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Current Affairs Today, July 26, 2026

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REPORTS & SCHEMES**GS2****GS3**

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

A consolidated roundup of the news that matters for UPSC and State PCS preparation on July 26, 2026. Items with a dedicated deep-dive article in today's edition are summarised here in brief; the remaining items are covered in full.

27TH KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS OBSERVED AT DRASS

India observed the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26, 2026, with the principal ceremony at the Kargil War Memorial in Drass, Ladakh, led by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Key Data

- Marks the conclusion of **Operation Vijay** and the declaration of success on July 26, 1999.
- Ceremony included wreath-laying, felicitation of Veer Naris, launch of a virtual walkthrough portal for the memorial, and the flag-in of the Shaurya Vijay Yatra motorcycle rally.
- Aerial tribute by one Advanced Light Helicopter and two Cheetal helicopters in arrowhead formation.
- A **Shaurya Sandhya** was held on July 25, 2026 with a *Yudh Sansmaran* presentation honouring the families of 40 bravehearts.

UPSC Angle

GS3 security in border areas; GS1 post-independence conflicts. The examinable thread is the post-1999 institutional reform stream, running from the Kargil Review Committee to the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff in 2019.

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Operation Vijay was the Army operation; Operation Safed Sagar was the Air Force component; Operation Talwar was the Navy component.

Four Param Vir Chakras were awarded for Kargil, two of them posthumously.

The Kargil Review Committee was chaired by K. Subrahmanyam.

PM INTERACTS WITH VIKSIT VIBRANT VILLAGE PROGRAMME 2026 PARTICIPANTS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with participants of the Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026 through video conferencing on July 26, 2026.

Key Data

- Implemented through **MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat)**, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- Two phases from June 4 to June 30, 2026, covering **74 vibrant villages** in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- Over **400 youth participants** from every State and Union Territory, selected through a national online quiz that drew more than 3 lakh entrants.
- Organising idea: border settlements are the **first villages of the nation**, not the last villages of India.

UPSC Angle

GS2 government policies and interventions; GS3 linkages between development and security in border areas.

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Vibrant Villages Programme-I: approved February 2023, Rs 4,800 crore, 662 villages, northern border.

Vibrant Villages Programme-II: approved April 2, 2025, Rs 6,839 crore, 1,954 villages, 15 States and 2 UTs, up to FY 2028-29.

INDIA PRESSES MARITIME SECURITY AT THE 21ST EAST ASIA SUMMIT

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told the 21st East Asia Summit in Manila on July 23, 2026 that international waterways must remain safe and unimpeded, and that attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping and infrastructure cannot be countenanced.

Key Data

- India backed a **substantive, effective and legally binding Code of Conduct** for the South China Sea, compliant with UNCLOS 1982.
- India stated the Code must not prejudice the legitimate rights of all users of the sea, including non-signatories.

- India announced it will host the **7th EAS Maritime Security Conference in Kochi**.

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The East Asia Summit was established in 2005 and has 18 members; India is a founding member.

The Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea dates from 2002 and is not legally binding.

UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA ANNOUNCE CIVILIAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement and a bilateral nuclear safeguards agreement on July 22, 2026. On July 23, President Trump said the deal was contingent on Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords.

Key Data

- Described by the US Department of Energy as the foundation of a **30-year, multi-billion-dollar partnership**; the full text is not yet public.
- Contains **no enrichment renunciation** and does **not** require Saudi Arabia to adopt the IAEA **Additional Protocol**.
- A **joint two-year study** will assess the commercial viability of enrichment; any facility would be built and operated by US companies without transferring sensitive technology to the Saudis.
- Safeguards cover enrichment, conversion, fuel fabrication and reprocessing.

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The 2009 US-UAE agreement set the “gold standard” by renouncing enrichment and reprocessing before Barakah opened; this agreement has no equivalent clause.

The IAEA Additional Protocol permits short-notice inspections to verify peaceful use.

Saudi Arabia is a party to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state; India is not a party to the NPT.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FINES GOOGLE 890 MILLION EUROS

The European Commission fined Google 890 million euros on July 23, 2026 for breaches of the Digital Markets Act, the first DMA penalty against the company and the largest issued under the regulation so far.

Key Data

- Split: **460 million euros** for self-preferencing in Google Search and **430 million euros** for restricting app developers from steering users to cheaper options outside Google Play.
- Google has **60 days** to comply, failing which periodic penalties of up to **5 per cent of worldwide turnover** may apply.

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The Digital Markets Act entered into force in 2022 and regulates designated gatekeepers on an ex-ante basis.

India's proposed equivalent category is the Systemically Significant Digital Enterprise, based on 9 Core Digital Services plus financial and user thresholds.

SPACEX STARSHIP FLIGHT 13 DEPLOYS 20 STARLINK V3 SATELLITES

SpaceX launched Starship Flight 13 from Starbase, Texas on July 24, 2026, deploying all 20 Starlink V3 satellites.

Key Data

- Second flight of the Starship **Version 3** configuration; Super Heavy Booster 20 with 33 Raptor 3 engines.
- Upper stage completed a controlled splashdown in the **Indian Ocean**.
- The booster splashed down harder than planned after an incomplete landing burn.

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Hot staging means igniting the upper stage before separation from the first stage is complete.

India's space reforms: IN-SPACe (2020), NSIL (2019), Indian Space Policy (2023), FDI liberalisation (2024).

RBI MOVES ON POLYMER BANKNOTES

Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL), the currency-printing arm of the Reserve Bank of India, issued a global Expression of Interest on July 17, 2026 seeking suppliers of polymer substrate sheets for printing Indian banknotes.

Background

Polymer banknotes are printed on a thin plastic film rather than cotton-based paper substrate. They are more durable, more resistant to soiling and moisture, and can carry security features such as clear windows that are difficult to replicate on paper. Several countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada, have moved wholly or partly to polymer notes.

Key Data

- Indicative requirement: **68,000 reams** of opacified polymer substrate with security features, each ream containing 500 sheets.
- Split equally at **34,000 reams each across two denominations**.
- Bid submission window open until **August 18, 2026**.
- Reporting indicates the pilot would likely begin with Rs 10 and Rs 20 notes, though the RBI has not officially confirmed denominations, launch date or circulation schedule.
- A wider rollout, if the trial succeeds, is expected from 2027 onwards.

UPSC Angle

GS3 Indian economy, money and banking. The examinable themes are currency management costs, counterfeiting **deterrence**, note life-cycle and the environmental trade-off between longer-lasting notes and the recyclability of the substrate.

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BRBNMPL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, established in 1995, with presses at Mysuru and Salboni.

Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) is the Government of India undertaking that operates the other currency presses and the mints.

The RBI's authority to issue banknotes derives from Section 22 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934; the Government of India issues the one-rupee note and all coins.

INDIAN RAILWAYS PILOTS AI-BASED LINEN INSPECTION

Parliament was informed on July 24, 2026 that Indian Railways has begun a pilot project using automated AI-camera stain detection in mechanised laundries to assess the quality of washed linen supplied to passengers in air-conditioned classes.

Key Data

- Pilot locations: **Pune Division** of Central Railway, and the **Jaipur and Jodhpur divisions** of North Western Railway.

- The system uses automated camera-based inspection to identify stains on washed linen that manual checking may miss.
- **Whito-Meters** are already used in all mechanised laundries to check the effectiveness of linen cleaning, and CCTV cameras have been installed across laundries on Indian Railways to monitor operations.
- The statement in Parliament was made by Railways Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw**.

UPSC Angle

GS3 applications of technology in governance and service delivery. A useful, concrete example of narrow AI applied to a quality-control problem in a public service, and therefore usable as an illustration in essay and GS3 answers on technology in public administration.

RAJASTHAN RELEASES STATE WATER PLAN 2047

Rajasthan launched the Rajasthan State Water Plan 2047 on July 24, 2026, setting out a long-term framework for river-linking projects, groundwater conservation and public participation in water management.

Key Data

- Horizon year **2047**, aligned to the centenary of independence and the Viksit Bharat framing.
- Three announced pillars: river-linking projects, groundwater conservation, and public participation.
- Rajasthan is India's largest state by area and among its most water-stressed, with a high proportion of over-exploited groundwater blocks.

UPSC Angle

GS1 geography, distribution of water resources; GS3 conservation and water management. Relevant to State PCS candidates in Rajasthan and to UPSC aspirants as a case study in state-level long-horizon resource planning.

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Water is a State subject under Entry 17 of the State List; inter-state rivers fall under Entry 56 of the Union List.

The Central Ground Water Board categorises assessment units as safe, semi-critical, critical or over-exploited based on the stage of groundwater extraction.

HELPAge INDIA REPORT ON ELDERLY VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE

HelpAge India's report *Climate Resilient Ageing: Ensuring Care, Dignity and Agency* was released in **June 2026**. It is carried here as revision background because the ageing-and-climate intersection is an under-used answer angle, not as current news.

Key Data

- Survey coverage: **2,224 older persons across 20 districts in 10 states**, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.
- **78 per cent** experienced at least one climate-related hazard in the previous three years: heatwaves **45 per cent**, floods **27 per cent**, droughts **20 per cent**.
- Coping and health impact during heatwaves: **90 per cent** stay indoors and **81 per cent** increase water intake, yet illness rises for **74 per cent**, existing conditions worsen for **44 per cent**, and **33 per cent** find healthcare access difficult.
- **60 per cent** reported their homes were not fully safe, particularly kutcha or poorly ventilated houses under heat stress.
- Most severe risk falls on those living alone, widows and persons with disabilities.

UPSC Angle

GS1 population and associated issues; GS2 welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; GS3 climate change and disaster management. The intersection of ageing and climate **vulnerability** is an under-used angle that strengthens answers on both topics.

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HelpAge India is a non-governmental organisation working for the cause of disadvantaged elderly persons, established in 1978.

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act was enacted in 2007.

The National Programme for the Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) is the umbrella scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for senior citizens.

UPSC RELEVANCE

ITEM	GS PAPER	SYLLABUS LINK
Kargil Vijay Diwas	GS3, GS1	Border area security; post-independence conflicts
Viksit Vibrant Village Programme	GS2, GS3	Government schemes; development and security linkage
East Asia Summit	GS2	Regional groupings affecting India's interests
US-Saudi nuclear agreement	GS2, GS3	International agreements; nuclear energy
EU fine on Google	GS3, GS2	Competition and regulation; regulatory bodies
Starship Flight 13	GS3	Space technology
RBI polymer banknotes	GS3	Money and banking; currency management
Railways AI linen inspection	GS3	Technology in service delivery
Rajasthan State Water Plan 2047	GS1, GS3	Water resources; conservation
HelpAge India report (June 2026, background)	GS1, GS2, GS3	Ageing; welfare; climate vulnerability

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DATES TO REMEMBER:

July 26: Kargil Vijay Diwas; the 2026 observance was the 27th

July 23, 2026: 21st East Asia Summit, Manila; US-Saudi nuclear announcement; EU fine on Google

July 24, 2026: Starship Flight 13; Parliament informed of the Railways AI linen pilot; Rajasthan State Water Plan 2047

July 17, 2026: BRBNMPL Expression of Interest for polymer substrate

NUMBERS:

890 million euros: EU fine on Google, split 460 million and 430 million

Rs 6,839 crore: outlay of Vibrant Villages Programme-II, covering 1,954 villages

Rs 4,800 crore: outlay of Vibrant Villages Programme-I, covering 662 villages

74 villages and 400-plus youth: Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026

68,000 reams: RBI's indicative polymer substrate requirement

20 Starlink V3 satellites deployed on Starship Flight 13

33 Raptor 3 engines on the Super Heavy booster

INSTITUTIONS IN THE NEWS:

MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

BRBNMPL, wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India

Competition Commission of India, under the Competition Act, 2002

IN-SPACE and NewSpace India Limited, Department of Space

HelpAge India, established 1978; its report Climate Resilient Ageing was released in June 2026, covering 2,224 older persons in 20 districts across 10 states

Sources: PIB, The Hindu, Reserve Bank of India, Ministry of External Affairs

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