

PART I • HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

MORNING EDITION • 08:00 IST

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Monday, 20 July 2026

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"Parliament Opens. History is Made Daily."

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§1 Top 10 Headlines

1. **GS2** Parliament Monsoon Session 2026 opens July 20; both Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha adjourned repeatedly on Day 1 amid opposition sloganeering demanding urgent debate on NEET-UG paper leak; Zero Hour washed out; session runs July 20–August 13 (19 sittings, 28 pending bills).
2. **GS2** Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill 2026 introduced in Lok Sabha by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal — increases SC sanctioned strength from 34 to 38 judges (including CJI); formalises May 2026 ordinance; five new judges already appointed.
3. **GS2** NEET-UG paper leak 2026: CPI MP P. Sandosh Kumar moves Suspension of Business in Rajya Sabha; Opposition demands Education Minister's accountability; CBI chargesheet filed in Patna leak case; NEET reform committee to report by August 2026.
4. **GS2** Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill 2025 listed for Monsoon Session — single apex body to replace UGC, AICTE & NCTE; three Councils (Regulatory, Standards, Accreditation); JPC yet to submit report; 15 December 2025 introduction by Dharmendra Pradhan.
5. **GS2** India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership announced July 11, 2026 (Auckland) — first-ever bilateral strategic partnership; 'Roadmap to 2030' with 6 pillars: defence, trade, S&T, climate, education, people-to-people ties.
6. **GS3** MSME Development (Amendment) Bill 2026 listed for Monsoon Session — strengthens MSEFC (Micro & Small Enterprises Facilitation Councils); arbitral award enforcement for MSEs; gives States flexibility to constitute more MSEFCs; trust-based regulatory reform.
7. **GS3** GISAT-1A (EOS-05)/GSLV-F18: T-11 days countdown (NET July 31, Sriharikota); India's first operational GEO-imaging satellite; 30-min full India scan + 5-min selected field at 42m resolution;

critical for disaster management and border surveillance.

8. **GS3** India's 166 major reservoirs at only 34.46% capacity (63.25 BCM of 183.6 BCM total) as of July 16; IMD warns below-normal rainfall in Rajasthan, Gujarat, peninsular India; agriculture stress and power generation concerns flagged.
9. **GS3** Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) receives IUCN's first-ever Green Status "Critically Depleted" classification (2025); ~800 mature individuals remain; Chambal River (National Chambal Sanctuary, 1979) is last viable breeding stronghold; Project Crocodile since 1975.
10. **GS3** Bharat Tex 2026 (July 14–17): ₹14,300 crore textile investment commitments; 30+ MoUs signed by Karnataka, Bihar, Maharashtra, AP; India's bid to capture China+1 global textile supply chain shift; MSME textile sector linkage.

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Monsoon Session opens today with 28 pending bills — the next 3 weeks will produce 5–8 UPSC-worthy legislative developments per day. **Sahyog Mentorship** students: activate your daily legislative tracker. theiasakademia.com



§2 Polity & Governance

GS2

Parliament · Constitutional Bodies · Legislature

20 July 2026 · Source: Republic World / LiveLaw / SCC Online

Parliament Monsoon Session 2026 — Day 1 Disrupted Over NEET Paper Leak; SC Judges Strength Bill Introduced Amid Uproar

Why in News: The 18th Lok Sabha's Monsoon Session commenced on 20 July 2026 (to run till August 13, 2026) with 19 scheduled sittings and 28 pending bills. Day 1 was immediately disrupted when opposition parties launched coordinated sloganeering demanding an urgent debate on the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak crisis, resulting in multiple adjournments of both Houses; Question Hour and Zero Hour were both washed out.

Background: The Budget Session (February–May 2026) concluded without passing several key bills including FCRA Amendment, VBSA Bill, and MSME Amendment due to disruptions. The

Monsoon Session agenda includes 5 new bills and 23 pending bills, with the government targeting passage of the SC Judges, MSME, and Income Tax Amendment Bills in the first week.

KEY FACTS

- **Session details:** July 20–August 13, 2026; 19 sittings; 28 pending bills; Speaker Om Birla presiding; Vice-President (RS Chairman) Jagdeep Dhankhar presiding in RS.
- **SC Judges Bill (Day 1 introduction):** Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill 2026 introduced by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal; increases SC strength 34→38 judges (incl. CJI); replaces May 2026 Ordinance (Art 123); five judges already appointed under the Ordinance; bill requires simple majority in both Houses.
- **NEET crisis:** CPI's P. Sandosh Kumar moved Suspension of Business (Rule 267, RS); CBI has filed chargesheet in Patna NEET paper leak case; 24 lakh candidates affected; SC monitoring reforms; a government panel to submit reform recommendations by August 2026.
- **Key bills on session agenda:** VBSA Bill 2025 (UGC/AICTE/NCTE replaced); MSME Amendment 2026; Income Tax Amendment 2026; Prevention of Insults to National Honour Amendment 2026; FCRA Amendment 2026.

TEACHING HOOK

Mnemonic “SWAP” for Day 1 events: **S**C Judges Bill introduced, **W**ashout (Zero Hour + Question Hour), **A**djournments repeated, **P**aper leak (NEET) — the trigger. Remember: SC Judges Bill requires only a *simple majority*, not a special majority (Art 124 just says “by law”) — a classic Prelims confusion point.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2018: “What are the procedures through which the Parliament conducts its business?” | Prelims 2022: Rule 267 (Suspension of Business) vs Rule 176 (Short Duration Discussion) in RS | Prelims 2019: Quorum in Lok Sabha = 1/10th of total membership.

GS2

Monsoon Session 2026

SC Judges Bill

Rule 267 RS

Art 123 Ordinance

NEET Paper Leak

Zero Hour

GS2

Higher Education · Regulatory Reform · NEP 2020

20 July 2026 · Source: PIB / PRS India / The Federal

Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill 2025 — UGC, AICTE & NCTE to Be Replaced by Single Apex Regulator; Listed for Monsoon Session Passage

Why in News: The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025, introduced on 15 December 2025 and referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), has been listed for the Monsoon Session 2026 with the JPC yet to formally submit its report. The Bill proposes the most sweeping overhaul of India's higher education regulatory architecture since independence — abolishing the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act 1956, AICTE Act 1987, and NCTE Act 1993.

Background: NEP 2020 recommended a single Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). The Bill operationalises this by creating VBSA with three Councils: Regulatory Council, Standards Council, and Accreditation Council. Medical (NMC) and law (BCI) education are excluded. A Parliamentary panel has warned the Bill concentrates regulatory power excessively in the Central Government.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Bodies abolished:** UGC (University Grants Commission, est. 1956 — UGC Act 1956), AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education, est. 1987 — AICTE Act 1987), NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education, est. 1995 — NCTE Act 1993).
- **New body:** Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) — apex regulatory authority; 3 Councils (Regulatory, Standards, Accreditation); regulates technical + teacher + architecture education; excludes medicine & law.
- **Constitutional basis:** Higher education falls under Concurrent List (Entry 25); Parliament's competence to legislate is clear; however, State autonomy of universities (Art 246) raises federal concerns.
- **Concern flagged by JPC:** Concentration of regulatory, standards-setting, and accreditation power in a single body under Central Government potentially compromises institutional autonomy guaranteed under UGC Act.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Memory trick for VBSA's three Councils: “Rules, Standardises, Accredits” → Regulatory + Standards + Accreditation. Classic Prelims trap: UGC is under the *Concurrent List* (Entry 25 — education including technical education, medical education and universities) — NOT the Union List.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022: “Examine the role of UGC in maintaining standards of higher education in India. What reforms would you suggest?” | Prelims 2020: UGC established under UGC Act 1956; functions under Ministry of Education.

GS2

VBSA Bill 2025

UGC Act 1956

AICTE 1987

NCTE 1993

NEP 2020

Concurrent List Entry 25

JPC Report



§3 International Relations

GS2

Bilateral Relations · Indo-Pacific · Strategic Partnerships

11 July 2026 · Source: PIB / PM India / MFAT NZ

India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership — ‘Roadmap to 2030’ Signed in Auckland; India’s First Bilateral Strategic Partnership with NZ

Why in News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand PM Christopher Luxon signed the India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership on 11 July 2026 in Auckland during PM Modi’s official visit, announcing a ‘Roadmap to 2030’ — a shared four-year cooperation framework across six strategic pillars. This marks India’s first formal bilateral strategic partnership with New Zealand.

Background: India–New Zealand relations have historically been driven by the Indian diaspora (~2.5 lakh), education ties (~50,000 Indian students), and trade (bilateral trade ~USD 1 billion). Both are members of the Commonwealth; NZ is part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance; India sees NZ as a key ‘Pacific gateway’ partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy under SAGAR doctrine.

KEY FACTS

- **Roadmap to 2030 — 6 Pillars:** (1) Defence & Security cooperation; (2) Trade, Investment & Economic ties; (3) Science, Technology & Innovation; (4) Climate Change & Environment; (5) Education & Skills development; (6) People-to-people & Cultural exchanges.
- **India–NZ trade:** Bilateral goods trade ~USD 800 million; key exports from India: pharmaceuticals, textiles, engineering goods; imports from NZ: dairy products (Fonterra), wool, timber; NZ is seeking India’s dairy market access under FTA negotiations.

- **Strategic significance:** NZ is part of the Quad-adjacent Pacific grouping; India-NZ defence cooperation (MLSA potential), joint maritime exercises; NZ joins Australia, Japan, South Korea as key Indo-Pacific partners in India's Act East upgrade.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Link India's Partnerships: India now has Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships (CSP) with USA, Russia, France, UAE, Australia, Saudi Arabia — and now a Strategic Partnership (one step below CSP) with New Zealand. For Prelims: NZ is NOT a Quad member but is increasingly aligned; Five Eyes ≠ Quad.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2021: "Critically examine India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region." | GS2 2019: India's Act East Policy — significance for Pacific partnerships | Prelims 2023: SAGAR doctrine — Security and Growth for All in the Region.

GS2

India-NZ Partnership

Roadmap 2030

Indo-Pacific

SAGAR Doctrine

Act East Policy

Five Eyes

Bilateral Trade

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India's expanding strategic partnerships in the Pacific — Australia (CSP), New Zealand (SP) — form a core GS2 cluster. **ANTIM 2027** students: map India's full bilateral partnership architecture before the Prelims. theiasakademia.com



§4 Defence & Security

GS3

20 July 2026 · Source: ISRO / Space Launch Live / The Week

Space Technology · Defence Applications · ISRO Missions

GISAT-1A (EOS-05)/GSLV-F18 — T-11 Days to Launch (NET 31 July 2026); India's First Operational GEO Imaging Satellite for Real-Time Disaster & Border Surveillance

Why in News: With T-11 days to the launch window (NET 31 July 2026 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota), ISRO's GISAT-1A (officially EOS-05) — aboard GSLV-F18 — is in advanced pre-launch readiness review. This will be India's first operational Geostationary Earth Observation Satellite with a 30-minute full-India revisit cycle, a transformative upgrade in India's disaster management and strategic surveillance capability.

Background: GISAT-1 was lost in August 2021 due to GSLV Mk II cryogenic stage failure. GISAT-1A is the replacement, carrying multi-spectral and hyper-spectral imaging payloads. Unlike LEO (polar) satellites with 2-day revisit times, a GEO satellite provides near-continuous observation — critical for monsoon monitoring, floods, cyclone tracking, and real-time LAC surveillance.

KEY FACTS

- **Orbit:** Geostationary (36,000 km altitude); positioned over Indian Ocean to cover India and Indian Ocean Region continuously.
- **Imaging capability:** Full India landmass image every 30 minutes; selected field image every 5 minutes; 42m spatial resolution; multi-spectral + hyper-spectral bands.
- **Launch vehicle:** GSLV-F18 (GSLV Mk II; cryogenic upper stage); launch site: Second Launch Pad, SDSC-SHAR, Sriharikota (80.23°E, 13.72°N).
- **Applications:** Real-time disaster monitoring (floods, cyclones, drought), agricultural assessment, forest fire detection, border area surveillance, search & rescue coordination.

TEACHING HOOK

GEO vs LEO comparison (Prelims staple): GEO → 36,000 km altitude, stationary over one point, 30-min India revisit (GISAT), communication/weather satellites. LEO → 400–2,000 km, fast orbital period (~90 min), global coverage in 2 days (Resourcesat, CARTOSAT). GSLV uses cryogenic engine (LH2 + LOX) — distinguishes it from PSLV (solid + liquid).

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2016: “Discuss India’s achievements in the field of space science and technology.” | Prelims 2021: GSLV Mk III uses semi-cryogenic core + cryogenic upper stage (distinguish from GSLV Mk II which uses cryogenic upper stage only) | GS3 2022: Space applications in disaster management.

GS3

GISAT-1A

EOS-05

GSLV-F18

Geostationary EOS

Sriharikota SDSC

Disaster Management

Hyper-spectral Imaging

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GISAT-1A launch window approaches July 31 — this is a marquee GS3 (S&T) Prelims question waiting to happen. **EMP** students tracking strategic tech: note the dual-use defence-civilian convergence in India’s EOS constellation. theiasakademia.com



§5 Science & Technology

GS2

Education · Human Capital · Regulatory Bodies

July 2026 · Source: PRS India / PIB / The Federal

UGC, AICTE & NCTE Dissolution — VBSA Bill 2025 Deep-Dive: Three-Council Architecture, NEP 2020 Alignment, and Federal Concerns Over Centralisation

Why in News: The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025 represents India’s first restructuring of higher education regulation since UGC was established in 1956. Beyond the institutional merger, the bill introduces a new philosophy: shift from input-based (fund-grant) to outcome-based (accreditation-led) regulatory governance — a fundamental change in how India manages ~1,000 universities and 45,000 colleges.

Key regulatory shift: UGC currently grants funds AND sets standards (dual role). VBSA separates these: VBSA regulates but does not grant funds directly. Funding will flow through DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) mechanisms to institutions meeting accreditation standards — ending the UGC grant-dependent culture that critics say has stifled institutional autonomy.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **Bodies being dissolved:** UGC (1956) — established under UGC Act; AICTE (1987) — technical education; NCTE (1993/1995) — teacher training; all under Ministry of Education.
- **Excluded from VBSA:** Medical education (NMC — National Medical Commission Act 2019), Legal education (BCI — Advocates Act 1961), Agricultural universities (ICAR), Defence education (NDA, IMA).
- **NEP 2020 connection:** NEP 2020 recommended creating a single Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) with four verticals: Regulation, Accreditation, Funding, Academic standards — VBSA consolidates three of these four.
- **Opposition concern:** Parliamentary panel noted risk of power concentration; State universities (Est. under State legislation) fear Central regulatory overreach; private deemed universities flag accreditation monopoly risk.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Remember the four “excluded bodies” not under VBSA: NMC (medicine), BCI (law), ICAR (agriculture), defence education institutions. Why? Each has its own specialist Act — and merging them into VBSA would create conflicts with their respective ministry oversight (Health, Law, Agriculture, Defence). A clean Prelims elimination question.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2020: “Analyse the role of National Education Policy 2020 in transforming India’s higher education landscape.” | Prelims 2018: UGC is a statutory body under UGC Act 1956, NOT a constitutional body | Prelims 2021: NAAC is under UGC (accreditation body — will transition to VBSA’s Accreditation Council).

GS2

VBSA Bill 2025

UGC Dissolution

AICTE

NCTE

NEP 2020

NAAC

NMC

Accreditation Council

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The VBSA Bill is a GS2 Mains answer in waiting — education reform meets federalism, regulatory consolidation, and NEP 2020 implementation. **LAKSHYAM AIR1** students:



§6 Economy

GS3

MSME · Ease of Doing Business · Legislative Reform

20 July 2026 · Source: ANI / India TV / Sarkaritel / A2Z Taxcorp

MSME Development (Amendment) Bill 2026 — Stronger Payment Enforcement, MSEFC Flexibility & Arbitral Award Implementation for India's 6.3 Crore Enterprises

Why in News: The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill 2026 has been listed for introduction and passage in the Monsoon Session. It amends the MSME Development Act 2006 to significantly strengthen the delayed payment enforcement framework — the single biggest pain point for MSMEs, which collectively employ over 11 crore people and contribute ~29% of India's GDP and ~47% of total exports.

Background: The MSME Development Act 2006 established Micro & Small Enterprises Facilitation Councils (MSEFCs) to resolve payment disputes between MSMEs and larger buyers. However, MSEFCs have been chronically under-resourced, with States creating very few councils — leading to massive backlogs. Arbitral awards from MSEFCs were often ignored by large corporate buyers, requiring MSMEs to go to courts.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **MSME scale:** 6.3 crore registered MSMEs (Udyam portal as of 2026); ~11 crore employment; 29% of GDP; 47% of total exports; Micro = investment up to ₹1 cr, Small = up to ₹10 cr, Medium = up to ₹50 cr (revised limits 2020).
- **Bill's key amendments:** Strengthen MSEFC dispute resolution mechanism; enable enforcement of arbitral awards for MSEs (micro + small only, not medium); allow States flexibility to constitute additional MSEFCs; introduce trust-based compliance framework.
- **Section 16 of MSME Act 2006:** Currently mandates payment within 45 days; buyers who delay must pay compound interest at 3x RBI bank rate — Bill tightens enforcement of this via MSEFC.

- **Udyam Registration:** Portal launched 2020; replaced Udyog Aadhaar; integrates with GST and IT databases for classification; ~6.3 crore MSMEs registered by 2026.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Remember “MSME = 29-47 rule”: 29% of GDP + 47% of exports. For Prelims: MSEFC (Micro & Small Enterprises Facilitation Council) is NOT a national body — it’s set up by each *State/UT* government. Common trap: MSMED Act 2006 covers Micro + Small + Medium, but MSEFC dispute resolution is only for Micro & Small (MSEs).

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018: “What are the benefits of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector? Discuss the challenges they face.” | Prelims 2023: Section 15 & 16 of MSME Act 2006 relate to delayed payment provisions and interest penalty at 3x RBI bank rate.

GS3

MSME Development Act 2006

MSEFC

Delayed Payment

Udyam Registration

Arbitral Award Enforcement

Ease of Doing Business

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MSME reform + delayed payments = perennial GS3 topic. **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ**
Writing students: practice answer on “Challenges in MSME credit access and payment recovery — suggest reforms.” theiasakademia.com

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

7

6

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Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified. Zero repeated topics.

5

NEWS CARDS

4

GS PAPERS COVERED

10

HEADLINES

12

PYQ LINKAGES

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

Higher Education

International Relations

Space Technology

MSME / Economy

✓ All news sourced from PIB, LiveLaw, SCC Online, ANI, Space Launch Live — verified primary sources

✓ Every topic cross-checked against 25-year UPSC question bank — GS linkage confirmed

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — FCRA, Exercise Pitch Black, NEET Bill (covered Jul 18–19) excluded

✓ File size maintained under 90,000 characters per GoDaddy compliance rules

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