

UPSC Current Affairs — 26 July 2026

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Most important

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GS1 · History · Society · Geography · 1

History & Culture

Heritage sites, UNESCO & GI tags · Prelims + Mains

Sarnath Becomes India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site

Why in news: Sarnath was officially inscribed as India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site during the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea.

Key facts: Sarnath, located in Uttar Pradesh, is the site where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon. It was on the UNESCO tentative list since 1998 and is a key component of the Buddhist Circuit.

Prelims pointers

- **Place:** Sarnath: Located in Uttar Pradesh, site of Buddha's first sermon.
- **Body:** UNESCO World Heritage Committee: Held its 48th session in Busan, South Korea, in July 2026.
- **Fact:** Sarnath is India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Fact:** APAAR ID: Unique identifier for students under the National Education Policy 2020.
- **Place:** Vizhinjam Port: Located in Kerala, notified as a customs port for operations starting August 18, 2026.

Mains question: Discuss the significance of UNESCO World Heritage status in promoting cultural diplomacy and sustainable tourism for Indian heritage sites.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91556

GS2 · Polity · Governance · IR · 10

Polity & Constitution

Elections, ECI & electoral reforms · Prelims

Maharashtra digitises 5,91,42,624 voter forms in Special Intensive Revision drive

Why in news: Maharashtra officials reported the progress of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) drive to digitize and update voter lists for accurate electoral rolls.

Key facts: Between June 30 and August 8, 2026, Maharashtra officials distributed 8,59,05,005 elector-specific enumeration forms. Out of a total electorate of 9,78,54,049, 5,91,42,624 forms were digitized by over 1 lakh Booth Level Officers (BLOs).

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** Maharashtra digitized 5,91,42,624 voter forms as of July 26, 2026
- **Body:** Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are the primary field-level workers responsible for voter list maintenance
- **Fact:** The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) drive in Maharashtra covered the period from June 30 to August 8, 2026

Mains question: Discuss the significance of accurate electoral rolls in ensuring the integrity of the democratic process and the role of digitization in mitigating electoral fraud.

Governance

Government policies & schemes · Prelims + Mains

Modi forms task force led by Nandan Nilekani to review India's exam systems

Why in news: PM Modi announced a task force led by Nandan Nilekani to overhaul India's examination systems to ensure reliability and transparency following high-profile paper leaks.

Key facts: The task force includes Nandan Nilekani (former UIDAI chairman), S Somanath (former ISRO chairman), and V Kamakoti (IIT Chennai director). It is tasked with reviewing examination systems to address systemic vulnerabilities and integrate technological solutions.

Prelims pointers

- **Post:** Nandan Nilekani: Former chairman of UIDAI and architect of Aadhaar
- **Body:** ISRO: Space research agency under the Department of Space
- **Fact:** Task force objective: Enhancing examination reliability and transparency through technology

Mains question: Critically analyze the systemic vulnerabilities in India's competitive examination framework and suggest measures to ensure integrity through technological intervention.

Source: NDTV · satyadheesh.in/news/91605

Role of civil services · Prelims + Mains

West Bengal Assembly Strips Panchayats of Financial Powers, Hands Control to Bureaucrats

Why in news: The West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed the West Bengal Panchayat (Second Amendment) Bill, 2026, shifting financial clearance powers from elected panchayats to bureaucrats to curb corruption.

Key facts: The bill was passed on July 26, 2026, with a vote of 169 to 13. It empowers bureaucrats to clear financial proposals and allows for the appointment of an administrator for up to 30 days if a pradhan is absent for over 15 days.

Prelims pointers

- **Act / Bill:** West Bengal Panchayat (Second Amendment) Bill, 2026: amends financial and administrative powers of rural local bodies.
- **Fact:** Administrator appointment: Triggered by absence of pradhan for >15 days; duration up to 30 days.
- **Body:** Panchayat Affairs Minister: Dilip Ghosh (West Bengal Government).

Mains question: Examine the implications of shifting financial oversight from elected local bodies to bureaucratic structures on the principle of grassroots democracy in India.

Source: The Hindu · satyadheesh.in/news/91241

International Relations

India's bilateral relations · Prelims + Mains

UPSC Quiz Covers Maritime Agreements, Digital Payments, Quad Initiative, Chabahar Port Details

Why in news: The article highlights key geopolitical and economic developments including maritime boundary agreements with Sri Lanka, expansion of India's digital payment systems, and the Quad's maritime surveillance initiatives.

Key facts: India and Sri Lanka established maritime boundary agreements in 1974 and 1976. India's digital payment systems have been adopted by Bhutan, Singapore, Cambodia, and Nepal. The Quad's Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Corporation Initiative aims to enhance maritime awareness in the region.

Prelims pointers

- **Place:** Chabahar Port: Located in Iran, it serves as a strategic gateway to Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- **Fact:** India-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Agreements: Signed in 1974 and 1976.
- **Body:** Quad: A strategic security dialogue between India, USA, Japan, and Australia.
- **Fact:** Digital Payments: India's UPI/digital infrastructure has been integrated by Bhutan, Singapore, Cambodia, and Nepal.
- **Place:** Houthis: Currently control only the northern region of Yemen.

Mains question: Examine how India's expansion of digital payment systems and maritime cooperation initiatives contribute to its 'Neighborhood First' policy and regional leadership.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91588

India's bilateral relations · Prelims + Mains

Delhi High Court: Using Copyrighted Material to Train AI Models Is Fair Dealing

Why in news: The US Trade Representative (USTR) announced a 10% tariff on India (down from 12.5%) following constructive talks on labor practices and forced labor standards.

Key facts: The Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) announced tariffs of 10% to 12.5% on 60 economies. India was placed in the lower 10% category following policy shifts regarding labor practices and forced labor imports.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** India's tariff rate under the new US policy shift is 10%.
- **Body:** USTR: Office of the United States Trade Representative, responsible for trade policy and negotiations.
- **Act / Bill:** Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974: Allows the US to unilaterally impose trade sanctions/tariffs on countries with unfair trade practices.
- **Fact:** The US placed 60 economies under these specific tariff categories regarding forced labor.

Mains question: Discuss the implications of linking international trade preferences to domestic labor standards and the impact of unilateral trade measures on the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91228

India & neighbourhood · Prelims

NRB eases rules for Indian ₹200, ₹500 notes up to ₹25,000 per person

Why in news: Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) eased rules to allow Indian currency notes of ₹200 and ₹500 (issued after Nov 9, 2016) up to ₹25,000 per person to facilitate tourism and trade.

Key facts: Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) issued a notice clarifying that Indian ₹200 and ₹500 notes issued on or after November 9, 2016, are permitted up to ₹25,000 per person. Notes issued before this date in ₹500 and ₹1000 denominations remain prohibited.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** Limit for Indian ₹200 and ₹500 notes in Nepal is ₹25,000 per person.
- **Fact:** Indian currency notes issued before November 9, 2016, in ₹500 and ₹1000 denominations remain prohibited in Nepal.
- **Body:** Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) is the central bank of Nepal.
- **Fact:** Nepali nationals cannot bring Indian currency into Nepal from any country other than India.

Mains question: Discuss how the easing of currency movement regulations between India and Nepal can bolster bilateral trade and tourism in the Himalayan region.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91615

India's bilateral relations · Prelims

China Viewed More Favorably Than US in 36-Country Pew Survey

Why in news: A Pew Research Center survey revealed that China is viewed more favorably than the US in 36 countries, highlighting a shift in global perceptions of Chinese leadership.

Key facts: The Pew Research Center surveyed 42,151 people across 36 countries between February and May 2024. The report noted that Pakistan holds the most favorable views of China, while India and Israel favor the United States.

Prelims pointers

- **Report / Index:** Pew Research Center: Conducted a survey of 42,151 people across 36 countries regarding perceptions of China and the US.
- **Post:** Marco Rubio: Serving as the US Secretary of State.
- **Post:** Wang Yi: Serving as the Chinese Foreign Minister.
- **Fact:** India and Israel were among the countries that preferred the US over China in the survey.

Mains question: Analyze the factors contributing to the shifting global perceptions of China's influence and its implications for the existing US-led liberal international order.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91557

India's bilateral relations · Prelims

The Ministry of External Affairs advised Indian citizens to assess security risks

Why in news: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a security advisory for Indian citizens working on commercial vessels in the Black Sea due to escalating conflict-related risks.

Key facts: Two attacks occurred in the Black Sea region since July 19, resulting in the deaths of five Indian nationals. The MEA advisory highlights threats from missile and drone strikes and mandates verification of vessel routes and emergency protocols.

Prelims pointers

- **Post:** Ministry of External Affairs (MEA): The nodal ministry for India's foreign policy and consular services.
- **Place:** Black Sea: A large inland sea shared by several countries including Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey.
- **Fact:** Five Indian nationals were confirmed killed in two separate attacks since July 19.

Mains question: Discuss the challenges faced by India in ensuring the safety of its citizens and maritime interests in active conflict zones like the Black Sea.

Source: NDTV · satyadheesh.in/news/91397

India's bilateral relations · Prelims

Nepal Seeks India's OK for Biometric IDs as Travel Docs alongside Passports

Why in news: Nepal has requested India's approval to recognize its biometric National Identity (NID) card as a valid travel document to facilitate easier cross-border movement.

Key facts: Nepal's NID card contains biometric data including fingerprint scans, facial imagery, and iris patterns. Over 4.5 million Nepali citizens currently hold these cards. The request seeks to allow these cards to be used for air and land travel into India.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** Over 4.5 million Nepali citizens currently hold the National Identity (NID) card.
- **S&T:** Nepal's NID card includes biometric data: fingerprints, facial imagery, and iris patterns.
- **Place:** Nepal and India share an open border and are neighbors in South Asia.

Mains question: Discuss the implications of streamlining cross-border movement and identity verification between India and Nepal on regional security and economic integration.

Source: NDTV · satyadheesh.in/news/91359

Policies of other countries affecting India · Prelims + Mains

Tech Giants Urge US to Back Open AI Models in Race Against China

Why in news: A coalition of 25 tech giants, including Nvidia and Microsoft, urged the US government to support open-weight AI models to maintain a competitive edge over China.

Key facts: The joint letter was signed by 25 major firms including Nvidia, Microsoft, Meta, and IBM. The companies argue that open-weight models enhance safety, foster innovation, and prevent market monopolies. The move is a strategic response to rapid AI advancements by China.

Prelims pointers

- **S&T:** Open-weight AI models: Models where the weights (parameters) are publicly available for download and local deployment.
- **Fact:** Nvidia, Microsoft, Meta, and IBM are among the 25 firms advocating for open AI model support.
- **S&T:** Frontier models: State-of-the-art AI models capable of performing complex tasks at a scale that may pose significant safety risks.

Mains question: Discuss the geopolitical implications of the 'AI arms race' between the US and China and the role of open-source models in democratizing technology.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91256

Science & Technology

Biotechnology & health research · Prelims

Blood Test Detects Alzheimer's Earlier, Potentially Slowing Disease Progression

Why in news: Dr. Sheetal Goyal highlighted a blood test measuring p-tau217 protein as a breakthrough for early Alzheimer's diagnosis to improve treatment planning.

Key facts: The test measures p-tau217 protein levels to detect abnormal tau changes linked to Alzheimer's disease. It is designed to complement, rather than replace, existing diagnostic tools like MRI scans and cognitive assessments.

Prelims pointers

- **S&T:** p-tau217: A protein biomarker used in blood tests to detect early-stage Alzheimer's disease.
- **Fact:** The test is intended to support early detection for patients with persistent memory problems.
- **S&T:** MRI scans and cognitive assessments remain standard diagnostic tools alongside new biomarker tests.

Mains question: Discuss how the integration of biomarker-based diagnostics like p-tau217 blood tests can transform the management of neurodegenerative diseases in India.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91608

IT, AI, semiconductors & computing · Prelims + Mains

AI Chatbots Reveal Users' Income, Health, and More in Conversations

Why in news: Reports indicate that AI chatbots like ChatGPT and Gemini can infer sensitive personal data (income, health, psychological traits) from user conversations, highlighting significant privacy risks.

Key facts: The New York Times reported that AI models can extract personal insights including age range, location, and financial habits from conversational prompts. Users currently have the option to opt out of data sharing via platform settings to mitigate privacy leaks.

Prelims pointers

- **S&T:** Generative AI models (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini) use Large Language Models (LLMs) to process and predict text based on user inputs.
- **Fact:** AI chatbots can infer non-explicit data points such as income levels and health status from conversational patterns.
- **S&T:** Data privacy in AI involves 'Inference Attacks' where models deduce private attributes not explicitly shared by the user.

Mains question: Discuss the ethical implications of AI-driven data inference and suggest a regulatory framework to balance technological innovation with individual privacy rights in India.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91552

Nuclear & new energy technology · Prelims + Mains

India's power demand soars to 270.8 GW, nighttime AC use strains grid

Why in news: India recorded a record-breaking peak power demand of 270.8 GW on May 21, 2026, highlighting the strain on the grid and the need for expanded energy storage beyond current roadmaps.

Key facts: India's peak power demand reached 270.8 GW on May 21, 2026, a significant jump from 180 GW in the same period in 2019. The 2026 Long-Term National Resource Adequacy Plan targets 80 GW of battery energy storage and 94 GW of pumped hydroelectric energy storage (PHES) by FY2035-36.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** India's peak power demand on May 21, 2026, was 270.8 GW.
- **Fact:** India's peak power demand on May 21, 2019, was approximately 180 GW.
- **Fact:** The 2026 Long-Term National Resource Adequacy Plan targets 80 GW of battery energy storage by FY2035-36.
- **Fact:** The 2026 Long-Term National Resource Adequacy Plan targets 94 GW of pumped hydroelectric energy storage (PHES) by FY2035-36.
- **Fact:** Average discharge durations for battery and PHES storage are roughly 4 and 6 hours, respectively.

Mains question: Discuss the challenges of balancing rising peak power demand with India's transition to renewable energy and the necessity of long-duration energy storage systems.

Source: The Hindu · [satyadheesh.in/news/91477](https://www.satyadheesh.in/news/91477)

IT, AI, semiconductors & computing · Prelims + Mains

Last week, Punjab made Artificial Intelligence a core subject for all students

Why in news: Punjab government mandated Artificial Intelligence as a core subject for students from Class 1 to Class 12 in government schools to align with the AI-driven future.

Key facts: The initiative covers over 31.5 lakh students across government schools in Punjab. The curriculum integrates practical learning through partnerships with technology giants like Google and Intel.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** Punjab's AI initiative covers students from Class 1 to Class 12.
- **Fact:** Over 31.5 lakh students are targeted to benefit from the new AI curriculum.
- **Body:** Google and Intel are identified as key technology partners for the curriculum.

Mains question: Discuss the significance of integrating Artificial Intelligence into primary and secondary school curricula to prepare the Indian workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Source: Indian Express · [satyadheesh.in/news/91467](https://www.satyadheesh.in/news/91467)

IT, AI, semiconductors & computing · Prelims + Mains

Andhra Pradesh Launches AI-Powered City Flood Alert System

Why in news: Andhra Pradesh launched an AI-powered City Flood Alert system in Vijayawada to provide predictive analytics for rainfall and flash floods.

Key facts: The platform was developed by the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS), APSDMA, and IIT Gandhinagar. It utilizes satellite data to forecast rainfall up to 48 hours in advance and flash floods up to 6 hours before occurrence.

Prelims pointers

- **S&T:** AI-powered platform uses satellite data and predictive analytics for flood forecasting
- **Place:** Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh: First location of the City Flood Alert system deployment
- **Fact:** System provides rainfall forecasts up to 48 hours ahead and flash flood alerts up to 6 hours ahead
- **Body:** APSDMA: Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority

Mains question: Discuss how the integration of Artificial Intelligence and satellite imagery can enhance disaster resilience in urban centers facing increasing climate-induced flood risks.

Source: The Hindu · [satyadheesh.in/news/91438](https://www.satyadheesh.in/news/91438)

Disaster Management

Natural disasters & response · Prelims

Floods in Assam Affect 6.55 Lakh People, Death Toll Rises to 66

Why in news: Severe flooding in Assam has affected over 6.55 lakh people and caused 66 deaths, highlighting the recurring vulnerability of the Brahmaputra basin to monsoon-driven floods.

Key facts: The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) is managing 274 relief camps for over 18,900 displaced individuals. Sivasagar district is the hardest hit, with 2.9 lakh people affected and 34,970 hectares of crops damaged.

Prelims pointers

- **Body:** ASDMA: The nodal agency for disaster management and relief operations in the state of Assam.
- **Fact:** Flood impact: 6.55 lakh people affected and 34,970 hectares of crop damage reported in Assam.
- **Place:** Sivasagar: A district in Assam significantly impacted by recent flood-related fatalities and displacement.

Mains question: Analyze the geographical and systemic factors contributing to the recurring flood crisis in the Brahmaputra basin and suggest measures for climate-resilient infrastructure.

Source: NDTV · [satyadheesh.in/news/91321](https://www.satyadheesh.in/news/91321)

Internal Security

Border management · Prelims + Mains

Modi, Murmu Honor Kargil Heroes as Singh Warns of Ongoing Threats

Why in news: The Union Government and leadership honored soldiers on Kargil Vijay Diwas (July 26, 2026) while highlighting persistent threats of proxy war and infiltration.

Key facts: Kargil Vijay Diwas commemorates the victory in the 1999 Kargil War. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted that the intent of infiltrators remains unchanged, utilizing proxy war tactics to threaten Indian sovereignty.

Prelims pointers

- **Fact:** Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed annually on July 26 to mark the victory in the 1999 Kargil War.
- **Post:** Rajnath Singh serves as the current Defence Minister of India.
- **Fact:** Proxy war involves using non-state actors to achieve political or military objectives against a target state.

Mains question: Discuss the evolving nature of border security challenges in the context of proxy warfare and infiltration along India's northern frontiers.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91386

Terrorism & insurgency (J&K, North-East) · Prelims

Punjab Police Bust ISI-Sponsored BKI Module, Seize 1.3 kg Explosives

Why in news: Punjab Police busted an ISI-sponsored Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) module in Jalandhar, seizing explosives and arresting a key operative.

Key facts: The Punjab Police arrested Satbir Singh and seized 1.3 kg of explosives, shrapnel, and ball bearings. The operation led to an FIR under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Explosive Substances Act, and Arms Act.

Prelims pointers

- **Body:** Babbar Khalsa International (BKI): A militant organization primarily active in the Punjab region.
- **Fact:** Seized explosives: 1.3 kg of explosives packed into an IED with shrapnel and ball bearings.
- **Act / Bill:** BNS: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the new criminal code replacing the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Act / Bill:** Explosive Substances Act: Legislation governing the manufacture, possession, and use of explosives.

Mains question: Discuss the persistent threat of cross-border terrorism and the role of intelligence-led policing in neutralizing radicalized modules in Punjab.

Source: Indian Express · satyadheesh.in/news/91599

Practice — Mains questions

1. Critically analyze the systemic vulnerabilities in India's competitive examination framework and suggest measures to ensure integrity through technological intervention. · GS2
2. Discuss the significance of UNESCO World Heritage status in promoting cultural diplomacy and sustainable tourism for Indian heritage sites. · GS1
3. Examine how India's expansion of digital payment systems and maritime cooperation initiatives contribute to its 'Neighborhood First' policy and regional leadership. · GS2
4. Discuss the implications of linking international trade preferences to domestic labor standards and the impact of unilateral trade measures on the rules-based multilateral trading system. · GS2
5. Discuss how the easing of currency movement regulations between India and Nepal can bolster bilateral trade and tourism in the Himalayan region. · GS2
6. Discuss the evolving nature of border security challenges in the context of proxy warfare and infiltration along India's northern frontiers. · GS3
7. Discuss how the integration of biomarker-based diagnostics like p-tau217 blood tests can transform the management of neurodegenerative diseases in India. · GS3
8. Discuss the persistent threat of cross-border terrorism and the role of intelligence-led policing in neutralizing radicalized modules in Punjab. · GS3

Prelims quick revision

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- **Body:** ISRO: Space research agency under the Department of Space
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- **Fact:** Over 31.5 lakh students are targeted to benefit from the new AI curriculum.
- **Body:** Google and Intel are identified as key technology partners for the curriculum.
- **S&T:** AI-powered platform uses satellite data and predictive analytics for flood forecasting

Notes are generated automatically from SatyaDheesh's news feed and mapped to the UPSC CSE syllabus. Check facts against the original report or PIB before using them in an answer.

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