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PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Monday, 24 August 2026

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## §1 Top Headlines

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## §2 Polity & Governance

23 AUGUST 2026

GS2 • Social Justice

### NCSK's Foundation Day: The Unfinished Business of Ending Manual Scavenging — Mechanisation as the Next Frontier

#### WHY IN NEWS

Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal addressed the Foundation Day celebrations of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) in New Delhi on 23 August 2026, calling for reduced manual intervention in sanitation work through mechanisation, and for a coordinated framework covering insurance, compensation and timely relief for sanitation workers, including those in private establishments.

#### BACKGROUND

The NCSK was first constituted on 12 August 1994 as a statutory body under an Act of Parliament, originally for a three-year term up to March 1997, and has since been extended through executive orders as a non-statutory body monitoring the welfare of sanitation workers. Its mandate operates alongside the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which bans manual scavenging and mandates rehabilitation of identified manual scavengers, and connects to the National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE).

#### KEY FACTS

- NCSK Foundation Day observed 23 August 2026; NCSK originally constituted 12 August 1994 under a Parliamentary Act.
- Legal backbone: Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
- Meghwal called for mechanisation to reduce manual/hazardous intervention in sanitation work.
- Minister flagged the need for coordinated insurance, compensation, and health-and-safety monitoring frameworks.
- Coverage sought to extend explicitly to sanitation workers employed in private establishments, not just public agencies.

- NAMASTE scheme (National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem) is the operational vehicle for mechanisation and worker profiling.

### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Dignity of labour: mechanisation is framed not merely as an efficiency measure but as a constitutional commitment to Article 21 dignity for a historically marginalised workforce.
- Implementation gap: manual scavenging bans have existed in law since 1993 and 2013, yet enforcement in private/informal establishments remains the weakest link.
- Institutional status question: NCSK's statutory tenure lapsed in 1997; its continuation by executive order rather than fresh legislation raises accountability questions.
- Intersectionality: manual scavenging work remains disproportionately linked to caste-based occupational assignment, connecting this to the broader social-justice agenda.

**Memory Hook:** Two laws, one goal — the 1993 Act banned dry latrines; the 2013 Act banned the manual scavenger's job itself and promised rehabilitation.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS2 2020 — welfare schemes for vulnerable sections and their performance.

#### Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis was constituted as a statutory body under a Parliamentary Act.
2. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 provides for the rehabilitation of identified manual scavengers.

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.**

GS2

SocialJustice

PYQ-2020

#NCSK

#ManualScavenging

**EMP**

This card pairs directly with today's Ethics & Integrity case on the dignity of invisible labour — see Part II §3.

## Bangladesh Confirms "No Decision Yet" on PM Tarique Rahman's India Visit — the Hasina Extradition Shadow

### WHY IN NEWS

Bangladesh's Prime Minister's Office told PTI on 22 August 2026 that "no decision has been made yet" on Tarique Rahman's proposed visit to India, even as the previously discussed 20-25 August window has now lapsed without confirmation. Dhaka has explicitly linked the delay to India's non-response on its request for the extradition of former PM Sheikh Hasina and "other fugitive criminals" currently in India.

### BACKGROUND

Rahman, BNP leader and Bangladesh's PM since February 2026, was invited by PM Modi for his first visit to India in that capacity; Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had earlier attended his swearing-in in Dhaka. Reports since mid-August suggested Rahman was "likely" to visit in an August 20-25 window, but neither government has issued a formal confirmation, and Dhaka's public linkage of the visit to the extradition question marks a harder diplomatic posture than seen in earlier bilateral exchanges this year.

### KEY FACTS

- Bangladesh PMO (Press Secretary AAM Saleh Shibly) confirmed on 22 Aug 2026 that no visit decision has been made.
- The previously reported 20-25 August visit window has lapsed without a confirmed itinerary.
- Bangladesh has explicitly tied the delay to India's non-response on extraditing Sheikh Hasina and other "fugitive criminals."
- A possible alternative window being discussed: the BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 12-13 September 2026.
- Neither India's MEA nor Bangladesh's government has issued a formal schedule as of 24 August 2026.

### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Extradition as diplomatic leverage: Dhaka's public linkage of a state visit to an extradition request signals a shift from quiet diplomacy to public conditionality.
- India's dilemma: hosting Sheikh Hasina creates a persistent friction point with Dhaka regardless of the current government's own troubled human-rights record post-transition.
- Multilateral off-ramp: using the BRICS Summit as a fallback visit window lets both sides defer a bilateral decision while still enabling leader-level contact.
- Continuity risk: unresolved protocol uncertainty over successive weeks itself becomes a signal of the fragility of post-transition India-Bangladesh ties.

## 💡 MEMORY TECHNIQUE — RETURNING TOPIC

**Previously covered (22-23 Aug):** a reported 20-25 Aug visit window under discussion; then a withdrawn Rashtrapati Bhavan ceremonial-rehearsal statement deepened the uncertainty.

**What's new today:** Bangladesh has now gone on record that no decision has been made at all, and has openly tied the delay to the Hasina extradition request — moving from ambiguity to an explicit, stated condition.

**UPSC relevance shift:** from "will the visit happen" to "what specific bilateral demand is now blocking it," with the BRICS Summit emerging as the next real diplomatic marker to track.

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

### Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding the proposed visit of Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman to India:

1. As of 24 August 2026, the visit has been formally confirmed by both governments.
2. Bangladesh has publicly linked the delay to India's response on an extradition request for Sheikh Hasina.

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: (b). Statement 1 is incorrect — no formal confirmation exists; statement 2 is correct.**

GS2

IndiaBangladesh

PYQ-2021

#Extradition

#BRICS2026

22-23 AUGUST 2026

GS2 · Diplomacy

## INS Sudarshini's Lokayan 26 Voyage Reaches Lisbon — Sail Training as Soft-Power Diplomacy

### WHY IN NEWS

The Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini arrived in Lisbon, Portugal, on 22 August 2026, marking the 15th port call of her ten-month Lokayan 26 transoceanic training expedition, which began in January 2026 and will cover over 22,000 nautical miles across 18 ports in 13 countries.

### BACKGROUND

INS Sudarshini, a three-masted sail training barque of the Indian Navy, carries over 200 Navy and Coast Guard trainees who gain hands-on experience in long-range ocean navigation and traditional seamanship while the voyage itself functions as a goodwill and naval-diplomacy platform, engaging foreign navies, local authorities and the Indian diaspora at each port of call.

## KEY FACTS

- INS Sudarshini arrived in Lisbon on 22 August 2026 via the Tagus River, its 15th port call in seven months.
- Lokayan 26 is a 10-month transoceanic voyage covering 22,000+ nautical miles, 18 ports, 13 countries, begun January 2026.
- Over 200 Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard trainees are undergoing sail training aboard the vessel.
- Activities in Lisbon included professional exchanges, cross-deck visits, and cultural engagement with the Portuguese Navy.
- The visit is described as reinforcing the India-Portugal maritime partnership.

## MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Naval diplomacy: sail training vessels double as low-cost, high-visibility instruments of goodwill diplomacy distinct from carrier or destroyer deployments.
- Diaspora engagement: port calls double as touchpoints for the Indian diaspora, reinforcing people-to-people ties alongside state-to-state ones.
- Europe outreach: an India-Portugal naval engagement sits within India's wider push to deepen maritime partnerships across the EU beyond its traditional Indo-Pacific focus.
- Training value: long-range sail training under real oceanic conditions builds seamanship skills that motorised training cannot replicate.

**Memory Hook:** Sudarshini means "the beautiful one who shows the way" — a sail ship showing India's flag in 13 countries without firing a single shot.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS2 2016 — India's bilateral relations through defence diplomacy.

### Probable Prelims MCQ:

INS Sudarshini's "Lokayan 26" voyage, in the news for its port call at Lisbon, is:

(a) A guided-missile destroyer deployment (b) A submarine goodwill patrol (c) A sail training ship's transoceanic expedition (d) A hospital ship's humanitarian mission

**Answer: (c)**

GS2

NavalDiplomacy

PYQ-2016

#Lokayan26

#IndiaPortugal

## "From Buyer to Builder": Rajnath Singh at the GRSE-Yantra India Groundbreaking — India's Shipbuilding Hub Ambition

### WHY IN NEWS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, addressing (virtually, from GRSE Bhavan, Kolkata) the groundbreaking ceremony for three expansion projects of Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) and two of Yantra India Limited on 23 August 2026 — a combined investment of about ₹3,500 crore — said all warships and submarines currently on order for the Indian Navy are now being built in Indian shipyards, describing this as India's shift "from being a buyer of naval platforms to becoming a builder of its own fleet."

### BACKGROUND

GRSE, a Kolkata-based Mini Ratna defence PSU under the Ministry of Defence, has historically built frigates, corvettes and patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and Coast Guard; Yantra India Limited is one of the seven defence PSUs carved out of the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board in 2021. The expansion aligns with the Ministry's stated ambition to position India as a global shipbuilding hub and export platform, building on the "Make in India, Make for the World" framing already used for GRSE's ongoing order to build 12 cargo ships for a German company.

### KEY FACTS

- Groundbreaking held 23 Aug 2026 for 3 GRSE and 2 Yantra India Limited expansion projects, combined investment ~₹3,500 crore.
- Rajnath Singh: all warships/submarines on order for the Navy are now built entirely in Indian shipyards (design, engineering, construction, lifecycle support).
- GRSE is separately building 12 cargo ships for a German company under the "Make in India, Make for the World" vision.
- Singh's stated strategy for exports: accept lower initial margins, scale up volume, cut costs, and ensure timely delivery to stay competitive.
- Yantra India Limited is one of 7 defence PSUs formed from the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board (restructured 2021).
- Singh separately called self-reliance ("atmanirbharta") in defence a "multiplier" of India's overall military capability.

### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Indigenisation-to-export pipeline: domestic warship self-sufficiency is being explicitly positioned as the launchpad for a defence/shipbuilding export industry, not an end in itself.
- PSU restructuring payoff: the 2021 Ordnance Factory Board corporatisation into seven PSUs (including Yantra India) is now generating investable, expansion-ready entities.

- Margin-versus-volume strategy: explicitly accepting lower initial margins for scale is a deliberate industrial-policy choice, mirroring East Asian export-led shipbuilding models.
- Strategic risk: a shipyard base concentrated in a few PSU clusters (Kolkata, Mumbai, Vizag) raises capacity and geographic-diversification questions as export ambitions scale up.

**Memory Hook:** Buyer to builder to exporter — that's the three-step ladder India's shipyards are now climbing, one groundbreaking at a time.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS3 2020 — indigenisation of defence production and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

#### Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Yantra India Limited was formed from the corporatisation of the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board.
2. Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) is headquartered in Kolkata.

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.**

GS3

DefenceIndigenisation

PYQ-2020

#GRSE

#AtmanirbharBharat

18-31 AUGUST 2026 (ONGOING)

GS3 · Defence Cooperation

## Exercise MAITREE-XV: India and Thailand's Joint Counter-Insurgency Drill

### WHY IN NEWS

An 85-member Indian Army contingent, drawn primarily from 9 Gorkha Rifles, is participating in the 15th edition of Exercise MAITREE with the Royal Thai Army at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand, running from 18 to 31 August 2026, focused on joint counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in jungle and semi-urban terrain.

### BACKGROUND

Instituted in 2006, Exercise MAITREE is a company-level bilateral exercise conducted under the framework of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, reflecting both countries' shared interest in peacekeeping-oriented counter-insurgency capability. It forms part of India's Act East Policy engagement with Thailand, complementing bilateral defence cooperation mechanisms distinct from India's multilateral ASEAN-linked exercises.

### KEY FACTS

- MAITREE-XV runs 18-31 August 2026 at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand.
- 85 personnel each from the Indian Army (9 Gorkha Rifles) and the Royal Thai Army (3rd Bn, 25th Infantry Bde, 5th Division).
- Focus: joint counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism operations in jungle and semi-urban environments.
- Conducted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter framework.
- Exercise MAITREE was instituted in 2006; this is its 15th edition.

#### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Act East linkage: bilateral military exercises with Thailand reinforce India's Act East Policy beyond trade and connectivity into security cooperation.
- UN Charter framing: anchoring a bilateral drill in Chapter VII signals both countries' orientation toward peacekeeping-relevant, not purely offensive, capability-building.
- Interoperability value: jungle/semi-urban counter-insurgency skills have direct relevance to India's own internal-security context (Northeast, LWE-affected areas).
- Regional balancing: continuous bilateral exercises with ASEAN states complement India's broader Indo-Pacific security architecture.

**Memory Hook:** MAITREE means friendship — the drill that has quietly run every year since 2006, this time in its 15th edition.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS3 2017 — India's defence cooperation and joint military exercises.

#### Probable Prelims MCQ:

Exercise MAITREE-XV, in the news in August 2026, is a joint military exercise between India and:  
(a) Vietnam (b) Thailand (c) Indonesia (d) Philippines

**Answer: (b)**

GS3

ActEastPolicy

PYQ-2017

#MAITREEXV

#IndiaThailand

## §5 Science & Technology

ANNOUNCED 18 AUGUST 2026; EVENT SCHEDULED 17-19 SEPTEMBER 2026

GS3 · Electronics & Semiconductors

# SEMICON India 2026: PM Modi to Inaugurate as Semicon 2.0's

## ₹1.275-Trillion Push Takes Shape

### WHY IN NEWS

SEMI and the India Semiconductor Mission announced on 18 August 2026 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate SEMICON India 2026 on 17 September at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, under the theme "Transform Tomorrow: Silicon to Systems — Building the Ecosystem," running 17-19 September 2026.

### BACKGROUND

The announcement builds on Semicon 2.0, unveiled with a ₹1.275-trillion outlay spanning chip design, fabrication, display manufacturing, advanced packaging, semiconductor equipment, speciality materials, R&D, engineering services and talent development. Under the original Semicon India Programme (Semicon 1.0), 3 of 12 approved semiconductor projects have already commenced commercial production, providing the on-ground track record behind the expanded second phase.

### KEY FACTS

- SEMICON India 2026 announced 18 Aug 2026; scheduled 17-19 September 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.
- PM Modi will inaugurate the event on 17 September 2026.
- Theme: "Transform Tomorrow: Silicon to Systems — Building the Ecosystem."
- Semicon 2.0 outlay: ₹1.275 trillion across six pillars (design, fabrication, display, packaging, equipment, materials/R&D/talent).
- Under Semicon 1.0, 3 of 12 approved semiconductor projects have already commenced commercial production.

### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Import-substitution strategy: semiconductor self-sufficiency is central to reducing India's electronics-component import dependence, a long-flagged trade-deficit driver.
- Ecosystem versus single-project approach: Semicon 2.0's six-pillar structure signals a shift from funding individual fabs to building a full value chain (design to talent).
- Execution track record: converting approvals into actual commercial production (3 of 12 so far) is the real test of the mission beyond headline outlay figures.
- Global positioning: hosting a flagship international semiconductor summit signals India's bid to be seen as a credible alternative node in global chip supply chains.

**Memory Hook:** Semicon 1.0 built the fabs; Semicon 2.0 is building everything around them — design, talent, and the systems that use the chips.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS3 2023 — indigenous manufacturing and India's semiconductor mission.

**Probable Prelims MCQ:**

The outlay for "Semicon 2.0," announced as part of India's semiconductor mission strategy, is approximately:

(a) ₹22,919 crore (b) ₹54,567 crore (c) ₹1.275 trillion (d) ₹3.67 trillion

**Answer: (c)**

GS3

Semiconductors

PYQ-2023

#SEMICONIndia2026

#Semicon2.0

**NEEB 300+** Track the "ecosystem over single project" pattern — it links today's semiconductor card with the GRSE/Yantra shipbuilding card as two faces of the same indigenisation strategy.

## §6 Economy

DATA FOR JULY 2026, RELEASED MID-AUGUST 2026

GS3 • External Sector

### India's Trade Deficit Widens to \$31.98 Billion in July 2026 — Oil Prices and the Middle East Effect

#### WHY IN NEWS

India's merchandise trade deficit widened to \$31.98 billion in July 2026, up from \$27.5 billion a year earlier and above market forecasts of \$30.2 billion — its largest shortfall since January 2026 — as imports surged 17.5% year-on-year to a record \$76.2 billion, partly driven by higher oil, fuel and coal prices amid fresh hostilities in the Middle East.

#### BACKGROUND

India's trade balance has been under sustained pressure through mid-2026, with the deficit at \$30.43 billion in June 2026 (versus \$19.12 billion a year earlier), also well above market expectations. Exports have simultaneously shown resilience: July 2026 exports rose a robust 19.6% to \$44.2 billion, led by petroleum products, electronics, engineering goods, gems and jewellery, and agri-marine products, showing that the deficit widening is driven more by import-side energy costs than export-side weakness.

#### KEY FACTS

- July 2026 trade deficit: \$31.98 billion (vs \$27.5bn in July 2025), largest since January 2026.

- July 2026 imports: record \$76.2 billion, up 17.5% year-on-year.
- July 2026 exports: \$44.2 billion, up a robust 19.6% year-on-year.
- June 2026 deficit was \$30.43 billion, also above market expectations.
- Higher oil, fuel and coal prices linked to fresh Middle East hostilities are cited as a key import-cost driver.
- Export growth was led by petroleum products, electronics, engineering goods, gems/jewellery, and marine/agri products.

### MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Energy-import vulnerability: a geopolitically driven oil-price shock can widen India's trade deficit even while non-oil exports perform strongly, exposing structural energy dependence.
- Twin resilience: robust export growth alongside a widening deficit shows India's external sector is not uniformly weak — the imbalance is import-side and largely energy-driven.
- Forex cushion: India's record forex reserves (from a prior edition) provide a buffer against short-term trade-deficit-driven currency pressure, but are not a substitute for reducing energy-import dependence.
- Policy response space: this data strengthens the case for accelerating renewable energy and domestic refining capacity as structural hedges against Middle East volatility.

**Memory Hook:** Exports up almost 20%, deficit still widens — when imports outrun exports on oil prices alone, that's not a trade problem, it's an energy problem.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS3 2019 — India's external trade balance and dependence on crude oil imports.

#### Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding India's trade data for July 2026:

1. India's exports declined in July 2026 compared to the same month a year earlier.
2. The widening trade deficit was primarily attributed to a surge in oil, fuel and coal import costs.

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: (b). Statement 1 is incorrect — exports rose 19.6%; statement 2 is correct.**

GS3

ExternalSector

PYQ-2019

#TradeDeficit

#OilImports

# Haryana Flags Off Rail Connectivity at the Nangal Chaudhary Logistics Hub

## WHY IN NEWS

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini flagged off the first goods train from a newly built rail yard at the Integrated Multi-Modal Logistics Hub (IMLH) coming up at Nangal Chaudhary in Mahendragarh district on 23 August 2026, calling it a step toward positioning the region as one of North India's largest logistics hubs and Haryana's "new economic capital."

## BACKGROUND

The IMLH's first phase spans 408 acres at an estimated cost of ₹1,300 crore, with the newly inaugurated rail link built at a cost of around ₹280 crore; once fully operational, the hub is projected to handle around two million containers annually, benefiting sectors such as automobiles, machinery, garments and agriculture. The project sits within the broader National Logistics Policy and PM GatiShakti framework, which aim to integrate rail, road and other freight modes to cut logistics costs as a share of GDP.

## KEY FACTS

- First goods train flagged off 23 Aug 2026 from the new rail yard at Nangal Chaudhary IMLH, Mahendragarh district, Haryana.
- IMLH Phase 1: 408 acres, ~₹1,300 crore; rail link itself built at ~₹280 crore.
- Projected capacity: ~2 million containers annually once fully operational.
- Target sectors: automobiles, machinery, garments, and agriculture.
- Framed within India's National Logistics Policy / PM GatiShakti multimodal-connectivity approach.

## MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Logistics-cost competitiveness: multimodal hubs like this directly target India's historically high logistics cost as a share of GDP relative to global peers.
- Regional economic development: state-level infrastructure push can shift industrial geography, as seen in Haryana's bid to position Nangal Chaudhary as a new economic node.
- Centre-State convergence: the project's alignment with PM GatiShakti shows how state infrastructure initiatives can plug into a national multimodal integration framework.
- Freight-mode shift: rail connectivity to a logistics hub supports a national push to shift freight from road to rail, which is more energy- and cost-efficient at scale.

**Memory Hook:** A logistics hub is only as good as its last mile — Nangal Chaudhary just got its rail-linked last mile.

**PYQ Linkage:** GS3 2022 — infrastructure development and the National Logistics Policy.

**Probable Prelims MCQ:**

The Integrated Multi-Modal Logistics Hub referenced in news reports of 23 August 2026 is located in which state?

(a) Punjab (b) Rajasthan (c) Haryana (d) Uttar Pradesh

**Answer: (c)**

GS3

Logistics

PYQ-2022

#PMGatiShakti

#IMLH

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