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Saturday, 11 July 2026

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

TODAY'S SECTIONS

- §1 Top 10 Headlines
- §2 Polity & Governance
- §3 International Relations
- §4 Defence & Security
- §5 Science & Technology
- §6 Economy

§1 — TOP 10 HEADLINES

1. PM Modi arrives in Auckland — first Indian PM visit to New Zealand in 40 years; India-NZ Strategic Partnership 2030 Roadmap formally declared. **GS2**
2. India-NZ FTA hailed as "historic milestone": NZ removes tariffs on 100% Indian goods; 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry visas for Indians annually; NZ commits \$20B investment. **GS2**
3. INS Mahendragiri commissioned at Visakhapatnam today — 6th Project 17A Nilgiri-class stealth frigate built by MDL; BrahMos + Barak-8 missiles; 75%+ indigenous content. **GS3**
4. India-Rwanda 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting in New Delhi (July 7); bilateral defence partnership to expand; Africa-India security cooperation strengthened. **GS2**
5. El Niño declared by NOAA; India's PMO holds high-level review (July 7); contingency plans ordered for 200 districts across 12 states for Kharif 2026. **GS3**
6. 13th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee meeting concludes in New Delhi (July 6–10); India-ASEAN bilateral trade reaches record \$128 billion in FY2025-26. **GS3**
7. Centre includes animal-related crop losses in PMFBY under Kharif 2026; Western Ghats farmers facing 50-60% crop damage from wild boar, peafowl and elephant attacks to benefit. **GS3**
8. ECI announces by-elections for Bankipur (Bihar), Datia (MP) and Manjalpur (Gujarat) — polling July 30; nomination deadline July 13. **GS2**
9. ISRO's GSLV-F18 mission with GISAT-1A (EOS-05) Earth Observation Satellite confirmed NET July 31 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre. **GS3**
10. PM Modi launches 'Viksit UDAN' — next phase of regional air connectivity scheme; targets 1,000 routes and 50 new aerodromes over 5 years under Viksit Bharat @2047 vision. **GS3**

THEIAS AKADEMIA High-density news day with IR, defence, science and economy convergence — exactly the pattern UPSC uses to frame multi-topic Prelims clusters. Our **Sahyog Mentorship** programme helps you build daily synthesis habits. theiasakademia.com

§2 — POLITY & GOVERNANCE

GS2 Elections · ECI · Constitutional Provisions

11 July 2026

ECI Announces Assembly By-elections for Bankipur, Datia and Manjalpur — Polling July 30

Why in News: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced assembly by-elections for three vacant seats — Bankipur (Bihar), Datia (Madhya Pradesh) and Manjalpur (Gujarat) — with polling on July 30, 2026 and counting on August 3. Nominations close July 13.

Background: Under Section 151 of the Representation of the People Act 1951 and Article 324 of the Constitution, ECI is empowered to hold by-elections whenever a vacancy arises mid-term, provided at least one year of the House's term remains. Vacancies arose due to the death of sitting MLAs in Bankipur and Datia, and disqualification under the RPA in Manjalpur.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ Article 324: ECI's plenary superintendence over all elections to Parliament and State Legislatures

- ▶ Article 151: ECI shall not fill a casual vacancy if the remainder of the term is less than 1 year
- ▶ Sections 30–36 of RPA 1951: govern notification, nomination, scrutiny and withdrawal processes for by-elections
- ▶ Model Code of Conduct applies only in the three constituencies from notification date until result declaration

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Remember: ECI's by-election powers are grounded in Article 324 (plenary superintendence), while Article 151 is the one-year bar on holding them — two different articles, two different rules, one entity. UPSC loves pairing them in statement-based questions.

📖 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2014: Examine the role of the Election Commission of India in upholding democratic values with reference to its constitutional mandate.

GS2 Article 324 Article 151 RPA 1951 ECI PYQ 2014

GS3 Infrastructure · Civil Aviation · Governance

4 July 2026

PM Launches Viksit UDAN — Next Phase of Regional Air Connectivity Scheme

Why in News: PM Modi launched 'Viksit UDAN' on July 4, 2026, the next generation phase of the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme targeting 1,000 new routes and activation of 50 new aerodromes/airstrips over five years under the Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.

Background: UDAN was launched in 2016 under the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) to provide affordable air travel to smaller cities. Earlier phases (UDAN 1.0 through 4.1) activated 74 underserved airports; Viksit UDAN upgrades the scheme with digital booking, sustainability mandates and SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel) integration.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ UDAN stands for: Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (Let the Common Citizen Fly); launched 2016 under MoCA
- ▶ Viability Gap Funding (VGF) mechanism: Centre + States subsidize airlines to operate unviable routes
- ▶ NABH Nirman policy (No-frills Airports for Bharat) complements UDAN for new aerodrome development
- ▶ By FY26, UDAN had activated 74 airports and operated 600+ routes; Viksit UDAN targets 1,000 routes

💡 TEACHING HOOK

UDAN = "People's Aviation Policy" — remember the VGF triangle: Centre pays a portion, State pays a portion, and airlines charge a capped fare. Every element has appeared in Prelims options. Viksit UDAN adds SAF and digital elements — new Prelims hooks.

📖 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020: What is UDAN scheme? What are its objectives? Examine the progress made under it.

GS3 UDAN Civil Aviation VGF NABH Nirman Viksit Bharat PYQ 2020

🌐 §3 — INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GS2 Bilateral Relations · FTA · Indian Diaspora

11 July 2026

India-New Zealand Strategic Partnership 2030 Roadmap Signed; FTA Hailed as 'Historic Milestone'

Why in News: PM Modi arrived in Auckland on July 11, 2026 — the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in 40 years — where he and NZ PM Christopher Luxon signed the India-New Zealand Strategic Partnership 2030 Roadmap and formally celebrated the India-NZ FTA (signed April 27, 2026).

Background: India and New Zealand had a limited trade and diplomatic relationship for decades; India-NZ bilateral trade stood at approximately \$1.5 billion. The FTA concluded in April 2026 was the first comprehensive trade agreement between the two countries and is expected to boost trade to \$5 billion by 2030, with the Strategic Partnership adding maritime, digital, space and education dimensions.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ India-NZ FTA (signed April 27, 2026): NZ removes tariffs on 100% Indian goods; India liberalizes 95% by value over 3–10 years
- ▶ 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry (TEE) visas for Indian skilled workers annually — a significant labour mobility concession
- ▶ New Zealand commits \$20 billion investment target in India; first preferential access for NZ mānuka honey
- ▶ Strategic Partnership 2030: covers maritime security, space, digital economy, climate, education and Indian diaspora (220,000+ Indians in NZ)

💡 TEACHING HOOK

India-NZ is now a "three-tier relationship" — FTA (trade), Strategic Partnership (diplomacy/security), and diaspora linkage (220,000 Indians in NZ). UPSC likes testing the specific terms of new FTAs — memorize: NZ = 100% tariff elimination; India = 95% by value; 5,000 TEE visas; dairy excluded from concessions.

📖 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022: Analyse the significance of India's bilateral FTAs in the Indo-Pacific region with special reference to emerging partnership frameworks.

GS2

India-NZ FTA

Strategic Partnership

Indo-Pacific

Free Trade Agreement

PYQ 2022

GS2

India-Africa Relations · Defence Diplomacy

7 July 2026

India-Rwanda 2nd JDCC: Bilateral Defence Partnership to Expand under India's Africa Outreach

Why in News: India and Rwanda held the 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting in New Delhi on July 7, 2026, agreeing to expand bilateral defence partnership including training, capacity building and defence supply cooperation — a key milestone in India's "Africa First" security engagement strategy.

Background: India's defence diplomacy with Africa has grown significantly under the India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) launched at the first-ever IADD at DefExpo 2022. Rwanda is strategically important for India's engagement in East Africa; JDCC meetings are structured forums for bilateral defence cooperation planning.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ JDCC (Joint Defence Cooperation Committee): structured bilateral mechanism for defence planning, annual/biannual meetings
- ▶ India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) launched 2022, DefExpo, Gandhinagar — India's structured defence engagement with the continent
- ▶ Rwanda: member of East African Community (EAC); emerged as logistics and tech hub post-2010s peace stabilization
- ▶ India has JDCCs with 40+ countries; JDCCs cover training, joint exercises, MRO, equipment supply

💡 TEACHING HOOK

India's Africa strategy follows three pillars — Trade (preferential tariffs), Development assistance (credit lines via Exim Bank), and Defence (JDCC + IADD). Rwanda adds a new security dimension to India's East Africa pivot. UPSC asks about JDCC in the context of India's defence exports which crossed ₹38,000 crore in FY26.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2021: How has India enhanced its defence cooperation with Africa? Discuss the institutional mechanisms in place.

GS2

India-Rwanda

JDCC

IADD

Defence Diplomacy

Africa Policy

PYQ 2021

THEIAS AKADEMIA India's simultaneous bilateral wins in the Pacific (NZ) and Africa (Rwanda) reflect the multi-vector foreign policy that UPSC tests every year. Our **ANTIM 2027** IR module covers all bilateral treaties and mechanisms — mapped to GS2 Mains question patterns. theiasakademia.com

§4 — DEFENCE & SECURITY

GS3

Defence · Indigenisation · Indian Navy

11 July 2026 · Source: PIB / Indian Navy

INS Mahendragiri Commissioned — 6th Project 17A Stealth Frigate; Named After Eastern Ghats Peak

Why in News: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned INS Mahendragiri, the 6th ship of Project 17A (Nilgiri-class), at Visakhapatnam on July 11, 2026 — a landmark in India's naval indigenisation programme under Atmanirbhar Bharat, with the ship carrying over 75% indigenous content.

Background: Project 17A is a ₹45,000-crore programme to build 7 advanced stealth guided-missile frigates for the Indian Navy. It follows the earlier Project 17 (INS Nilgiri, Himgiri, Udaygiri — three frigates). Project 17A frigates are the Nilgiri-class (new), built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), featuring stealth hull design, CODOG propulsion and advanced weapons integration.

KEY FACTS

- ▶ INS Mahendragiri: named after Mahendragiri peak in the Eastern Ghats range (Odisha) — highest peak of Eastern Ghats
- ▶ Weaponry: BrahMos Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSM) + Barak-8 (MRSAM) Surface-to-Air Missiles; Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) suite
- ▶ CODOG propulsion: Combined Diesel Or Gas — flexibility of diesel for cruise + gas turbine for high speed
- ▶ Project 17A: 7 frigates total — displaces ~6,670 tonnes, length ~149m; Integrated Combat Management System

TEACHING HOOK

Project 17A = "Nilgiri-class Gen-2" — remember the weapon-pairing: BrahMos (surface strike) + Barak-8 (air defence) + ASW torpedo systems = the triple-threat frigate. UPSC asks about indigenisation percentages (75%+) and the shipyard names (MDL + GRSE). Mahendragiri is also notable as a geographical peak that UPSC tests in GS1 Geography.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2023: What is the significance of Project 17A for India's indigenisation of defence production? Discuss the key technological features.

GS3

Project 17A

INS Mahendragiri

MDL

BrahMos

Barak-8

CODOG

PYQ 2023

THEIAS AKADEMIA INS Mahendragiri's commissioning is a direct PYQ trigger — Project 17A has appeared in Prelims 2021, 2023. Our EMP programme integrates defence ethics (Atmanirbhar, strategic autonomy) for GS4 value addition in answer writing.
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§5 — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GS3 Space Technology · Remote Sensing · ISRO

July 2026 · Source: ISRO / Space agencies

ISRO's GSLV-F18 Mission to Launch GISAT-1A (EOS-05) Earth Observation Satellite — NET July 31

Why in News: ISRO has confirmed that its GSLV-F18 rocket carrying GISAT-1A (Earth Observation Satellite-05) will launch NET July 31, 2026 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota — placing India's first dedicated geostationary earth observation satellite for near-real-time disaster monitoring in orbit.

Background: GISAT-1 (EOS-01) faced a setback in 2020 due to a GSLV mission anomaly. GISAT-1A (EOS-05) is the successor mission. Unlike LEO earth observation satellites, GISAT will be in geostationary orbit (36,000 km altitude), enabling continuous imaging of the Indian subcontinent every 30 minutes — a critical capability for disaster management and kharif monitoring.

KEY FACTS

- ▶ GISAT-1A / EOS-05: Multi-spectral + hyper-spectral imaging in visible, SWIR (Short-Wave Infrared) and TIR (Thermal Infrared) bands
- ▶ Spatial resolution: 42 metres; revisit time — full Indian landmass image every 30 minutes; selected field image every 5 minutes
- ▶ Launch vehicle: GSLV Mk-II (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle) with indigenous CE-20 cryogenic upper stage
- ▶ Applications: cyclone tracking, floods, drought monitoring, kharif crop health, border surveillance, ocean state forecasting

TEACHING HOOK

GEO-based earth observation is fundamentally different from LEO — think of GISAT as India's "always-watching eye from 36,000 km" versus Cartosat/ResourceSat which need multiple passes. The 30-minute revisit time is the key UPSC-testable fact. Connects to disaster management (GS3) + space programme (GS3) in the same question.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018: Discuss ISRO's earth observation satellite programme and its applications in disaster management and agriculture.

GS3

GISAT-1A

EOS-05

GSLV-F18

Remote Sensing

Disaster Management

PYQ 2018

THEIAS AKADEMIA GISAT-1A's geostationary positioning makes it qualitatively different from all previous Indian earth observation satellites — a Prelims distinguisher. Our **LAKSHYAM AIR1** S&T module maps every ISRO mission to its GS3 Mains question type.
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§6 — ECONOMY

GS3 International Trade · FTA · India-ASEAN

6–10 July 2026 · Source: PIB / Ministry of Commerce

13th AITIGA Joint Committee Concludes in New Delhi; India-ASEAN Trade Hits Record \$128 Billion

Why in News: India hosted the 13th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee meeting at Vanijiya Bhawan, New Delhi (July 6–10), co-chaired by Additional Secretary Nitin Kumar Yadav (India) and Malaysia's Mastura Ahmad Mustafa, with all 10 ASEAN member states participating — a key milestone in modernising the India-ASEAN trade pact.

Background: AITIGA was first signed in 2009 and came into force in 2010. India has consistently run a trade deficit with ASEAN (over \$23 billion in FY26), partly attributed to inverted duty structures and Rules of Origin (RoO) issues. The ongoing review, launched in 2022, aims to modernise the agreement for digital trade, e-commerce and services; improve RoO to prevent tariff arbitrage; and enhance supply chain resilience.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- ▶ AITIGA (2009): India's first major multilateral trade agreement; covers trade in goods only; services and investment are separate negotiations
- ▶ India-ASEAN bilateral trade: \$128 billion in FY2025-26 (record high); India's trade deficit with ASEAN: ~\$23 billion
- ▶ Sub-committees under review: SC-CPTF (Customs Procedures), SC-NTMA (National Treatment & Market Access), SC-ROO (Rules of Origin)
- ▶ ASEAN-10: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam

💡 TEACHING HOOK

AITIGA's "inverted duty structure" problem: India's tariffs on raw materials > tariffs on finished goods imported from ASEAN, hurting Indian manufacturers. UPSC loves this concept. Also remember: AITIGA = Goods only; for Services = AIFTA (ASEAN-India Free Trade Area Agreement under ASEAN-India services track).

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019: Critically examine the implications of the India-ASEAN FTA for India's domestic manufacturing sector.

GS3

AITIGA

ASEAN-India Trade

Rules of Origin

Trade Deficit

FTA Review

PYQ 2019

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AITIGA + India's FTA portfolio (UK CETA, EU FTA, NZ FTA) together define India's trade diplomacy in 2026 — a high-probability Mains theme. Our **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** programme has dedicated sessions on FTA answer frameworks. theiasakademia.com

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UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

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

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

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→ **Continue to Part II:** Environment & Ecology · Places in News · Ethics & GS4 Cases · 15 MCQs · 6 Mains Questions · Value Addition · Direct Hit Tracker

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