

19/07/2026 Daily Current News

1. *Vikram-1:*

Context: As Skyroot Aerospace prepares to launch Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket, the country's growing private space ecosystem is demonstrating the impact of these reforms under Mission Aagaman. The Indian Space Policy 2023 has opened the entire space value chain to private participation, fostering innovation, investment and enterprise across the space ecosystem. Indian industry is now participating in satellite manufacturing, launch services, space applications and downstream services.

About Vikram-1:

- ❖ Vikram-1, developed by Skyroot Aerospace, is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle, capable of placing 350 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- ❖ Orbital launch vehicles deploy satellites into stable Earth orbits, supporting communication, navigation, Earth observation and scientific research.
- ❖ It is built with an all-carbon composite structure, reliable solid-fuel boosters and a 3D-printed liquid engine, Vikram-1 showcases India's growing private-sector launch capabilities.
- ❖ Vikram-1 is scheduled to launch under Mission Aagaman between 12 July and 4 August 2026. A successful mission will validate the country's indigenous commercial launch capability and the success of the Government of India's space sector reforms.
- ❖ The mission will deploy multiple customer payloads into LEO at an altitude of 450 kilometres (280 miles). These include Skyroot's SCOPE satellite, DCUBED's technology demonstration payload, Grahaa Space's SOLARAS S3 satellite, and CosmoServe Space's Embrace, a robotic arm designed to capture orbital debris.
- ❖ The maiden flight will also carry two symbolic payloads—"Cosmic Bloom", a floral-shaped artwork, and an 18-karat gold micro-rocket. The micro-rocket features microscopic sculptures of C. V. Raman, Vikram Sarabhai and A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, each smaller than a grain of rice, paying tribute to India's pioneering scientists.

2. *Specified Non-Financial Assets (SNFAs):*

Context: The Reserve Bank of India has introduced a prudential framework for Specified Non-Financial Assets (SNFAs) through amendments to the Resolution of Stressed Assets Directions, 2025. The framework applies to Regional Rural Banks, All India Financial Institutions, commercial banks, small finance banks, and non-banking financial companies, and it comes into force on 1 October 2026.

About Specified Non-Financial Assets (SNFAs):

- ❖ SNFAs are immovable non-banking assets acquired by banks in full or partial settlement of loans classified as NPAs.
- ❖ SNFAs are physical assets, not financial claims, taken over after borrower default.
- ❖ Banks must have a board-approved policy for the acquisition, recovery, valuation, and disposal of SNFAs.
- ❖ SNFAs must be disposed of within 7 years from the date of acquisition.
- ❖ Banks cannot sell SNFAs back to the original borrower or related parties.

- ❖ SNFAs are valued at the lower of the extinguished loan's net book value or the distress sale value.
- ❖ Distress sale value must be determined by at least two independent external valuers.
- ❖ SNFAs are not classified as Gross NPAs, Net NPAs, or stressed assets.
- ❖ SNFAs must be disclosed separately under specified heads in banks' balance sheets.
- ❖ Legacy SNFAs outstanding as of 30 September 2026 must comply with the new directions by 30 September 2027.

3. *Geothermal energy:*

Context: India commissioned its first and deepest geothermal wells in the Puga Valley of Ladakh on 17 July 2026. Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh V.K. Saxena inaugurated two wells drilled to a depth of 1,000 metres each at an altitude of more than 14,000 feet.

About Geothermal energy:

- ❖ Geothermal energy is heat from the Earth's interior used for electricity generation and direct heating.
- ❖ India has identified major geothermal resource zones in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- ❖ Puga Valley in Ladakh is one of India's key geothermal energy project sites.
- ❖ The ONGC Energy Centre is executing the geothermal drilling project at Puga Valley.
- ❖ The first geothermal well reached a depth of 1,000 metres on 22 May 2026.
- ❖ The second geothermal well was spudded on 3 June 2026 and completed on 8 July 2026.
- ❖ A maximum temperature of 135°C was recorded at a depth of 400 metres in the wells.
- ❖ Further testing is underway to evaluate deeper temperatures and reservoir conditions for geothermal power generation.

4. *World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO):*

Context: China has launched the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO) in Shanghai, positioning it as a global AI governance platform for the Global South and developing countries.

About World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO):

- ❖ WAICO (World AI Cooperation Organization) is a China-led international AI governance platform headquartered in Shanghai, China.
- ❖ Aim: To promote inclusive AI development, international cooperation, AI capacity building, and a Global South-led AI governance framework.
- ❖ Global South Focus: Brings together 30 participating countries, mainly from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, to strengthen AI collaboration.
- ❖ Capacity Building: China will provide 5,000 AI training opportunities and establish joint AI cooperation centres with ASEAN, African Union, BRICS, SCO, League of Arab States, and CELAC.
- ❖ Open-Source AI Promotion: Encourages open-source AI models, technology sharing, and collaborative AI development.

- ❖ **Alternative AI Governance Model:** Advocates digital sovereignty, multilateral AI governance, and reduced dependence on Western AI platforms.

5. ***Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0:***

Context: On July 15, the Union Cabinet cleared the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), and the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS), with a ₹1.27 lakh crore and ₹62,500 crore outlay, respectively.

About Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0:

- ❖ ISM's first phase was approved in December 2021 with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore. Following an amendment in 2022, the programme was empowered to provide for up to 50% capital subsidy for big-ticket projects, such as Micron's memory chip packaging facility in Sanand, Gujarat.
- ❖ The expenditure department under the Finance Ministry has cleared a Budget proposal entailing an allocation of ₹1.25 lakh crore for India Semiconductor Mission 2.0.
- ❖ The funds were also directed to the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme, which was designed to incentivise additional manufacturing of smaller electronics components.
- ❖ The main change is that the ISM programme will now cover a larger part of the electronics manufacturing ecosystem, including areas that were partially addressed in the previous phase.
- ❖ These include encouraging chip design talent, capital machinery (the large equipment used in chip-making facilities), chemicals and gases that are of semiconductor-grade purity, and research and development efforts.
- ❖ The newer scheme will also trim capital subsidies to 30-40%, Mr. Sinha said, as the semiconductor industry is likely to get more attractive in India even with less incentives.
- ❖ The government is also less likely to offer land support, as State governments have shown increasing enthusiasm for hosting such projects by providing land at token prices and offering their own incentives on top of those provided by the Union government.

6. ***Solar storms:***

Context: As countries electrify more of their economies and increasingly interconnect their power grids, understanding space weather has become crucial. One particularly adverse form of space weather is a geomagnetic storm: temporary disturbances in earth's magnetic field caused by charged particles from the sun. These storms produce beautiful aurorae but also induce strong yet short-lived currents in the grid. However, a new study in Space Weather has reported that these storms can also stress power grids in a hitherto unexpected way and that existing tools may not fully capture the effects.

What are Solar storms?

- ❖ **Definition:** Solar storms (geomagnetic storms) occur when large-scale magnetic eruptions on the Sun, often involving Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) and associated solar flares, accelerate charged particles to very high speeds.
- ❖ **Movement to Earth:** These charged particles travel towards Earth at speeds of up to about 3 million miles per hour.

- ❖ **Interaction with Magnetosphere:** When an Earth-directed CME or high-speed solar wind reaches Earth, it compresses and disturbs the magnetosphere, allowing energetic particles to enter the atmosphere near the poles.
- ❖ **Role of Magnetosphere:** Earth's magnetosphere, generated by its magnetic field, acts as a protective shield against most charged particles from the Sun.
- ❖ **Satellite Damage:** Energetic solar particles can penetrate satellites, damaging electronic circuits and disrupting satellite operations.
- ❖ **Risk to Humans in Space:** Solar radiation storms can damage biological DNA, posing health risks to astronauts.
- ❖ **Aviation Hazard:** During severe solar radiation storms, passengers and crew on high-altitude, high-latitude flights may face increased radiation exposure.
- ❖ **Auroras:** Geomagnetic storms produce spectacular Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) and Aurora Australis (Southern Lights) near the polar regions.

7. ***Raimona National Park:***

Context: Bishal Basumatary, a research scholar at Bodoland University, set out to document the butterflies and their nectar sources in Raimona National Park. One of the most significant findings is that *Lantana camara*, *Chromolaena odorata*, and *Ziziphus mauritiana*, which are generally regarded as invasive exotic species and are often excluded from forest management practices, serve as major nectar sources for a large number of butterfly species in the park.

About Raimona National Park:

- ❖ **Location:** Raimona National Park is located in the Gossaigaon subdivision of Kokrajhar district, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Assam, along the India–Bhutan border.
- ❖ **Biodiversity Hotspot:** It is a critical conservation area forming part of the Eastern Himalayan Foothills Biodiversity Hotspot.
- ❖ **Transboundary Landscape:** The park is ecologically connected with Bhutan's Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary, Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, and West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve, together covering over 2,400 sq. km.
- ❖ **Topography:** Situated in the Eastern Himalayan foothills, the park has an altitude ranging from 85 m to 1,042 m.
- ❖ **Major Rivers:** It is bounded by the Sankosh River (west), Saralbhangha River (east), and Pekua River (south).
- ❖ **Vegetation:** The park supports about 380 plant species, including tropical forests, riverine grasslands, orchids, and moist deciduous and evergreen forests.
- ❖ **Flora:** Important plant species include Sal, Teak (*Tectona grandis*), Banyan, Assam Rosewood, *Bambusa balcooa*, and orchids such as *Cymbidium* and *Dendrobium*.
- ❖ **Fauna:** It is home to the endemic Golden Langur, Asian elephant, Royal Bengal tiger, clouded leopard, wild water buffalo, along with 170 bird species and 150 butterfly species.
- ❖ **Conservation Significance:** Raimona is a key Golden Langur conservation area and an important elephant corridor linking the Assam plains with the Bhutan hills.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ In another significant boost to the horticulture exports of Jammu & Kashmir, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, facilitated the first export shipment of premium Areko Cherries (High-Density European Sweet Cherries) and Scentrose Plums from Shopian and Pulwama to Singapore. The milestone follows the successful export of fresh cherries and plums from the region to Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the UAE, further expanding the global footprint of Kashmir's premium temperate fruits.
- ☐ Shri Amit Shah will perform the Bhoomi Pujan of the world's largest curd production plant under the Amul Bengal Dairy Project at the New Town Convention Centre in Kolkata on 19 July 2026.
- ☐ The fourth edition of the National Conference on Responsible Business Conduct (NCRBC) 2026, organised by the School of Business Environment (SBE) of the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, concluded recently in New Delhi.
- ☐ The Supreme Court of India granted final approval on 16 July 2026 for the Kukrail Night Safari and Day Zoo project in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The project is planned as India's first urban night safari and the world's fifth such facility after Singapore, Thailand, China and Indonesia.
- ☐ World Listening Day is observed every year on 18 July. The day was established in 2010 by the World Listening Project, a non-profit organisation founded in 2008. The date marks the birthday of Raymond Murray Schafer, a Canadian composer, author and environmentalist associated with acoustic ecology. The official theme for World Listening Day 2026 is "Listening as a Way of Knowing and Relating to the World Around Us."
- ☐ Gujarat has emerged as the country's leading investment destination after securing the top position among major States in NITI Aayog's first-ever Investment Friendliness Index 2026, according to the report released by the Chief Minister's Office.
- ☐ On July 17, Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off India's first train powered by hydrogen. It operates on an 89-km stretch between Jind and Sonipat in Haryana. Germany was the first country to introduce commercial hydrogen passenger trains, while France, Italy, China, Japan and others are pursuing pilot projects or limited deployments. However, these trains typically have two to four coaches and serve mainly regional routes.
- ☐ Last week, when prominent political parties and groups representing Sri Lanka's Tamil-speaking ethnic minorities launched a common platform, the move piqued the interest of many. Especially since the platform, or "medai", as the leaders called it, is neither a conventional political coalition nor an electoral alliance.



FEATURE FILMS – TOP HONOURS

BEST FEATURE FILM

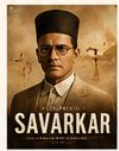
Article 370
(Hindi)



Director:
Aditya Suhas Jambhale

BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR

Swatantrya Veer Savarkar (Hindi)



Director:
Randeep Hooda

BEST POPULAR FILM PROVIDING WHOLESOME ENTERTAINMENT

Kalki 2898 AD
(Telugu)



Director:
Nag Ashwin Singireddy

BEST DIRECTION

Amaran
(Tamil)



Director:
Rajkumar Periasamy

BEST ACTOR & ACTRESS

BEST ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE



Yami Gautam
Article 370 (Hindi)

BEST ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE



Mammooty
Bramayugam
(Malayalam)



Kartik Aaryan
Chandu Champion
(Hindi)

AWARD SHARED

OTHER MAJOR AWARDS – FEATURE FILMS

BEST ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Sanjay Mishra
Bhakshak
(Hindi)

BEST ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Sachana Namidass
Maharaja (Tamil) &
Ropashree Varkady
Mithya (Kannada)

BEST CHILD ARTIST

Athish S Shetty
(Mithya) ,
Arundev Pothula
(35- Chinna Katha Kaadu) ,
Riddhiman Banerjee,
Tapomoy Deb,
Gitashree Chakraborty
(Onko Ki Kothin)

BEST MUSIC DIRECTION

Shashwat Sachdev
(Songs - Article 370)
& G. V. Prakash Kumar
(Background Score -
Amaran)

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Shehnad Jalal
Bramayugam
(Malayalam)

BEST EDITING

R. Kalaivannan
Amaran
(Tamil)

BEST SOUND DESIGN

Manas Choudhury
Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3
(Hindi)

BEST FEATURE FILM – LANGUAGE WISE (SCHEDULE VIII LANGUAGES)

Assamese	Juiphool	Malayalam	Feminichi Fathima
Bengali	Chalchitra Ekhon	Manipuri	Sunita
Gujarati	Maaran	Marathi	Mukkam Post Bombilwadi
Hindi	Srikanth	Odia	Lahari
Kannada	Mithya	Tamil	Raayan
Konkani	Mog Asum	Telugu	Committee Kurrollu

OTHER LANGUAGES (NOT IN SCHEDULE VIII)

Garhwali	Dholi	Tulu	IMBU
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NON-FEATURE FILMS – TOP HONOURS

BEST NON-FEATURE FILM
Bhangaar (Marathi & English)

BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR
Angen (Santhali)

BEST DOCUMENTARY
Ram-Nami (Hindi)

BEST DIRECTION
Statue of Unity - Ekta ka Prateek (Hindi)

OTHER NOTABLE AWARDS – FEATURE FILMS

- Best Screenplay: Pushpa (The Rule Part - 02) (Original) / Swargandharva Sudhir Phadke (Adapted)
- Best Lyrics: Manoj Muntashir (Maidaan – Jaane Do)
- Best Choreography: Vijay Ganguly (Stree 2 – Aaj Ki Raat)
- Best Action Direction (Stunt Choreography): Anil Arasu (Maharaja)
- Best Costume Design: Deepali Noor & Sheetal Sharma (Pushpa: The Rule Part - 02)
- Best Production Design: Nitin Zihani Choudhary (Kalki 2898 AD)
- Best Make-up: P Ravi Kumar (Committee Kurrollu)

BEST NON-FEATURE FILM
Actor: Dianush

BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR
Angen (Santhali)

BEST DOCUMENTARY
Ram-Nami (Hindi)

BEST DIRECTION
Statue of Unity - Ekta ka Prateek (Hindi)

OTHER KEY AWARDS

- Best Cinematography:
 - Life in Loom
 - Blue (Tamil)
- Best Editing:
 - NDA (Hindi)
 - Parat 41st chya Magavar (On the Trail of 41st) (Marathi)
- Best Short Film (Up to 30 Min): Hamsafar (Marathi)
- Special Mentions:
 - Bhadra-Kali Natakam (Malayalam)
 - Chola Dora aur Sui (Hindi)

The awards were announced by Shri Jayaraj (Chairperson, Feature Film Jury), Shri Aseem Sinha (Chairperson, Non-Feature Film Jury), Shri A. Chandrasekhar (Chairperson, Best Writing on Cinema Jury) in the presence of Dr. Ajay Nagabhushan M.N., Joint Secretary (Films) and Shri Dharendra Ojha, PDG, PIB.



HIGHLIGHT

The 72nd National Film Awards, 2024 reflect the diversity, creativity and excellence of Indian cinema across languages and genres.

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

The world's largest curd production plant under the Amul Bengal Dairy Project is being established in:

- (a) Ahmedabad
- (b) Guwahati
- (c) Kolkata
- (d) Bhubaneswar

The Kukrail Night Safari project set to become India's first urban night safari is located in:

- (a) Jaipur
- (b) Lucknow
- (c) Bhopal
- (d) Dehradun

With reference to Vikram-1, consider the following statements:

1. Vikram-1 is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle.
2. It has been developed by Skyroot Aerospace.
3. It is capable of placing a 350 kg payload into Low Earth Orbit.
4. It is also India's first private reusable launch vehicle.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

With reference to Specified Non-Financial Assets (SNFAs), consider the following statements:

1. SNFAs are immovable non-banking assets acquired by banks in full or partial settlement of loans classified as NPAs.
2. SNFAs are financial claims acquired from borrowers after loan default.
3. SNFAs are taken over by banks after borrower default.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

With reference to the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO), consider the following statements:

1. WAICO is a China-led international AI governance platform headquartered in Shanghai.
2. Its primary objective is to promote inclusive AI development and international cooperation.

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

Raimona National Park is located along the international border between India and:

- (a) Nepal
- (b) Myanmar
- (c) Bhutan
- (d) Bangladesh

-----The END-----