

SANSKRITI IAS DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

18-07-2026

Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS)

 News On AIR

PM Modi inaugurates 75 redeveloped railway stations across country under Amrit Bharat Scheme

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated 75 redeveloped railway stations across 20 states from Jalandhar in Punjab last evening.



Why in News

- The **Prime Minister** virtually inaugurated **75 redeveloped railway stations** across **20 States** under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS).

Scheme Framework

- ABSS was launched in **2022** by the **Ministry of Railways**.
- It aims at the long-term redevelopment and modernization of railway stations.
- The scheme is based on **station-wise Master Planning** according to local needs.

Key Features

- It promotes **multimodal connectivity** and improved passenger accessibility.
- It upgrades **entry and exit points, waiting halls, platforms, toilets, roofing, lifts, escalators, and Wi-Fi**.
- It seeks to make railway stations cleaner, safer, greener, and more user-friendly.

Economic Significance

- The scheme promotes local products through the **One Station One Product (OSOP)** initiative.
- It supports local economies by providing marketing opportunities for regional products.

BIMSTEC

 News On AIR

India calls for stronger BIMSTEC cooperation on security and economy

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has underscored the need for closer cooperation among BIMSTEC member countries to address economic...



Why in News

- **BIMSTEC** security chiefs recently resolved to strengthen cooperation against terrorism and endorsed **maritime law enforcement principles**.

Institutional Framework

- **BIMSTEC** stands for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- It was established through the **Bangkok Declaration** on 6 June 1997.
- Its Secretariat is located in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.

Evolution

- It was formed as **BIST-EC** in 1997.
- It became **BIMST-EC** after **Myanmar** joined in 1998.
- It was renamed **BIMSTEC** after **Bhutan and Nepal** joined in 2004.

Membership & Working Mechanism

- Members are **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand**.
- It serves as a bridge between **South Asia** and **Southeast Asia**.
- It conducts **Summits (biennially)**, Ministerial Meetings (annually), and **Senior Officials' Meetings (twice annually)**.

India's Role

- **India** leads the sectors of **Transport & Communication, Tourism, Environment & Disaster Management, and Counter Terrorism & Transnational Crime**.
- BIMSTEC has identified **14 priority sectors** for regional cooperation.

E-Commerce Council of India (ECCI)

TH The Hindu

[IAMAI launches E-Commerce Council of India to unify \\$120 bn digital commerce ecosystem](#)

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) on Friday launched the E-Commerce Council of India (ECCI), a first-of-its-kind national...



Why in News

- The **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)** launched the E-Commerce Council of India (ECCI) as India's first national platform to unify the country's **\$120 billion digital commerce ecosystem**.

Institutional Framework

- **ECCI** is India's first national platform for collaborative development of the **digital commerce ecosystem**.
- It has been launched by the **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)**.
- It seeks to bring together **government, industry, academia, startups, MSMEs, exporters, logistics providers and payment companies**.

Governance Dimensions

- The council will undertake **policy advocacy** for India's digital commerce sector.
- It will promote **research and industry engagement** on emerging digital economy issues.
- It will strengthen cooperation in **cross-border trade, logistics, AI, digital payments, consumer trust and MSME enablement**.

About IAMAI

- IAMAI was established in **2004** as a not-for-profit body under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.

- It is India's largest representative body for the **digital services industry** with over **500 members**.
- It promotes **free and fair competition**, progressive laws and growth of the **digital economy**.

World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO)

D Dawn

Pakistan becomes founding member of World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation

Pakistan on Thursday became a founding member of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO) after Deputy Prime...



Why in News

- **Twenty-nine countries** signed an agreement in **Shanghai** to establish the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) for global AI governance.

Institutional Features

- WAICO is an **independent intergovernmental international organization**.
- Headquarter is located in **Shanghai, China**.
- China first proposed the organization in **July 2025**.

Global Governance

- WAICO aims to strengthen **international cooperation** in **Artificial Intelligence**.
- It seeks to promote **global AI governance** consistent with the **UN Charter**.
- The organization follows a **people-centred** and shared-benefit approach.

Important Facts

- Founding members include China, Russia, Pakistan, Brazil, South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Oman, Kazakhstan and several African countries.
- **India is not a founding member**, despite being a **BRICS** country.

Vishwas 2026

 News On AIR

EPFO launches scheme VISHWAS to amicable settlement of damages & penalty-related disputes

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has launched VISHWAS, 2026 to facilitate amicable settlement of disputes relating to levy...



Why in News

- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** launched **VISHWAS 2026**, a one-time dispute resolution scheme for EPF-related penalty and damages cases.

Scheme Highlights

- VISHWAS 2026** has been launched by **EPFO** under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- It provides a **fully digital, transparent and time-bound** mechanism for dispute settlement.
- The scheme became effective on 29 June 2026 and remains operational for **six months**.



Coverage & Eligibility

- It covers disputes pending before **judicial forums**.
- It includes cases where **recovery is pending** or only partly completed.
- It also covers cases where **notices have been issued** but final orders are pending.
- It extends to cases where notices are yet to be issued.

Exclusions

- Cases where **damages or penalties have already been fully recovered** are excluded.

- Cases involving fraud, misappropriation or falsification of records are excluded.
- Cases without full payment of statutory interest are not eligible.

Significance

- The scheme promotes voluntary compliance and reduces litigation.
- Employers receive substantially reduced penalty rates for eligible historical defaults before 14 June 2024.
- Employees benefit from faster settlement of long-pending EPF disputes.

Boss Scam

 India Today

SEBI alert: That urgent WhatsApp text from your boss could be a scam

SEBI has warned companies and regulated entities about a new scam called "Boss Scam." It is a cyber fraud where criminals impersonate CEOs...



Why in News

- SEBI cautioned regulated entities and listed companies against the growing threat of Boss Scam, a cyber fraud targeting finance departments.

Nature of Fraud

- Boss Scam involves impersonation of CEOs, Managing Directors and senior executives.
- The objective is to induce finance officials to transfer funds fraudulently.

Modus Operandi

- Fraudsters use AI-generated voice cloning, deepfake videos and fake social media groups.



- Victims are often told the payment concerns Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI).
- Attackers also distribute malicious ZIP files containing executable malware.
- Malware hijacks WhatsApp Web sessions and enables fraudulent payment instructions.

Governance Relevance

- The scam highlights cyber risks associated with Artificial Intelligence.
- It underlines the need for stronger cybersecurity protocols, employee verification and digital awareness.

Manasbal Lake

The Hindu

J&K's Mansbal lake starts hosting migratory birds again

Manasbal Lake, the country's deepest freshwater lake in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, is on the path of ecological recovery with the...



Why in News

- Manasbal Lake has shown signs of ecological recovery with the return of migratory birds.

Geographical Features

- It is located in Ganderbal district, Jammu & Kashmir.
- It lies at an altitude of about 1,585–1,600 metres in the Jhelum Valley.
- It is regarded as the deepest freshwater lake in India, with a depth of about 13 metres.

Hydrological Characteristics

- The lake is primarily fed by precipitation and over 1,200 springs.

- Its outflow is regulated into the **Jhelum River**.
- It is a **monomictic lake** exhibiting thermal stratification from **March to November**.

Ecological Importance

- The lake supports diverse **macrophytes**, **phytoplankton**, **zooplankton** and **benthos**.
- Important fish include **Schizothorax niger**, **Schizothorax esocinus**, **Cyprinus carpio** and **Neomacheilus latius**.
- The lake supports local fisheries and biodiversity conservation.

Historical Significance

- The lake derives its name from **Lake Manasarovar**.
- **Jaroka Bagh**, built by Nur Jahan, overlooks the lake.
- Nearby heritage includes a **17th-century fort** and an **8th–9th century temple**.

Other Important News of the day

Places in News	Belgium
	Why in News • The first India–Belgium Strategic Dialogue was recently held in Brussels, strengthening bilateral cooperation. Geographical Profile • Belgium is a country located in Western Europe. • It shares land borders with the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, and France. • It is bounded by the North Sea to the northwest. • Brussels is the capital city. 

	Physical Features - Belgium has three major physiographic regions: the Coastal Plain, Central Plateau, and Ardennes Uplands. - The highest point is Botrange (694 m / 2,276 ft). - Major rivers are the Scheldt, Meuse, and Yser. Important Facts - Important lakes include Lake Genval, Lake Gileppe, Lake Eupen, and Lake Robertville. - Major natural resources include limestone, cobalt, copper, iron, steel, lead, nitrogen (ammonia), tin, and zinc. - Brussels hosts the headquarters of both the European Union (EU) and NATO.
Environment	Laudankia Vine Snake  The Times of India Rare Laudankia vine snake documented in Udaipur Rare endemic Laudankia vine snake photographed in Udaipur's Ubeshwar Ji on July 12, 2026, boosting records for Rajasthan biodiversity...  Why in News - The rare Laudankia Vine Snake was recently photographed in Ubeshwar Wildlife Area, Udaipur (Rajasthan). Taxonomy - Scientific name: Ahaetulla laudankia. - It belongs to the Asian Vine Snake (Ahaetulla) genus. - It is a diurnal and arboreal snake. 

	Distribution & Habitat • The species is endemic to India. • It occurs from the Eastern Ghats through Central India to Eastern Rajasthan. • It inhabits dry deciduous forests, scrublands and hill slopes. Identification • It has a slender vine-like body with chestnut-brown colour and black speckles. • It possesses a long pointed snout, large eyes and horizontal pupils. Ecological Importance • It feeds mainly on lizards, geckos, frogs and small birds. • It is rear-fanged and mildly venomous, posing little danger to humans.
Defence	MH-60R Seahawk TH The Hindu <u>One more U.S. made anti-submarine helicopter delivered to the Indian Navy</u> The Indian Navy has received another MH-60R Seahawk multi-role naval helicopter from the United States, further strengthening its...  Why in News • The Indian Navy recently received another MH-60R Seahawk multi-role naval helicopter from the United States. Platform Overview • The MH-60R Seahawk, also called "Romeo", is a state-of-the-art multi-mission naval helicopter.

- It is manufactured by **Lockheed Martin (USA)**.
- India signed a contract to procure **24 MH-60R helicopters** in **2020**.

Operational Capabilities

- It performs **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)** and **Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW)** missions.
- It is used for **maritime surveillance, search and rescue, medical evacuation, and shipborne operations**.
- It serves as the **primary anti-submarine helicopter** of the **U.S. Navy**.

Technical Features

- It is equipped with **AN/AQS-22 Airborne Low Frequency Sonar (ALFS)**, sonobuoys, and **multi-mode radar**.
- It carries **GPS, Inertial Navigation System (INS), SATCOM**, and secure **VHF/UHF communication** systems.
- It has a maximum speed of about **330 km/h**, an operational range of around **830 km**, and can carry nearly **3,000 kg** payload.

Armament & Global Operators

- It can be armed with **Mk-54 lightweight torpedoes, AGM-114 Hellfire missiles**, and machine guns.
- Besides **India** and the United States, it is operated by **Australia, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Greece, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, and Brazil**.

Uttar Pradesh in News

Chief Minister's Teachers' Cashless Medical Scheme

Why in News

- The **Uttar Pradesh Government** launched the **Chief Minister's Teachers' Cashless Medical Scheme** to provide **cashless healthcare** and enhanced **social security** for teachers and non-teaching staff across the state.

Coverage & Beneficiaries

- The scheme covers over **15 lakh** teachers and non-teaching staff associated with **basic and secondary education** in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Eligible beneficiaries include **regular teachers, Shiksha Mitras, instructors, cooks**, and eligible staff of **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)**.
- The scheme extends healthcare benefits to beneficiary families through a cashless treatment mechanism.

Scheme Framework

- The scheme was launched by **Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** from **Varanasi**.
- It provides **cashless medical treatment up to ₹5 lakh** per beneficiary family.
- The scheme aims to strengthen **health security, financial protection, and social security** of education personnel.

Social Security Provisions

- An **MoU** has been signed with the **State Bank of India (SBI)** to provide additional social security benefits.
- Contractual employees earning more than **₹10,000 per month** are eligible for personal accident insurance ranging from **₹30 lakh to ₹80 lakh**.
- Permanent disability is covered with insurance benefits between **₹30 lakh and ₹80 lakh**.

- Partial disability is covered with insurance benefits ranging from ₹15 lakh to ₹40 lakh.
- The package also includes air accident insurance and financial assistance for children's education and daughters' marriage in case of an unforeseen tragedy.

Governance Significance

- The scheme strengthens the welfare ecosystem for the education sector through integrated healthcare and insurance coverage.
- It complements the state's efforts to improve employee welfare and social protection in the public education system.