



# **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**23 AUGUST 2025**



## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### 1. UIDAI and Starlink Collaborate for Aadhaar-based Customer Verification to Boost Digital Infrastructure.



The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), working under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has partnered with Starlink Satellite Communication Private Limited, the satellite internet provider of SpaceX, to enable Aadhaar-based customer verification.

- This collaboration is expected to enhance digital authentication infrastructure, making the process faster, secure, and more reliable.
- The partnership designates Starlink as a Sub-Authentication User Agency (SUA) and Sub-electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC) User Agency, allowing the company to carry out Aadhaar-based authentication for customer onboarding.
- The initiative was formalized in the presence of Bhuvnesh Kumar, CEO of UIDAI, Manish Bhardwaj, Deputy Director General (Dy-DG) of UIDAI, and Parnil Urdhwareshe, Director of Starlink India.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The strategic collaboration aims to

support Starlink in complying with India's regulatory framework while expanding its satellite internet services across households, institutions, and businesses in rural and urban regions. This ensures that Aadhaar authentication becomes a critical enabler for secure digital identity verification.

(ii) By enabling Aadhaar-based authentication, Starlink can provide a seamless and secure verification system while rolling out high-speed internet connectivity. This step reflects the scalability and reliability of India's digital infrastructure, aligning with the government's Digital India vision.

(iii) UIDAI has clarified that Aadhaar-based authentication for customer onboarding will remain voluntary, in line with existing norms. Users will have the freedom to opt in or out, ensuring compliance with India's data privacy and security standards while strengthening Starlink's presence in the Indian market.

### 2. EPFO Raises Ex-Gratia Death Relief Fund to ₹15 Lakh from April 1, 2025.



In August 2025, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), under the Ministry of Labour & Employment,



announced an increase in the ex-gratia benefit under its Death Relief Fund (DRF) for Central Board employees from ₹8.80 lakh to ₹15 lakh, effective April 1, 2025.

- This enhancement means that the family members—either nominees or legal heirs—of a deceased EPFO Central Board employee will receive ₹15 lakh from the Staff Welfare Fund, up from the previous ₹8.80 lakh, providing stronger financial assistance during times of loss.

- Though announced in August 2025, the new ex-gratia amount applies retroactively from April 1, 2025, ensuring that eligible deaths occurring since then qualify under the higher compensation slab without delay.

#### Key Points:-

(i) This hike reflects EPFO's commitment to improving death relief mechanisms. Advocacy groups and EPFO officials highlighted that the elevated support, nearly doubling the previous amount, is meant to match rising living costs and the emotional impact borne by bereaved families.

(ii) Prior to this revision, the ex-gratia amount had been raised to ₹8.80 lakh effective April 1, 2024. This move followed earlier increments—from ₹4.20 lakh to ₹8 lakh in 2021—showing a progressive upward trend in support over the years.

(iii) The increased ex-gratia disbursement underscores EPFO's focus on social security and welfare for its employees. By offering enhanced relief, particularly through digitally streamlined claim procedures rolled out in recent years, EPFO aims to ensure quick and compassionate support during bereavement.

### 3. IEPFA Opens 3 Niveshak Seva Kendras in Hyderabad, Telangana.



In August 2025, the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA), functioning under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA), inaugurated three Niveshak Seva Kendras in Hyderabad, Telangana to provide faster and seamless services to investors.

- The three Niveshak Seva Kendras were launched in collaboration with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Central Depository Services India Ltd (CDSL), National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL), Bombay Stock Exchange Ltd (BSE), and National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE).

- This multi-agency effort aims to improve investor grievance redressal and streamline pending service requests.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The newly inaugurated centres are located at KFin Technologies Ltd, BSE Hyderabad Office, and NSE of India Ltd in Hyderabad. These centres are operational from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM and are designed to facilitate direct investor interactions for resolving critical financial service issues.

(ii) The Kendras provide key services such

as facilitation of unpaid dividend transfers pending for 6 to 7 years, seamless KYC and nomination updates, and submission of Investor Service Request (ISR) forms. Once KYC and ISR formalities are completed, investors can receive their pending dividends directly.

(iii) The initiative is expected to benefit thousands of investors by reducing delays, enhancing accessibility, and ensuring financial entitlements are delivered without unnecessary hurdles. This launch marks an important step by IEPFA to strengthen investor protection and promote financial inclusion across India.

#### 4. Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka to Visits India from August 24–26, 2025 to Strengthen Bilateral Ties.



Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka is set to embark on a significant four-day official visit to India from August 24 to 26, 2025. This marks his inaugural visit to India in his current capacity. Accompanied by his spouse, Sulueti Rabuka, and a delegation of senior officials, the visit underscores the strengthening of diplomatic and economic relations between the two nations.

- During his stay, Prime Minister Rabuka is scheduled to meet with Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. These high-level discussions aim to reinforce the longstanding ties between Fiji and India, focusing on areas such as trade, education, and climate resilience.

- Notably, President Murmu had visited Fiji in August 2024, marking the first visit by an Indian head of state to the Pacific island nation.

- A significant aspect of the visit includes the formal recognition of the lease process for India's new Chancery and Cultural Centre in Nasese, Fiji. This development is expected to enhance diplomatic engagement and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Prime Minister Rabuka will also deliver a speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in New Delhi, focusing on the theme 'Ocean of Peace'. This address aims to highlight Fiji's commitment to promoting peace and sustainable development in the Pacific region.

(ii) Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is expected to be signed between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Fiji's Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards. This agreement seeks to enhance technical cooperation and standardization practices between the two nations.

(iii) The visit follows the 6th Foreign Office Consultations held in Suva, where senior officials from both governments reviewed current areas of cooperation and explored new opportunities for deeper collaboration. It also builds upon previous engagements, including the meeting between Prime

Minister Rabuka and India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Pabitra Margherita, in May 2025.

### 5. SASCI Scheme Bolsters Tourism in Lesser-Known Destinations with ₹3,295.76 Crore Allocation.



Under the Scheme for Special Assistance to States/Union Territories for Capital Investment (SASCI), the Ministry of Tourism has approved ₹3,295.76 crore for 40 projects across 23 states during FY 2024-25—aimed at developing lesser-known but iconic tourist sites to global standards.

- The SASCI scheme provides interest-free capital support—over 50-year tenure—to state governments for developing iconic tourist centres, ensuring branding and global-level infrastructure that boosts local economies and fosters sustainable tourism.

- Projects were selected through a competitive "challenge mode" evaluation, prioritising connectivity, sustainability, tourism ecosystem, carrying capacity, operational management, marketing potential, and long-term value. Implementation is handled by state agencies with continual progress reviews by the Ministry.

### Key Points:-

(i) The scheme encompasses 40 projects in 23 states, including diverse destinations like Gandikota Fort (AP), eco-retreats in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam Zoo revamp, heritage hubs in Assam, Kerala backwaters, and underwater tourism initiatives—ensuring holistic regional development.

(ii) Under SASCI, Gujarat received funds for two major initiatives: a tented city with convention centre at Dhordo (₹51.56 crore) and an ecotourism destination at Kerly (Mokarsagar), Porbandar (₹99.50 crore), enhancing infrastructure with eco-sensitive designs.

(iii) By developing lesser-known destinations, the SASCI scheme seeks to diversify tourist traffic, generate employment, stimulate local industries, encourage public-private partnerships, and promote technology-led sustainable infrastructure—moving beyond overcrowded tourist spots.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. India and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Sign Terms of Reference (ToR) to Launch Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations.



In August 2025, India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Russia, signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) in Moscow, Russia, to initiate negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This agreement is expected to enhance trade relations, diversify market access for Indian products, and strengthen India-EAEU economic ties.

- The ToR was signed by Ajay Bhadoo, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce (DoC), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), Government of India (GoI), and Mikhail Cherekaev, Deputy Director, Trade Policy Department, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC). This highlights collaboration at senior bureaucratic and policy levels between India and EAEU.

- The proposed FTA aims to boost India's exports, particularly supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), while diversifying market access for Indian products within the EAEU region. It is also intended to strengthen bilateral economic relations and create a sustainable trading framework.

- The ToR establishes the formal framework for FTA negotiations. It is expected to unlock untapped trade potential, improve investment flows, and foster a stronger and sustainable India-EAEU economic partnership. The agreement also sets the stage for future strategic economic cooperation and integration.

#### Key Points:-

(i) India-EAEU trade turnover reached USD 69 billion in 2024, representing a 7% increase from 2023. The proposed FTA is supported by the EAEU's combined GDP of USD 6.5 trillion, indicating substantial

market opportunities for India. This trade relationship complements India's ongoing negotiations with other major partners, including the United States of America (USA).

(ii) The EAEU is an international economic union in northern Eurasia that facilitates free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor. It was established through the Treaty on the EAEU and came into force on January 1, 2015, succeeding the Eurasian Economic Community (EvrAsEs). Belarus currently holds the presidency of the EAEU.

(iii) The EAEU's main objectives are to enhance competitiveness of member state economies, increase cooperation among members, and promote stable development to improve living standards. The union consists of five member states: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. The FTA with India is expected to strengthen trade, support MSMEs, and contribute to sustainable economic development across the region.

## BANKING & FINANCE

**1. Thomas Cook India Enables Contactless Cross-Border Payments via Mobile.**





Thomas Cook (India) Limited has become the first Indian forex-services provider to enable contactless cross-border payments by integrating its prepaid foreign exchange (forex) cards with Google Pay, powered by Visa's secure tokenisation, offering users seamless tap-and-pay and online payments in over 95 countries.

- In a pioneering move, Thomas Cook India partnered with Google Pay and Visa to allow users of its prepaid forex cards—such as Borderless Travel, One Currency, Study Buddy, and EnterpriseFX—to make contactless payments abroad using their mobile devices. This development marks Thomas Cook India as the first Indian company to offer mobile-based cross-border tap-and-pay functionality.

- Cardholders can zip through transactions across physical point-of-sale outlets or online platforms in up to 95 countries. The integration with Google Pay ensures enhanced security via advanced network tokenisation standards, reducing risks like card loss or fraud, while offering a fast, convenient payment experience.

- This initiative aligns with shifting consumer preferences in India's travel and payment landscape—especially among millennials and Gen Z. UPI statistics highlight a major leap in digital adoption: in October 2024 alone, it processed 16.58 billion transactions worth ₹23.49 lakh crore, registering a 45% year-on-year increase. Moreover, Thomas Cook reports that more than 20% of its forex business now stems from digital channels like its portal, app, and WhatsApp services.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Deepesh Varma, Executive Vice President for Foreign Exchange at Thomas Cook (India), emphasized that the initiative

addresses the expectations of “global Indians,” combining security, speed, and convenience.

(ii) Rishi Chhabra, Country Manager for Visa India, lauded this collaboration as delivering “cutting-edge digital payment solutions” suited for today's international travelers, while enhancing the seamlessness and safety of transactions.

(iii) By blending mobile-first design, tokenised security, and borderless usability, Thomas Cook India's innovation is set to redefine the travel payments ecosystem. It is poised to reshape consumer expectations and service standards in cross-border forex transactions, reinforcing Thomas Cook's position as “India ka Forex Specialist” by leveraging partnerships with Google Pay and Visa to deliver frictionless, secure, globally accepted mobile payment solutions.

## 2. AU Small Finance Bank Rolls Out UPI for NRE/NRO Account Holders Using International Mobile Numbers.



AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB) has launched a trailblazing initiative enabling Non-Resident External (NRE) and Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) account holders, using mobile numbers from select

international destinations, to access UPI (Unified Payments Interface) services—eliminating the need for an Indian SIM and simplifying seamless digital transactions in India.

- AU SFB now allows NRE and NRO account holders to register international mobile numbers—spanning 12 countries including the USA, UK, UAE, Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore—for UPI access. This rollout follows a directive from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), aimed at broadening UPI accessibility for the Indian diaspora.

- With this update, NRIs can use UPI for a comprehensive range of transactions—be it peer-to-peer transfers, bill payments, or merchant QR code-based purchases—without any requirements for an Indian mobile connection. The service is offered without extra charges, enhancing efficiency, security, and financial convenience from abroad.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Uttam Tibrewal, Executive Director and Deputy CEO of AU SFB, emphasized that this initiative “breaks traditional barriers” for NRIs while supporting India’s Digital India mission and promoting innovative, inclusive digital banking. The move strengthens AU SFB’s commitment to integrating global Indians with India’s digital financial ecosystem.

(ii) This development is part of a broader trend: multiple Indian banks and UPI apps now support international mobile numbers in compliance with updated NPCI and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) frameworks. Leading players such as Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC, and others are part of this

expansion.

(iii) Earlier, UPI’s reach was limited to Indian mobile numbers; now, NRE/NRO account holders can enjoy UPI’s convenience using their native mobile connections.

## ECONOMY & BUSINESS

### 1. SBI Research Ecowrap Projects India’s Q1 FY26 GDP Growth at 6.8%-7.0%, Above RBI Estimate.



In August 2025, SBI Research, the economic research division of the State Bank of India (SBI), released its Ecowrap report estimating India’s GDP growth in Q1 FY26 at 6.8%-7.0%, surpassing the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) forecast of 6.5%.

- SBI Research’s Ecowrap highlighted India’s real GDP growth at 6.9% year-on-year in Q1 FY26, driven by government capital expenditure and resilient consumption despite weak private investment momentum.

- The report projected Gross Value Added (GVA) growth at 6.5% for Q1 FY26, reflecting broad-based sectoral contributions but underlining uneven recovery patterns in industrial and agricultural performance.

- For the full FY26, SBI Research forecasted India’s GDP growth at 6.3%, marginally below



RBI's projection of 6.5%, indicating concerns regarding sustainability of momentum in subsequent quarters.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) SBI Research has revised India's GDP outlook for remaining FY26 quarters, lowering each by 20 basis points. It projects 6.5% growth in Q2, 6.3% in Q3, and 6.1% in Q4, reflecting cautious economic momentum.
- (ii) SBI Research emphasized that capital expenditure (Capex) from the government continues to anchor growth, while private sector investments remain muted, restricting the economy from achieving stronger growth acceleration.
- (iii) The Ecowrap report cautioned that while consumption remains resilient, balancing inflationary pressures, fiscal discipline, and external trade challenges will be crucial for India to sustain its medium-term growth outlook.

## 2. Indian Government Raises ₹1.42 Lakh Crore Through Highway Asset Monetisation Till FY25.



As of the end of fiscal year 2024-25, the Indian government has mobilised approximately ₹1.42 lakh crore by monetising

highway assets—a key highlight of its National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)—with an estimated ₹30,000 crore expected in the current fiscal.

- The government reported raising ₹1,42,758 crore through highway asset monetisation until FY25 via varied mechanisms, as informed in Parliament by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.
- Funds were generated through three monetisation routes: Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT), Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT), and securitisation via Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The government anticipates raising an additional ₹30,000 crore through the same highway monetisation framework in the ongoing fiscal, maintaining momentum in infrastructure funding.
- (ii) This achievement unfolds against the backdrop of the four-year NMP, which aimed to unlock value worth ₹6 lakh crore from central government assets between FY22 and FY25.
- (iii) Building on this success, the Union Budget 2025 introduced the second asset monetisation plan targeting ₹10 lakh crore from FY26 to FY30, aiming to reinvest proceeds into newer infrastructure projects.

## 3. CCPA Imposes ₹10 Lakh Penalty on Rapido for Misleading Advertisements and Unfair Trade Practices.



The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has levied a ₹10 lakh fine on ride-hailing platform Rapido for deceptive advertisements such as “Guaranteed Auto” and “Auto in 5 min or get ₹50,” mandating prompt customer refunds and compliance.

- The CCPA initiated a suo motu probe into Rapido’s claims—“Guaranteed Auto” and “Auto in 5 min or get ₹50”—and concluded that these promotions misled consumers by overpromising guaranteed services and benefits.
- Further scrutiny revealed that the promised ₹50 was not actual cash but “Rapido coins,” valid only for bike rides, expiring in seven days, and subject to undisclosed conditions—reducing the promise’s real value.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Complaints filed with the National Consumer Helpline surged to 1,224 between June 2024 and July 2025, up from 575 in the previous period. The CCPA directed Rapido to refund affected users, scrap misleading advertisements, and submit a compliance report.

(ii) Acting under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and 2022 advertising guidelines, the CCPA enforced penalties to uphold consumer transparency and deter deceptive

commercial practices, reinforcing its heightened regulatory stance in the digital economy.

### MOUs and Agreement

#### 1. DEPwD, Nipman Foundation & YLAC Ink MoU to Launch ‘Breaking Barriers Fellowship’.

### DEPwD, Nipman Foundation & YLAC Ink MoU to Launch ‘Breaking Barriers Fellowship’



In August 2025, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nipman Foundation and Young Leaders for Active Citizenship (YLAC) to jointly launch the “Breaking Barriers Fellowship,” a programme designed to foster innovation, advocacy, and inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

- The “Breaking Barriers Fellowship” is a collaborative effort between DEPwD, the Nipman Foundation, and YLAC. Nipman Foundation brings its robust advocacy in accessibility and inclusive practices, while YLAC contributes its expertise in empowering youth leadership. The partnership aims to elevate disability rights through fellow-led initiatives.

- Under the MoU, the fellowship will drive awareness and innovation on disability rights through initiatives such as hackathons, national-

level competitions, and Inclusive Equal Opportunity Awards. These events aim to inspire systemic change and recognize best practices in accessibility.

- This agreement stems from broader inclusion efforts, highlighted during the Inclusive India Summit—organized on Global Accessibility Awareness Day—where DEPwD formalized partnerships with Nipman Foundation and YLAC among other key stakeholders to strengthen India’s accessibility ecosystem.

### Key Points:-

(i) Nipman Foundation is well-known for accessibility audits, awareness campaigns (including the Equal Opportunity Awards), and grassroots initiatives such as “Wheels for Life” to enhance mobility for persons with disabilities. YLAC brings strength in engaging youth through civic leadership programs and public policy advocacy.

(ii) The fellowship is aligned with DEPwD’s commitment to empowering persons with disabilities through inclusive programs. By leveraging youth engagement and community innovation, it catalyzes inclusive social change and supports DEPwD’s mission of building an accessible and equitable society.

## 2. BVFCL Signs 5-Year Fertilizer Supply Pact with Bhutan’s National Seed Centre.



In August 2025, Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (MoCF), signed a 5-year Business-to-Business (B2B) agreement with Bhutan’s National Seed Centre (NSC) at Siliguri, West Bengal (WB). The agreement strengthens India-Bhutan cooperation in agriculture and ensures cross-border fertilizer security.

- Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL), operating under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (MoCF), will supply essential fertilizers to Bhutan as part of the agreement.

- The products include Urea, Suphala (NPK), Single Super Phosphate (SSP), Muriate of Potash (MOP), and Borax, which are crucial for enhancing soil fertility and crop productivity.

- The agreement aims to guarantee uninterrupted and timely access to critical fertilizers for Bhutan. This will directly support Bhutan’s agricultural productivity and food security goals, ensuring that farmers in the Himalayan nation receive reliable supplies of key agricultural inputs.

### Key Points:-

(i) This 5-year business-to-business pact



reflects India's broader strategy of regional agricultural cooperation. By ensuring the continuous flow of fertilizers, the agreement fosters sustainable agriculture, addresses Bhutan's input supply challenges, and supports long-term planning for crop cycles.

(ii) The signing of the agreement at Siliguri in West Bengal highlights the strategic location for cross-border trade and logistics. It also underscores India's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Bhutan through agricultural and allied sector collaborations.

(iii) This strategic partnership is a milestone in India-Bhutan relations, particularly in the agricultural sector. It not only secures fertilizer supply but also promotes mutual growth, regional stability, and enhanced cooperation in food security between the two neighboring nations.

Commissioner of Police, Delhi—effective immediately—after a security breach exposed vulnerabilities, aiming to restore public confidence and enhance law enforcement capabilities in the capital.

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) acted swiftly in response to a security breach at Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta's residence, where she was attacked during a public hearing. Within 24 hours of the incident, the MHA replaced the acting Police Commissioner and appointed Satish Golcha to the top post.

- Golcha is a seasoned 1992-batch IPS officer with the AGMUT cadre who has held several pivotal roles: Director General (Prisons), Special Commissioner of Police (Law & Order, Zone 2), Special CP (Intelligence), Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), and Joint CP. Notably, he managed law and order during the northeast Delhi riots—his proven expertise in crisis situations is seen as crucial for his new mandate.

- Satish Golcha succeeds SBK Singh, an 1988-batch IPS officer and Director General (Home Guards), who had been serving as acting Delhi Police Commissioner since August 1 after the retirement of Sanjay Arora. Singh's interim tenure ended abruptly amid heightened scrutiny following the CM's attack.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The MHA's formal notification states: "With the approval of the competent authority, Satish Golcha, presently posted as DG (Prisons), Delhi, is hereby appointed to the post of the Commissioner of Police, Delhi with effect from the date of assumption of charge and until further orders." His appointment is seen as integral to rebuilding trust in the capital's policing framework.

(ii) Following the attack, CM Rekha Gupta's

## APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

### 1. Satish Golcha Appointed as Delhi Police Commissioner to Fortify Capital's Security Post-CM Attack.



Satish Golcha, a 1992-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories) cadre, has been appointed

security was upgraded to 'Z' category and handed over to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

(iii) The MHA also ordered a thorough inquiry, leading to improved security protocols, structured access during public hearings, and stricter perimeter control measures—all signaling a more cautious approach under Golcha's leadership.

## IMPORTANT DAYS

**1. International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism 2025 observed on 21 August.**

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND TRIBUTE TO VICTIMS OF TERRORISM 2025 21 AUGUST

The United Nations (UN) observed the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism on 21st August 2025, marking the 8th annual commemoration. The day honours victims, supports survivors, and promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- The 2025 commemoration highlighted the theme "United by Hope: Collective Action for Victims of Terrorism." This theme emphasized global solidarity in ensuring justice, dignity, and long-term support for victims across affected regions.

- The observance traces back to the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in June 2011, which, through resolution A/HRC/RES/17/8, initially proposed 19 August as the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism.

### Key Points:-

(i) On 19th December 2017, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/72/165, officially proclaiming 21st August of every year as the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. This resolution institutionalized global recognition and annual observance.

(ii) The first official observance took place on 21st August 2018, creating a platform to raise awareness about the needs of victims, advocate international cooperation, and reaffirm the UN's commitment to countering terrorism while upholding human rights.

(iii) By 2025, the observance has grown into a global movement, with the 8th commemoration reinforcing the role of governments, civil society, and international bodies in advancing support systems for victims and preventing further acts of terrorism.

**2. Madras Day Celebrated on 22 August 2025.**

# MADRAS DAY CELEBRATED 22 AUGUST 2025



The city of Madras (now Chennai) celebrates Madras Day every year on 22 August, marking the purchase of Madraspatnam in 1639 by agents of the British East India Company—among India’s earliest colonial settlements.

- On 22 August 1639, the British East India Company, through officials Francis Day and Andrew Cogan, acquired a coastal strip known as Madraspatnam from the local Nayak rulers—laying the foundation for what evolved into the city of Madras.
- Madras Day as an annual observance was initiated in 2004 by Chennai historian S. Muthiah, Vincent D’Souza (editor of Mylapore Times) and Sashi Nair (director/editor, Press Institute of India), aiming to celebrate the city’s rich heritage.

## Key Points:-

- (i) The commemoration features heritage walks, talks, exhibitions, food festivals, quizzes, photo contests, and more—engaging communities, schools, cultural groups, and tourists in exploring the city’s history, architecture, cuisine, and multicultural legacy.
- (ii) The 1639 acquisition led to erection of Fort St. George and the growth of

surrounding settlements like George Town, ultimately extending into the sprawling metropolis of Chennai—now a major cultural, educational, and economic hub in India.

(iii) Madras Day has expanded over the years—from a single day to “Madras Week” or longer—celebrated across the city with over a hundred events that reflect civic pride, awareness, unity, and preservation of Chennai’s cultural identity.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. NASA and IBM Launch ‘Surya’ AI Model to Predict Solar Storms.



In August 2025, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in partnership with International Business Machines (IBM) introduced ‘Surya,’ an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Heliophysics Foundational Model designed to detect and predict solar storms and space weather.

- The Surya model has been developed under the Interagency Implementation and Advanced Concepts Team (IMPACT) of NASA’s Office of Data Science in collaboration with IBM Corporation.



- It is based on the advanced helio-AI foundation model and aims to improve forecasting accuracy of solar activities that affect satellites, power grids, and communication networks globally.

- The model derives its name 'Surya' from the Sanskrit word for 'Sun.' It leverages high-resolution data captured by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO), launched in 2010, which has provided uninterrupted solar imagery every 12 seconds in multiple wavelengths for over 15 years. This continuous dataset forms the backbone of Surya's predictive capabilities.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Trained on nine years of continuous observations from SDO, the AI model can generate visual forecasts of solar activity up to two hours in advance with unprecedented accuracy. It also enhances predictive efficiency by around 16% compared to conventional forecasting methods.

(ii) The model was supported by the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR) Pilot, a U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)-led initiative. It integrates AI tools, datasets, and computing access with the support of industry players like NVIDIA, enabling broader scientific innovation in heliophysics and AI research.

(iii) The primary purpose of Surya is to provide protective measures for satellites, communication systems, aviation, and power grids by detecting early signs of solar flares and eruptions. This predictive capability will play a vital role in safeguarding infrastructure and ensuring continuity of technological operations during space weather disruptions.

## 2. India Outlines 6G Roadmap by 2030 Based on ITU-R IMT-2030 Framework and Bharat 6G Vision.



On 21 August 2025, the Government of India presented its strategic roadmap for 6G deployment by 2030, aligning with the International Telecommunication Union's Recommendation ITU-R M.2160 and guided by the homegrown Bharat 6G Vision Document.

- India's 6G roadmap is anchored in the ITU-R Recommendation M.2160, the internationally accepted framework for IMT-2030 systems. This ensures the country's rollout is in harmony with global technology and regulatory standards.

- The Bharat 6G Vision, released in March 2023, defines India's goal to "design, develop and deploy 6G network technologies that provide ubiquitous, intelligent and secure connectivity," emphasizing affordability, sustainability, and ubiquity.

- To accelerate indigenous innovation, India has sanctioned over ₹275 crore for 104 research and development projects under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) and sanctioned 100 5G labs across academic institutions to foster a 6G-ready ecosystem.

#### Key Points:-

(i) India has established the Bharat 6G Alliance, a multi-stakeholder consortium of industry, academia, research institutions, and standards bodies. It coordinates research, policy input, and global collaboration to steer the 6G mission.

(ii) Communications Minister Dr Pemasani Chandra Sekhar affirmed the roadmap in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, underscoring India's ambition to emerge as a global 6G leader by 2030—backed by strategic vision, substantial funding, and institutional readiness.

### 3. ISRO to Conduct First Gaganyaan Uncrewed Test Flight in December 2025.



On August 21, 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman, V. Narayanan, officially confirmed that the first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission—carrying a humanoid space robot—will launch in December 2025, marking a pivotal milestone in India's human spaceflight aspirations.

- **ISRO's upcoming Gaganyaan-1 (G1) mission will be the programme's maiden uncrewed orbital flight. It will carry Vyommitra, a half-humanoid robotic astronaut, to simulate human functions and monitor critical spacecraft**

**systems such as environmental controls, avionics, and life support.**

- **The mission is scheduled for December 2025, with launch operations to be conducted from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR). The spacecraft will conduct a low Earth orbit mission—including system validation through orbital maneuvers and recovery—before safely reentering.**

#### Key Points:-

(i) ISRO has declared 2025 as 'Gaganyaan Year' under Chairman V. Narayanan's guidance. Over 7,200 system tests have been completed while approximately 3,000 more are pending. Preparations continue 24/7 to ensure all systems are flight-ready.

(ii) G1's core objective is to achieve a three-day orbital stay, during which Vyommitra and other onboard instruments will assess life-support systems, navigation, re-entry dynamics, and spacecraft resilience under microgravity, radiation, and thermal stress. This will validate critical parameters ahead of crewed missions.

(iii) The successful launch of G1 is the first in a series of at least three uncrewed test flights, paving the way for India's inaugural crewed Gaganyaan flight, targeting early 2027. This mission will carry one to three astronauts in a short orbital test, placing India among global leaders in human spaceflight.

**Static GK**

<b>Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)</b>	Founded: 1952	Headquarters: New Delhi
<b>Fiji</b>	Prime minister: Sitiveni Rabuka	Capital: Suva
<b>Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)</b>	Union Minister : Amit Shah	Headquarters: New Delhi
<b>Thomas Cook (India) Limited</b>	CEO : Mahesh Iyer	Headquarters: Lower Parel, Mumbai
<b>Rapido</b>	CEO : Aravind Sanka	Headquarters: Bangalore
<b>International Business Machines (IBM)</b>	CEO: Arvind Krishna	Headquarters: Armonk, New York, United States
<b>ISRO</b>	Chairman : V. Narayanan	Headquarters: Bengaluru