

15/08/2026 Daily Current News

1. *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):*

Context: The Government of India launched the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) in the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. Under the new system, the food subsidy will be transferred directly into the beneficiary's Digital Rupee wallet, instead of a conventional bank account. The beneficiary can then use the purpose-bound digital subsidy to purchase foodgrains from empanelled merchants through a secure and traceable digital payment mechanism.

About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):

- ❖ Launched: April 2020 as a COVID-19 relief measure under the broader Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP).
- ❖ Objective: To ensure food security and protect poor, migrant and vulnerable households during crisis periods.
- ❖ Beneficiaries: Covers Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Households (PHH) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.
- ❖ Food Grain Benefit: Provides free food grains — 5 kg per person per month for PHH and 35 kg per month per AAY household.
- ❖ Implementation: Food grains are distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS) across the country.
- ❖ PHH Identification: Priority Households are identified by State Governments/UT Administrations based on their prescribed criteria.
- ❖ AAY Coverage: Includes vulnerable households such as those headed by widows, elderly, disabled or terminally ill persons and those without assured livelihood.
- ❖ Other Vulnerable Groups: Includes primitive tribal households, landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans, slum dwellers and informal-sector workers.
- ❖ Significance: Helped reduce hunger and strengthen food security among vulnerable sections during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Recent Rice Reform: Raw rice supplied under PMGKAY will contain up to 10% broken grains instead of 25%; parboiled rice up to 5% instead of 16%.
- ❖ Productive Use & Quality: Broken rice generated during milling will be separated and used productively, ensuring better-quality edible rice reaches beneficiaries.
- ❖ QR-Code Traceability: QR-code tagging of rice bags will enable end-to-end tracking, improving transparency, accountability, inventory management and prevention of leakages in the PDS.

2. *Gallantry awards:*

Context: President Smt Droupadi Murmu has approved 78 Gallantry awards, including 13 posthumous, to the personnel of the Defence Forces and Central Armed Police Forces on the eve of Independence Day 2026.

About Gallantry awards:

- ❖ Purpose: Gallantry Awards honour acts of bravery and sacrifice by Armed Forces personnel, other lawfully constituted forces and civilians.
- ❖ Announcement: These awards are announced twice a year — on Republic Day and Independence Day.
- ❖ Categories: Gallantry Awards are divided into two categories — Gallantry in the Face of Enemy and Gallantry Other than in the Face of Enemy.
- ❖ Gallantry in the Face of Enemy: Param Vir Chakra (PVC), Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) and Vir Chakra.
- ❖ Gallantry Other than in the Face of Enemy: Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra.
- ❖ First Three Awards: Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra were instituted on 26 January 1950.
- ❖ Ashoka Chakra Series: Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Class-II and Class-III were instituted on 4 January 1952.
- ❖ Renaming: In January 1967, Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Class-II and Class-III were renamed Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra, respectively.
- ❖ Highest Award: Param Vir Chakra is India's highest military gallantry award for bravery in the face of the enemy.

3. *Ken–Betwa Link Project:*

Context: The Government clarified that reports of tribal displacement without compensation or rehabilitation under the Ken–Betwa Link Project are incorrect and misleading. Most eligible families have already received full compensation and rehabilitation benefits, with only a few procedural formalities pending.

About Ken–Betwa Link Project:

- ❖ Under the project, the transfer of excess water from the River Ken to the Betwa basin was envisaged. Both are tributaries of Yamuna river
- ❖ It aims to provide irrigation to the Bundelkhand region, which is one of the worst drought-affected areas in India.
- ❖ The project involves building a 77-metre tall and a 2-km wide Dhaudhan dam (to be built within Panna Tiger Reserve) and a 230-km canal.
- ❖ A Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Centre and the governments of U.P and M.P for the project.
- ❖ A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) called Ken-Betwa Link Project Authority (KBLPA) was set up to implement the project.
- ❖ The project will ensure irrigation for 10.62 lakh hectares, drinking water for nearly 62 lakh people, and 103 MW of hydropower generation.
- ❖ Of the total estimated cost of ₹44,604.99 crore, ₹12,445.85 crore has been spent up to July 2026. The project is being implemented by the Ken–Betwa Link Project Authority.

4. *PM Vishwakarma scheme:*

Context: The Government of India has invited 100 beneficiaries of PM Vishwakarma from the Delhi-NCR region as 'Special Guests' to witness the 80th Independence Day Ceremony at the Red Fort, Delhi, on 15th August, 2026.

About PM Vishwakarma scheme:

- ❖ Launched: Central Sector Scheme launched on 17 September 2023 for traditional artisans and craftspeople engaged in manual/tool-based work.
- ❖ Eligibility: Artisans above 18 years, working in 18 family-based traditional trades in the unorganised sector on a self-employment basis.
- ❖ Family & Loan Condition: One member per family can benefit; government employees and their families are excluded. Applicants should not have availed PMEGP, MUDRA or PM SVANidhi loans in the previous 5 years, subject to the specified repayment exception.
- ❖ Recognition: Beneficiaries receive a PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID Card.
- ❖ Skill Training: Basic training (5–7 days/40 hours) and advanced training (15 days) with ₹500/day stipend.
- ❖ Toolkit Incentive: Up to ₹15,000 through e-RUPI/e-vouchers for modern tools.
- ❖ Credit Support: Collateral-free Enterprise Development Loans — ₹1 lakh first tranche and ₹2 lakh second tranche, with interest subvention.
- ❖ Digital Empowerment: ₹1 per digital transaction, up to 100 transactions/month, directly credited to beneficiaries.
- ❖ Market Support: ₹250 crore corpus for quality certification, branding, advertising, publicity and other marketing activities.

5. *Rub' al Khali:*

Context: Oman and Saudi Arabia have signed a cross-border freight deal as an alternative to chokepoints like Strait of Hormuz. This deal utilizes the direct overland road through the Rub' al Khali.

About Rub' al Khali:

- ❖ Location: Arabian Peninsula; mainly in Saudi Arabia, extending into Oman, UAE and Yemen.
- ❖ Area: About 650,000 km² — the world's largest continuous sand desert.
- ❖ Relief: Dominated by vast sand seas, dunes and sand sheets; some dunes rise to ~250 m.
- ❖ Climate: Extremely arid; annual rainfall is generally <30 mm.
- ❖ Temperature: Summer temperatures can exceed 50°C, with large diurnal temperature variation.
- ❖ Drainage: No permanent rivers; drainage is mainly through ephemeral channels/wadis.
- ❖ Vegetation: Very sparse xerophytic vegetation due to extreme aridity.
- ❖ Human life: Traditionally inhabited/traversed by Bedouin communities, particularly around desert margins and oases.
- ❖ Geomorphology: Strong aeolian processes produce extensive dune systems.
- ❖ Significance: Important for petroleum and natural gas resources, particularly in the wider Arabian Peninsula.

- ❖ Name: *Rub' al Khali* literally means “Empty Quarter”, referring to its vast, sparsely inhabited terrain.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ In a unique celebration of patriotism, public service and technological innovation, the Department of Posts today delivered the National Flag, the Tiranga, through a drone from Mandi Head Post Office to Rehardhar Branch Post Office in Himachal Pradesh, marking the first-ever drone delivery of the Tiranga by India Post.
- ☐ United States Central Command (CENTCOM) announced Task Force Falcon Strike on 13 August 2026 as its first multinational, multi-domain attack drone task force for operations in West Asia. The unit is designed around low-cost, one-way attack drones and includes unmanned systems operating above, on, and below the sea.
- ☐ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is implementing measures to reduce space debris from Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellations. The measures include the Debris Free Space Mission (DFSMS), Active Debris Removal (ADR), post-mission disposal practices, and orbital decay norms for Indian space actors.
- ☐ The inaugural India-Israel Hackathon concluded on 14 August 2026 with the theme of Restorative Healthcare. The event brought together 1,300 young innovators from India and Israel in mixed cross-country teams to work on 14 problem statements linked to rehabilitation and patient mobility.
- ☐ India won its maiden overall title at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships 2026 in Lagos, Nigeria, after finishing with 35 medals across the Under-23 and Senior divisions. The final tally included 13 gold, 8 silver, and 14 bronze medals, and India won the Wilkinson Sword Trophy for the best overall performance.
- ☐ The Australian Institute of Marine Science released the 2025/26 Long-Term Monitoring Program Annual Summary Report on 11 August 2026. The report recorded a rebound in hard coral cover in parts of the Great Barrier Reef after severe bleaching in earlier years. The Great Barrier Reef is the world’s largest coral reef system and lies off the north-eastern coast of Australia in the Coral Sea. Hard coral cover is a standard monitoring measure used to assess the proportion of reef surface occupied by living hard corals.
- ☐ India is once again in U.S. crosshairs, this time for allegedly allowing China to evade U.S. tariffs by routing its exports through the country. The latest allegations are part of a new White House report called ‘The Great Transshipment Scam’. In particular, the U.S. has named “the Pune-Gujarat-Chennai belt” as one of the areas “enabling” China to evade tariffs to the detriment of supply chains in the U.S.
- ☐ India’s current account deficit (CAD) widened to \$6.2 billion in June from a surplus of \$1.2 billion in the year-ago month, according to preliminary data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday. The CAD was primarily driven by a widening merchandise trade deficit, which rose to \$30.2 billion in June 2026 from \$19.2 billion a year earlier. Merchandise exports increased to \$41.2 billion in June from \$35.3 billion in the year-ago month, while imports rose at a faster pace to \$71.4 billion from \$54.5 billion.

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

The first-ever drone delivery of the National Flag (Tiranga) by India Post was made between which of the following places?

- (a) Shimla Head Post Office and Kullu Branch Post Office
- (b) Dharamshala Head Post Office and Rehardhar Branch Post Office
- (c) Mandi Head Post Office and Shimla Branch Post Office
- (d) Mandi Head Post Office and Rehardhar Branch Post Office

With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), consider the following statements:

1. It was launched in April 2020 as a COVID-19 relief measure.
2. It covers beneficiaries under both Antyodaya Anna Yojana and Priority Households under the NFSA, 2013.
3. Food grains under the scheme are distributed through the Public Distribution System.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

With reference to the Gallantry Awards in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra are awarded for gallantry other than in the face of the enemy.
2. The Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra were instituted together on 26 January 1950.

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

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