

14/08/2026 Daily Current News

1. 'GARUD':

Context: India Optel Limited (IOL), a Mini Ratna Category-I Defence Public Sector Undertaking under the Department of Defence Production, has launched the indigenous 'GARUD' High Resolution Binoculars for the civil market.

About GARUD:

- ❖ GARUD offers 8x magnification and a wide 7.6-degree field of view, enabling clear observation of distant objects while retaining a broad viewing perspective.
- ❖ The binocular features ± 5 diopter adjustment to accommodate individual eyesight, soft-touch eyecups for comfortable extended viewing and a secure, ergonomic grip.
- ❖ Its weather-resistant construction enables reliable use across varied outdoor conditions.
- ❖ Weighing approximately 610 grams, GARUD combines portability with dependable performance in a compact design.
- ❖ It is suited for a wide range of applications, including birdwatching, wildlife observation, nature exploration, travel, sports, forestry, marine activities and security-related applications.

2. *Eco sensitive zones:*

Context: Kaziranga eco-sensitive zone to be cut from 10km to 1km as per SC guidelines.

About Eco sensitive zones:

- ❖ ESZs are ecologically fragile areas around protected areas (PAs) designated so under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986
- ❖ Land within 10 km of the boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries is to be notified as eco-fragile zones or Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ).
- ❖ While the 10-km rule is implemented as a general principle, the extent of its application can vary.
- ❖ These were issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)
- ❖ Eco-Sensitive Zones are created as "shock absorbers" for the protected areas, to minimize the negative impact on the "fragile ecosystems" by certain human activities taking place nearby.
- ❖ These areas are meant to act as a transition zone from areas requiring higher protection to those requiring lesser protection.
- ❖ They are not meant to hamper the daily activities of people living in the vicinity, but are meant to guard the protected areas and "refine the environment around them".
- ❖ Prohibited activities: Commercial mining, saw mills, commercial use of wood, etc., apart from regulated activities like felling of trees.
- ❖ Permitted activities: Ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, among others.
- ❖ India has more than 600 Ecologically Sensitive Zones declared across different states.

3. *Voyager 2:*

Context: NASA's Voyager 2 mission extended by a year.

About Voyager 2:

- ❖ **Launch:** NASA's Voyager 2 was launched on 20 August 1977, a few weeks before its sister spacecraft, Voyager 1.
- ❖ **Primary Mission:** It was designed to study the outer planets—Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune—and their moons before continuing into interstellar space.
- ❖ **Planetary Firsts:** Voyager 2 is the only spacecraft to have visited Uranus and Neptune and the only one to study all four giant planets at close range.
- ❖ **Major Discoveries:** It discovered new moons and rings, including 10 new moons and 2 rings around Uranus, and 5 moons and 4 rings around Neptune, including Neptune's Great Dark Spot.
- ❖ **Golden Record:** The spacecraft carries the Golden Record, containing sounds and images from Earth intended as a message to potential extraterrestrial civilizations.
- ❖ **Interstellar Space:** Voyager 2 entered interstellar space on 10 December 2018, becoming the second human-made object to do so after Voyager 1.
- ❖ **Current Significance:** It continues its journey through interstellar space and transmits scientific data about the interstellar medium and heliosphere; it remains the second-most-distant human-made object from Earth.

4. *Kuril Islands:*

Context: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday made his first visit to the Kuril Islands, a Moscow-controlled Pacific archipelago that also is claimed by Japan, which voiced a diplomatic protest over the trip. Japan asserts territorial rights to the four southernmost islands of the chain, which it calls the Northern Territories. The Soviet Union took them from Japan in the final days of the Second World War, and the dispute kept the countries from signing a peace treaty formally ending their hostilities.

About Kuril Islands:

- ❖ **Location:** The Kuril Islands are an archipelago in the Russian Far East, forming a natural boundary between the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Okhotsk.
- ❖ **Extent:** They stretch about 1,300 km from the southern tip of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula to northeastern Hokkaido, Japan.
- ❖ **Composition:** The archipelago consists of 56 islands and numerous islets and rocks, covering over 15,600 sq. km, and is divided into Greater and Lesser Kuril Chains.
- ❖ **Volcanic Activity:** Located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, the islands contain over 100 volcanoes, including around 35 active volcanoes, along with numerous hot springs.
- ❖ **Climate & Vegetation:** The region has long, cold and snowy winters and cool, wet, foggy summers; vegetation ranges from tundra in the north to dense forests in the south.
- ❖ **Administration:** Russia administers the islands as part of Sakhalin Oblast. Important settlements include Kurilsk, Severo-Kurilsk and Yuzhno-Kurilsk.

- ❖ Kuril Islands Dispute: Japan claims the four southernmost islands—the Northern Territories—while Russia administers them. The dispute has contributed to Russia and Japan not formally concluding a World War II peace treaty.

5. ***Kanwar Yatra:***

Context: The Haridwar administration has launched a major clean-up drive to remove about 7,000 tonnes of waste left behind by Kanwariyas across the city and on the ghats of the Ganga. About 50 million pilgrims had undertaken the 12-day Kanwar Yatra.

About Kanwar Yatra:

- ❖ It is an annual pilgrimage undertaken by millions of Hindu devotees, primarily dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- ❖ During this sacred journey, devotees, known as Kanwariyas, travel to the holy rivers, primarily the Ganges, to fetch holy water.
- ❖ Typically occurs during the Hindu month of Shravan, which usually falls in July.
- ❖ This water, carried in earthen pots called Kanwars, is then offered to Shiva lingams at various temples.
- ❖ Kanwariyas often travel long distances, with popular destinations including Haridwar, Gaumukh, Gangotri in Uttarakhand and Sultanganj in Bihar.

6. ***Parliamentary privileges under Article 105:***

Context: The Supreme Court has said a seven-judge Constitution Bench would commence hearing from October 6 a series of long-pending petitions questioning whether legislative privileges can override citizens' fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

About Parliamentary privileges:

- ❖ Freedom of Speech: Article 105(1) guarantees freedom of speech in Parliament, subject to the Constitution and parliamentary rules.
- ❖ Immunity for Speech: Under Article 105(2), an MP cannot face court proceedings for anything said in Parliament or in its committees.
- ❖ Immunity for Vote: MPs cannot be held legally liable for any vote given in Parliament or its committees.
- ❖ Publication Immunity: No person is liable for publication of reports, papers, votes or proceedings when published by or under the authority of either House.
- ❖ Other Privileges: Article 105(3) provides for the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament, its members and committees.
- ❖ Privileges by Law: Parliament may define these privileges by legislation. Until Parliament makes such a law, the applicable privileges continue according to the constitutional provision.
- ❖ Persons Other Than MPs: Article 105(4) extends the relevant protections under clauses (1), (2) and (3) to persons who have a constitutional right to speak and participate in parliamentary proceedings, even though they are not MPs.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ NITI Aayog has released the report titled “Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub”, which through a structured and data-driven framework identifies major sectors that can fuel India’s ambition to become global manufacturing powerhouse. This report has extensively analyzed four sectors viz. Chemicals, Telecom & Networking Equipments, Textiles and Solar Photo Voltaic manufacturing.
- ☐ Dr. Padma Gurmet, Director, National Institute of Sowa-Rigpa, Leh, has been conferred the UT Ladakh State Award for the year 2025 in recognition of his contribution to the preservation, promotion and development of the Sowa-Rigpa system of medicine in Ladakh.
- ☐ ‘Vigyan Tech’, a first of its kind national initiative was organized by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), on National Technology Day, 11 May 2026 at BRIC-National Institute of Immunology (BRIC-NII), N. Delhi. The purpose was to promote a whole-of- Government approach for science, technology and innovation.
- ☐ Union Minister of Textiles Shri Giriraj Singh will inaugurate Handloom Haat: The Handloom Experience Centre at Janpath, New Delhi, on 14 August 2026, marking a significant step towards creating a distinctive public destination for experiencing, understanding and engaging with India’s rich handloom heritage. The re-envisioned Handloom Haat will bring together heritage, knowledge, contemporary design, enterprise and retail under one roof.
- ☐ Parliament has passed the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, seeking to change the State’s name from “Kerala” to “Keralam”. Under Article 3, Parliament can alter the name, area or boundaries of a State. Such a Bill can be introduced in either House only on the President’s recommendation; if it affects a State’s name, area or boundaries, the President refers it to the concerned State Legislature for its views, which are not binding on Parliament, followed by passage in Parliament and President’s assent.
- ☐ Russia has appointed former Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud as its arbitrator in an investment treaty arbitration filed by Ukraine’s state-owned Oschadbank. The dispute concerns assets and operations that Oschadbank says it lost in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions after Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- ☐ Gujarat has received approval for the Desert Zoological Park and Night Safari at Juna Deesa in Banaskantha district. The project will be developed on about 103 hectares of contiguous government land and is planned as Asia’s first desert-themed drive-through night safari.
- ☐ The Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) commenced the bilateral air exercise Udara Shakti 2026 on 10 August 2026. The five-day exercise is scheduled to continue until 14 August 2026 at Subang Air Base in Malaysia.
- ☐ The 8th Meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Ocean and Polar Science and Technology (OPST) began in Goa on 12 August 2026.
- ☐ The Gaj Gaurav Awards 2026 were conferred on 13 August 2026 during the national celebrations of World Elephant Day in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The ceremony was hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and recognised frontline contributions to elephant conservation and management in India. Seven mahouts from Jaldapara National Park in West Bengal received the 2026 award for flood-rescue work.

- ☐ The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru released SraVaani on 13 August 2026 as an open-source multilingual speech-recognition model. The model was developed by the SPIRE Lab in collaboration with ART PARK and with support from Google.
- ☐ Indian fencers claimed five team gold medals in men's sabre, women's sabre, men's epee, women's epee and women's foil, as well as a silver in men's foil on the fourth day of the Commonwealth fencing championship in Lagos, Nigeria, on Wednesday. With 35 medals, including 13 gold and eight silver, India was declared overall champion and awarded Wilkinson Sword Trophy.

Practice questions:

Objective questions:

With reference to the alteration of the name of a State in India, which one of the following Articles of the Constitution is primarily relevant?

- (a) Article 4
- (b) Article 2
- (c) Article 3
- (d) Article 368

'Udara Shakti 2026', recently conducted between which of the following countries?

- (a) India and Indonesia
- (b) India and Thailand
- (c) India and Singapore
- (d) India and Malaysia

Consider the following statements regarding Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs):

1. Eco-Sensitive Zones are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. The 10-km criterion around protected areas is an absolute and uniformly applicable rule for determining the extent of every ESZ.
3. ESZs are intended to act as transition zones or "shock absorbers" around protected areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

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