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PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Sunday, 23 August 2026

INSIDE PART I

- \$1** Top Headlines
- \$2** Polity & Governance
- \$3** International Relations
- \$4** Defence & Security
- \$5** Science & Technology
- \$6** Economy

§1 Top Headlines

1. Supreme Court's "SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026" Special Lok Adalat culminates today, 400+ cases settled **GS2**
2. EAM Jaishankar visits Russia to co-chair the 27th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission **GS2**
3. Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's proposed India visit deepens in diplomatic uncertainty **GS2**
4. Data Patterns bags ₹585.76-crore radar electronics order from Bharat Electronics **GS3**
5. IN-SPACe: ISRO to exit launch-vehicle manufacturing, hand technology to private industry **GS3**
6. India's forex reserves jump \$9.9 billion to a record \$716.9 billion, 7th straight weekly rise **GS3**

§2 Polity & Governance

21-23 AUGUST 2026

GS2 · Polity

SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026: The Supreme Court's Special Lok Adalat — 400+ Cases Settled by Consent

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court's Special Lok Adalat, held under the "SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026" initiative on 21, 22 and 23 August 2026, culminates today, with more than 600 cases listed before 16 Special Lok Adalat Benches and over 400 amicably settled on the very first day alone. Launched under the leadership of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, the initiative began in April 2026 as part of the Supreme Court's push to embed mediation and other consent-based dispute-resolution methods more firmly within the justice system.

BACKGROUND

Lok Adalats derive their statutory basis from the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, which gives their awards the force of a civil court decree with no further appeal, and trace their constitutional inspiration to Article 39A's directive on equal justice and free legal aid. While Lok Adalats have traditionally operated at the district and State level, the Supreme Court holding its own Special Lok Adalat is a comparatively rare and significant extension of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to the apex court itself, aimed at reducing pendency in categories of cases — matrimonial, motor-accident, land-acquisition, tax, and service disputes — that are well-suited to negotiated settlement rather than adversarial adjudication.

KEY FACTS

- "SAMADHAN SAMAROH 2026" (Supreme Court Action for Mediated Adjudication and Disputes Harmonisation Across Nation) launched under CJI Surya Kant.
- Initiative commenced April 2026; Special Lok Adalat held on 21, 22 and 23 August 2026.
- 600+ cases listed before 16 Special Lok Adalat Benches, each with two sitting Supreme Court judges.
- 400+ cases amicably settled on day one alone (21 August).
- Case categories: matrimonial and property disputes, motor accident claims, land acquisition/compensation, tax matters, service and labour disputes.
- Statutory basis: Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987; constitutional anchor: Article 39A.
- Lok Adalat awards have the force of a civil court decree and are not appealable.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- ADR mainstreaming: extending the Lok Adalat mechanism to the Supreme Court itself signals a institutional shift toward consent-based resolution even at the apex level.
- Pendency management: matrimonial, motor-accident and land-acquisition disputes are structurally suited to settlement, freeing adversarial bench time for genuinely contested constitutional and legal questions.
- Access to justice: Article 39A's promise of equal justice is advanced when litigants can resolve disputes without the cost and delay of full adjudication.
- Institutional leadership: a CJI-driven initiative illustrates how administrative leadership within the judiciary can drive systemic reform without requiring new legislation.
- Limits of ADR: not all case categories (e.g., pure constitutional questions) are suited to a Lok Adalat approach — settlement works only where genuine consent is possible.

Memory Hook: A Lok Adalat award is final the moment it's signed — no appeal, because it's a decree by consent, not a verdict by contest.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2019 — Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms and Article 39A.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding Lok Adalats:

1. They derive their statutory basis from the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
2. An award passed by a Lok Adalat can be appealed before a High Court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). A Lok Adalat award has the force of a civil court decree and is final — it cannot be appealed.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of the Supreme Court holding its own Special Lok Adalat, and examine the categories of disputes best suited to consent-based resolution mechanisms.

GS2

Polity

PYQ-2019

#LokAdalat

#ADR

SAHYOG ADR mechanisms (Lok Adalat, mediation, arbitration) are a recurring GS2 static-cum-current theme — Sahyog Mentorship's Weekend Judgment Clinic has a dedicated module on this ladder.

§3 International Relations

23-24 AUGUST 2026

GS2 · IR

EAM Jaishankar Visits Russia for the 27th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission

WHY IN NEWS

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is on a two-day visit to Russia on 23-24 August 2026 to co-chair the 27th Session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) with Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, and will separately hold talks with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on regional and global issues.

BACKGROUND

The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission has two divisions: IRIGC-TEC, co-chaired by the External Affairs Minister and Russia's First Deputy PM, and a separate military-technical cooperation track. The IRIGC-TEC mechanism provides a structured annual framework to review and expand cooperation across trade, energy, connectivity, and technology, sitting alongside the broader India-

Russia "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership." The visit comes against the backdrop of Western sanctions on Russia and India's continued balancing act of maintaining energy and defence ties with Moscow while deepening partnerships with the US and Europe.

KEY FACTS

- Jaishankar's Russia visit: 23-24 August 2026.
- Co-chairs the 27th Session of IRIGC-TEC with First Deputy PM Denis Manturov.
- Separate bilateral talks scheduled with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.
- IRIGC has two divisions: IRIGC-TEC (trade/economic/tech/cultural) and a separate military-technical cooperation track.
- Visit sits within India-Russia's "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership" framework.
- Comes amid Western sanctions on Russia and India's multi-alignment balancing act.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Strategic autonomy: India's continued engagement with Russia despite Western sanctions reflects a multi-alignment foreign policy rather than bloc alignment.
- Institutional mechanism value: an annual IRIGC-TEC session provides continuity in bilateral relations independent of shifting geopolitical winds.
- Energy and defence dependency: Russia remains a key defence-hardware and discounted-crude supplier, shaping the cost-benefit calculus of the relationship.
- Balancing act: simultaneous deepening of India-US and India-EU ties requires careful diplomatic sequencing to avoid friction with either side.

Memory Hook: IRIGC has two tracks — TEC (Trade/Economic/Cultural, led by the EAM) and the separate military-technical track — don't conflate the two when a PYQ asks "who co-chairs what."

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2020 — India's relations with Russia in a changing global order.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission:

1. Its Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (TEC) division is co-chaired by India's External Affairs Minister.
2. It has held its 27th session as of August 2026.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Examine the significance of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission mechanism for sustaining bilateral ties amid India's broader multi-alignment foreign policy.

EVOLVING, AS OF 22-23 AUGUST 2026 — MEMORY TECHNIQUE RETURN

GS2 • IR

Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's Proposed Visit: Diplomatic Uncertainty Deepens

WHY IN NEWS

Bangladesh has said no decision has yet been made on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India, even as Indian media reported he could arrive in New Delhi on 23-25 August. Speculation intensified after Rashtrapati Bhavan issued, and then withdrew, a statement saying the 22 August Change of Guard ceremony would not take place because of a "full rehearsal" for the ceremonial welcome of the Bangladesh PM — a sequence that has deepened rather than resolved the uncertainty first flagged on 22 August.

BACKGROUND

Tarique Rahman, a senior Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader, was sworn in as Bangladesh's Prime Minister in February 2026; Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla attended the swearing-in on India's behalf. This would be Tarique Rahman's first visit to New Delhi since taking office, and the two sides have been in talks for weeks as they work to repair and reset ties strained by the 2024 ouster of former PM Sheikh Hasina.

KEY FACTS

- Bangladesh: "no decision yet" on the visit, despite Indian media reports of a 23-25 August window.
- Rashtrapati Bhavan issued, then withdrew, a statement about a "full rehearsal" for the Bangladesh PM's ceremonial welcome — fuelling further speculation.
- Tarique Rahman (BNP) was sworn in as Bangladesh PM in February 2026.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla represented India at the February 2026 swearing-in.
- Would be Tarique Rahman's first visit to India since taking office.
- Context: repairing ties after the 2024 ouster of former PM Sheikh Hasina.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Protocol as diplomatic signal: a withdrawn ceremonial-rehearsal statement itself becomes a data point in reading the state of bilateral trust.
- Neighbourhood-first policy under uncertainty: India's eagerness to host an early visit, even amid scheduling ambiguity, signals the priority placed on stabilising ties with a transitioned government.
- Domestic political sensitivity in Dhaka: Bangladesh's non-confirmation may reflect internal political caution rather than a rejection of the visit itself.

- Comparative diplomacy: how visit-scheduling uncertainty compares with more settled precedents of neighbourhood bilateral visits.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Previously covered (22 Aug): The visit was "reportedly likely" in a 20-25 Aug window, dates still being finalised.

What's new today: A Rashtrapati Bhavan statement about ceremonial rehearsals was issued and then withdrawn — the uncertainty has deepened, not resolved.

UPSC relevance shift: From "will it happen" to "what does the handling of protocol itself signal about the state of bilateral trust."

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021 — India's neighbourhood policy and bilateral relations with Bangladesh.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Tarique Rahman was sworn in as Bangladesh's Prime Minister in February 2026.
2. As of 23 August 2026, his visit to India has been officially confirmed by both governments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). The visit remained unconfirmed as of 23 August, per Dhaka's own statement.

GS2

IR

PYQ-2021

#IndiaBangladesh

#Protocol

§4 Defence & Security

21 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Defence

Data Patterns Bags ₹585.76-Crore Radar Electronics Order from BEL

WHY IN NEWS

Data Patterns (India) Limited, a Chennai-based defence electronics firm, received a ₹585.76-crore order from Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) on 21 August 2026 for the supply of radar electronics, sending its share price to a fresh 52-week high. The order forms part of ₹771.08 crore in orders the company has secured since 30 July 2026, against a reported order book of ₹2,654 crore as of that date.

BACKGROUND

BEL, a Navratna defence public-sector undertaking, integrates radar and electronic-warfare sub-systems sourced from private-sector specialists like Data Patterns into complete systems for the Indian Armed Forces, reflecting the layered public-private defence-production model India has built since liberalising defence manufacturing and raising FDI limits over the past decade. Data Patterns is among a cohort of listed private defence-electronics firms (alongside peers in radar, EW and avionics sub-systems) that have benefited from rising indigenous defence procurement under the Positive Indigenisation Lists and the broader Atmanirbhar Bharat push in defence.

KEY FACTS

- Data Patterns (India) Limited: Chennai-based defence electronics company.
- Order: ₹585.76 crore from Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), dated 21 August 2026, for radar electronics.
- Share price rose to a fresh 52-week high following the announcement.
- Total new orders since 30 July 2026: ₹771.08 crore (including this BEL order).
- Reported order book as of 30 July 2026: ₹2,654 crore (received plus under negotiation).
- BEL is a Navratna defence PSU that integrates sub-systems into complete radar/EW systems.
- Reflects India's public-private defence-production model under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Public-private defence production: PSU integrators (BEL) increasingly sourcing critical sub-systems from private specialists rather than building everything in-house.
- Import substitution: rising domestic radar-electronics orders reduce dependence on imported sub-systems for critical defence platforms.
- Capital markets and defence policy: listed defence-electronics firms' order books have become a visible market indicator of indigenisation progress.
- Risk concentration: reliance on a small number of private specialist firms for critical sub-systems raises supply-chain resilience questions.

Memory Hook: BEL builds the radar; Data Patterns builds what's inside the radar — integrator and specialist, not competitor and competitor.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2020 — indigenisation of defence production and public-private partnership in the defence sector.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) is classified as a Navratna defence public-sector undertaking.
2. Data Patterns (India) Limited is headquartered in Chennai.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of the public-private "integrator-specialist" model in India's defence-electronics production, with reference to recent orders placed by defence PSUs on private firms.

GS3

Defence

PYQ-2020

#DefenceElectronics

#AtmanirbharBharat

§5 Science & Technology

REPORTED 21-22 AUGUST 2026

GS3 • S&T

ISRO to Exit Launch-Vehicle Manufacturing — Technology Handed to Private Industry

WHY IN NEWS

IN-SPACe Chairman Dr Pawan Goenka has confirmed, at the "India @ 100" Economy Summit, that ISRO will no longer manufacture launch vehicles, with such activities to be handled entirely by private-sector firms or public-sector undertakings other than ISRO itself; the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3) are slated for privatisation, with public-sector companies barred from participating in the upcoming process to ensure private industry takes full charge.

BACKGROUND

This marks one of the most profound transformations in ISRO's history: the organisation is set to gradually withdraw from manufacturing launch vehicles and routine satellites, repositioning itself as a research-and-development body focused on scientific missions and advanced technologies that private companies cannot yet independently create. ISRO has already transferred 120 technologies to private firms as part of this transition, and India's spacetechnology sector has matured in parallel — Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 became India's first privately developed orbital-class launch vehicle to reach orbit, in July 2026.

KEY FACTS

- IN-SPACe Chairman Dr Pawan Goenka: ISRO "will not make any launch vehicles" going forward.
- Statement made at the "India @ 100" Economy Summit, reported around 21-22 August 2026.
- PSLV and LVM-3 slated for privatisation; public-sector entities excluded from this specific process.

- ISRO to reposition as an R&D-focused organisation for scientific missions and advanced technologies.
- 120 technologies already transferred from ISRO to private firms to date.
- Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 became India's first privately developed orbital-class launch vehicle to reach orbit, July 2026.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Institutional transformation: ISRO shifting from a manufacturer-operator to a research-and-enabler role mirrors global trends (e.g., NASA's shift toward commercial launch providers).
- Space-sector liberalisation: full privatisation of PSLV/LVM-3 production, with PSUs excluded, signals a genuine handover rather than a token gesture.
- Innovation ecosystem effect: freeing ISRO from routine manufacturing could accelerate frontier research (deep-space, human spaceflight, advanced propulsion).
- Risk and continuity: private industry must demonstrate reliability at ISRO's safety and success-rate standards before full confidence is warranted.
- Employment and PSU transition: technology transfer to private firms raises workforce and institutional-knowledge continuity questions within ISRO's own manufacturing units.

Memory Hook: ISRO isn't stepping back from space — it's stepping UP, from the assembly line to the research bench, while private industry takes the assembly line.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2023 — India's achievements in space technology and private-sector participation.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The PSLV and LVM-3 launch vehicles are slated for privatisation.
2. Public-sector undertakings are barred from participating in this specific privatisation process.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of ISRO's planned exit from launch-vehicle manufacturing for India's space-sector ecosystem, and examine the risks involved in this transition.

GS3

S&T

Space

PYQ-2023

#ISRO

#INSPACe

§6 Economy

DATA FOR WEEK ENDED 14 AUGUST 2026, RELEASED 21 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Economy

India's Forex Reserves Jump \$9.9 Billion to a Record \$716.9 Billion

WHY IN NEWS

India's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$9.905 billion to a record \$716.90 billion during the week ended 14 August 2026, according to Reserve Bank of India data released on 21 August 2026 — the seventh consecutive weekly increase, adding roughly \$50 billion over that period, with foreign currency assets up \$7.2 billion to \$581.85 billion and gold reserves up \$2.67 billion to \$111.41 billion.

BACKGROUND

India's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) held with the IMF, and India's reserve position with the IMF, and serve as a buffer against external-sector shocks, currency volatility, and import-cover requirements. The latest surge has been partly attributed to inflows under the RBI's Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) — FCNR(B) — deposit scheme, which have begun reflecting more visibly in reserve data, alongside gold-price gains boosting the valuation of India's gold holdings.

KEY FACTS

- Forex reserves: \$716.90 billion as of the week ended 14 August 2026, a fresh record.
- Weekly increase: \$9.905 billion — the seventh consecutive weekly rise.
- Cumulative increase over the seven weeks: approximately \$50 billion.
- Foreign currency assets (largest component): up \$7.2 billion to \$581.85 billion.
- Gold reserves: up \$2.67 billion to \$111.41 billion.
- Partly driven by inflows under the RBI's FCNR(B) deposit scheme.
- Data released by the RBI on 21 August 2026.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- External-sector resilience: record reserves strengthen India's buffer against global shocks, capital-flow reversals and currency volatility.

- Import-cover adequacy: rising reserves support the traditional benchmark of maintaining sufficient months of import cover.
- Policy-tool linkage: the FCNR(B) scheme's role in the recent surge shows how targeted deposit schemes can be used to shore up reserves during periods of external stress.
- Valuation versus flow effects: distinguishing genuine capital inflows from valuation gains (e.g., gold-price appreciation) is important for accurately reading reserve adequacy.

Memory Hook: Reserves = Foreign Currency Assets + Gold + SDRs + IMF Reserve Position — remember it as "FASI" to never forget a component.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2021 — components and significance of India's foreign exchange reserves.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding India's foreign exchange reserves:

1. Foreign currency assets are typically the largest component of India's forex reserves.
2. India's forex reserves crossed \$716 billion for the first time during the week ended 14 August 2026.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Both statements are correct.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the significance of India's rising foreign exchange reserves for external-sector stability, and distinguish between flow-based and valuation-based drivers of the recent increase.

GS3

Economy

PYQ-2021

#ForexReserves

#FCNRB

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