

09/08/2026 Daily Current News

1. *Makhana:*

Context: APEDA Facilitates First-Ever Export of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana by Sea Route from Bihar to Australia.

About Makhana:

- ❖ Botanical Name: Makhana or foxnut is an aquatic flowering crop scientifically known as *Euryale ferox*, commonly called the prickly water lily.
- ❖ Climate: It grows best in tropical and subtropical climates.
- ❖ Temperature & Humidity: Suitable temperature is around 20–35°C, with 50–90% relative humidity.
- ❖ Rainfall & Soil: Requires about 100–250 cm annual rainfall and prefers smooth loamy soil.
- ❖ Origin: It is considered native to South-East Asia and China.
- ❖ Special Name: Makhana is called the “Black Diamond” because of its dark outer covering.
- ❖ Major Producer: Bihar is India's leading producer, contributing approximately 90% of India's makhana production; other producing states include West Bengal, Manipur, Assam, Tripura, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ Global Distribution: It is also cultivated in Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Japan, Russia and Korea.
- ❖ Importance: Makhana is increasingly recognised as a nutritious “superfood” with growing commercial importance.

2. *DigiLocker:*

Context: DigiLocker Partners with AAERI to Fast-Track Document Verification for Indian Students Heading to Australia. National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has partnered with the Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI) to launch 'AAERI Verify'.

About DigiLocker:

- ❖ The DigiLocker platform, launched in 2015, operates as an app to store users’ digital records.
- ❖ The app can be used when applying for a passport, reviewing marksheets, or proving one’s identity during travel.
- ❖ The app is part of the Indian government’s paper-free initiative aimed at letting users access, verify, and store essential documents in a digital wallet so that they are easy to retrieve and present to officials when required.
- ❖ DigiLocker is a paperless solution meant to ensure that a user can access the latest and updated versions of their documents online in order to prove their identity and their credentials at any given moment.
- ❖ To the verifying officials, this helps in keeping at bay fake, poor quality print copies, and outdated documents that miss key details.

- ❖ Also, for the user, this app helps eliminate the need to carry separate sets of documents while they are on the move.
- ❖ DigiLocker is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) under the Digital India programme.
- ❖ It is a government approved application and is ideally maintained with strict security protocols framed by officials.

3. *Modified Mix Seal Surfacing Plus (MSS+) Technology:*

Context: In a significant step towards promoting sustainable, cost-effective and environmentally friendly road construction and maintenance technologies, CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI), New Delhi, presented its indigenously developed Modified Mix Seal Surfacing Plus (MSS+) Technology before Mr. V. Srinivas, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan at Rajasthan Secretariat.

About Modified Mix Seal Surfacing Plus (MSS+) Technology:

- ❖ Technology: MSS+ is an innovative road-surfacing technology designed to improve the durability and performance of roads.
- ❖ Basic Principle: It uses a modified bituminous mix to create a durable surface layer over existing road pavement.
- ❖ Purpose: It aims to provide better resistance to wear, cracking, water infiltration and deformation.
- ❖ Material Efficiency: MSS+ can reduce the requirement for conventional pavement materials, helping to optimise resource use.
- ❖ Durability: The modified mix improves the strength and service life of the road surface compared with conventional surfacing methods.
- ❖ Maintenance: It can help reduce the frequency and cost of road maintenance by improving pavement performance.
- ❖ Sustainability: Lower material consumption and longer pavement life can contribute to reduced environmental impact and carbon emissions.
- ❖ Application: It is particularly relevant for road resurfacing and upgrading existing pavements, offering a relatively efficient approach to improving road quality.
- ❖ Significance: MSS+ represents the use of advanced pavement technology for cost-effective, durable and sustainable road infrastructure.

4. *Eco-Educational Hub:*

Context: Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh dedicates to the nation first-of-its-kind 'Eco-Educational Hub' developed by CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI) at Lucknow.

About Eco-Educational Hub:

- ❖ Location & Institution: The first-of-its-kind CSIR-NBRI Eco-Educational Hub, 'Prakriti Gyan Dham' was dedicated at the Maharishi Parashar Bioresource Centre (MPBC), Banthra, Lucknow.
- ❖ Core Concept: It integrates scientific research, environmental education, biodiversity conservation, botanical heritage and cultural interpretation.
- ❖ Living Repository: The Hub serves as a living repository of India's botanical and cultural heritage, designed for students, researchers, educators, nature enthusiasts and the general public.

- ❖ **PAaVan Path:** The PAaVan Path (Plants and Associated Vegetations for Appreciating Nature) is the central interpretive heritage trail, showcasing curated plant collections representing diverse ecological regions.
- ❖ **Indian Heritage Garden:** It conserves heritage trees propagated from historically significant locations, including Bawan Imli of Fatehpur, Mother Dussehri Mango of Lucknow, Patalpuri Banyan of Prayagraj and Gandhi-planted Mango of Bhitiharwa.
- ❖ **Digital Interpretation:** QR-enabled audio systems provide visitors with historical, cultural and botanical information about heritage trees through smartphones.
- ❖ **Threatened & State Plants:** Vibhav Enclave showcases rare, endangered and threatened plants, while Bhairav Enclave presents the officially designated State Plants of States and UTs.
- ❖ **Bamboosteum:** Houses 43 indigenous and exotic bamboo species, highlighting bamboo's role in carbon sequestration, ecological restoration, soil conservation, sustainable livelihoods and green infrastructure.

5. *Slender-billed vultures (Gyps tenuirostris):*

Context: Five captive-bred slender-billed vultures at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)'s facility in Assam were released into the wild for the first time globally. Vultures were transported from Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, Guwahati and released at Jatayu Soft Release Centre in Kaziranga National Park.

About Slender-billed vultures (*Gyps tenuirostris*):

- ❖ **Habitat:** An Old World vulture of the sub-Himalayan region, inhabiting wetlands, wooded areas and open countryside.
- ❖ **Distribution:** Found in India from the Gangetic plains to Himachal Pradesh, potentially extending to northern Odisha, and eastwards through Assam; also occurs in Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Cambodia.
- ❖ **Identification:** Characterised by a long, slender neck, pale underparts and a dark, thin bill; generally less associated with human habitation than other vultures.
- ❖ **Diet & Behaviour:** Primarily a carrion feeder; often forms large flocks around carcasses and is an efficient glider, undertaking long search flights for food.
- ❖ **Major Threat:** Population decline is strongly associated with diclofenac and other NSAIDs, which enter vultures when they consume carcasses of livestock treated with these drugs before death.
- ❖ **IUCN Status:** Classified as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List, reflecting its severe population decline.
- ❖ **Legal Protection:** Listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, receiving the highest level of legal protection in India.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ The XI BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting was held in Bhopal today under India's BRICS Chairship and concluded with the adoption of the Bhopal Declaration, providing a practical and forward-looking framework for strengthening cultural cooperation among BRICS Member States and partner countries.
- ☐ India took a major step towards digitising maritime governance with the launch of E-Samudra, a comprehensive digital platform that integrates services for seafarers, shipping companies, ports and other maritime stakeholders, while announcing a series of reforms to strengthen seafarer welfare, security and service delivery.
- ☐ The Boss Scam, also known as CEO impersonation fraud, is a cyber-enabled financial fraud in which criminals impersonate a senior executive, typically using a genuine compromised WhatsApp account or saving an attacker-controlled number under the name of the "CEO" on a compromised device. The fraudsters then send urgent instructions to accounts or finance personnel to transfer funds to mule bank accounts, exploiting the authority of senior executives and the pressure of urgency to induce employees to bypass normal verification procedures.
- ☐ The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement was signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye in Mecca, establishing a collective-defence framework under which an armed attack on any one member will be regarded as an attack on all, with the aim of strengthening collective deterrence against aggression.
- ☐ India plans to introduce a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for polysilicon manufacturing to reduce its dependence on China, from which it currently sources polysilicon entirely. Polysilicon, an ultra-high-purity form of silicon refined from metallurgical-grade silicon, is the key raw material for solar PV cells, semiconductor chips and electronic devices; it is produced through energy-intensive processes such as the Siemens process, using high-purity quartz.
- ☐ The 10th India International Footwear Fair (IIFF) 2026 was held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from 6 August to 8 August 2026.
- ☐ Indian gymnast Ariha Pangambam of Imphal, Manipur, won India's first senior gold medal in the individual women's category at the Aerobic Gymnastics Asian Championships on 7 August 2026. The championship was held in Tagaytay City, Philippines, from 4 August to 7 August 2026 under the sanction of the Asian Gymnastics Union.
- ☐ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Param Pragma, an AI-powered high-performance supercomputing facility, at the Sonipat Campus of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi on 8 August 2026. The inauguration took place during the 57th Convocation Ceremony of IIT Delhi, where the Prime Minister was the chief guest.

IMPORTANT NITI AAYOG INDICES & RANKINGS IN INDIA



Benchmarking States & UTs



Tracking Progress



Promoting Competitive & Cooperative Federalism

1 SDG INDIA INDEX



Tracks progress of States & UTs towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- First released: December 2018
- Developed with: United Nations in India
- Coverage: 16 out of 17 global SDGs, mapping over 100 indicators
- Exclusion: Goal 17 assessed qualitatively (not ranked)
- Scoring: Composite score between 0 & 100
- Categories: Aspirant (0–49), Performer (50–64), Front-Runner (65–99), Achiever (100)

LATEST RANKINGS (2023-24 EDITION)

- 🏆 Top States: Kerala & Uttarakhand (joint) – 79
- 🥈 2nd Rank: Tamil Nadu – 78
- 📉 Lowest Score: Bihar – 57, Jharkhand – 62
- 🏠 Top UT: Chandigarh

2 INVESTMENT FRIENDLINESS INDEX (IFI)



Assesses States & UTs on creating a conducive environment for investments

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Announced: Budget 2025–26; 1st edition released in July 2026
- Developed with: CRISIL
- Purpose: Domestic replacement for World Bank's Ease of Doing Business
- Data sources: Govt, data + Investor perception survey (1,850 investors)
- Coverage: 84 indicators across 8 pillars
- Pillars: Infrastructure, Business Climate, Resources, Govt, Policy, Regulatory Ease, Institutional Environment, Financial Health, Environmental Resilience
- Categories: Top Performers (>50), Frontrunners (45–50), Emerging Performers (40–45), Aspiring (<40)

LATEST RANKINGS (2026 EDITION)

- 🏆 Top 5 Performers (>50): Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Odisha
- 🥈 Overall Rank: Gujarat 1st, Maharashtra 2nd, Tamil Nadu 3rd
- 🏠 Hilly States: Uttarakhand 1st, Assam 2nd, Himachal Pradesh 3rd
- 🏠 UTs: Goa 1st, Delhi 2nd, Chandigarh 3rd

3 EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI)



Ranks States & UTs on export readiness, policy framework & export performance

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- First published: August 2020
- Developed with: Institute for Competitiveness
- Core Pillars: Policy & Governance, Export Infrastructure, Trade Ecosystem, Export Performance
- Coverage: 70 indicators across 13 sub-pillars
- Classification: Large States and Small States/ North-Eastern States/UTs; grouped as Leaders, Challengers, Aspirers

LATEST RANKINGS (2024 EDITION)

- 🏆 Large States: Maharashtra 1st (68.01)
- 🥈 2nd: Tamil Nadu (64.41) 🥉 3rd: Gujarat (64.02)
- 🏠 Smaller States/UTs: Uttarakhand 1st, Jammu & Kashmir 2nd, Nagaland 3rd

4 NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI)



Measures deprivations across health, education and living standards

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Reports: Baseline (2021), Progress Review (2023)
- Developed with: UNDP & Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
- Data source: NFHS (NFHS-4: 2015–16 vs NFHS-5: 2019–21)
- Methodology: Alkire-Foster methodology
- Structure: 3 equally weighted dimensions (Health, Education, Living Standards) with 12 indicators
- India-specific indicators: Maternal Health and Bank Accounts

5 STATE ENERGY & CLIMATE INDEX (SECI)



Tracks performance of States on energy transition, accessibility & environmental safety

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- First released: April 2022
- Indicators: 27 KPIs across 6 parameters
- Parameters & Weightage: Discoms' Performance (40%), Access, Affordability & Reliability (15%), Clean Energy Initiatives (15%), Energy Efficiency (6%), Environmental Sustainability (12%), New Initiatives (12%)
- Categories: Front Runners, Achievers, Aspirants

LATEST RANKINGS (ROUND 1)

- 🏆 Large States: Gujarat 1st, Kerala 2nd, Punjab 3rd
- 🏠 Small States: Goa 1st, Tripura 2nd, Manipur 3rd
- 🏠 UTs: Chandigarh 1st

6 STATE HEALTH INDEX



Ranks States & UTs on overall health performance and year-on-year improvement

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Established: 2017
- Developed with: Technical assistance from World Bank in consultation with MoHFW
- Framework: Weighted composite index with 24 indicators
- Domains: Health Outcomes, Governance & Information, Key Inputs/Processes
- Classification: Larger States, Smaller States, Union Territories

LATEST RANKINGS (5th EDITION)

- 🏆 Overall Rank: Kerala 1st, Tamil Nadu 2nd, Telangana 3rd
- 📈 Max YoY Improvement: Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Telangana

7 SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALITY INDEX (SEQI)



Evaluates performance in school education sector (outcome based)

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- First published: 2019
- Developed with: Ministry of Education and World Bank
- Coverage: 30 indicators under 2 categories – Outcomes & Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes
- Classification: Large States, Small States, Union Territories

LATEST RANKINGS (2026 EDITION)

- 🏆 Top Rank: Punjab 1st (overtaken Kerala)
- 🥈 Top Performer: Manipur
- 🏠 UTs: Chandigarh 1st
- ✅ Strong gains in digital infrastructure, school facilities & learning outcomes

8 COMPOSITE WATER MANAGEMENT INDEX (CWMI)



Assesses efficiency of water resource management & conservation

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- First released: June 2018
- Prepared with: Ministry of Jal Shakti & Ministry of Rural Development
- Coverage: 28 indicators across 9 themes
- Themes: Groundwater restoration, irrigation management, watershed development, participatory irrigation practices, and rural & urban drinking water supply

9 INDIA INNOVATION INDEX



Measures innovation capabilities & performance of States & UTs

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Developed with: Institute for Competitiveness
- Framework: "Enabler-Performance" framework
- Coverage: 50 indicators across 7 pillars
- Segments: Major States, Hilly & North-Eastern States, UTs & City States

LATEST RANKINGS (3rd EDITION)

- 🏆 Major States: Karnataka 1st, Telangana 2nd, Haryana 3rd
- 🏠 Hilly & NE States: Manipur 1st
- 🏠 UTs & City States: Chandigarh 1st, Delhi 2nd

10 ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME (ADP) DELTA RANKINGS



Improves socio-economic status of the most underdeveloped districts

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Initiated: January 2018
- Approach: Convergence of Central & State schemes, collaboration of officers, competition among districts
- Evaluation: Monthly incremental progress across 49 key performance indicators
- Ranking Areas & Weightage: Health & Nutrition (30%), Education (30%), Agriculture & Water Resources (20%), Financial Inclusion & Skill Development (10%), Basic Infrastructure (10%)

11 DISTRICT HOSPITAL INDEX



Evaluates performance of secondary healthcare institutions (District Hospitals)

KEY FACTS & PARAMETERS

- Developed with: World Bank & Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Data validation: National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH)
- Coverage: 10 key performance indicators
- Indicators include: Bed occupancy rate, availability of diagnostic services, ratio of doctors to beds, surgical productivity, etc.

WHY THESE INDICES MATTER

- 📊 Data-driven policy making
- 🎯 Identify gaps & best practices
- 🏆 Encourage healthy competition
- 🤝 Promote cooperative federalism
- 🌱 Support inclusive & sustainable development

★ These indices help States & UTs benchmark their performance, learn from each other and accelerate India's overall development.

Practice questions:***Objective questions:***

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, recently in news, involves which combination of countries?

- (a) Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan
- (b) Saudi Arabia, UAE and Pakistan
- (c) Türkiye, Iran and Pakistan
- (d) Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Türkiye

Polysilicon, proposed to be supported through a Production Linked Incentive scheme in India, is most directly important for the manufacture of:

- (a) Solar photovoltaic cells
- (b) Lithium-ion battery electrolytes
- (c) Hydrogen fuel-cell membranes
- (d) Wind turbine blades

Consider the following statements regarding Prakriti Gyan Dham:

1. It is an Eco-Educational Hub established by CSIR-NBRI at the Maharishi Parashar Bioresource Centre in Banthra, Lucknow.
2. It integrates biodiversity conservation with scientific research, environmental education and cultural interpretation.
3. It conserves heritage trees propagated from historically significant locations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Consider the following statements regarding Modified Mix Seal Surfacing Plus (MSS+) Technology:

1. It uses a modified bituminous mix to create a durable surface layer over an existing pavement.
2. It is primarily designed for constructing entirely new roads rather than resurfacing existing pavements.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

With reference to DigiLocker, consider the following statements:

1. It enables users to access, verify and store essential documents digitally.
2. It can be used for accessing documents such as educational marksheets and identity-related records.
3. It eliminates the need for all forms of physical verification in every government service.
4. Its objective is consistent with the paperless governance approach under Digital India.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

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