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Current Affairs Today, August 20, 2026

20 August 2026 ·

SCIENCE & TECH**ECONOMY**

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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20 August 2026 · 6 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

INDIAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP RK-251, A TUMOUR-ACTIVATED “SMART” CANCER DRUG

Researchers at **IASST, Guwahati** and **IIT Guwahati** (Dr Asis Bala and Dr K.P. Bhabak) developed a prodrug, published in the *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry (ACS)*, that is selectively activated by reactive oxygen species (ROS) found at elevated levels inside tumour cells, releasing the anticancer compound **NBDHEX** only within cancer cells.

Key Data

- Trigger mechanism: reactive oxygen species (ROS), elevated inside tumour cells
- Active compound released: **NBDHEX**
- Strong preclinical activity shown against triple-negative breast cancer

UPSC Angle

GS3: biotechnology, drug discovery, India’s indigenous oncology research base under the National Biopharma Mission.

✦ FACTS CORNER

Developed by IASST Guwahati and IIT Guwahati; targeted, tumour-selective drug activation

SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY S301 AS THE FASTEST KNOWN STAR ORBITING THE MILKY WAY’S CENTRAL BLACK HOLE

Astronomers using ESO’s Very Large Telescope Interferometer (**GRAVITY+** instrument) in Chile detected **S301**, a star orbiting **Sagittarius A*** (the Milky Way’s central supermassive black hole) at roughly 8% the speed of light, the fastest stellar orbital speed yet recorded in the galaxy.

Key Data

- Orbital period: ~8.7 years, highly elliptical path
- Speed: ~25,000 km/second (~8% speed of light)
- Detection: VLT Interferometer with GRAVITY+, Paranal Observatory, Chile

UPSC Angle

GS3: space science and astrophysics; useful as a Prelims-grade current-events fact.

★ FACTS CORNER

S301 orbits Sagittarius A* faster than any previously observed star in the Milky Way

SAIL'S BHILAI STEEL PLANT LAUNCHES REAL-TIME CO2 EMISSIONS DASHBOARD

Bhilai Steel Plant, inaugurated by Chittaranjan Mahapatra, Director I/c, on August 18, 2026, launched a real-time digital dashboard tracking plant- and shop-level CO2 emissions, developed with a consultant appointed by SAIL's Environment Management Division.

Key Data

- Aligns with India's **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)**
- SAIL is a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Steel

UPSC Angle

GS3: industrial decarbonisation, PSU sustainability reporting, India's Net Zero 2070 pathway for high-emission-intensity sectors like steel.

INDIA EXPANDS AIR CARGO TRANSSHIPMENT OPERATIONS AT DELHI AIRPORT

Union Civil Aviation Minister **Ram Mohan Naidu** inaugurated an expanded phase of transshipment cargo reforms at DIAL's Transshipment Excellence Centre, Terminal 2, IGI Airport, eliminating mandatory cargo re-screening and adding new domestic and international destinations to the network.

Key Data

- Chennai-Delhi-Frankfurt proof-of-concept cut transit time from 60 to 20 hours
- New international destinations added: London, Copenhagen; new domestic links: Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Hyderabad

UPSC Angle

GS3: logistics, ease of doing business, civil aviation policy, India's ambition to become a regional air-cargo transshipment hub.

GLENMARK GETS USFDA APPROVAL FOR GENERIC FLUTICASONE PROPIONATE NASAL SPRAY

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals received US FDA approval for a generic version of *Flonase Nasal Spray* (0.05 mg/spray), addressing a \$295.2-million annual US market.

UPSC Angle

GS3: India's generics pharma export strength, "Pharmacy of the World" narrative, linkage to the PLI Scheme for pharmaceuticals.

BHU SECURES SIX MAJOR ICMR RESEARCH GRANTS WORTH RS 15 CRORE

The Institute of Medical Sciences, **BHU**, secured roughly **Rs 15 crore** across six **ICMR**-funded projects spanning gallbladder cancer detection, antimicrobial resistance, post-kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis diagnostics, paediatric septic shock, and renal cell carcinoma precision oncology.

UPSC Angle

GS3: India's health research ecosystem, ICMR's role, antimicrobial resistance as a National Action Plan priority.

EXERCISE MAITREE-XV: INDIA-THAILAND JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE UNDERWAY

An 85-member Indian Army contingent from **9 Gorkha Rifles** is conducting the 15th edition of Exercise **MAITREE** with the Royal Thai Army at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand (August 18-31, 2026), focused on jungle and semi-urban counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations under UN Charter Chapter VII.

UPSC Angle

GS2/GS3: India-ASEAN defence diplomacy, Act East Policy, bilateral military exercise series.

★ FACTS CORNER

MAITREE was instituted in 2006; this is its 15th edition

INDIA TO HOST 5TH COAST GUARD GLOBAL SUMMIT IN FEBRUARY 2027

India will host the **5th Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS)** in New Delhi in February 2027, coinciding with the **Indian Coast Guard's 50th anniversary (Swarnim Jayanti)**; a hybrid preparatory working-level meeting was held on August 19, 2026.

UPSC Angle

GS3: maritime security architecture, India's MAHASAGAR vision and SAGAR doctrine, the Coast Guard's multilateral outreach role.

DIGITAL BRICS FORUM AND EXPO HELD IN PUNE AHEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS MINISTERS' MEETING

The Department of Telecommunications organised a five-day **BRICS ICT Track** (August 17-21) in Pune under India's 2026 BRICS Chairship; the **Digital BRICS Forum and Expo** was held on August 20, ahead of the 12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting chaired by Union Minister **Jyotiraditya Scindia** on August 21.

Key Data

- Track theme: "Innovate, Cooperate and Transform (ICT) for a Resilient Future"

UPSC Angle

GS2/GS3: BRICS institutional cooperation, India's push to export its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model through multilateral platforms.

TARUN TEJPAL APPEALS BOMBAY HC CONVICTION TO SUPREME COURT; GOA GOVERNMENT SEEKS ENHANCED SENTENCE

Following the Bombay High Court's Goa Bench conviction of **Tarun Tejpal** (overturning a 2021 acquittal, on August 6, 2026) in a 2013 sexual assault case, Tejpal has appealed to the Supreme Court against the conviction, while the Goa government has separately moved the Supreme Court seeking an enhanced sentence.

UPSC Angle

GS2: appellate judicial process; GS4 ethics: the High Court's critique of the "ideal/perfect victim" stereotype (drawing on Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie's 1986 victimology framework) and its bearing on judicial evaluation of survivor testimony.

NATIONAL OBSERVANCES: AKSHAY URJA DIWAS AND SADBHAVANA DIWAS

August 20 marks two annual observances in India: **Akshay Urja Diwas (Renewable Energy Day)**, coordinated by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy with the 2026 theme “Empowering Youth for a Sustainable Future,” and **Sadbhavana Diwas**, marking the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister **Rajiv Gandhi** (born August 20, 1944), promoting communal harmony.

UPSC Angle

GS3: renewable energy policy and India’s Net Zero 2070 trajectory (Akshay Urja Diwas); GS1/GS2: modern Indian political history and constitutional fraternity (Sadbhavana Diwas).

65TH SUBROTO CUP INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT UNDERWAY

The 65th **Subroto Cup**, organised by the Subroto Mukerjee Sports Education Society under the Air Force Sports Control Board, is underway in New Delhi NCR with 107 participating teams across categories, running through September 24, 2026.

UPSC Angle

Sports current affairs: the tournament is named after Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee, independent India’s first IAF Chief of Air Staff.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

TODAY’S CONSOLIDATED FACTS:

RK-251 cancer prodrug: IASST + IIT Guwahati, activated by tumour-cell ROS, releases NBDHEX

S301: fastest known star orbiting Sagittarius A*, ~8% speed of light

USFDA approval: Glenmark’s generic Fluticasone Propionate nasal spray, ~\$295.2 million US market

BHU: ~Rs 15 crore across six ICMR grants

MAITREE-XV: 15th edition, India-Thailand, Surat Thani, Thailand (Aug 18-31)

5th Coast Guard Global Summit: New Delhi, February 2027, alongside ICG’s 50th anniversary

BRICS ICT Track: Pune, Aug 17-21, 2026; Digital BRICS Forum and Expo, Aug 20

Akshay Urja Diwas and Sadbhavana Diwas: both observed August 20 annually

Sources: PIB, ANI, Bar and Bench, Business Standard, Nature/ESO, ACS Journal of Medicinal Chemistry

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