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Current Affairs Today — August 28, 2026

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SECURITY & DEFENCE**ECONOMY****SOCIAL ISSUES****SCIENCE & TECH**

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SAMARTHAK, THE NAVY'S FIRST MULTI-PURPOSE VESSEL, DELIVERED BY A PRIVATE SHIPYARD

Samarthak, the first **Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV)** built for the Indian Navy by **Larsen and Toubro** at its **Kattupalli shipyard, Tamil Nadu**, was delivered on **August 27, 2026**, with **over 75 per cent indigenous content**.

Key Data

The vessel is conceived primarily as a **trial and evaluation platform**, and additionally engineered for **maritime surveillance and reconnaissance, offshore patrolling and support to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** operations. The name **Samarthak** means “**The Proponent**”, signalling a role as an enabler across mission types rather than a single-role combatant.

UPSC Angle

The builder is the story, not the platform. A **private yard** delivering a first-of-class naval vessel tests whether Indian naval shipbuilding has genuinely broadened beyond the four defence PSU shipyards (**Mazagon Dock, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Goa Shipyard, Hindustan Shipyard**). Read alongside the same week's export liberalisation: together they describe a strategy of building industrial depth at home while opening export markets. The open question is **order-book continuity**, since a private yard that delivers one class and then has no follow-on order does not build a sustained capability.

Chief of the Naval Staff: **Admiral Krishna Swaminathan**.

TRAI: 1,354.28 MILLION SUBSCRIBERS, AND A DIGITAL DIVIDE VISIBLE IN ONE RATIO

TRAI released **Telecom Subscription Data for end-July 2026** on **August 28, 2026**. Total telephone subscribers stood at **1,354.28 million**, with a net addition of **6.20 million** in July.

Key Data

MEASURE	FIGURE
Total subscribers	1,354.28 million (wireless 1,306.27 mn , wireline 48.01 mn)
Net addition in July	6.20 million ; monthly growth 0.46 per cent
Broadband subscribers (with M2M)	1,094.48 million
Overall teledensity	94.68 per cent with M2M, 85.06 per cent without
Urban teledensity	154.12 per cent
Rural teledensity	61.05 per cent
Rural share of subscribers	41.17 per cent
Active wireless subscribers (peak VLR)	1,204.01 million
MNP requests in July	15.98 million

UPSC Angle

Urban teledensity above 100 per cent is the clue that teledensity counts connections, not people. A single user with two SIMs registers as two. So “near-universal” headline teledensity is partly a statistical artefact, and the honest comparison is **154.12 urban against 61.05 rural**.

The second number worth holding is the gap between **1,354 million connections and 1,204 million active subscribers on peak VLR**: roughly 150 million connections are not active. Where welfare delivery, DBT, health records and education assume a working smartphone, that gap and the rural teledensity figure are **where exclusion errors live**. Pair this directly with the Jan Dhan article: an account plus a mobile is the operating assumption of the **JAM** architecture, and rural teledensity is its weakest leg.

Teledensity is computed on projections from the **Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections for India and States 2011-2036**. VLR is the Visitor Location Register, which is why it measures **active** subscribers.

PM SVANIDHI COMPLETES ONE YEAR OF ITS RESTRUCTURED PHASE

August 27, 2026 marked one year of the restructured phase of **PM SVANidhi**. Background: the Union Cabinet approved that restructuring on **August 27, 2025**, extending lending to **March 31, 2030**.

Key Data

MEASURE	FIGURE
Loans in the year	21.86 lakh , to 10.56 lakh new beneficiaries
Value	Rs 6,294 crore
UPI-linked RuPay credit cards approved	27,077 , with a Rs 30,000 limit
Target	1.15 crore vendors , including 50 lakh new
Street Food Hubs	50 , with up to Rs 4 crore assistance per hub

Historical background: the scheme was launched in 2020, on **1 June 2020**, by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** for street vendors affected by the pandemic.

UPSC Angle

The restructured phase shifts SVANidhi from an **emergency working-capital loan** to a **graduated credit relationship**, with the UPI-linked RuPay credit card as the bridge from a term loan into revolving credit. That is the same transition problem Jan Dhan faces with its overdraft facility. Link to the **Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014**, which requires **Town Vending Committees** and a survey-based certificate of vending, and whose implementation has been the binding constraint on SVANidhi coverage.

NHRC TAKES SUO MOTU COGNIZANCE OF 60 NEWBORN DEATHS IN MALDA

On August 28, 2026, the National Human Rights Commission took suo motu cognizance of reports of 60 newborn deaths at Malda Medical College and Hospital, West Bengal, issuing notice to the Chief Secretary with a two-week reporting deadline.

Key Data

Media reports of August 27 state that **44 of the 60** had been **referred from other facilities** after their condition deteriorated, and that **ten died on a single day**. A companion NHRC release the same day concerns the **non-serving of mid-day meals to Classes VI to VIII in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh**.

UPSC Angle

The referral figure is the analytical point. **44 of 60 arriving already critical from lower-tier facilities** describes a failure of the **referral chain** rather than of the tertiary hospital alone: peripheral facilities without neonatal capacity stabilising too late, and transport without in-transit care. Pair with The Hindu's editorial the same day on **ICU fire safety**, which makes a parallel argument that the failure mode recurs because no mechanism converts one inquiry's finding into a binding requirement elsewhere.

NHRC: a **statutory** body under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**; chaired by a former **Chief Justice of India**; may inquire **suo motu**, but its recommendations are **not binding** and it cannot inquire into a matter more than **one year** after the act complained of.

MOSPI RELEASES A CONCEPT PAPER ON MONETARY ASSET ACCOUNTS FOR MARINE FISH

On August 27, 2026, MoSPI released a concept paper on Experimental Monetary Asset Accounts of Marine Fish Resources, aligned with the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework.

Key Data

It builds on the **EnviStats India** series MoSPI has published since **2018**, and draws on the OECD's 2025 work on measuring natural resources in the national accounts.

UPSC Angle

This is **natural capital accounting**: treating a fish stock as an **asset with a monetary value on a national balance sheet** rather than as a flow of catch in a given year. The consequence is that **depletion becomes visible as a fall in national wealth**, where conventional GDP records only the catch as income and never records the stock being drawn down. It is the same critique that underlies **Green GDP** and the **Gross Environment Product** work, and it is an excellent, current, specific hook for any GS3 answer on sustainable development that would otherwise rely on generalities.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS ACTS ON SUGAR AND ONION PRICES

On August 28, 2026, the Department of Consumer Affairs reported that sugar ex-mill prices had declined about 20 per cent, and announced a move to a fortnightly quota system from September.

On August 27, retail intervention on onions began in Delhi-NCR at Rs 35 per kg.

Key Data

Nationwide physical verification found mills **holding stocks above their declared monthly returns** and instances of **short selling**. The government attributes the recent price spike to **hoarding and speculation rather than shortage**.

On onions, **NCCF and NAFED** mobile vans were flagged off from Krishi Bhawan. The "**Kanda Express**" moved about **88,000 MT to 16 cities across 86 railway rakes in 2025-26**, against **14 rakes and about 12,000 MT to five cities in 2024-25**. The **Central Warehousing Corporation** has been inducted for storage.

UPSC Angle

Two different instruments for two different diagnoses. **Sugar** is being treated as an **information and enforcement problem**: the stock exists, the returns were false, and the response is verification plus a shorter release cycle that reduces the value of hoarding. **Onion** is being treated as a **logistics and buffer problem**: the response is physical movement of buffer stock into deficit markets. Note that a fortnightly quota is a **market-design change**, not a price control, and it works by shortening the horizon over which withheld stock can be profitably held.

ALSO IN THE NEWS

- **PRIP Scheme, second call for applications** (August 28). Department of Pharmaceuticals. **Rs 5,000 crore** outlay. Early-stage track (TRL 1-3 to a maximum of TRL 5) up to **Rs 5 crore** per project; later-stage track (TRL 4-6) up to **Rs 100 crore** per project, capped at **35 per cent** of project cost.
- **Sri Lanka Navy chief in India** (August 26-29). **Vice Admiral Damian Fernando** received a ceremonial Guard of Honour at South Block and laid a wreath at the **National War Memorial** on August 27, with talks on joint operations, capacity building and maritime security. His maiden visit since taking over.
- **JJM 2.0 and SBM-G 2.0 convergence** (August 27), under the **Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025**. Water security is one of the Act's four thematic focus areas; as background, **JJM 2.0 was approved on 10 March 2026**; integration runs through **Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans**.
- **RBI directions on The Citizens Co-operative Bank Ltd., Jammu** (effective from close of business August 27, for six months). Withdrawal cap **Rs 1,25,000**; issued under **Section 35A read with Section 56, Banking Regulation Act, 1949**. DICGC deposit insurance cover is **Rs 5 lakh**. Parallel action the same day on **Desaiganj Nagari Cooperative Bank Maryadit** and a penalty on **Jalna District Central Co-operative Bank**.
- **ICAR-CIFRI granted Indian Patent No. 600617** (August 27) for a nanoemulsifiable concentrate formulation, commercialised as **CIFRI ARGURE** for managing **Argulus** and other fish ectoparasites, licensed non-exclusively through **Agrinnovate India Ltd.** Institute at **Barrackpore**.
- **DAANVEER** (August 27), Ministry of Panchayati Raj: a computer-crowdsourcing initiative for Gram Panchayats, with donations routed through the **Meri Panchayat App** to **DigiHaat**, an **ONDC-enabled marketplace**, complementing the **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**.
- **ICAT issues the first compliance certificate for a 15-metre multi-axle sleeper bus** (August 26), Ministry of Heavy Industries, certified under **AIS-119 and AIS-153** per the Central Motor Vehicles Rules. Configurations: **42 berths** full sleeper, or **21 berths plus 42 seats** hybrid.

- **PM speaks to Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah** (August 26), conveying condolences on the flood deaths and offering humanitarian assistance.
- **CAQM inspection drive in Loni, Ghaziabad** (August 26): **28 premises inspected, 16 sealed.**

DAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- **August 28, 2026: Raksha Bandhan and World Sanskrit Day (Vishva Sanskrit Diwas)**, both falling on **Shravana Purnima**, which coincide this year. Also **Narali Purnima**, observed in coastal Maharashtra.
- **August 28, 2026: 163rd birth anniversary of Mahatma Ayyankali** (see the deep-dive article in this edition).
- **August 28, 2026: Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti**, observed on the **Chatayam** star in the Malayalam month of **Chingam**.
- **August 28, 2026: twelfth anniversary of PMJDY** (see the deep-dive article in this edition).
- **August 26, 2026: Thiruvonam**, the culminating day of **Onam**, and **Milad-un-Nabi**, which fell on the same date this year.

National Sports Day, marking **Major Dhyan Chand's** birth anniversary, falls on August 29 and is **outside this edition's window**. The Khelo India programming carried through August 27 and 28 is advance activity for it, not the observance itself.

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