



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

> 19 AUGUST 2025

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. IBM & Maharashtra Govt Sign Lol to Boost Quantum Computing Ecosystem under National Quantum Mission.



In August 2025, International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Government of Maharashtra to advance the state's quantum computing ecosystem. The agreement was formalized during the inauguration of IBM's India Client Experience Centre in Mumbai.

- The Letter of Intent (LoI) aims to strengthen Maharashtra's position in India's technology sector by supporting the growth of a quantum computing ecosystem. This collaboration will align with the National Quantum Mission (NQM), an initiative designed to develop quantum technologies in India.
- IBM will provide technical expertise to help Maharashtra design and implement its state-level quantum computing program. The initiative will focus on creating a robust framework for innovation and research while also supporting India's national vision of becoming a global leader in quantum technologies.
- The collaboration will include workshops, training programs, and skill development

activities targeted at building a strong talent pool in quantum computing. These efforts will not only help create jobs but also support the emergence of a vibrant ecosystem in Maharashtra's technology landscape.

Key Points:-

- (i) The newly inaugurated IBM India Client Experience Centre in Mumbai will play a central role in this partnership. The centre will focus on AI through the watsonx platform, data and automation, cybersecurity, hybrid cloud, and consulting-led solutions customized for Indian businesses.
- (ii) By signing this LoI, the Government of Maharashtra and IBM have set a strong foundation for advancing quantum research, skill development, and technological growth, directly contributing to India's larger vision under the National Quantum Mission.

2. Lok Sabha Passes Indian Ports Bill, 2025 Ushering in a New Era for India's Maritime Future.



The Lok Sabha passed the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, marking a major reform in India's maritime governance. The bill aims to modernise port operations, boost trade

efficiency, and strengthen India's position as a global maritime leader. It replaces outdated colonial-era regulations and reflects the vision of building a future-ready, world-class maritime sector.

- **The Bill introduces the Maritime State Development Council (MSDC) to promote cooperative federalism by involving both Centre and State representatives. The MSDC will coordinate maritime development, ensuring smoother resolution of disputes among ports, users, and service providers. This move is expected to enhance institutional support for long-term port planning.**

- **A major highlight of the Bill is its focus on improving ease of doing business (EoDB). It simplifies port procedures, digitises operations, incorporates green initiatives, and strengthens disaster management and pollution control measures. It also mandates transparent tariff frameworks and ensures high safety standards, positioning India as a competitive maritime hub.**

Key Points:-

(i) The Bill is projected to reduce logistics costs significantly by streamlining cargo movement and enhancing port connectivity. This will generate employment opportunities in sectors such as operations, logistics, warehousing, and allied industries. Provisions for eco-friendly practices, waste management, and low-emission energy use will support India's climate commitments.

(ii) The legislation also promotes greater autonomy for ports by allowing them to independently set tariffs within a transparent system. It encourages investment through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and long-term development strategies, ensuring seamless integration with inland waterways and multimodal transport systems. This is

expected to attract private players and strengthen infrastructure growth.

(iii) Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, highlighted that the Bill aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Ports for Prosperity", aiming to transform India into a global maritime power by 2047. The Bill establishes India's ports as a critical driver of economic growth, global trade competitiveness, and sustainable development.

3. MoPR Launches AI-Powered Tool 'SabhaSaar' to Digitize Gram Sabha Summaries.



The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has launched 'SabhaSaar', an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based summarisation tool to automatically generate structured Minutes of Meetings (MoM) from Gram Sabha and Panchayat recordings. The initiative was launched in New Delhi in August 2025 by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh.

- **The SabhaSaar tool is designed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies, allowing automatic transcription of spoken discussions, identification of key decisions, and creation of**

well-formatted summaries. The tool is integrated with Bhashini, India's National Language Translation Mission (NLTN), to ensure accessibility in multiple languages.

- The launch event was attended by Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh, and Union Minister of State (MoS) Professor Satya Pal Singh Baghel, who emphasized its importance in improving transparency and efficiency in local governance.

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has urged all States and Union Territories (UTs) to adopt the SabhaSaar tool for recording Gram Sabha proceedings.

Key Points:-

(i) As part of the first phase, Tripura was chosen for initial implementation. On 15th August 2025, all 1194 Gram Panchayats of Tripura—including traditional local bodies—used the tool to generate MoMs for Special Gram Sabhas, aligning with the 79th Independence Day celebrations. This highlights the government's focus on digital empowerment at the grassroots level.

(ii) Bhashini, which was launched in July 2022, serves as India's AI-powered language translation platform and currently supports 13 Indian languages, with plans to add more. Through its integration with SabhaSaar, the platform ensures inclusivity for Panchayat functionaries across diverse linguistic regions, thereby strengthening participatory democracy.

(iii) The key objectives of SabhaSaar include enhancing efficiency, reducing time spent on manual documentation, ensuring accountability, and enabling Panchayat officials to focus more on governance and service delivery. By digitizing Gram Sabha

processes, the government aims to set a new benchmark in e-governance, rural digital innovation, and participatory decision-making.

4. Indian Railways Unveils First Removable Solar Panel System Between Tracks at BLW Varanasi.



On 15th August 2025, the Ministry of Railways (MoR) introduced India's first removable solar panel system between railway tracks at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, marking a major step towards sustainable green energy under Indian Railways (IR).

- The pilot project was inaugurated at BLW's Line No. 19 on Independence Day 2025. It represents an innovative initiative by Indian Railways to reduce carbon emissions and achieve its long-term goal of net-zero carbon neutrality.

- The solar system has an installed capacity of 15 Kilowatt Peak (kWp), comprising 28 panels spread across 70 meters of track length. This modular design allows easy installation, removal, and maintenance without hindering train operations.

Key Points:-

(i) The project is expected to generate around 3.21 lakh units of power annually per kilometer, contributing to significant energy savings. The system also provides an energy density of 880 units per kilometer per day, ensuring sustainable power output.

(ii) With a power density of 220 kWp per kilometer, the project demonstrates the feasibility of harnessing renewable energy even in constrained railway track spaces, showcasing a model that could be replicated across the country for large-scale green energy adoption.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. NSIC Signs MoUs with Private Banks to Enhance MSME Credit Access.



The National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC), under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME), recently signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with five private banks to strengthen credit availability, last-mile connectivity, and growth support for MSMEs under its MSME Credit Facilitation Programme.

● The MoUs were signed in August 2025 by NSIC with private sector banks including Axis Bank,

Dhanlaxmi Bank, Karnataka Bank, AU Small Finance Bank, and IndusInd Bank.

● The initiative comes under the MSME Credit Facilitation Programme, designed to streamline financing and support the formalization of micro, small, and medium enterprises.

● The MoUs were exchanged by Gaurav Gulati, Director (Finance) of NSIC, in the presence of Dr. S. S. Acharya, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of NSIC, along with senior representatives of the participating banks. The event highlighted the collaboration between NSIC and banks to boost credit access for MSMEs.

Key Points:-

(i) The signing ceremony was also attended by Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi (MoMSME) and S.C.L. Das, Secretary of MoMSME, showcasing the government's commitment to strengthening the credit ecosystem for MSMEs in India.

(ii) Each participating bank brings regional strength: Axis Bank (Mumbai), Dhanlaxmi Bank (Thrissur), Karnataka Bank (Mangalore), AU Small Finance Bank (Jaipur), and IndusInd Bank (Mumbai). Their collaboration with NSIC aims to increase formal financial inclusion for small enterprises across states.

(iii) The primary objective of the MoUs is to enhance MSME credit access, provide last-mile financing, and accelerate sector growth and formalization. By linking MSMEs with formal banking systems, this initiative will help small businesses expand their outreach, reduce credit gaps, and contribute to India's economic development.

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

1. India's Unemployment Slips to 5.2% in July 2025 as Rural Hiring Picks Up.



India's unemployment rate recently dropped to 5.2% in July 2025, down from 5.6% in June, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). This improvement was primarily driven by stronger rural employment tied to agriculture and rising labour force participation.

- Rural unemployment fell to 4.4% in July, down from 4.9% in June, underlining robust seasonal hiring ahead of harvests and the festival season. Meanwhile, urban unemployment rose slightly to 7.2%, reflecting regional disparities in employment gains.

- Among youth aged 15–29, rural joblessness dropped to 13.0% from 13.8%, while urban youth unemployment edged up to 19.0% from 18.8%, signifying persistent challenges in city job markets.

Key Points:-

(i) The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) rose to 54.9% in July from 54.2% in June, indicating increased engagement in the workforce—an encouraging sign for inclusive employment recovery.

(ii) Since early 2025, India's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) has been revamped, enabling monthly labour market data release for both rural and urban areas, and providing granular, timely insights for policy interventions.

(iii) Falling unemployment aligns with broader economic gains: India's government is planning a GST cut by October to boost manufacturing and employment. Meanwhile, S&P upgraded India's sovereign rating, citing robust growth and discipline amid rising trade frictions.

2. NTPC Becomes 1st PSU to Adopt ISO 22301:2019-Based Business Continuity Plan for Power Supply.



In August 2025, NTPC Limited (formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation Limited), India's largest power generating company, became the first Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) in the Indian power sector to adopt a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) aligned with the ISO 22301:2019 global standard of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This adoption marks a significant step in ensuring uninterrupted power supply and

strengthening India's energy security framework.

- NTPC has set a benchmark by becoming the first PSU in India to formally adopt the Business Continuity Plan for power continuity, ensuring its operations remain resilient even under adverse conditions such as natural disasters, cyberattacks, and supply chain disruptions.

- The adopted framework is based on ISO 22301:2019, the international standard for Business Continuity Management Systems (BCMS), which emphasizes readiness, prevention, coordinated response, and continual improvement of critical operations.

- The initiative is designed to guarantee uninterrupted electricity generation and supply, thereby reinforcing NTPC's role as a reliable backbone of India's energy sector and supporting both industrial and household power demands.

Key Points:-

(i) The BCP includes periodic risk assessments, disaster recovery drills, backup communication channels, and coordinated response strategies, ensuring protection of employees, assets, and critical power infrastructure.

(ii) With this step, NTPC aims to address emerging risks in the energy sector, introducing systems for continuous monitoring and improvement, thereby strengthening India's long-term energy resilience.

(iii) NTPC's adoption of this global benchmark highlights India's efforts to modernize its public enterprises. As the first PSU to adopt such a framework, NTPC sets an example for other organizations in the

power and infrastructure sectors to follow.

MOUs and Agreement

1. National Health Authority & C-DAC Signed MoU to Launch 'e-Sushrut@Clinic' for Digital Healthcare Infrastructure.



In August 2025, the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) signed an MoU in New Delhi to launch 'e-Sushrut@Clinic', a lightweight, cloud-based Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) for outpatient clinics.

- The MoU was signed in the presence of **Punya Salila Srivastava, Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare (DoHFW), MoHFW**, highlighting the government's commitment to expanding digital healthcare solutions.

- **e-Sushrut@Clinic** is an affordable and government-backed HMIS solution designed specifically for small and medium healthcare providers to strengthen digital healthcare accessibility.

- The system represents an important expansion of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), launched in September 2021, which aims to build an interoperable national digital health ecosystem.

Key Points:-

- (i) The platform is tailored for outpatient management, pharmacy, and nursing modules, while also enabling digital patient records and offering telemedicine services.
- (ii) Healthcare providers can easily onboard through the Health Facility Registry (HFR) and Health Professionals Registry (HPR), ensuring inclusion of both institutions and individual practitioners.
- (iii) The platform integrates with AIIMS Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS) for hypertension and diabetes, while already being implemented across 17 AIIMS and more than 4,000 health facilities nationwide.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

1. Abhinav Bindra Appointed as IOC Mental Health Ambassador to Promote Athlete Well-Being.



In August 2025, Olympic gold-medalist and Vice-Chair of the International Olympic

Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission, Abhinav Bindra, was appointed as one of the IOC's Mental Health Ambassadors, tasked with advocating athlete mental well-being and breaking stigma through education and support programs.

- As an IOC Mental Health Ambassador, Abhinav Bindra joins eight other Olympians to champion conversations around mental health in sport. Their mission includes building a supportive environment where athletes feel encouraged to seek help and where mental health is seen as vital as physical fitness.

- Bindra's appointment aligns with the IOC's broader Mental Health Action Plan, designed to integrate mental health into high-performance sporting environments. Ambassadors contribute trusted personal insights, provide feedback on IOC initiatives, and inspire open dialogue among the athlete community globally.

Key Points:-

- (i) The IOC emphasizes that "mental health is just as important as physical health." Mental Health Ambassadors like Bindra are charged with breaking the stigma surrounding psychological challenges in sport, offering support through educational programs, social media outreach, and one-on-one interactions.
- (ii) Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medalist (Beijing 2008, 10m air rifle), has long been a vocal mental health advocate. He was also a member of the IOC Mental Health Working Group prior to his ambassadorial appointment. His personal journey—marked by post-achievement challenges—adds credibility to his guidance and outreach.
- (iii) Bindra joins a global roster of seven

other Olympians across disciplines and continents, including Great Britain's Holly Bradshaw, Hong Kong's Camille Cheng, Brazil's Bruno Fratus, USA's Gracie Gold, Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou-Smith, Papua New Guinea's Ryan Pini, South Africa's Akani Simbine, and Afghanistan's Masomah Ali Zada.

SPORTS

1. India to Host Asian Open Short Track Speed Skating Trophy 2025 for the First Time.



India will host the Asian Open Short Track Speed Skating Trophy 2025 from 20 to 23 August at the Olympic-standard Himadri Ice Skating Rink, Dehradun. The event marks a landmark moment in Indian sports, underscoring the country's emergence on the winter sports stage.

- For the first time, India is hosting the prestigious Asian Open Short Track Speed Skating Trophy—a significant milestone in the nation's winter sports history. The championship will convene elite skaters from more than 10 Asian nations at Dehradun's Himadri Ice Skating Rink, India's only Olympic-standard facility.

- The four-day event, running from 20–23 August 2025, will take place at the Maharana

Pratap Sports College in Raipur, Dehradun—the only Olympic-sized rink in the country.

Key Points:-

(i) Approximately 240 skaters and officials from 10–11 countries are expected to participate, including teams from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Chinese Taipei, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and others.

(ii) Competitors will vie across nine race distances, ranging from 222-meter sprints to 5000-meter relays, in both junior and senior categories, showcasing speed, endurance, and team dynamics.

(iii) Event organizers believe this championship could serve as a catalyst for the development of winter sports infrastructure in India. It may spur investment in ice rinks, training facilities, and youth athlete development programs, paving the way for hosting larger international competitions—such as the Junior World Cup (by 2027), the 2029 Asian Games, and even the Winter Olympics in the future.

2. Former Sri Lankan Domestic Cricketer Saliya Saman Banned from All Cricket for Five Years.



Former Sri Lankan domestic all-rounder Saliya Saman has been banned from all forms of cricket for five years after an ICC Anti-Corruption Tribunal found him guilty of breaching the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) code over attempted match manipulation during the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 League.

- Saman was accused of attempting to manipulate matches in the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 League, under the now-defunct Pune Devils franchise. The tribunal found him guilty of breaches under Articles 2.1.1, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4 of the ECB Anti-Corruption Code, including fixing attempts, offering rewards, and soliciting corrupt conduct.

- He has been banned for five years from all cricket, with the suspension backdated to 13 September 2023, the date he was provisionally suspended.

Key Points:-

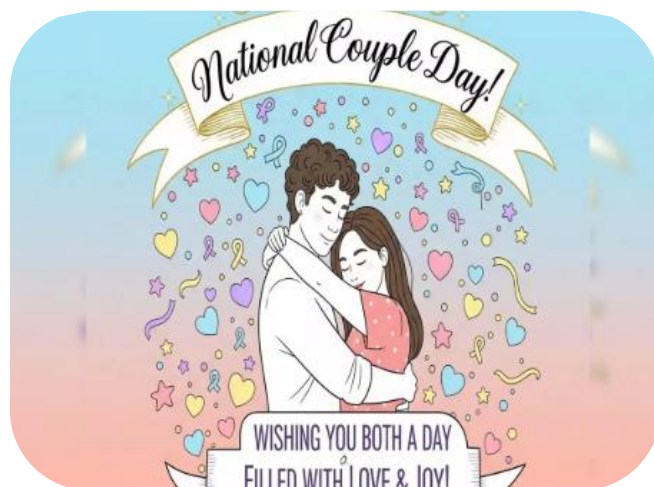
(i) Saman was one among eight people charged in September 2023, including Bangladesh all-rounder Nasir Hossain, team officials, and coaching staff associated with the Abu Dhabi T10 League.

(ii) A seasoned all-rounder, Saman featured in 101 first-class, 77 List A, and 47 T20 domestic matches. His last known appearance was in the SLC Twenty20 Tournament in March 2021.

(iii) This disciplinary action highlights the International Cricket Council's (ICC) ongoing commitment to combat match-fixing and maintain integrity in cricket, particularly in franchise-based tournaments.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. National Couples Day Observed on August 18, 2025.



National Couples Day is observed annually on August 18, celebrating love, companionship, and emotional bonds between couples across the U.S. While its exact roots remain informal, many believe the day was first noted around 2010 to honour romantic relationships distinct from Valentine's Day.

- Though exact details are scarce, best estimates indicate that National Couples Day originated in 2010, likely created by a U.S.-based company as a light-hearted celebration of relationships. Over time, it evolved organically, gaining traction through social media and popular culture initiatives.

- Unlike many movable holidays, National Couples Day falls on August 18 every year, regardless of the day of the week. It is meant to provide another opportunity—six months after Valentine's Day—for couples to recognise and cherish their relationships through meaningful gestures and time shared together.

Key Points:-

(i) The observance embraces all types of partnerships—including same-sex, opposite-

sex, and non-traditional relationships. As societal views on love evolve, National Couples Day has become an inclusive symbol that everyone's bond deserves celebration.

(ii) Popular ways to commemorate the day include heartfelt love letters, romantic dinners (at home or away), surprise picnics, "love jars," and personalized photo albums. Financially modest yet emotionally rich gestures often make the most impact—demonstrating that love is less about luxury and more about sincerity.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Indian Navy Inducts 3rd Survey Vessel 'Ikshak' Built by GRSE in Kolkata.



On 14 August 2025, the Indian Navy (IN) received its third Survey Vessel (Large) (SVL) ship, INS Ikshak (Guide – Yard 3027), from Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE), a defence PSU under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), at Kolkata, West Bengal.

- The contract for 4 SVLs was signed in 2018, with INS Sandhayak commissioned in February 2024 and INS Nirdeshak in December 2024. INS Ikshak is the 102nd ship designed by the Navy's

Warship Design Bureau (WDB), reflecting India's naval self-reliance.

- Ikshak is the first SVL ship to provide dedicated accommodation for women officers and sailors. It also represents the 75th warship delivered to the Indian Navy by GRSE, showcasing the shipyard's legacy as the only Indian yard to achieve this feat.

- The vessel marks GRSE's 802nd ship overall and 113th warship, built under the supervision of the Warship Overseeing Team (WOT), Kolkata. This milestone highlights GRSE's consistent contribution to strengthening India's maritime power.

Key Points:-

(i) With a displacement of 3,400 tons and a length of 110 meters, INS Ikshak is equipped with advanced hydrographic technology, including Data Acquisition and Processing System (DAPS), Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS), and Digital Side Scan Sonar (DSSS).

(ii) The induction of Ikshak strengthens India's capacity in hydrographic surveys, supporting navigation, charting, and oceanographic studies essential for both defence and maritime trade security.

Static GK

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)	Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) : Cmde PR Hari	Headquarters : Kolkata (West Bengal, WB)
International Business Machines (IBM)	CEO: Arvind Krishna	Headquarters: Armonk, New York, United States
Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)	Established : 1988	Headquartered : Pune
National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC)	Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) : Dr. S. S. Acharya	Headquarters: New Delhi
NTPC Limited	Founded: 1975	Headquarters: New Delhi
Emirates Cricket Board (ECB)	President: Vasbert Drakes	Chairman: Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahyan
Indian Railways (IR)	Minister : Ashwini Vaishnaw	Headquarters: New Delhi
International	President:	Headquarters:

Olympic Committee (IOC)	Kirsty Coventry	Lausanne, Switzerland
--------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------