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PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Thursday, 30 July 2026

§1 · TOP 12 HEADLINES

1. Sarnath inscribed as India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site at the 48th World Heritage Committee session, Busan **GS1**
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11. National CAMPA advances conservation projects for river dolphins, Wild Water Buffalo, rhinos and snow leopards **ENV**
12. Places in News: Sarnath, Beijing, Odisha, Kulasekharapatnam and more feature on today's map **ENV**

§2 · POLITY & GOVERNANCE

GS1

Art & Culture · World Heritage

25 July 2026 · Source: UNESCO / PIB / The Hindu

Sarnath Inscribed as India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage Site

Why in News: At the 48th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Busan, South Korea, UNESCO inscribed Sarnath — where the Buddha delivered his first sermon — as India's 45th World Heritage property on July 25, 2026.

Background: Sarnath's Ashokan Pillar, Dhamek Stupa and monastic ruins have anchored Buddhist pilgrimage and archaeology for over a century; the inscription follows years of dossier preparation by the Archaeological Survey of India.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Sarnath becomes India's 45th UNESCO World Heritage property, inscribed July 25, 2026 at the 48th session in Busan, South Korea.
- Marks the site of the Buddha's first sermon (Dhammacakkappavattana), one of Buddhism's four most sacred sites alongside Lumbini, Bodh Gaya and Kushinagar.
- Key monuments: the Ashokan Pillar (bearing the Lion Capital, India's national emblem), Dhamek Stupa, Chaukhandi Stupa, and the Sarnath Archaeological Museum.
- India now holds 45 UNESCO World Heritage Sites overall, spanning Cultural, Natural and Mixed categories.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember the "four sacred steps of the Buddha" — Lumbini (birth), Bodh Gaya (enlightenment), Sarnath (first sermon), Kushinagar (mahaparinirvana) — Sarnath is the "sermon" stop, now UNESCO-listed alongside Bodh Gaya.

 PYQ LINKAGE

GS1 (recurring): "Buddhist sites and their significance — UNESCO World Heritage recognition."

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. Sarnath is associated with which event in the Buddha's life? (a) Birth (b) Enlightenment (c) First Sermon (d) Mahaparinirvana. **Answer:** (c).

GS1

UNESCO World Heritage

Sarnath

Buddhist Heritage

GS2

Social Justice · Reservation Policy

28 July 2026 · Source: LiveLaw / Bar and Bench

Supreme Court: ₹8 Lakh EWS Income Ceiling "Prima Facie Reasonable"

Why in News: Hearing petitions challenging the ₹8 lakh annual family income ceiling for the EWS quota in NEET All India Quota admissions, a bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe orally observed on July 28, 2026 that the limit appeared "prima facie reasonable."

Background: The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019 introduced a 10% EWS reservation among the general category, capped by an income/asset ceiling that has faced repeated legal challenges over its uniform, non-region-specific design.

 KEY FACTS

- Bench: Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe; oral observation made July 28, 2026, in the NEET All India Quota (AIQ) context.
- EWS reservation (10%) was introduced by the 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019, adding Articles 15(6) and 16(6).
- The ₹8 lakh ceiling has been criticised as arbitrary since it mirrors the OBC "creamy layer" limit despite EWS having no caste basis.
- The same ₹8 lakh ceiling was upheld in principle by a 3:2 majority in the Supreme Court's 2022 Constitution Bench ruling, Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India.

 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember "103 unlocks 15(6)/16(6)" — the 103rd Amendment (2019) inserted Articles 15(6) and 16(6) to carve out EWS reservation, upheld 3:2 in Janhit Abhiyan (2022).

 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 (recurring): "EWS reservation, the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, and Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India."

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The EWS reservation of 10% was introduced through which Constitutional Amendment? (a) 101st (b) 102nd (c) 103rd (d) 104th. **Answer:** (c).

GS2

EWS Reservation

103rd Amendment

Janhit Abhiyan

GS2

Constitutional Bodies

28-29 July 2026 · Source: LiveLaw / Bar and Bench

Supreme Court: National Commission for Scheduled Castes Has No Adjudicatory Role, Only Advisory

Why in News: Setting aside a Bombay High Court ruling, a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and A.G. Masih held that the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) under Article 338 lacks any adjudicatory or binding-decision power over service matters, arising from a dispute involving the Mumbai Port Authority.

Background: Article 338 (post the 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, which split the combined SC/ST Commission into separate NCSC and NCST bodies) equips the Commission with civil-court-like powers only for investigation, not for passing binding orders like a tribunal.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Bench: Justices Sanjay Karol and A.G. Masih; ruling set aside a Bombay High Court order arising from a Mumbai Port Authority service dispute.
- NCSC derives its mandate from Article 338, established as a body separate from NCST via the 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003.
- NCSC has civil court powers only for investigation (summoning witnesses, requiring document production) — not for adjudicating or passing binding orders.
- The ruling clarifies the constitutional boundary between advisory/recommendatory bodies and adjudicatory tribunals.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember "89 splits, 338 empowers (but doesn't adjudicate)" — the 89th Amendment (2003) split the joint SC/ST Commission into NCSC (Art. 338) and NCST (Art. 338A); both keep civil-court powers for inquiry only, never adjudication.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 (recurring): "Constitutional bodies — NCSC/NCST composition, powers and limitations."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes derives its constitutional mandate from which Article? (a) Article 330 (b) Article 335 (c) Article 338 (d) Article 340. **Answer: (c).**

GS2

NCSC

Article 338

Constitutional Bodies

GS2

Border Area Development

26 July 2026 · Source: PIB

PM Interacts With Vibrant Village Programme 2026 Participants From India's Border Villages

Why in News: The Prime Minister interacted on July 26, 2026 with participants of the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP), a scheme aimed at reversing depopulation and building infrastructure in India's remote border villages.

Background: Approved in February 2023 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, VVP covers border blocks across Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand, focusing on roads, housing, connectivity and livelihood support to check migration from border areas.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) covers border villages in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand.
- Originally approved February 2023 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Home Affairs' Border Management Division.
- Focus areas: roads, housing, drinking water, decentralised renewable energy, telecom connectivity, tourist centres and livelihood generation.
- Aims to reverse depopulation from border villages by making them economically vibrant "first villages" rather than "last villages."

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember "last village becomes first village" — VVP reframes India's remotest border villages, once seen as the "last" village on the map, as the "first" village a visitor encounters.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 (recurring): "Border area development schemes — Vibrant Village Programme and BADP."

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The Vibrant Village Programme primarily targets border villages in which of the following? (a) Only Jammu & Kashmir (b) Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand (c) Only North-Eastern states (d) Only coastal states. **Answer: (b).**

GS2

Vibrant Village Programme

Border Development

MHA

§3 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GS2

Bilateral Relations · Neighbourhood

28 July 2026 · Source: MEA / The Week

India, China Reaffirm Border Peace and Tranquility During Foreign Secretary's Beijing Visit

Why in News: During a two-day visit to Beijing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri held talks with senior Chinese leaders on July 28, 2026, with both sides reaffirming that peace and tranquility along the India-China border remains essential to deepening bilateral cooperation.

Background: India-China relations have been gradually normalising since the October 2024 disengagement agreement at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), following the 2020 Galwan Valley clash; border peace remains a foundational precondition both sides link to progress in trade and exchanges.

 KEY FACTS

- FS Vikram Misri's two-day Beijing visit; talks held with China's Vice Foreign Minister and Vice Minister of the CPC Central Committee's International Department, dated July 28, 2026.
- Both sides reaffirmed peace and tranquility along the India-China border areas as essential for bilateral cooperation.
- Builds on the October 2024 disengagement agreement reached ahead of the Kazan BRICS Summit, restoring patrolling arrangements at Depsang and Demchok.
- The 2020 Galwan Valley clash remains the reference point for the current de-escalation and confidence-building process.

 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember "2020 clash, 2024 disengagement, 2026 dialogue" — Galwan (2020) froze ties, the Kazan-linked disengagement (Oct 2024) restored patrolling, and 2026's visits build on that normalisation.

 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 (recurring): "India-China relations — LAC disengagement and border management mechanisms."

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The October 2024 India-China disengagement agreement was reached ahead of which multilateral summit? (a) G20 (b) SCO (c) BRICS (Kazan) (d) ASEAN. **Answer: (c).**

GS2

India-China Relations

LAC

Foreign Secretary

§4 · DEFENCE & SECURITY

DRDO Showcases Seven Indigenous Defence Technologies Placing India Among Advanced Military Powers

Why in News: DRDO publicly listed seven flagship indigenous defence technologies — spanning land warfare, aerospace, missile defence, underwater propulsion and space security — that it says place India among a small group of nations capable of independently developing such systems, in a showcase reported July 29, 2026.

Background: The list follows years of Aatmanirbhar Bharat-driven import substitution in defence, with DRDO's laboratories working across categories from ballistic missile defence to unmanned systems to cut India's historical dependence on imported critical defence technology.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- DRDO showcase (reported July 29, 2026) spans five domains: land warfare, aerospace, missile defence, underwater propulsion, and space security.
- Reflects India's push toward self-reliance in "critical and complex" defence technologies, not merely assembly-level indigenisation.
- Comes amid a broader government push to cut import dependence, alongside the Positive Indigenisation Lists administered by the Department of Defence Production.
- DRDO operates 41+ laboratories/establishments across India under the Ministry of Defence.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember DRDO's "L-A-M-U-S" domains — Land warfare, Aerospace, Missile defence, Underwater propulsion, Space security — five advanced-technology baskets highlighted in this showcase.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence production — DRDO's role and indigenisation lists."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The Positive Indigenisation Lists for defence equipment are administered under which body? (a) DRDO (b) Department of Defence Production (c) Ordnance Factory Board (d) Defence Acquisition Council. **Answer: (b).**

GS3

DRDO

Aatmanirbhar Bharat

Defence Indigenisation

§5 · SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Gaganyaan Mission: Government Tells Parliament First Uncrewed Flight Nears Readiness

Why in News: The government informed Parliament during the ongoing Monsoon Session that critical Gaganyaan launch systems, spacecraft components and mission infrastructure are either completed or nearing readiness ahead of the first uncrewed mission (G1), with details shared July 29, 2026.

Background: Gaganyaan is India's indigenous human spaceflight programme; ISRO has structured it around uncrewed test flights (with humanoid Vyommitra) before any crewed mission, prioritising safety validation of the crew module, launch vehicle and life-support systems.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Human Rated Launch Vehicle (HLMV3) has completed development and ground testing of all propulsion stages and structural systems.
- Crew Module and Service Module propulsion systems have been developed, tested and qualified.
- Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS), developed indigenously by ISRO, regulates temperature, humidity, pressure and CO2 inside the Crew Module; a reduced version will fly on uncrewed missions.
- ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan has indicated G1 (first uncrewed mission) may extend into Q3 2027, pushing the crewed flight toward 2028 or later.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember Gaganyaan's safety ladder — uncrewed G1 (with humanoid Vyommitra) must succeed before any crewed flight; ECLSS, HLMV3, and Crew/Service Module propulsion are the technology pillars being validated first.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Gaganyaan Mission — objectives, indigenous systems and human spaceflight readiness."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. The humanoid robot to be flown on Gaganyaan's uncrewed test missions is named: (a) Pragyan (b) Vyommitra (c) Rohini (d) Aryabhata.
Answer: (b).

GS3

Gaganyaan

ISRO

Human Spaceflight

GS3

Defence-Space Convergence

29 July 2026 · Source: Raksha Anirveda

DRDO Charts Strategic Alliance With ISRO's Upcoming Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport

Why in News: DRDO announced on July 29, 2026 that it is drawing up a strategic roadmap to utilise ISRO's upcoming spaceport at Kulasekharapatnam in Tamil Nadu, deepening convergence between India's military and civilian aerospace capabilities.

Background: Kulasekharapatnam is being developed as India's second spaceport, mainly to support Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) operations and reduce congestion at the existing Satish Dhawan Space Centre, opening possibilities for dedicated defence-related launch access.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Announcement dated July 29, 2026; concerns DRDO's roadmap to use ISRO's new spaceport at Kulasekharapatnam, Tamil Nadu.
- Kulasekharapatnam is India's second spaceport, developed primarily to support Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) missions.
- The alliance reflects deepening defence-space convergence relevant to India's military satellite and space-security ambitions.
- Complements existing Sriharikota (Satish Dhawan Space Centre) operations rather than replacing them.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember "Sriharikota is the original, Kulasekharapatnam is the SSLV specialist" — India's second spaceport is purpose-built for small satellite launches, distinguishing it from Sriharikota's broader multi-vehicle role.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "India's spaceport infrastructure and defence-space convergence."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. India's second spaceport, developed primarily for Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) missions, is located at: (a) Sriharikota (b) Kulasekharapatnam (c) Thumba (d) Chandipur. **Answer: (b).**

§6 · ECONOMY

GS3

External Sector · Monetary Economics

Week ended 17 July 2026, released ~24 July 2026 · Source: RBI Weekly Statistical Supplement

India's Forex Reserves Hit Fresh Record High of \$676.24 Billion

Why in News: RBI's weekly statistical data shows India's foreign exchange reserves rose \$1.08 billion to a fresh record high of \$676.24 billion for the week ended July 17, 2026, driven mainly by a \$4.55 billion increase in foreign currency assets.

Background: Forex reserves — comprising foreign currency assets, gold, SDRs, and India's Reserve Tranche Position with the IMF — serve as a buffer against external shocks and currency volatility; RBI publishes updated figures weekly with roughly a week's lag.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Reserves rose \$1.08 billion to \$676.24 billion for the week ended July 17, 2026 — a fresh record high.
- Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), the largest component, rose by \$4.55 billion during the week.
- Forex reserves comprise four components: Foreign Currency Assets, Gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and Reserve Tranche Position (RTP) with the IMF.
- Reserve adequacy is typically benchmarked in months of import cover — a standard external-sector stability indicator.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Trick: remember forex reserves' "FC-G-S-R" formula — Foreign Currency assets, Gold, SDRs, Reserve Tranche Position — the four components RBI reports weekly, with FCA almost always the largest share.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 (recurring): "Foreign exchange reserves — composition, adequacy and RBI's reporting mechanism."

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Q. India's foreign exchange reserves do NOT include which of the following? (a) Gold held by RBI (b) Special Drawing Rights (c) External Commercial Borrowings (d) Reserve Tranche Position with IMF. **Answer: (c).**

GS3

Forex Reserves

RBI

External Sector

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