

Current Affairs Today

15th and 16th August 2024 Daily GK Update

National News

India-USA join hands to promote cooperation in MSMEs

- India and the USA signed an MoU to enable Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from both countries to participate more effectively in global markets and foster trade.
- The MoU provides a framework for both sides to discuss issues concerning micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and explore possibilities for cooperation.
- The MoU also provides for the joint conduct of programmes for women entrepreneurs to empower them and facilitate trade partnerships between women-owned small businesses in the two countries.

Recently India signed MoUs with others countries

- India and Maldives have renewed their MoU to bolster the training of Maldivian civil servants.
- India and New Zealand sign customs co-operation arrangement to ease trade between the two countries
- India and Vietnam team up to Preserve Maritime History with NMHC in Lothal
- India and Vietnam sign 9 agreements to deepen strategic partnership & enhance cooperation
- India, US Sign Cultural Property Agreement To Repatriate Stolen Indian Artifacts

NHA & MUHS Sign MoU to Offer Digital Health Education & Support Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

- National Health Authority (NHA) and Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) have signed an MoU to offer its Digital Health Foundation Course to NHA and co-develop additional Digital Health programs to support the roll-out of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- The Digital Health Foundation Course provides a comprehensive understanding of Digital Health fundamentals to doctors and healthcare providers.
- The partnership between NHA and MUHS marks a significant milestone in integrating digital health education into the medical curriculum.
- The MoU laid the foundation for a more connected and effective healthcare ecosystem. This partnership will not only enhance the skills of medical students and professionals but also drive the broader implementation of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, ultimately benefiting millions of people with better access to quality care.

BHEL gets 1,600 MW thermal power project from Damodar Valley Corporation

- State-owned BHEL has secured a 1,600 MW project from Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC).
- The coal-based unit will be set up in the Koderma district of Jharkhand on an EPC (Engineering, Procurement, and Construction) basis.
- The 2x800 MW Koderma Supercritical Thermal Power Project (STPP) has been awarded through International Competitive Bidding (ICB).
- This is the first such project in terms of capacity for DVC and will be set up adjacent to its existing 2x500 MW units set up by BHEL earlier. It has a long-standing partnership with DVC and has installed over 80 percent of the coal-based power stations of the utility in Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- The new project from DVC includes supply, erection and commissioning, along with civil works. The key equipment for the project will be supplied by BHEL's manufacturing units.

About Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)

- Establishment - 1956

- Headquarters - New Delhi
- BHEL works as a part of the Government of India and comes under the purview of the Ministry of Heavy Industry.
- It has the distinction of being the largest manufacturer of power generation equipment under government ownership.

Neelakurinji becomes a 'threatened species' officially

- Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*), the purplish flowering shrub, that blooms once in 12 years, has been included on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) official Red List of Threatened Species.
- This is the first-ever Global Red List assessment for this flagship species of the montane grasslands of southwest India.
- The latest global assessment confirms its threatened status in the Vulnerable (Criteria A2c) category of the IUCN. The mass blooming of the flower is a huge tourist attraction.

Chhattisgarh govt. to develop fourth tiger reserve in State

16 August 2024

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- Chhattisgarh government decided to declare a new tiger reserve covering areas of Guru Ghasidas National Park and Tamor Pingla wildlife sanctuary in the state.
- This will be the fourth tiger reserve in the state.
- Creation of the tiger reserve will lead to the development of eco-tourism and also generate employment opportunities for villagers living in the core and buffer areas.
- As per recommendation of State Wildlife Board and consent of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Union Ministry of Forest and Climate Change, the cabinet has decided to notify Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve in an area of 2,829.387 sq km.
- Currently, the state has three tiger reserves - Indravati (in Bijapur district), Udanti-Sitanadi (Gariaband) and Achanakmar (Mungeli).

About Chhattisgarh

- **Capital** – Raipur
- **Chief Minister** – Vishnu Deo Sai (replace Bhupesh Baghel)
- **Deputy CM** - Arun Sao & Vijay Sharma
- **Governor** – Biswabhusan Harichandan
- **Speaker of Chhattisgarh Assembly** - Dr. Raman Singh



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Banking and Financial

Axis Bank launches PRIMUS super-premium credit card

- Axis Bank, one of India's largest private sector banks, has partnered with Visa to launch the 'Primus' credit card. This is a super-premium card, available by invitation only.
- This credit card targets select ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNWIs) in India.
- Primus is the first in India to provide access to globally acclaimed bespoke privileges under the Visa Infinite Privilege offering.
- The card offers exclusive benefits, including access to private jets, custom-made travel itineraries, and invitations to exclusive events such as private art exhibitions and product launches.

Recent Facilities Launched in Banking & Insurance Sector

- PNB launches **PNB ANTAH DRISHTI Braille Debit Card** for visually impaired customers
- DBS Bank India launched "**DBS Golden Circle**," a priority banking program for senior citizens.
- LIC launched **LIC's Yuva Term, LIC's Digi Term, LIC's Yuva Credit Life, LIC's Digi Credit Life** term life insurance plans for providing term insurance and safety net against loan repayments
- RBL Bank becomes first private sector lender to merge UPI and NCMC in RuPay credit cards

WPI inflation cools to 3-month low of 2.04% in July as food prices decline

- India's wholesale price index (WPI) inflation cooled to a three-month low of 2.04 per cent in July from a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent in June, primarily on the back of a sharp reduction in food prices.
- The food price inflation stood at 3.45 per cent during the month as compared to 10.87 per cent in the preceding month.
- The data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed that the inflation of other major sub-indices like manufactured products and fuel and power witnessed a slightly higher year-on-year (Y-o-Y) print in July.
- The moderation in WPI inflation was primarily driven by a decline in the inflation of primary articles, even as inflation for manufactured products and fuel and power increased.

Recent WPI-based Wholesale inflation in India

- **January 2024** – 0.27%
- **February 2024** – 0.20%
- **March 2024** – 0.53%
- **April 2024** – 1.26%
- **May 2024** – 2.61%
- **June 2024** – 3.36%
- **July 2024** – 2.04%

PFC secures JPY 25.5 billion loan from JBIC to finance wind project

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- State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has secured a loan of 25.5 billion Japanese yen (around Rs 147 crore) from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for a wind energy project.
- This loan is part of JBIC's Global Action for Reconciling Economic Growth and Environmental Preservation (GREEN) initiative.
- In addition to JBIC's contribution, the loan is co-financed by Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and other Japanese banks.
- JBIC will also provide a guarantee for the portion of the loan co-financed by these private financial institutions.
- The loan proceeds will be used to finance 300.3 MW Wind Energy Project of Ostro Kannada Power Private Ltd (OKPPL) in Karnataka, India.



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Appointment

Sandeep Poundrik takes charge as Secretary of Ministry of Steel

- Sandeep Poundrik has assumed charge as Secretary of the Ministry of Steel.
- He is a 1993-batch IAS officer from the Bihar cadre. Poundrik was in charge of the Additional Chief Secretary position in the Industries Department and also held additional charge for several other positions in the Government of Bihar.
- He had previously served as Advisor in the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs and as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Recent Appointment

- CMD of NHPC Ltd - Raj Kumar Chaudhary
- Additional secretary in PMO - Amit Singh Negi

- Director in Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) under Ministry of Corporate Affairs - Samir Ashwin Vakil
- Deputy Election Commissioners in ECI - Maneesh Garg, Sanjay Kumar and Ajeet Kumar
- Director general of Employees' State Insurance Corporation - Ashok Kumar Singh

PR Sreejesh appoints India junior men's team head coach

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- Goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has been appointed as the new head coach of the junior men's hockey team.
- The Indian goalkeeper delivered a stellar performance as India bagged the bronze medal for the second consecutive time, edging out Spain 2-1. His crucial saves were instrumental in the win as he capped off a brilliant campaign with the medal.
- Notably, India won consecutive bronze hockey medals for the first time in 52 years since the 1972 Munich Games.

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Science

IIT Bhubaneswar inks pact with IG Drones on disaster management R&D

- IIT Bhubaneswar has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IG Drones, a drone-tech and AI company, to establish an Advanced Drone Excellence Centre at the IIT Bhubaneswar Research and Entrepreneurship Park. The centre will focus on disaster management research and development.
- This collaboration marks a significant milestone in advancing drone technology research and development in the field of disaster management, especially as India is a disaster-prone country
- IG Drones has been active in disaster management since 2019, with experience from its work in Uttarakhand's avalanche-affected regions, Sikkim's landslides, and Odisha's cyclone-prone areas.

- The partnership with IIT Bhubaneswar Research and Entrepreneurship Park aims to further advance the development of drone technologies that can be deployed effectively during emergencies, providing critical support in disaster response and recovery efforts.

IITs in News

- IIT Madras Partners with IDBI Bank to Launch Cybersecurity Lab
- C-DOT partners with IIT Roorkee and Mandi to boost 6G standardization, connectivity
- IIT Kanpur launched UDAAN programme to boost drone startups
- IIT Dharwad Unveils Innovative Fire Rescue Drone
- Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) signed MoU with the Indian IIT Hyderabad to collaborate on research and training.

Defence

Indian Navy approves Mazagon Dock to build 6 submarines with German collaboration

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- Government-owned Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) has got the Indian Navy's approval to build six submarines with the project worth Rs 60,000 crore.
- The MDL in partnership with Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems will build the submarines that are being developed under 'Project 75 India'.
- The deal is crucial for India to counter the increasing influence of China and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Project 75 India aims to acquire diesel-electric attack submarines with AIP technology, making them larger and more advanced than current models.

Recent MoU

- SLRTC and Army Welfare Association sign MoU to Promote Indian Sign Language
- BIS signs MoU with Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru to promote Standardisation
- IGNCA signed MoU with Sansad TV to make Indian art & culture more accessible to people.
- Cisco and Tata Communications partner to launch Webex Calling in India
- AIIMS New Delhi signed MoU with University of Bolton Institute of Medicine
- Mahindra & Mahindra sign MoU with MSDE for 'Drone Didi' Pilot Project

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- MDL and ThyssenKrupp were competing against Larsen & Toubro and Navantia. The approval came after the MDL was informed by a Commodore-rank officer of the Indian Navy (Brigadier equivalent in the Army) that they had qualified for the trial requirements.
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DRDO successfully tested its first Long-Range Glide Bomb GAURAV

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully tested its Long-Range Glide Bomb, GAURAV, off the coast of Odisha.
- The smart bomb was dropped from the Indian Air Force's Su-30 MK-I fighter plane.
- The successful testing of the smart bomb is likely to enhance the Indian Air Force's combat capability.
- After being dropped from the fighter plane, the bomb pops out its wings and is guided to its target by an onboard satellite navigation system. These bombs are very useful for the Air Force as they can be fired from a safe distance from the enemy air defence system.

About GAURAV Bomb


- The Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad laboratory of the DRDO, is developing long-range glide bombs named GAURAV for the Indian Air Force.
- GAURAV is a winged long-range glide bomb which weighs 1000 kg and has a glide range of 100 km.
- The Gaurav bomb has a hybrid navigation system, which combines the Inertial Navigation System (INS) and the Global Positioning System (GPS).

Sports

PB-BCL sign landmark deal to promote cricket

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- The Big Cricket League (BCL), a franchise-based T20 event that will offer aspiring local players a chance to play alongside their cricketing heroes, has joined hands with the national broadcaster Prasar Bharati in a landmark long-term deal.
- The inaugural edition of BCL will be held in September this year in Lucknow.
- BCL will be broadcast live on DD Sports across the country, and Prasar Bharati will also be promoting the league across its network.
- The Big Cricket League's first season will be televised internationally in more than 30 countries. It will feature six teams, namely Awadh Lions, Northern Challengers, Rajasthan Kings, Mumbai Marines, Southern Spartans, and Bengal Rhinos.
- A council of eminent former cricketers, led by the League Commissioner and former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar, will oversee the league. Former Indian pacer Rudra Pratap Singh is President and legendary West Indian fast bowler Courtney Walsh is Vice-President of BCL.

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Important day

India celebrated 78th Independence Day this year

- India celebrates its Independence Day annually on August 15. This year, the nation marks its 78th Independence Day or Swatantrata Diwas.
- The government of India has announced the theme for this year is Viksit Bharat or Developed India. It symbolises the vision of a developed nation by 2047 and reflects the government's commitment to transform India.
- The year 2047 will be the 100th year of India's freedom from colonial rule.
- Independence Day commemorates India's freedom from British colonial rule for more than 200 years on August 15, 1947. The country began its struggle for Independence with the Revolt of 1857.
- Later, around 1920, the freedom struggle gained momentum under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. Finally, on July 4, 1947, the British House of Commons introduced the Indian Independence Bill. On August 15, India became an independent nation.
- On the eve of India's Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, hailed this historic achievement as a 'Tryst with Destiny'.
- On August 15, Nehru hoisted the Indian national flag above the Lahori Gate of Red Fort in Delhi. It is a tradition that every Prime Minister has since followed with an address to the country.
- This year's speech will mark the 11th consecutive Independence Day speech by PM Modi and the first during his third term.

14 August - Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

- India has observed the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' every year on August 14 to pay tribute to those who lost their lives and were displaced during the country's partition in 1947.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in 2021 that August 14 would be observed annually as 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day'.
- The observance aims to commemorate the sacrifices made by those who suffered during the Partition and to keep their memories alive.
- India gained independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. While Independence Day is a joyous and proud occasion, the trauma of the partition that accompanied the birth of the newly independent nation left permanent scars on millions of Indians.
- The partition resulted in one of the largest migrations in human history, affecting around 20 million people. Countless families were forced to leave their ancestral homes and start anew as refugees.
- Partition Horrors Remembrance Day serves as a solemn reminder of the suffering endured and the resilience shown by those who lived through one of the most turbulent periods in India's history.