UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 4 July 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB | 17 Topics | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu | [IE] Indian Express | [PIB] Press Info Bureau

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 4 JULY 2026 (Curated for UPSC)

1. PM MODI'S THREE-NATION INDO-PACIFIC TOUR — Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand (July 6-11)

✓ MEA announced PM Modi will depart July 6 for a three-nation tour covering Indonesia (July 6-8), Australia (July 8-10), and New Zealand (July 10-11) — India's first PM visit to New Zealand in 40 years.

✓ INDONESIA (Leg 1, July 6-8, Jakarta + Yogyakarta): Invitation by President Prabowo Subianto; Modi's 4th visit to Indonesia; first bilateral since elevation to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2018; agenda: maritime security, Malacca Strait cooperation, defence, economic ties; cultural diplomacy — PM will visit Prambanan Temple complex (UNESCO World Heritage Site, 9th century, dedicated to the Trimurti) at Yogyakarta, where India is collaborating on conservation; diaspora address in Jakarta.

✓ AUSTRALIA (Leg 2, July 8-10, Melbourne): Invitation by PM Anthony Albanese; 3rd India-Australia Annual Summit; India-Australia CEOs Forum (direct pitch to Australian investors for manufacturing, clean energy, tech sectors); Governor-General Sam Mostyn AC call; bilateral focuses on: QUAD, defence supply chains, critical minerals (Quad Critical Minerals Partnership), renewable energy. Australia has large lithium, cobalt, and REE reserves that complement India's ISM 2.0 strategy.

✓ NEW ZEALAND (Leg 3, July 10-11, Auckland): Invitation by PM Christopher Luxon; first Indian PM state visit to NZ in 40 years; coming just months after India-NZ FTA (INFTA) was concluded; bilateral: INFTA implementation, CPTPP context, education, agri-tech, defence cooperation, climate. Modi to address the large NZ Indian diaspora and meet prominent business and sports personalities.

✓ Strategic context: The tour follows the Seychelles-Mauritius Indian Ocean visits (June 27-28) and the Japan summit (July 1-2) — completing India's maritime strategic arc from the western Indian Ocean to the Pacific; MEA Sec Tandon: 'We are systematically engaging the entire maritime neighbourhood from west to east.'

✓ GS2 Angle: India's Act East Policy; ASEAN; QUAD; India-Indonesia CSP; India-Australia ECTA/QUAD; India-NZ INFTA; Pacific diplomacy; diaspora diplomacy; Indo-Pacific architecture.

🔔 2. DAC APPROVES Rs 52,000 CRORE MILITARY ACQUISITIONS

✓ Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) — the apex body chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh — cleared capital acquisition proposals worth Rs 52,000 crore to enhance combat readiness.

✓ Key approvals (reported): (1) Additional Pralay ballistic missiles (surface-to-surface, ~500 km range, precision-guided) for the Army's Rocket Force — a significant post-Operation Sindoor modernisation; (2) Mounted Gun Systems for infantry divisions operating in high-altitude terrain (Ladakh/Arunachal front) — ATAGS-based; (3) Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) systems — DRDO-developed, for short-range air defence against aircraft and cruise missiles; (4) Advanced light helicopters for high-altitude mountain operations (HAL Dhruv upgrades or LUH variant); (5) INS Nilgiri-class P-17A frigate additional components/weapons packages.

✓ Atmanirbharta focus: Majority of the Rs 52,000 crore is for 'Buy (Indian)' or 'Buy and Make (Indian)' categories — procuring weapons systems that are manufactured domestically; consistent with India's 68%+ domestic defence procurement policy target.

✓ Context: India's defence capital budget for FY27 is Rs 1.87 lakh crore (Rs 28,000 crore in DAC already cleared this year); the Hormuz crisis and Operation Sindoor have both accelerated procurement urgency.

✓ GS3 Angle: DAC; Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020; Atmanirbharta in defence; DRDO-developed systems; QRSAM; Pralay ballistic missile; P-17A frigate.

🔔 3. HIGH-SPEED RAIL FUTURE + MADE-IN-INDIA EXIM CONTAINER + NATIONAL WATER AWARDS

✓ HIGH-SPEED RAIL (PIB Backgrounder): India is developing a 'Standardised High-Speed Rail' architecture — rather than having 3-4 different HSR standards (Shinkansen for MAHSR Mumbai-Ahmedabad; French TGV for Delhi-Amritsar; indigenous for other corridors), India will develop a UNIFIED indigenous HSR platform (speed: 250-350 km/h) for planned corridors. National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRC) is tasked with this standardisation. Upcoming corridors include: Delhi-Varanasi, Delhi-Amritsar, Mumbai-Nagpur, Ahmedabad-Mumbai (Japan Shinkansen ongoing). Standardisation reduces per-km cost by 30-40% by eliminating technology-specific infrastructure.

✓ MADE-IN-INDIA EXIM SHIPPING CONTAINER: Ports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced India's first commercially produced export-import (EXIM) shipping container manufactured entirely in India — at a facility in Gujarat. India currently IMPORTS all its shipping containers from China (~98% of global container

production is Chinese-dominated, primarily by CIMC — China International Marine Containers). The container is the standard 20-foot TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) dry container made by a Tata Steel-backed startup; significance: India imports 500,000+ containers annually; domestic production reduces forex outflow and China supply-chain dependence.

✓ 7TH NATIONAL WATER AWARDS (Jal Shakti Ministry): Awards excellence in water conservation; categories: Best State, Best District, Best Gram Panchayat, Best Urban Local Body, Best Industry. Winners typically from water-positive Rajasthan, Karnataka, Gujarat districts. JalShakti Abhiyan and PMKSY-PDMC are aligned with the award framework.

✓ GS3 Angles: High-speed rail standardisation; NHSRC; EXIM shipping container; container manufacturing; port sector; National Water Awards; Jal Shakti Abhiyan.

GS PAPER 2 — International Relations · Polity · Governance

1. Centre Opens Power Bids to Four China-Linked Firms — Security vs. Pragmatism

[TH] Page 1

GS 3 / GS 2: Economy: Power sector; India-China trade; 2020 Chinese FDI restrictions; energy security; GS2 — Security: India-China relations.

- A Ministry of Finance order (dated June 24, 2026, made public July 3) allows four Chinese power equipment manufacturers with factories in India to participate in government tenders for critical power projects — a significant partial rollback of the 2020 Chinese company restrictions.
- The four firms: TBEA Energy (India), Nanjing Electric India, New Northeast Electric India, Taikai Electric (India) — all are Chinese companies with manufacturing units established in India.
- The restriction background: After the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash, India barred Chinese companies from government procurement unless they received security clearance from the government's Special Committee; this effectively excluded Chinese firms from most central and state government power projects (transformers, transmission lines, switchgear).
- Why the exemption now: (a) India's power transmission expansion urgency — India is adding 60-70 GW of renewable energy annually but transmission capacity is lagging; transformers and other power equipment are in short supply domestically; (b) Post-LAC partial normalisation — Depsang-Demchok disengagement creates political space; (c) The 4 firms have Indian manufacturing facilities (employing Indian workers, paying Indian taxes); (d) The exemption is time-limited (2 years) and specifically for these 4 firms only; NOT a precedent.

The Security Concern

- Critical infrastructure risk: Power transmission systems (transformers, high-voltage switches, transmission line hardware, smart grid components) contain embedded software; there are documented concerns (US, UK, Australia) about Chinese-manufactured power equipment potentially having hardware/software vulnerabilities exploitable for espionage or sabotage; Indian security agencies have expressed similar concerns.
- The Indian counter-argument: These 4 firms have Indian manufacturing facilities — equipment is manufactured in India under Indian labour and supervision; it is not imported directly from China; software components can be independently verified by India's CERT-In (Computer Emergency Response Team); the security risk of domestically manufactured (by Chinese-owned firms) equipment is lower than directly imported equipment.
- The Banning of Malicious Applications Rule 2023 connection: India's September 2023 rules for banning Chinese apps also apply to Chinese software embedded in hardware; the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) would need to certify the power equipment's software components are clean — this process is separate from the Ministry of Finance's procurement exemption.

The Broader India-China Economic Re-engagement

- This exemption is part of a broader pattern since the Depsang-Demchok disengagement (late 2024): India has been cautiously re-engaging Chinese commercial interests — Chinese FDI applications are being considered again (slowly); Chinese steel has been exempted from some anti-dumping duties; Chinese battery materials are being imported for India's EV sector. The political logic: India needs Chinese technology/capital for its economic transition even while maintaining strategic competition on the border.

UPSC ANGLE

• Press Note 3 (2020): Required government approval for Chinese company investments/contracts; the exemption for these 4 firms doesn't repeal Press Note 3 but creates a case-by-case pathway for firms with demonstrated domestic manufacturing and operational presence.

• TBEA Energy India profile: TBEA (Tebian Electric Apparatus) is one of China's largest transformer manufacturers; its India subsidiary manufactures large power transformers (765 kV) that India's power sector needs in large quantities for its ultra-high-voltage transmission grid; no Indian firm can currently manufacture these at sufficient scale.

- **TBEA Energy (India)** — Indian subsidiary of China's TBEA (Tebian Electric Apparatus); manufactures large power transformers in India; one of 4 Chinese-linked firms now allowed to bid for Indian government power projects; 2-year exemption from Ministry of Finance (June 24, 2026).
- **Press Note 3 (2020)** — MHA notification requiring government approval for investments/contracts involving companies from countries sharing land borders with India (China primary target); continues in force; the July 2026 exemption creates a case-by-case pathway for established India-manufacturing Chinese firms.

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2. Ladakh to Have Customised Self-Governance Framework — Breakthrough in Centre-Ladakh Dialogue

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: Polity: Ladakh as Union Territory; Article 371; Sixth Schedule; sui generis governance; Centre-UT relations; federalism.

‣ MHA (Additional Secretary Prashant Lokhande) and representatives of the Apex Body Leh (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) finalised the minutes of the Sub-Committee of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) meeting (May 22, 2026) — marking a significant breakthrough in the Centre-Ladakh governance dialogue.

‣ Key agreement: While statehood remains the 'long-term aspiration' of Ladakh, the immediate step agreed upon is a UT-level elected body with executive, financial, and legislative powers — a historic governance advancement since Ladakh became a UT (without legislature) in August 2019.

‣ Constitutional safeguards: Both sides agreed to explore Articles 371A-371J framework for Ladakh — a 'customised sui generis model'; Article 371 provisions (371A = Nagaland, 371B = Assam, 371C = Manipur, etc.) protect states' special interests; Ladakh's variant would protect its land, employment, cultural identity, and environment.

‣ Bureaucratic accountability: APARs (Annual Performance Appraisal Reports) of civil servants on subjects under the elected body's jurisdiction will be finalised by the elected executive authority — a key demand of Ladakh's leaders; previously, Ladakh's civil servants were exclusively accountable to Delhi.

The Background: Ladakh Post-August 2019

- J&K Reorganisation Act 2019: On August 5, 2019, Parliament bifurcated J&K into two UTs — J&K (with legislature) and Ladakh (WITHOUT legislature); Ladakh's 'without legislature' status was a conscious choice given its strategic sensitivity (LAC with China, LoC with Pakistan); but it denied Ladakh residents direct democratic representation in their governance.
- Ladakh's demands: (1) Statehood (restore full state status); (2) Sixth Schedule status (tribal council with legislative powers — similar to northeast tribal areas); (3) Separate Ladakh Administrative Service and Ladakh Police Service; (4) Domicile and employment protections for permanent residents; the Centre has consistently resisted full statehood due to security concerns.

- What 'sui generis' means here: 'Unique in its kind' — a one-of-a-kind constitutional arrangement not following any existing model exactly; similar to how J&K had a sui generis arrangement (Article 370) before abrogation; Ladakh's arrangement would be more limited than statehood but more than a pure UT without legislature — a middle path.
- Article 371A-371J precedents: Article 371A (Nagaland) — protects Naga customary law and practices from central legislation without state assembly's resolution; Article 371G (Mizoram) — similar protections; Article 371J (Karnataka) — Hyderabad-Karnataka region special provision; Ladakh's Article 371-style provision would protect land ownership, employment, and cultural identity from external changes.

UPSC ANGLE

• The statehood question: J&K was promised statehood 'at an appropriate time' by the Centre (Home Minister Amit Shah's statement in Rajya Sabha, August 5, 2019); J&K has been given statehood (effective from July 2024 — SC ordered assembly elections by September 2024, held October 2024); Ladakh's demand for statehood remains pending — the new UT-level elected body is a compromise that provides democratic governance without full statehood.

• The timing: The Ladakh breakthrough comes amid the LAC stabilisation (Depsang-Demchok disengagement), the BRICS NSA meeting (Wang Yi attending), and PM Modi's Indo-Pacific tour announcement — suggesting the Centre is managing India's multiple strategic fronts simultaneously, including domestic political settlements in border regions.

- **Sui Generis Model (Ladakh)** — A uniquely designed governance model for Ladakh UT that doesn't follow any existing constitutional template exactly; includes a UT-level elected body with executive, financial, and legislative powers + Article 371-style constitutional safeguards for land, employment, and cultural protection; agreed in principle July 4, 2026.
- **Articles 371A to 371J** — Special constitutional provisions for specific states/regions protecting their cultural identity, customary law, land rights, and employment from general Central legislation; 371A = Nagaland, 371G = Mizoram, 371J = Karnataka (Hyderabad-Karnataka region); being explored as the framework for Ladakh's sui generis model.

3. India-Japan Relations Should Not Target Third Party — China's Warning

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: India-Japan; China's response; QUAD; Indo-Pacific; multipolar world order.

‣ China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian responded to the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (July 1-2) outcomes: 'India and Japan's relations should not target any third country nor damage the interests of a third country. We urge both sides to look at their bilateral relations rationally, without disturbing the region's peace and stability.'

‣ What triggered China's statement: The India-Japan joint statement on the Indo-Pacific, the AI cooperation (with specific reference to 'trusted AI' — a formulation that excludes Chinese AI platforms), the energy resilience statement (Japan funding India's LNG infrastructure to reduce China-route dependence), and Modi's statement at the India-Japan Business Forum that 'in a world of increasing geopolitical uncertainty, like-minded democracies must stand together.'

‣ India's response: MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal: 'India and Japan have a Special Strategic and Global Partnership based on shared values of democracy, rule of law, and a free and open Indo-Pacific. This partnership is not directed against any third country.' — a standard diplomatic deflection.

‣ The 'third country' language: China's diplomatic standard formulation when any two countries strengthen ties in ways that implicitly challenge Chinese interests; used previously about: India-US defence ties, QUAD, AUKUS, India-Australia defence partnership.

- The implicit concern: China's specific concerns from the India-Japan summit include: (a) Japan's investment in India's semiconductor mission (ISM 2.0) — reduces India's chip dependence on China; (b) The energy resilience joint statement — specifically addresses reducing dependence on sea routes vulnerable to Chinese coercion; (c) US-2 flying boat for India — enhances India's maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean-Pacific; (d) QUAD summit to be hosted in India — a direct signal of India-Japan-US-Australia maritime solidarity.

- The 'third country' as China: China never identifies itself as the 'third country' in such statements but it is universally understood; the formulation allows China to object without explicitly admitting that India-Japan's growing partnership is a response to Chinese assertiveness — maintaining the fiction of a 'neutral' multilateral world order.
- India's multi-alignment logic: India's simultaneous engagement with China (BRICS, SCO, Modi-Xi bilateral track, SED resumption discussion) AND with Japan-QUAD partners (7th India-Japan summit in 18 months) is a classic multi-alignment strategy; India refuses to make China-or-QUAD a binary choice; China's statement is partly an attempt to force that binary choice — India consistently refuses.

UPSC ANGLE

• The geography of opposition: China has sent 'third country targeting' warnings about: India-US 2+2 dialogue; India-Australia AUKUS-adjacent exercises; India-Japan defence cooperation; India-France defence partnership; India-Israel defence ties; virtually every Indian diplomatic relationship is framed by China as potentially 'targeting' China — illustrating how China views every external relationship through a zero-sum lens.

• South Korean parallel: South Korea received similar Chinese warnings ('consequences' messaging) when it hosted THAAD missile defence in 2017; China's 'economic coercion' (blocking Korean tourists, K-pop, Korean products) temporarily hurt South Korea but ultimately demonstrated the limitations of Chinese economic pressure tools.

4. No Revival of Indus Water Treaty If Pakistan Does Not End Terror — India's Position

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: Indus Water Treaty; India-Pakistan; Pakistan's terror support; water as leverage.

‣ India's official position: 'There can be no revival of the Indus Waters Treaty until Pakistan categorically and verifiably ends its support for cross-border terrorism against India. Water and terrorism cannot go together.' — Ministry of External Affairs.

‣ Status of the Indus Waters Treaty: India put the IWT on hold following the Pahalgam terror attack (June 2025) and Operation Sindoor (May 2025); formally sent Pakistan a notice under Article XII(3) of the Treaty seeking renegotiation of terms; the Treaty has been technically 'suspended' (India has stopped attending Permanent Indus Commission meetings and stopped information sharing) — though the Treaty's legal text has no 'suspension' mechanism.

‣ Pakistan's position: Pakistan has approached the Court of Arbitration (ICSID) under the Treaty's dispute resolution mechanism — arguing India's suspension violates the Treaty; Pakistan calls the IWT a 'humanitarian' treaty that provides 80% of Pakistan's agricultural water and cannot be weaponised.

‣ China's interest: China, as the upper riparian of the Indus main stem (Indus originates in Tibet) and a close Pakistan ally, is watching the IWT developments closely; China has not built major diversionary projects on the upper Indus but has surveyed the possibilities.

- The IWT's strategic logic (1960): Negotiated by the World Bank; PM Nehru and Pakistan PM Ayub Khan signed it in September 1960; India was given the 3 eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) and Pakistan was given the 3 western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab); crucially, the Treaty has NO exit clause and NO 'extraordinary circumstances' clause allowing unilateral suspension — India's legal position is thus that it is 'seeking renegotiation' (under Article XII), not breaking the Treaty.
- India's actual water use: India is using almost all of the Eastern rivers' allocation already; the Western rivers flow predominantly to Pakistan; India's specific hydropower projects on the Western rivers (Kishanganga, Ratle) have been the subject of disputes — Pakistan challenged them at international arbitration. India's 'suspension' primarily affects information sharing, not actual water diversion.
- The 'water as leverage' policy shift: India's use of IWT as diplomatic leverage against Pakistan is unprecedented — the Treaty survived 3 wars (1965, 1971, 1999), multiple crises, and nuclear tests; using it as leverage after a terror attack signals a more muscular Pakistan policy under Modi — 'normalising bilateral relations will require Pakistan to end state-sponsored terrorism.'

UPSC ANGLE

• Indus Water Treaty (1960) key facts: Signed September 1960; IWT gave India 3 eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej — ~20% of total Indus system flow) and Pakistan 3 western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab — ~80% of flow); Permanent Indus Commission: annual meeting mechanism for technical cooperation; India currently seeking renegotiation under Article XII(3); World Bank involved as mediator.
• Pakistan's agricultural dependence: Pakistan's Indus-fed agriculture supports: 90% of Pakistan's grain production; the vast Punjab and Sindh agricultural belts; Indus River System Authority (IRSA) in Pakistan manages this; any actual Indian water diversion from western rivers would be catastrophic for Pakistan's food security and political stability.

- 📌 **Indus Waters Treaty (1960)** — India-Pakistan water-sharing treaty (September 1960); mediated by World Bank; India = eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej = 20% flow); Pakistan = western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab = 80% flow); no exit clause; India sought renegotiation under Article XII(3) post-Pahalgam attack (2025); Pakistan approached Court of Arbitration.

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5. Teesta Project — India to Consider 'All Related Developments': MEA on Bangladesh

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: India-Bangladesh; Teesta River; water disputes; China-Bangladesh; Yunus interim government.

‣ MEA response to Bangladesh's request for clarity on the Teesta Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project: India 'will consider all related developments' before deciding its position on the Teesta project.
‣ Background: Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has been in discussions with China about the Teesta project — China has expressed interest in funding and implementing a major Teesta River management project in Bangladesh; India views China's Teesta involvement as geopolitically sensitive given India's existing (and unfinalised) Teesta water-sharing arrangement with Bangladesh.
‣ The India-Bangladesh Teesta water agreement: Negotiations have been ongoing since 2011; a draft agreement (15% to Sikkim/West Bengal, 37.5% to Bangladesh, 47.5% reserved as 'natural flow') was near completion in 2011 but was blocked by West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee; subsequent attempts (2014, 2016, 2019, 2022) also failed due to West Bengal's objection; India's federal structure means the Centre cannot sign without the State's concurrence for rivers originating or flowing through the state.
‣ 'All related developments' meaning: India wants to see: (a) whether the China-Bangladesh Teesta project involves Chinese hydrological infrastructure that could give China monitoring/control over Teesta flows; (b) whether the Yunus government (which was supported by elements critical of India) is genuinely neutral or is using the China-Teesta invitation as leverage against India.

- The China-Bangladesh-India triangle: China's construction of hydrological infrastructure on rivers flowing into Bangladesh (Teesta originates in Sikkim, flows through West Bengal, enters Bangladesh) would give China surveillance and potential leverage over South Asian river flows — comparable to China's upstream position on the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) and Salween. India sees China's Teesta bid as strategic, not just commercial.
- Post-Hasina Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina's ousting (August 2024) and Yunus's interim government took a different foreign policy direction, including warming to Pakistan and China; relations with India have been complicated; the Teesta project is one of several issues (Agartala-Akhaura rail link, Rooppur nuclear plant, Indian workers' contracts) that India and Bangladesh need to resolve.
- India's 'natural flow' challenge: The Teesta's lean-season flow (October-April) has been severely reduced by upstream irrigation withdrawals in West Bengal — there may not be enough water to share even if a treaty is signed; Bangladesh needs 3,000-4,000 cusecs in lean season; India's western bank districts of West Bengal urgently need the same water for farming. This is a genuine water scarcity problem, not just a political negotiation failure.
- 📌 **Teesta River** — Originates in Sikkim's Khangchung glacier; flows south through West Bengal's Darjeeling hills and Siliguri corridor; enters Bangladesh; India-Bangladesh water-sharing negotiations ongoing since 1983; last substantive agreement draft (2011) blocked by West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee.

6. The Iran Conundrum and the Decline of the West — Editorial Analysis

[TH] Page Editorial

GS 2: International Relations: US-Iran war; Muscat Accord; Khamenei's death; declining Western hegemony; multipolar world order.

- The Hindu editorial: The US-Iran war (February-June 2026) and its resolution through the Muscat Accord reveals both the limits of American power and the emergence of a genuinely multipolar order in which the 'West' no longer sets the rules unilaterally.
- The Hormuz miscalculation: The US-Israeli strike on Tehran that killed Khamenei was expected to quickly force Iran to capitulate; instead, it created: 4 months of Hormuz closure costing the global economy $2-3 trillion; an energy price shock that hit India, China, and developing nations far more than the US (which is now energy-independent); galvanised global South opposition to unilateral US military action.
- 'Decline of the West' argument: (a) The US needed Pakistan and Oman to mediate with Iran — unable to impose its will directly; (b) China and India both refused to endorse the US action; (c) The Euro had to be declared an 'emergency neutral currency' for the oil trade, bypassing SWIFT (partly) during the Hormuz closure; (d) India, China, and Gulf states showed independence from Western financial architecture during the crisis.
- India's paradox: India condemns the Hormuz closure's consequences but also benefited diplomatically (India as an essential interlocutor between Iran and the West); India's multi-alignment proved more effective than Pakistan's Pakistan-West alignment or China's formal opposition to the US action.

- The Iran conundrum: Iran's new post-Khamenei reality (Pezeshkian + Assembly of Experts selecting a new Supreme Leader) creates uncertainty about Phase 2 nuclear talks (August 13 deadline); a reformist Iran (Pezeshkian's preference) vs. a hardline Supreme Leader (IRGC's preference) could go either way; the 'decline of the West' argument may be premature if Iran ultimately concedes to US nuclear demands — demonstrating that American power still sets binding constraints even in a multipolar world.
- The Global South realignment: Brazil (Lula), South Africa (ANC), Indonesia (Prabowo), India (Modi), Turkey (Erdogan) all refused to take sides in the US-Iran conflict — a striking demonstration of the 'middle powers' asserting independence from both Western and Chinese alignment; this is the true expression of multipolarity, not just China rising but the 'swing states' of the Global South refusing to be instrumentalised.
- 📌 **Multipolar World Order** — A world where power is distributed among multiple major players (US, China, India, EU, Russia, emerging powers) rather than concentrated in one superpower (unipolar) or two blocs (bipolar); the US-Iran conflict and Global South's refusal to align reinforces the multipolar reality.

7. Building Water Security in a Rapidly Drying India

[TH] Page Editorial

GS 3: Environment: Water security; groundwater depletion; per capita water availability; climate change; water governance.

- The Hindu editorial: India is facing a structural water security crisis — per capita water availability is declining, groundwater is being overexploited, and climate change is making the monsoon more variable; the 2026 monsoon deficit (35%+ below LPA nationally) is an acute manifestation of a chronic structural problem.
- Per capita water availability: India had 5,177 cubic metres per person per year in 1951; in 2021: 1,486 cubic metres per person per year (falling below the 'water stress' threshold of 1,700 cubic metres); projected to reach 'water scarcity' (below 1,000 cubic metres) by 2050 if population and usage trends continue.
- Groundwater overexploitation: India extracts 251 billion cubic metres of groundwater annually — the world's highest; 64% of India's irrigation comes from groundwater; 1,592 of India's 6,585 administrative

blocks are 'over-exploited' (extraction exceeding natural recharge); Punjab and Haryana are at acute crisis level (water table dropping 50-100 cm/year in some districts).
‣ The PMKSY and water use efficiency: India's agricultural sector uses 80%+ of total freshwater; flood irrigation (the predominant method in Punjab-Haryana paddy cultivation) is extremely wasteful — 70-80% of water evaporates or runs off; micro-irrigation (drip + sprinkler, PMKSY-PDMC scheme) uses 50-70% less water for the same crop yield; expanding micro-irrigation from the current 75 lakh ha to 250+ lakh ha is the most impactful single water-saving measure.

- Solutions framework: (1) Demand-side: Micro-irrigation expansion; paddy cultivation incentive shift (Punjab paying farmers to NOT grow paddy during peak groundwater season — Pani Bachao Paisa Kamao scheme); crop diversification (millets replace paddy in high-stress districts); (2) Supply-side: Interlinking of rivers (ambitious but politically contested); water harvesting and groundwater recharge (Atal Bhujal Yojana, covering 8,350 gram panchayats in 7 states); (3) Governance: Groundwater regulation (Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment; a dedicated Groundwater Regulation Act is pending); urban water pricing that signals scarcity; (4) Climate adaptation: Weather-based crop insurance; climate-smart agriculture extension.
- 2026 monsoon context: The current 35% national deficit is concentrated in Central and Northwest India — the same regions that depend most heavily on groundwater for irrigation; a weak Kharif followed by increased groundwater pumping creates a dangerous compounding effect.
- **Per Capita Water Availability (India)** — Declined from 5,177 cubic metres/person/year (1951) to 1,486 cubic metres/person/year (2021); approaching 'water stress' threshold (1,700 cubic metres); projected to reach 'water scarcity' (1,000 cubic metres) by 2050 if trends continue.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana** — Central government scheme for groundwater management and recharge; covers 8,350 Gram Panchayats across 7 states (Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, MP, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, UP); community-led groundwater management; World Bank-assisted.

8. US at 250 — India's Perspective on America's Global Role

[IE] Page 8 (Editorial)

GS 2: International Relations: India-US; July 4 US Independence Day; American democratic values; global governance; India-US BTA.

‣ July 4, 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776 — 'All men are created equal... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'). The Indian Express editorial analyses America's global role at its 250th milestone, specifically from India's perspective.
‣ The 250th context: The US was founded on Enlightenment ideals of popular sovereignty, individual rights, and democratic governance; 250 years later, it remains the world's largest economy, military power, and (by some measures) cultural influence; but it faces internal political polarisation (the Trump era) and external challenges (China rising, Hormuz crisis, BRICS expansion) that test its global leadership claims.
‣ Trump's America at 250: President Trump's 'America First' doctrine has reduced US multilateral engagement (withdrew from Paris Agreement before re-entering; questioned NATO burden-sharing; used tariffs as primary foreign policy tool; backed the Iran strike that caused global economic damage); the editorial argues this represents a 'departure from the American ideals' of 1776 — which emphasised liberty from colonial power and universal human rights, not transactional nationalism.
‣ India-US relationship at 250: The US is India's largest single-country trading partner ($190 billion), largest defence technology supplier, and a key QUAD partner; the India-US BTA (Bilateral Trade Agreement) with August 15 deadline adds economic urgency to the relationship; Modi government has navigated Trump's transactionalism better than most (via the QUAD framework, defence purchases, and strategic ambiguity on China).

- The Declaration of Independence's India relevance: India's own independence (August 15, 1947) was partly inspired by American democratic ideals; Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' speech echoes the Declaration's emphasis on liberty and national self-determination; the US's support for Indian

independence (US pressure on Britain post-1945) reflected these ideals in practice. The 250th anniversary is an occasion to reflect on this shared heritage.

- The 'decline' vs. 'reinvention' argument: The IE editorial title ('America may not') implies that while the Declaration's ideals remain universal, Trump-era America may not live up to them; but the editorial also notes the 'reinvention' capacity — the US has survived civil war, great depression, two world wars, and McCarthyism; the 250th may mark the beginning of another reinvention phase.
- 📌 **US Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)** — Adopted by the Continental Congress; primarily authored by Thomas Jefferson; declared the 13 American colonies independent from Britain; grounded in Enlightenment philosophy of John Locke (social contract, natural rights); Jefferson's phrase 'all men are created equal' became the foundational statement of American democratic ideals; 250th anniversary: July 4, 2026.

9. Delhi SIR Exercise: Booth-Level Agents Barely Present After Four Days

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GS 2: Governance: Special Intensive Revision (SIR); Electoral rolls; ECI; India's citizenship documentation; voter identity.

‣ Delhi's month-long SIR (Special Intensive Revision) exercise — commenced June 25 — shows low participation by booth-level agents (BLAs) after 4 days; political parties are supposed to deploy BLAs to help residents re-enrol and update electoral rolls.

‣ What SIR requires: Every registered voter must submit a fresh Form 6 (re-enrolment application) with citizenship documentation; the SC (May 27, 2026) upheld SIR's constitutional validity but limited the EC's role to voter roll eligibility, not citizenship adjudication.

‣ The BLA problem: BLAs (volunteers from political parties) are the primary channel for assisting residents with the SIR process; low BLA participation means residents (particularly in dense urban settlements) are not getting assisted; this could result in mass deletions from voter rolls of people who fail to re-enrol through no fault of their own.

‣ The citizenship anxiety nexus: The passport-not-citizenship statement (MEA, June 24), the demography panel questionnaire (July 2), and the SIR all converge to create significant anxiety about citizenship documentation among marginalised and migrant communities in Delhi.

- The stakes of SIR for Delhi: Delhi has 1.5+ crore registered voters; given Delhi's large migrant population (30%+ of residents are from outside Delhi), SIR's requirement for 'residency certification' plus 'citizenship documentation' creates specific challenges — long-term migrants who don't have Delhi residency certificates or who lack updated Aadhaar may be excluded from the electoral roll.
- SC's role: The SC's May 27 judgment upheld SIR but the Court emphasised: the EC cannot 'adjudicate citizenship' based on SIR documents; deletion from the voter roll requires the EC to follow established procedures (notice + hearing + appeal opportunity) — not automatic deletion for failure to re-enrol.
- 📌 **SIR (Special Intensive Revision)** — Election Commission's comprehensive revision of electoral rolls; requires fresh Form 6 enrolments from all registered voters in target areas; currently running in Delhi (month-long); upheld by SC (May 27, 2026) but EC cannot adjudicate citizenship.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

PM Modi's Indo-Pacific Tour (July 6-11, 2026)	Three-nation tour: Indonesia (July 6-8) → Australia (July 8-10) → New Zealand (July 10-11). INDONESIA: President Prabowo Subianto; 4th Modi visit; 1st bilateral since CSP elevation (2018); Prambanan Temple (UNESCO WHS, 9th century, Hindu, Yogyakarta) cultural diplomacy; Malacca Strait maritime security focus. AUSTRALIA: PM Anthony Albanese; 3rd India-Australia Annual Summit; India-Australia ECTA (entered force Dec 2022); CEOs Forum; Governor-General Sam Mostyn AC call; QUAD + critical minerals + renewable energy focus. NEW ZEALAND: PM Christopher Luxon; 1st Indian PM visit in 40 years; INFTA (India-NZ FTA) just concluded; CPTPP context; Auckland diaspora address. Strategic context: Completes India's maritime strategic arc — Western Indian Ocean (Seychelles-Mauritius, June 27-28) →

	Japan (July 1-2) → Southeast Asia-Pacific (July 6-11). India-Indonesia CSP: Elevated May 2018; covers defence, trade, maritime, digital technology.
Ladakh Self-Governance Breakthrough — Key Constitutional Facts	Ladakh became UT (without legislature): August 5, 2019 (J&K Reorganisation Act). Ladakh's demands: Statehood + Sixth Schedule + LAS/LPS + domicile protections. HPC (High-Powered Committee): Constituted by MHA to address Ladakh's governance concerns; 5 rounds + Sub-Committee. July 4, 2026 breakthrough: Agreement on UT-level elected body with executive, financial, and legislative powers; Constitutional safeguards under Articles 371A-371J (sui generis model); APARs under elected body for subjects under its jurisdiction. Article 371 provisions: 371A = Nagaland (protects customary law); 371B = Assam; 371C = Manipur; 371F = Sikkim; 371G = Mizoram; 371H = Arunachal Pradesh; 371J = Karnataka (Hyderabad-Karnataka). Sui generis = uniquely designed model; does not replicate any existing provision exactly. Stakeholders: Apex Body Leh (LAB, Chering Dorjey) + Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA). September 24, 2025 incident: Referenced in demands for case withdrawal.
Indus Water Treaty (1960) — Complete Facts	Signed: September 19, 1960 (Karachi); PM Nehru + Pakistan PM Ayub Khan; World Bank as guarantor/mediator. Eastern rivers (India's): Ravi, Beas, Sutlej (~20% of total Indus system flow). Western rivers (Pakistan's): Indus, Jhelum, Chenab (~80% of flow). Permanent Indus Commission: Annual bilateral technical meeting for river data, visits, dispute resolution. India's suspension: Following Pahalgam terror attack (June 2025) + Operation Sindoor (May 2025); India stopped attending PIC meetings; sought renegotiation under Article XII(3); no 'suspension' clause in Treaty text. Pakistan's response: Approached Court of Arbitration (ICSID arbitration) — ongoing. Article XII(3): Allows a party to request treaty renegotiation to 'remove difficulties'; India's legal pathway. Pakistan's agriculture: 80% of Pakistan's agricultural water comes from western rivers; Sindh + Punjab breadbasket depends on Indus system.
India's Water Crisis — Key Numbers	Per capita water availability: 5,177 cubic m/person/year (1951) → 1,486 cubic m/person/year (2021) → projected ~1,000 by 2050 (water scarcity threshold). Global thresholds: Water stress = <1,700; Water scarcity = <1,000 cubic m/person/year. Groundwater: India extracts 251 billion cubic metres/year (world's highest); 64% of irrigation from groundwater; 1,592 of 6,585 blocks = 'over-exploited.' Irrigation water use: 80%+ of India's total freshwater. Atal Bhujal Yojana: Groundwater recharge + management; 8,350 Gram Panchayats; 7 states; World Bank assisted. PMKSY-PDMC: Drip + sprinkler irrigation; 75 lakh ha currently covered; saves 50-70% water vs. flood irrigation. Current (2026) monsoon: 35% below LPA nationally; Central India 65% deficit; Northwest India 77% deficit.
China-Linked Power Firms + Press Note 3 + Power Equipment	4 firms exempted for government power tenders: TBEA Energy India, Nanjing Electric India, New Northeast Electric India, Taikai Electric India. All: Chinese-owned but have manufacturing units in India. Order: Ministry of Finance, June 24, 2026; time-limited 2 years; NOT a precedent for other companies. Background: 2020 Galwan → India required security clearance for all Chinese company contracts/investments; Press Note 3 (MHA, 2020) — government approval required for Chinese company investments in India. Energy security need: India expanding transmission network for 60-70 GW RE additions annually; transformer shortage domestically; TBEA India manufactures 765 kV ultra-high-voltage transformers that India needs. India-China economic re-engagement: Cautious since Depsang-Demchok disengagement; this exemption is part of a broader pattern.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts

Prambanan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia	PM Modi will visit the Prambanan Temple complex (July 6-7, 2026) — a UNESCO World Heritage Site (since 1991); 9th century CE Hindu temple complex dedicated to the Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva); the largest Hindu temple complex in Indonesia and one of the largest in Southeast Asia; India-Indonesia joint conservation collaboration is being explored; Yogyakarta is Java's cultural heartland, ~500 km southeast of Jakarta.
Melbourne, Australia	PM Modi visits July 8-10 for the 3rd India-Australia Annual Summit; India-Australia ECTA (effective December 2022); QUAD partnership; CEOs Forum for manufacturing and clean energy investment; India-Australia critical minerals partnership (lithium, cobalt, REE — Australia is world's 2nd largest REE producer); Indian diaspora address; Australia's second-largest city.
Auckland, New Zealand	PM Modi's state visit July 10-11 — first Indian PM visit to NZ in 40 years; India-NZ FTA (INFTA) just concluded; dairy exclusion maintained; Prime Minister Christopher Luxon; significant Indian diaspora (200,000+); discussions on education, agri-tech, renewable energy, Quad-adjacent security cooperation.
Leh and Kargil, Ladakh	Apex Body Leh + Kargil Democratic Alliance agreed to the sui generis UT-level elected body framework (July 4, 2026); key constitutional breakthrough since Ladakh became UT (August 2019); Leh and Kargil are the two main administrative centres of the UT and headquarters of the two Hill Councils.
Pahalgam, Kashmir (historical context)	Site of the terror attack (June 2025) that led India to suspend the Indus Water Treaty; Baisaran Valley near Pahalgam was the attack site (26 tourists killed by Lashkar-e-Taiba affiliated militants); the attack triggered Operation Sindoor (May 2025) and India's IWT suspension — connecting to July 4's 'no IWT revival without end to terror' statement.
Teesta River (Sikkim-West Bengal-Bangladesh)	India MEA's cautious response to Teesta project (China-Bangladesh interest); river originates in Sikkim's Khangchung glacier → flows through West Bengal's Darjeeling hills + Siliguri corridor → enters Bangladesh; lean-season flow severely reduced by West Bengal irrigation; 2011 treaty draft blocked by Mamata Banerjee; China's potential hydrological infrastructure investment raises strategic concerns for India.
Amarnath (cave shrine), J&K	Amarnath Yatra 2026 began July 4 — over 12,000 pilgrims visited the cave shrine on Day 1; Amarnath cave is at 3,888 m altitude in Anantnag district, J&K; CRPF + J&K Police security framework; the annual pilgrimage (July-August) is one of India's largest Hindu pilgrimages (4-8 lakh pilgrims over the season); the cave is famous for a naturally formed ice Shiva lingam.
Siliguri Corridor (Chicken's Neck)	Context for Ladakh + Teesta + Bangladesh analyses: The Siliguri Corridor (22-60 km wide land link connecting Northeast India to mainland India) passes between Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan; strategically critical; India's Teesta water management and Bangladesh's China-Teesta project both affect this corridor's geopolitical environment; IBG doctrine for Northeast India (17 Mountain Strike Corps) also relates to this strategic geography.

UPSC with Saurabh Kaushik