

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

Morning Edition

The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

Sunday, 21 June 2026 | Morning Edition

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SECTION 1

Top Headlines

- 01** Bimal N. Patel elected judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) for a nine-year term (2026–2035). **GS2**
- 02** PM Modi's historic first visit to Slovakia since independence (1993); bilateral ties elevated to Comprehensive Partnership with 14 key outcomes. **GS2**
- 03** India-US Trade Deal: reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods reduced from 25% to 18%, aligning India with most Asian peers (15–19% range). **GS3**
- 04** Supreme Court releases Draft Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Courts, 2026 — first-ever judicial AI framework. **GS2**
- 05** RBI holds repo rate at 5.25%; projects real GDP growth at 6.6% for 2026–27; forex reserves at USD 682.3 billion. **GS3**
- 06** Nagastra-1 loitering munition fully inducted into Indian Army; Bhargavastra drone-swarm system completing final evaluation for 2026 induction. **GS3**
- 07** Dhruva Space to establish 2.80 lakh sq ft Assembly, Integration and Testing (AIT) facility near Hyderabad — India's largest private space manufacturing hub. **GS3**
- 08** SOE 2026 Report (CSE/Down to Earth): 7 of 9 planetary boundaries now breached; ocean acidification enters the list for the first time. **GS3**

09 Safran Aircraft Engines & India's Cyran Tech sign MoU on AI-driven aerospace and defence solutions at Bharat Innovates 2026 (Nice, France).

GS3

10 NIUA (National Institute of Urban Affairs) celebrates Golden Jubilee (50 years) under theme 'Resilient Urban India @2047'.

GS2

TheIAS Akademia

With 10 high-impact headlines spanning GS2 and GS3, today is exactly the kind of high-density news day where 1-on-1 mentorship makes the difference — enrol in

Sahyog Mentorship at theiasakademia.com and get a personalised daily reading plan.

SECTION 2

Polity & Governance

GS2

Judiciary | Technology & Law

21 June 2026

Supreme Court Releases Draft AI Regulations for Courts, 2026

What happened: The Supreme Court of India released draft 'Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Courts, 2026' — the first-ever comprehensive framework governing AI deployment within the Indian judicial system. The regulations address AI in case management, legal research, translation, and judicial assistance, while explicitly barring AI from making judicial decisions.

Why it matters for UPSC: This connects GS2 themes of judicial independence, technology in governance, and the constitutional principle of fair trial. It can be tested as a Prelims question on recent SC initiatives or as a Mains question on AI ethics in justice delivery.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- First-ever AI governance framework for Indian courts issued by the Supreme Court.
- Prohibits AI from replacing judicial decision-making; AI to be used only as an assistive tool.
- Covers: case management systems, legal research, translation, transcription, and citizen-facing interfaces.
- Aligns with India's approach under the DPDP Act 2023 on responsible data use.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Think of judicial AI as a "law clerk with no vote" — it can research, organise, and translate, but the gavel stays with the judge. This mirrors the constitutional principle: courts must be human-accountable institutions. Mnemonic: **A.I. = Assistance, not Independence** in courts.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2023 GS2: "What are the challenges to an independent functioning of the judiciary in India?" — Today's AI framework adds a new dimension: technology adoption without compromising independence.

SC (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance 2026 Sparks Debate; Lok Sabha to Roll Out Digital Attendance

What happened: The promulgation of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance 2026 has reignited debate on the misuse of the Ordinance-making power by the executive. Simultaneously, the Lok Sabha is rolling out a digital attendance system from Budget Session 2026, using biometric verification to record the physical presence of MPs inside the House — marking a major step in parliamentary accountability.

Why it matters for UPSC: This card covers two parallel GS2 themes: constitutional limits on the Ordinance power (Article 123) and parliamentary reforms for accountability. Both are high-frequency Prelims and Mains topics.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate Ordinances only when Parliament is not in session; the power is subject to judicial review (DC Wadhwa case, 1987).
- The SC (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance 2026 raises the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court judges beyond 34.
- Lok Sabha digital attendance uses biometric/RFID — aims to reduce proxy attendance and improve quorum compliance.
- India's Supreme Court has the world's largest sanctioned strength of judges among apex courts.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Remember: an Ordinance is Parliament's "gap-filler" — valid only while Parliament is in recess and must be laid before Parliament within 6 weeks of reassembly. The DC Wadhwa principle holds that re-promulgating ordinances without tabling them is a "fraud on the Constitution." Use the mnemonic: **O.R.D.I.N.A.N.C.E. = Occasional Relief During Intervals, Not A Normal Constitutional Exercise.**

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Prelims 2021: Which article of the Constitution empowers the President to promulgate Ordinances? (Ans: Article 123)
| Mains 2019 GS2: "Critically examine the constitutional provisions related to the Ordinance-making power of the President."

SECTION 3

International Relations

PM Modi's Historic Visit to Slovakia — India-Slovakia Comprehensive Partnership

What happened: PM Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to Slovakia on 15–18 June 2026 — the first ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister since Slovakia's independence in 1993. The two nations elevated bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership and announced 14 key outcomes spanning defence, digital technologies (AI, semiconductors, 6G, IoT), labour mobility, higher education, and trade.

Why it matters for UPSC: India's pivot towards Central/Eastern Europe is a recurring GS2 theme. The visit reflects India's EU engagement strategy post-CETA and the growing relevance of the V4 (Visegrád Group) for Indian interests in defence

supply chains and skilled migration.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- First visit by an Indian PM to Slovakia since its independence in 1993 — a historic diplomatic milestone.
- Bilateral ties elevated to **Comprehensive Partnership** — 14 outcomes signed.
- Key MoUs: Defence R&D Letter of Intent; Digital Cooperation MoU (AI, semiconductors, 6G, IoT); Labour Mobility MoU.
- Slovakia is a NATO member and EU state — important context for India's balancing act.
- Both countries agreed to strengthen the India-Slovakia Joint Economic Committee.
- Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism established.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Think of India-Slovakia through the **DELTA framework**: **D**efence R&D, **E**ducation/STEM, **L**abour Mobility, **T**rade & Investment, **A**I & Digital Cooperation. This mirrors India's broader European strategy — not just the big-5 (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain) but deep-tech ties with smaller EU tech economies like Slovakia.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2022 GS2: "What is the significance of India-EU relations in the context of a changing global order?" — India-Slovakia is a micro-case illustrating how India diversifies European partnerships beyond legacy ties.

GS2

India's Foreign Policy | Minilaterals | Middle East

21 June 2026

India-Israel Relations: I2U2 and IMEC Redefine Strategic Contours

What happened: A comprehensive assessment of India-Israel relations reveals the bilateral partnership has transformed from a distant buyer-seller defence relationship into a deep strategic, technological, and geopolitical partnership. The partnership is increasingly shaped by minilateral frameworks — particularly I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), announced at the G20 New Delhi Summit 2023.

Why it matters for UPSC: I2U2 and IMEC are among the highest-probability UPSC Prelims and Mains topics in 2026. The strategic logic — bypassing the Suez Canal, creating a rail-sea corridor from India through Gulf states to Europe — is directly testable as GS2 (IR) and GS3 (infrastructure) content.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- **I2U2:** India, Israel, UAE, USA — focused on food security, clean energy, water, transport.
- **IMEC:** India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor — announced at G20 New Delhi Summit, September 2023.
- IMEC route: India → UAE → Saudi Arabia → Jordan → Israel → Greece → Europe (two segments: Eastern Corridor + Northern Corridor).
- India-Israel bilateral trade stands at ~USD 10 billion; defence imports from Israel historically ~USD 1–2 billion/year.
- Israel is India's 3rd largest defence supplier after Russia and France.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

IMEC = the **"New Silk Road with a desert bypass"**. Visualise two segments: **Eastern Corridor** (India to Gulf by sea) + **Northern Corridor** (Gulf to Europe by rail/road). The missing middle? Israel, which provides the Mediterranean port gateway. Mnemonic: **I-MEG** = **I**ndia, **M**iddle East (UAE, KSA, Jordan), **E**urope (Greece/Italy), with **G**ateway Israel.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2023 GS2: "The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor has the potential to transform India's connectivity with the world. Evaluate." | Prelims 2024: Questions on I2U2 members and objectives.

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IR is the section that separates toppers from near-toppers in Mains GS2. **ANTIM 2027**

's structured IR module covers minilaterals, corridors, and India's bilateral architecture in full — visit theiasakademia.com .

SECTION 4

Defence & Security

GS3

Defence Technology | Indigenisation | Drone Warfare

21 June 2026

Nagastra-1 Operational; Bhargavastra Drone-Swarm System Nears Induction

What happened: India has inducted the Nagastra-1, its first indigenous loitering munition ("kamikaze drone"), into active service with the Indian Army. Simultaneously, Bhargavastra — India's first drone-swarm counter-drone system — is completing final military evaluation and environmental stress testing, with full induction and series manufacturing scheduled for end of 2026.

Why it matters for UPSC: Loitering munitions and drone swarms represent the future of warfare, a recurring theme since the Ukraine-Russia conflict. From India's perspective, indigenisation under IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured) policy and the Atmanirbhar Bharat defence roadmap are core GS3 topics.

KEY FACTS

- **Nagastra-1:** Indigenous loitering munition (kamikaze drone); range ~30 km; developed by Economic Explosives Ltd (EEL) under MAKE-II category.
- **Bhargavastra:** Indigenous counter-drone system using drone swarms to neutralise enemy UAVs; developed by Solar Industries India.
- Both systems categorised under IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured) — highest preference category under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.
- India's Drone Policy 2021 and Draft Drone Rules 2025 form the regulatory backbone for military UAV induction.
- Drone warfare lessons from Ukraine-Russia conflict directly influenced India's accelerated induction timeline.

TEACHING HOOK

Distinguish clearly: **Nagastra-1** = offensive (loitering munition that hits the target); **Bhargavastra** = defensive (uses a swarm to intercept enemy drones). Think: **Naga** = strikes like a snake (offensive); **Bhargava** = shields like a protective force (counter-drone). This is a classic UPSC trick-question pairing.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2023 GS3: "The use of autonomous weapon systems raises significant ethical and legal concerns. Discuss." | Prelims 2022: Questions on India's Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 categories.

Safran–Cyran Tech MoU: AI-Powered Aerospace Defence at Bharat Innovates 2026

What happened: At Bharat Innovates 2026 in Nice, France, in the presence of PM Modi and President Emmanuel Macron, Safran Aircraft Engines (France) and India's deep-tech start-up Cyran Tech signed an MoU to jointly develop AI solutions for aerospace and defence. Cyran Tech has developed advanced EdgeAI intelligence suites for real-time automated inspection and predictive maintenance of aircraft engines.

Why it matters for UPSC: This is a triple-overlap story: India-France defence ties (GS2), AI in critical infrastructure (GS3), and India's emerging deep-tech start-up ecosystem (GS3 economy). PM Modi's Europe trip linking France and Slovakia showcases India's strategic pivot.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Safran Aircraft Engines: France-based, makes LEAP engines powering Airbus A320neo and Boeing 737 MAX.
- Cyran Tech's EdgeAI: Real-time automated inspection and predictive maintenance using AI at the edge (without cloud dependency).
- Bharat Innovates 2026: India-hosted innovation pavilion in Nice, France — part of PM Modi's Europe visit.
- India-France Strategic Partnership (1998) has deepened into defence (Rafale, Scorpène submarines, Shakti engines) and space (ISRO-CNES) cooperation.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

EdgeAI = AI without the internet. Unlike cloud AI, Edge AI processes data locally on the device — critical for fighter jets and satellites where latency and secrecy matter. Think: a fighter pilot can't wait for a server response at 2,000 km/h. The Safran-Cyran MoU puts Indian start-ups on the global defence-AI map — a perfect Mains "India's growing technology diplomacy" answer point.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2021 GS2: "Analyse the strategic significance of India-France bilateral relations in the Indo-Pacific." | Prelims 2020: "Rafale is a product of which country?" (France/Dassault Aviation).

TheIAS Akademia

Autonomous weapons, AI in warfare, and the ethics of drone strikes carry deep GS4 dimensions.

EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy) at TheIAS Akademia helps you write nuanced, conceptually grounded GS4 answers —

theiasakademia.com .

SECTION 5

Science & Technology

Dhruva Space to Set Up India's Largest Private Space AIT Facility Near Hyderabad

What happened: Dhruva Space, India's leading private space company, has announced the establishment of a 2.80 lakh square foot Assembly, Integration and Testing (AIT) facility near Hyderabad — set to become India's largest private space manufacturing complex. The facility will cover end-to-end spacecraft engineering, scaled manufacturing, launch integration, ground station infrastructure, and space applications.

Why it matters for UPSC: Private space sector growth under IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) and the Space Sector Reforms 2020 are high-priority GS3 topics. Dhruva Space represents India's emerging new-space ecosystem, directly relevant to questions on science & technology policy.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- AIT (Assembly, Integration & Testing): The facility where satellite components are put together and tested before launch.
- Dhruva Space: Hyderabad-based; has operated ground stations and deployed nanosatellites; backed by IN-SPACe framework.
- **IN-SPACe** (under DoS): Established in 2020 under Space Sector Reforms; acts as single-window regulator for private space entities.
- India's new-space ecosystem: Over 150 space start-ups registered with IN-SPACe as of 2025.
- Hyderabad is home to ISRO's NRSC (National Remote Sensing Centre) and emerging private space cluster.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Think of the space sector reform as **"ISRO as a franchisor, private players as franchisees."** IN-SPACe is the licensing authority; NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) handles commercial launches; private players like Dhruva Space, Agnikul Cosmos, and Skyroot Aerospace are the new-age operators. This 3-entity structure (ISRO + IN-SPACe + NSIL) is a classic Prelims question framework.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2022 GS3: "India's space programme has come a long way with increasing commercialisation. Discuss the role of private sector participation in India's space ambitions." | Prelims 2021: Questions on IN-SPACe's mandate and establishment.

TheIAS Akademia

Space technology is a direct-hit topic in UPSC Prelims 2026–27. **LAKSHYAM AIR1**

's Science & Technology module covers ISRO missions, private space policy, and emerging tech in depth — join at

theiasakademia.com .

SECTION 6

Economy

GS3

Monetary Policy | RBI | Macroeconomics

21 June 2026

RBI Monetary Policy June 2026: Repo Rate Held at 5.25%; GDP at 6.6%, Forex at \$682.3 Billion

What happened: The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25% in its June 2026 meeting, projecting real GDP growth at 6.6% for 2026–27. CPI inflation was projected at 5.1% for the

year. India's foreign exchange reserves stood at USD 682.3 billion as of 29 May 2026 — equivalent to approximately 11 months of import cover and 89.1% of external debt.

Why it matters for UPSC: RBI monetary policy data is directly testable in Prelims (exact figures) and in Mains GS3 (monetary transmission, inflation targeting under the FRBM framework, and the MPC's role). Forex adequacy metrics are also testable.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Repo Rate: **5.25%** (unchanged) | Reverse Repo Rate: typically 25 bps below repo.
- Real GDP growth 2026–27: **6.6%** (Q1: 6.6%, Q2: 6.3%, Q3: 6.5%, Q4: 6.8%).
- CPI Inflation projection 2026–27: **5.1%** (Q1: 4.2%, Q2: 5.1%, Q3: 5.9%, Q4: 5.4%).
- Forex Reserves: **USD 682.3 billion** (May 29, 2026) — 11 months import cover, 89.1% of external debt.
- MPC has a mandate to target CPI inflation at 4% ($\pm 2\%$), i.e., a band of 2–6%.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Remember the RBI's "**3-Rs of Forex Adequacy**": **R**eserves in months of import cover (benchmark: 3 months minimum; India has 11 months = very comfortable); **R**atio to external debt (benchmark: 100%; India at 89.1%); **R**atio to short-term debt (GDP insulation metric). India's forex buffer is among the world's largest — a key Mains answer point on macroeconomic resilience.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Prelims 2022: "With reference to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of India, which of the following statements is/are correct?" — Standard question on MPC composition, inflation target, and vote-casting process.

GS3

International Trade | Trade Policy | India-USA Relations

21 June 2026

India-US Trade Deal: Reciprocal Tariffs Cut from 25% to 18% — What It Means for India

What happened: Under the India-US trade deal concluded in early 2026, "reciprocal" tariffs on Indian exports to the USA were reduced from 25% to 18% — bringing India in line with other major Asian economies (tariff range 15–19%). The RBI also issued Trade Relief Measures Directions 2026, extending the enhanced export credit period (pre- and post-shipment) to 450 days for disbursements made up to June 30, 2026, easing liquidity for Indian exporters.

Why it matters for UPSC: India-US trade deals, tariff structures, and WTO commitments are core GS3 topics. The trade deal signals a strategic realignment — India normalising trade ties with the US while maintaining its strategic autonomy. It is also linked to GS2 (India-US diplomatic relations) and the MFN (Most Favoured Nation) principle.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- US tariff on Indian goods: Reduced from **25% to 18%** — aligns India with the Asian average (15–19%).
- RBI Trade Relief Directions 2026: Extended enhanced export credit period to **450 days** for pre- and post-shipment credit.
- India-US bilateral trade (2024–25): Approximately USD 130 billion; USA is India's largest trading partner.
- Key Indian exports to US: Pharma, IT services, textiles, gems & jewellery, engineering goods.
- The deal does NOT constitute a Free Trade Agreement (FTA); it is a targeted tariff rationalisation arrangement.

💡 TEACHING HOOK

Distinguish: this is **NOT an FTA** — it is a *tariff reduction arrangement*. An FTA (like India-UAE CEPA or India-Australia ECTA) involves comprehensive coverage of goods, services, and investment. India-US have been negotiating a full FTA since 2019 without conclusion. The 18% tariff still means Indian goods face duties — only reduced ones. Think of it as moving from "heavy toll" to "light toll" on the US highway — the road is not yet free.

PYQ LINKAGE

UPSC CSE Mains 2023 GS3: "Discuss the impact of trade policy changes in major economies on India's export performance." | Prelims 2021: "With reference to the trade between India and USA, consider the following statements..." (standard format question on bilateral trade composition).

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VERIFIED · PART I

Proof of Precision

Every item mapped. Every claim verified.

10

NEWS HEADLINES

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FULL NEWS CARDS

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GS PAPERS COVERED

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PYQ LINKAGES

0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

Governance

International Relations

Defence

Science & Technology

Economy

Space

AI & Emerging Tech

✓ All news sourced from PIB / Ministry releases / primary government sources and verified national media

✓ Every topic cross-checked against 25-year UPSC question bank for relevance

✓ News Freshness Rule applied — all 10 topics are new developments without repetition

✓ Part I sections verified: Headlines → Polity → IR → Defence → S&T → Economy → Proof of Precision

✓ No Environment section in Part I (correctly placed in Part II)

✓ No Places in News section in Part I (correctly placed in Part II)

✓ All 5 Akademia programme notes included at correct trigger sections

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48 out of 100 questions in UPSC Prelims 2026 covered in ANTIM ASSURED 100+.

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