Kotak Mahindra as MD. At age 49, she founded Nykaa in 2012 with USD 2 million personal capital. After its 2021 IPO, Nykaa's valuation soared, boosting her net worth to approximately USD 3.4 billion by mid-2025.

- Biotech Pioneer and Healthcare Leader Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, born in 1953 in Bangalore and educated in India and Australia, founded Biocon Ltd. in 1978. Under her leadership, Biocon emerged as India's leading biopharmaceutical company. Her consistent innovation in

## 2. Forbes 2025: Falguni Nayar & Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw Rank 31st & 32nd Among 50 Richest Self-Made Women Globally.



affordable healthcare has grown her net worth to USD 3.3 billion.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Globally, only 3.5% of billionaires are self-made women, an increase of 50% since 2017. The total combined fortune of the 50 listed self-made women reached USD 276 billion, averaging USD 5.5 billion per woman, highlighting both progress and gender gaps in wealth creation.

(ii) The list is topped by Rafaela Aponte-Diamant (Switzerland) with USD 38.8 billion in shipping, followed by Diane Hendricks (USA, building supplies) and Zhong Huijuan (China, pharma). These rankings reflect diversity of industry as well as geography among self-made women billionaires.

(iii) Alongside Nayar and Mazumdar-Shaw, India has seen rise of other women like Radha Vembu (Zoho) and Kanika Tekriwal (JetSetGo) in billionaire and entrepreneurial rankings. Their success signals a broader shift in India's gender dynamics in business leadership.

### 3. SBI Adjudged 'World's Best Consumer Bank 2025' by Global Finance Magazine.



In July 2025, the State Bank of India (SBI) was honored with the prestigious title of 'World's Best Consumer Bank 2025' by Global Finance magazine, recognizing its excellence in consumer banking innovation, digital transformation, and customer-centric service delivery.

- The award will be formally presented to SBI Chairman Challa Sreenivasulu (CS) Setty on 18th October 2025 during the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) Annual Meetings in Washington D.C., United States of America (USA). The decision followed an extensive editorial review supported by insights from analysts and finance experts worldwide.

- The "World's Best Consumer Bank" is part of Global Finance magazine's World's Best Bank Awards 2025, recognizing top-performing global banks from over 150 countries for their innovations, digital inclusion, and service quality. This is the first time SBI has won this particular title in the global consumer banking category.

- Other major global winners in 2025 include Société Générale (France) as the World's Best Bank and World's Best Frontier Market Bank, BBVA (Spain) as World's Best Corporate Bank, J.P. Morgan (USA) as World's Best Emerging Market Bank, and CIBC Mellon (Canada) as the World's Best Sub-Custodian Bank.

#### Key Points:-

(i) SBI was recognized for its digital innovation leadership, with Global Finance highlighting SBI's efforts in building robust mobile banking infrastructure, AI-based hyper-personalization, vernacular UI adoption, omnichannel engagement, and real-time customer support across rural and semi-urban regions.

(ii) As of March 2025, SBI serves over 52 crore customers, with total deposits worth Rs 53.82 lakh crore. Its Current Account Savings Account (CASA) ratio stood at 39.97%, and the total number of savings accounts surpassed 42.20 crore, underlining its wide financial reach and trust among Indian citizens.

(iii) Founded on 1st July 1955, SBI is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Under the leadership of Chairman CS Setty, it continues to expand its global footprint while driving innovation, inclusion, and digital empowerment in India's banking ecosystem.

## IMPORTANT DAYS

### 1. World Chess Day is observed on 20 July 2025.



World Chess Day is observed every year on July 20 to commemorate the establishment of the International Chess Federation, FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs), which was founded in Paris in 1924. Recognised by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, the day celebrates chess as more than a game—promoting education, mental strength, and international solidarity.

- **World Chess Day was first proposed by UNESCO in 1966 and officially recognised by the**

UN in December 2019. The resolution acknowledged chess as a global activity that promotes fairness, inclusion, and mutual respect. The game's ability to transcend language, age, gender, and socio-economic barriers makes it a powerful tool for diplomacy and education.

- In 2025, World Chess Day is being observed with the theme “Every Move Counts”, aligning with FIDE's declaration of the Year of Social Chess.

- This initiative focuses on using chess to address social issues like inequality, education gaps, and community engagement. The idea is to bring chess to people from all walks of life—from schools and prisons to refugee camps and hospitals.

### Key Points:-

(i) The celebrations in 2025 feature global online events, educational workshops, and special initiatives. Notably, a 24-hour blitz tournament hosted in partnership with platforms like Lichess.org and Chess.com is taking place worldwide. Public spaces, railway stations, schools, and community halls are being transformed into chess hubs to encourage spontaneous and inclusive participation.

(ii) In the previous year (2024), World Chess Day made global headlines by setting a Guinness World Record with over 7.28 million online chess games played in a single day across more than 350 events globally. Building on that momentum, this year's efforts are aimed at making the sport more accessible and relatable to people beyond the professional chess community.

(iii) World Chess Day continues to promote chess as a “gymnasium for the mind,” with



its positive influence on concentration, memory, patience, and planning. From kindergartens to senior citizen homes, the game is being introduced as a tool to enhance cognitive skills and promote peaceful social interaction, truly reflecting the values celebrated on this global observance.

## 2. International Moon Day is celebrated on 20 July 2025.



International Moon Day is celebrated annually on 20 July to commemorate the historic Apollo 11 Moon landing in 1969. Officially proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2021, this day promotes global awareness of lunar exploration, sustainable space development, scientific innovation, and peaceful cooperation.

- International Moon Day traces its roots to the Moon Village Association's proposal to the UN's Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

- This led to UNGA Resolution 76/76 on 9 December 2021, acknowledging the importance of commemorating the Apollo 11 milestone and encouraging responsible lunar stewardship for humanity's shared heritage.

### Key Points:-

(i) The 2025 theme, "One Moon, One Vision, One Future," set by the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), emphasizes global unity in lunar science. Focus areas include coordinating international efforts such as NASA's Artemis, India's Chandrayaan-3, and China's Chang'e programs to foster collective progress in space exploration and research.

(ii) Observed worldwide, International Moon Day events in 2025 include public telescope nights, expert lectures, school workshops, and a major gathering hosted by the University of Dubai, UAE, uniting scientists, students, and policymakers. These programs aim to inspire future space innovators and reinforce the UN's role in promoting peaceful, sustainable use of outer space per the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.

## 3. Nelson Mandela International Day 2025 – Observed Globally on July 18.



Nelson Mandela International Day 2025 was observed worldwide on 18 July 2025 to honour the legacy of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, celebrated for his lifelong commitment to democracy, peace, equality, and social justice. This United Nations-

recognized day promotes collective civic responsibility, volunteering, and action against inequality and poverty.

- This international observance coincides with the birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela, the first Black President of South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate of 1993.

- The day is meant to inspire individuals globally to dedicate 67 minutes of service—one for each year Mandela spent fighting for social justice and freedom.

### Key Points:-

(i) In 2025, the theme for Mandela Day was “It’s still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity,” reflecting the urgency of acting on Mandela’s ideals through community engagement, public participation, and inclusion in global development processes. The focus is on shared responsibility and transforming Nelson Mandela’s vision into actionable change.

(ii) The day has been officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through resolution A/RES/64/13, adopted on 10 November 2009, which declared 18 July as the Nelson Mandela International Day each year. The resolution acknowledges Mandela’s role in advancing human dignity, social justice, and peace worldwide.

(iii) The first observance of UN-recognized Nelson Mandela International Day took place on 18 July 2010. Since then, it has become an annual platform to reflect on Mandela’s global contribution to building a fairer world through the promotion of democracy, reconciliation, and equality, especially in developing nations.

## DEFENCE

### 1. INS Nistar Commissioned: India’s First Indigenous Diving Support Vessel Enhances Naval Rescue Capabilities.



On 18 July 2025, INS Nistar, India’s first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel (DSV), was commissioned into service at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam. The commissioning was presided over by Sanjay Seth, Minister of State for Defence, and attended by Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of Naval Staff.

- Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), INS Nistar embodies over 80% indigenous content, involving more than 120 Indian MSMEs in its design and construction. This achievement aligns with the Government’s Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives to enhance national defense manufacturing capacity.

- At approximately 118 metres in length, 22 metres beam, and displacing close to 10,000 tonnes, INS Nistar can conduct saturation diving up to 300 metres and support complex submarine rescue missions using its specialized diving complex, ROVs, side-scan sonar, and a 15-tonne subsea crane.



● Equipped to serve as a “Mother Ship” for the Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV), INS Nistar includes a dynamic positioning system (DP-II), hyperbaric medical facilities, an operating theatre, ICU, and eight-bed hospital, enabling extended deep-sea missions and emergency medical support.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Defence MoS Sanjay Seth emphasized INS Nistar’s strategic role in reinforcing India as a “First Responder” and “Preferred Security Partner” in the Indian Ocean Region. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Tripathi lauded it as not just a technological asset, but a crucial operational enabler for regional submarine-rescue collaboration.

(ii) The vessel adopts the name of its 1971 predecessor, INS Nistar, which played a key role in locating the Pakistani submarine Ghazi during the Indo-Pakistan War. The maiden crew of the earlier ship attended the commissioning, linking past valor to future readiness.

On July 16, 2025, the Indian Army (IA) successfully carried out a high-altitude production model test of the upgraded Akash Prime missile system in the eastern Ladakh sector near the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The trial was conducted at an altitude of approximately 4,500 metres (15,000 feet) to assess its combat readiness under extreme terrain and weather conditions.

● The Akash Prime missile system, an enhanced version of the Akash Weapon System, is designed for high-altitude aerial defense. During the two-day testing period, the missile successfully intercepted and neutralized two high-speed unmanned aerial targets, demonstrating its improved response capabilities and operational efficiency for deployment in mountainous border regions.

● This high-altitude testing was led by the Indian Army’s Corps of Army Air Defence (AAD) in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

● The trial included industrial partners such as Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) based in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) from Bengaluru, Karnataka.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Akash Prime is a medium-range surface-to-air missile system developed indigenously by DRDO. It is specifically optimized for intercepting hostile aerial threats at higher altitudes, featuring better performance in cold climates and complex terrains. It is equipped with a new indigenous active Radio Frequency (RF) seeker for improved precision, making it more effective than earlier Akash variants.

Additionally, on July 17, 2025, India also successfully conducted test-firing of nuclear-

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

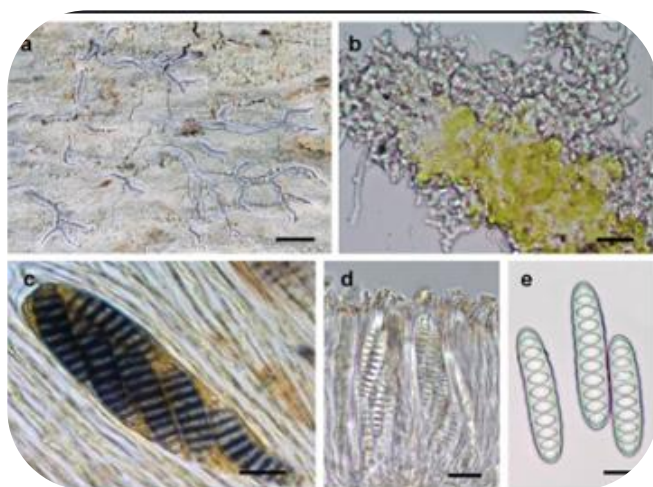
### 1. Indian Army Successfully Conducts Akash Prime Missile System Trial at High Altitude in Ladakh.



capable Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs) – Prithvi-II and Agni-I – from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, Odisha. These strategic tests were carried out by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) as part of routine readiness assessments.

## ENVIRONMENT

### 1. New Lichen Species *Allographa effusosoredica* Discovered in Western Ghats.



In mid-July 2025, researchers at MACS-Agharkar Research Institute, Pune (under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India) formally described a novel crustose lichen species, *Allographa effusosoredica*, discovered in the Western Ghats. This marks the first molecularly sequenced *Allographa* species in India, shedding light on ancient symbiosis.

- The species *Allographa effusosoredica* was identified by a team led by Ansil P. A., Rajeshkumar K. C., Lücking R., and Sharma B.O., through integrated morphological, chemical, and molecular analyses (mtSSU, LSU, RPB2 for the fungus; ITS for the algal partner). The work was supported by the MACS-Agharkar Research Institute, Pune, under the Department of

Science & Technology (DST), Government of India.

- This crustose lichen features a thin, diffusely sorediate (effuse) thallus with norstictic acid—a rare compound within the genus. It forms eight-spored asci bearing transversely septate ascospores with 7–11 septa. The morphology is superficially similar to *Graphis glaucescens*, but genetic analyses place it firmly within *Allographa*, closely allied to *A. xanthospora*.

- The symbiotic photobiont is a strain of *Trentepohlia* (cf. *arborum*), making this one of the first tropical lichens in India whose algal component was molecularly identified. This reveals the importance of local fungal–algal co-adaptation in biodiverse ecosystems like the Western Ghats.

#### Key Points:-

(i) *Allographa effusosoredica* is now the 53rd *Allographa* species recorded from India and the 22nd from the Western Ghats region alone. It also represents the first Indian *Allographa* species ever sequenced at the molecular level—a milestone in Indian lichenology.

(ii) Lichens like *A. effusosoredica* play multiple roles in ecosystems—from soil formation and insect food sources to serving as sensitive bioindicators of environmental health. The integrative taxonomic approach used here highlights hidden biodiversity and reinforces the need to conserve the fragile Western Ghats habitat.

(iii) Through polyphasic taxonomy combining classical morphology, chemical profiling (e.g. norstictic acid detection), and DNA sequencing of both fungal and algal partners, this study establishes a robust model for lichen classification in tropical

regions. It raises important questions about the distinction between *Allographa* and the similar genus *Graphis*, pushing boundaries in fungal systematics.



**Static GK**

<b>Bihar</b>	Chief minister: Nitish Kumar	Governor: Arif Mohammad Khan
<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)</b>	President : Audrey Azoulay	Headquarters : Paris, France
<b>HDFC Bank Limited</b>	MD & CEO : Sashidhar Jagdishan	Headquarter : Mumbai
<b>Forbes</b>	CEO : Sherry Phillips	Headquarters : New Jersey, the United States of America (USA)
<b>State Bank of India (SBI)</b>	Chairman : Challa Sreenivasulu (CS) Setty	Headquarter : Mumbai
<b>Ukraine</b>	President: Volodymyr Zelenskyy	Prime minister: Yulia Svyrydenko
<b>Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)</b>	Director General (DG): Yadubir Singh Rawat	Headquarters: New Delhi