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Top Stories of The Day

- *National Sports Awards 2025* honour 17 athletes, with no Khel Ratna awardee this year.
- *Digital Bharat Nidhi* signs agreement to expand BharatNet connectivity across Chhattisgarh's rural areas.
- Government approves incentive scheme to accelerate *domestic PNG connections* across Indian households from September.
- *Rishabh Pant* becomes first Indian and fourth player to hit 100 Test sixes.
- *Vignesh Vermula* and *Saranya Devi* win Asian Junior Blitz Chess titles in Mumbai.
- Karnataka launches *Vidyarthi Sahayahasta* scheme providing 7.5% reservation for rural government-school students.
- *CCI* extends commitment application timelines, streamlining antitrust proceedings under amended 2026 regulations.
- Former Air India CEO *Campbell Wilson* appointed director on Air New Zealand's board.
- *Tata Power* and *IIT Bombay* partner for advanced clean-energy technology research and commercialisation.
- *YES BANK* launches *Essence Credit Card* offering customised rewards and benefits for women.

National Sports Awards 2025: Key Winners and Major Highlights



- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has announced the National Sports Awards 2025, recognising outstanding achievements by Indian sportspersons, coaches and sports-promoting institutions. Notably, no sportsperson has been selected for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award for 2025, while 17 sportspersons have been chosen for the Arjuna Award.

Major Award Categories:

- The National Sports Awards include the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award, Arjuna Award, Arjuna Award (Lifetime), Dronacharya Award and Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar.

Key Arjuna Award Winners:

- Tejaswin Shankar – Athletics
- Muhammed Ajmal V – Athletics
- Priyanka Goswami – Athletics
- Treesa Jolly – Badminton
- Pullela Gayatri Gopichand – Badminton
- Vidit Santosh Gujrathi – Chess
- Divya Deshmukh – Chess
- Lalremsiami – Hockey
- Rajkumar Pal – Hockey
- Dhanush Srikanth – Deaf Shooting
- Divya Deshmukh, who won the FIDE Women's World Cup 2025, and chess grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi are among the notable chess awardees. Lalremsiami is the first sportsperson from Mizoram to receive the Arjuna Award.

Other Awards:

- Arumainayagam, a footballer and member of India's 1962 Asian Games gold-winning team, has been recognised with the Arjuna Award (Lifetime).
- The Army Paralympic Node, Pune has received the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar.
- The Dronacharya Award for best coaches of Sports and Games has been awarded to:
 - Parveer Singh – Athletics
 - Chhote Lal Yadav – Boxing
 - Neha Nandkumar Chavan – Shooting

Additional Key Facts:

- Administering Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
- Khel Ratna: India's highest sporting honour
- Khel Ratna instituted: 1991–92
- Renamed: Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021
- Arjuna Award: Recognises outstanding sporting performance along with leadership, sportsmanship and discipline.
- National Sports Day: 29 August, commemorating Major Dhyan Chand's birth anniversary.

Exam Focus Points:

- Awards: National Sports Awards 2025
- Announced by: Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
- Khel Ratna 2025: No awardee
- Arjuna Awardees: 17 sportspersons
- Notable Winners: Tejaswin Shankar, Divya Deshmukh, Vidit Gujrathi, Lalremsiami
- Lifetime Arjuna: I. Arumainayagam
- Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar: Army Paralympic Node, Pune
- National Sports Day: 29 August

Digital Bharat Nidhi and Chhattisgarh: Amended BharatNet Programme



- Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN), under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications, has signed an agreement with the Chhattisgarh Government, Chhattisgarh State BharatNet Infrastructure Limited, BSNL and Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society to implement the Amended BharatNet Programme (ABP) in the state.
- The agreement aims to strengthen last-mile broadband connectivity and promote inclusive digital growth.

Key Features:

- The programme will cover more than 11,000 Gram Panchayats, while over 8,000 additional villages will receive connectivity on a demand basis. The Government of India has approved financial support of over ₹3,900 crore for the programme in Chhattisgarh.
- The project will facilitate access to digital services such as e-governance, online education, telemedicine, digital payments and other broadband-based services in rural areas.

Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN):

- Digital Bharat Nidhi was established under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, replacing the earlier Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). Its objective is to promote universal access to telecommunications in underserved rural, remote and urban areas and support

telecom research, pilot projects and new technologies.

Amended BharatNet Programme:

- The Union Cabinet approved ABP in August 2023. It aims to provide optical-fibre connectivity to 2.64 lakh Gram Panchayats using a ring-topology network and extend connectivity to approximately 3.8 lakh non-GP villages on a demand-driven basis.
- The programme has an approved cost of approximately ₹1.39 lakh crore and incorporates technologies such as IP-MPLS, remote fibre monitoring and long-term operation and maintenance arrangements.

Significance:

- Digital inclusion: Bridges the rural-urban digital divide.
- Rural development: Enables digital delivery of government and essential services.
- e-Governance: Strengthens access to online public services at the grassroots level.
- Economic empowerment: Improves opportunities for education, entrepreneurship and digital payments.

Exam Focus Points:

- Initiative: Amended BharatNet Programme
- Fund: Digital Bharat Nidhi
- State: Chhattisgarh
- Coverage: 11,000+ Gram Panchayats; 8,000+ villages on demand
- Financial Support: ₹3,900+ crore
- DBN: Replaced USOF under Telecommunications Act, 2023
- ABP Approved: August 2023
- National Target: 2.64 lakh Gram Panchayats
- Strategic Link: Digital India, rural connectivity and e-governance

Incentive Scheme to Promote Domestic PNG Connections



- The Government has approved an Incentive Scheme for Promotion of Domestic Piped Natural Gas (PNG) Connections to accelerate the expansion of PNG connections among households across India. The scheme aims to provide clean, safe and convenient cooking fuel and will come into effect from 1 September 2026.

Key Features:

- The scheme seeks to fast-track the activation of domestic PNG connections, enabling more households to shift from conventional LPG cylinders to piped natural gas.
- The initiative is part of the government's broader efforts to expand the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network and increase the use of natural gas in the domestic sector.

About Piped Natural Gas (PNG):

- PNG is natural gas supplied to households through an underground pipeline network. It is used primarily for cooking and offers a continuous supply without the need to store or replace cylinders.
- Natural gas is generally considered a cleaner-burning fuel than many conventional fossil fuels and produces lower emissions of several pollutants.

City Gas Distribution (CGD):

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) regulates the CGD sector.

CGD networks distribute natural gas to domestic, commercial, industrial and transport consumers.

- Major CGD companies include Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL), Mahanagar Gas Ltd (MGL), GAIL Gas and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL).

Additional Key Facts:

- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Regulator: PNGRB
- PNG: Piped Natural Gas
- CNG: Compressed Natural Gas, mainly used as an automotive fuel
- Priority supply: In 2026, domestic PNG and CNG for transport have been given priority in natural-gas allocation.
- The government has also encouraged states and CGD entities to accelerate PNG infrastructure and connections.
- In May 2026, the government amended LPG regulations to allow consumers obtaining PNG connections to either terminate their LPG connection within 30 days or obtain a transfer voucher for future restoration in a non-PNG area.

Significance:

- Clean energy: Encourages cleaner household fuel use.
- Convenience: Provides continuous piped cooking-gas supply.
- Energy transition: Supports gradual diversification away from LPG.
- Urban infrastructure: Promotes expansion of CGD networks.
- Energy security: Supports greater use of domestic and imported natural gas through an integrated gas network.

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Incentive Scheme for Promotion of Domestic PNG Connections
- Effective From: 1 September 2026
- Ministry: Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Fuel: Piped Natural Gas

- Regulator: PNGRB
- Distribution Network: City Gas Distribution
- Key Aim: Fast-track PNG connections and promote the shift from LPG to piped natural gas.
- Strategic Link: Clean cooking fuel, energy transition and CGD expansion

Rishabh Pant: First Indian to Hit 100 Sixes in Test Cricket



- Indian wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant has become the first Indian and fourth player in the world to hit 100 sixes in Test cricket. He achieved the milestone during the fourth day of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle on 18 August 2026.

list with 138 sixes, followed by McCullum (107), while Gilchrist and Pant have 100 each.

About Rishabh Pant:

- Rishabh Pant is an Indian wicketkeeper-batter known for his aggressive batting style, particularly in Test cricket. He made his Test debut against England in 2018 and has played important innings in overseas Test victories, including India's historic series triumph in Australia in 2020–21.
- He is regarded as one of India's most successful attacking wicketkeeper-batters in Test cricket.

Historic Milestone:

- Pant reached 100 Test sixes in just his 51st Test match, making him the fastest player to achieve the feat. He surpassed the previous record held by England's Ben Stokes, who took 82 Tests to reach 100 sixes.
- The other players to have crossed the 100-six mark in Tests are Ben Stokes, Brendon McCullum and Adam Gilchrist. Stokes leads the

Exam Focus Points:

- Player: Rishabh Pant
- Achievement: First Indian to hit 100 sixes in Test cricket
- Global Position: Fourth
- Fastest: 100 sixes in 51 Tests
- Previous Record: Ben Stokes – 82 Tests
- Venue: Galle, Sri Lanka

Vignesh Vermula and Saranya Devi: Asian Junior Blitz Chess Champions



- Indian chess players Vignesh Vermula and Saranya Devi won the Open and Girls' blitz titles, respectively, at the Asian Junior Chess Championship 2026 held in Mumbai.
- India made a strong start by securing both gold medals on the opening day.

Vignesh Vermula – Open Blitz:

- Vignesh Advait Vemula, seeded 23rd, emerged as the Asian Junior Open Blitz Champion after finishing level on points with compatriots Viresh Sharnarathi and Nandish V. S. He secured the title through superior tie-break scores. Vignesh scored 6/7 points in the event.

Saranya Devi – Girls' Blitz:

- Saranya Devi won the Girls' Blitz title, overcoming higher-seeded competitors with strong tactical play. She was seeded 9th in the event. India's Sannidhi Bhat also finished on the podium in the Girls' section.

About Blitz Chess:

- Blitz chess is a fast format in which players have very limited time to complete a game. It emphasises quick decision-making, tactical awareness, calculation and time management. When players finish with equal points, tie-break systems are used to determine the final ranking.

Karnataka's Vidyarthi Sahayahasta Scheme: Reservation for Rural Government School Students



- The Karnataka Government has announced the Vidyarthi Sahayahasta scheme to improve access to professional higher education for students from rural government schools. Under the scheme, eligible students will receive 7.5% reservation within the existing 15% rural reservation quota for admission to professional courses, including engineering and medical courses.

Asian Junior Chess Championship 2026:

- The championship is being held in Mumbai, Maharashtra, with the ITC Maratha Sheraton serving as the venue for the blitz competitions. The event is being organised under the aegis of the Maharashtra Chess Association.

Exam Focus Points:

- Sport: Chess
- Championship: Asian Junior Chess Championship 2026
- Venue: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Open Blitz Winner: Vignesh Vermula
- Girls' Blitz Winner: Saranya Devi
- Vignesh's Seed: 23rd
- Saranya's Seed: 9th
- Vignesh's Score: 6/7
- Organising Body: Maharashtra Chess Association

Key Features:

- Students who have studied in rural government schools from Class I to Class X will be eligible for the special reservation. The initiative aims to reduce the rural-urban educational gap and provide greater opportunities for students from government schools to enter professional institutions.

Existing Rural Reservation:

- Karnataka already provides 15% horizontal reservation in government seats for rural candidates who have studied for 10 full academic years from Class I to Class X in eligible rural institutions. The new 7.5% quota is proposed within this existing rural reservation, rather than as an additional 7.5% over the total seats.

Professional Courses:

- The initiative covers professional higher education, particularly engineering and medical courses, helping rural students access specialised education and career opportunities.
- Admissions to several professional courses in Karnataka are conducted through the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA), including engineering, agriculture, veterinary and pharmacy courses.

- Launched by: Karnataka Government
- Beneficiaries: Rural government-school students
- Reservation: 7.5% within existing 15% rural quota
- Study Requirement: Class I to X in rural government schools
- Major Courses: Engineering and medical
- Objective: Improve access to professional higher education
- Strategic Link: Rural–urban educational gap and inclusive education

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Vidyarthi Sahayahasta

CCI Notifies New Rules for Commitment Applications in Antitrust Cases



- The regulations also provide a clearer four-stage process for rectification of defects in applications.

What is a Commitment Application?

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has notified the Competition Commission of India (Commitment) Amendment Regulations, 2026, aimed at streamlining the procedure for companies seeking to offer commitments in antitrust investigations. The amended regulations came into effect on 18 August 2026.

- A commitment application allows an enterprise under a CCI antitrust investigation to voluntarily offer corrective measures to address competition concerns. If accepted, the mechanism can resolve the matter without completing a prolonged investigation and litigation process.
- The Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023 introduced the settlement and commitment framework through Sections 48A and 48B of the Competition Act, 2002.

Key Changes:

- Filing period: Time to submit a commitment application has been increased from 45 to 60 days.
- Preliminary examination: CCI's initial consideration period has been extended from 7 to 15 working days.
- Overall timeline: The total period for commitment proceedings has increased from 130 to 180 working days.

CCI :

- Formed: 14 October 2003
- Minister: Nirmala Sitaraman
- Chairperson: Ravneet Kaur
- Secretary: Inder Pal Singh Bindra

Significance:

- Faster resolution: Provides an alternative to lengthy antitrust proceedings.
- Regulatory efficiency: Gives CCI a structured mechanism to address competition concerns.

- Business certainty: Allows enterprises to voluntarily propose remedies.
- Consumer interest: Helps address potentially anti-competitive practices while avoiding prolonged litigation.

Exam Focus Points:

- Authority: Competition Commission of India
- Regulation: CCI (Commitment) Amendment Regulations, 2026

- Purpose: Streamline antitrust commitment applications
- Filing Period: 60 days
- Earlier Period: 45 days
- Total Timeline: 180 working days
- Earlier Timeline: 130 working days
- Legal Basis: Competition Act, 2002
- Strategic Link: Competition regulation, ease of doing business and consumer protection

Campbell Wilson: Appointed as Director on Air New Zealand Board



- Campbell Wilson, former CEO and Managing Director of Air India, has been appointed as a director on the board of Air New Zealand, the national flag carrier of New Zealand.
- His appointment, along with former Air New Zealand CFO Robert McDonald, will take effect from 24 September 2026, subject to shareholder re-election at the airline's annual meeting.

About Campbell Wilson:

- Campbell Wilson is a New Zealand-born aviation executive with more than 30 years of experience in the airline industry.
- He joined Singapore Airlines (SIA) in 1996 and served in several international roles. He was also the founding CEO of Scoot, SIA's low-cost subsidiary.

- In 2022, Tata Sons appointed Wilson as CEO & MD of Air India. He led the airline during its post-privatisation transformation and the integration of the Tata Group's airline businesses. He stepped down as Air India CEO in April 2026.

About Air New Zealand:

- Air New Zealand is the national airline of New Zealand, headquartered in Auckland. It operates domestic and international passenger and cargo services and plays an important role in connecting New Zealand with the world.

Exam Focus Points:

- Appointment: Campbell Wilson as Air New Zealand director
- Country: New Zealand
- Airline: Air New Zealand
- Previous Organisation: Air India
- Previous Position: CEO & Managing Director
- Earlier Achievement: Founding CEO of Scoot
- Effective From: 24 September 2026
- Strategic Link: Global aviation leadership and corporate governance

Tata Power and IIT Bombay: Long-Term Clean Energy Research Partnership

- Tata Power and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay) have signed a Master Research Agreement (MRA) to

establish a long-term partnership for developing, scaling and commercialising next-generation energy technologies and advanced clean-energy solutions.

- The collaboration aims to bridge the gap between laboratory research and large-scale industrial deployment.



The partnership will focus on:

- Smart grids and digital grid technologies
- Power electronics
- Energy storage
- Electric mobility and EV charging
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) for power systems
- Cybersecurity
- Carbon capture
- Circular economy solutions

Master Research Agreement (MRA):

- An MRA provides a structured framework for long-term research collaboration, allowing institutions and industry partners to undertake multiple research projects in areas of mutual interest. In this case, IIT Bombay will contribute its academic and research capabilities, while Tata Power will provide industry expertise and large-scale deployment capabilities.

Significance:

- Clean energy transition: Supports the shift towards renewable and low-carbon energy systems.

YES BANK Launches YES Essence Credit Card for Women

- YES BANK has launched the YES Essence Credit Card, a women-focused credit card designed for young professionals, salaried and digitally savvy women.
- The card aims to offer customised rewards and lifestyle, wellness and entertainment benefits

aligned with the evolving financial needs of women.

- Research commercialisation: Helps convert laboratory innovations into commercially viable technologies.
- Energy security: Promotes development of indigenous energy technologies.
- Grid modernisation: Smart grids and AI can improve efficiency, reliability and resilience.
- Decarbonisation: Technologies such as energy storage and carbon capture can support emission reduction.

Tata Power:

- An integrated power company involved in generation, transmission, distribution, renewables and energy solutions.
- Tata Power's FY2026 portfolio had 47% clean and green operational capacity, with a stated target of 70% by 2030 and Net Zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2045.
- Founded: 18 September 1919
- Founder: Dorabji Tata
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
- MD & CEO: Praveer Sinha

Exam Focus Points:

- Partners: Tata Power & IIT Bombay
- Agreement: Master Research Agreement
- Main Objective: Develop, scale and commercialise clean-energy technologies
- Key Areas: Smart grids, energy storage, EVs, AI, cybersecurity, carbon capture
- Institution: IIT Bombay
- Strategic Link: Clean energy transition, innovation, energy security and decarbonisation

The YES Essence Credit Card offers:

- Welcome vouchers across fashion, beauty, travel and fitness categories.

- Accelerated rewards on everyday spending such as dining, grocery, shopping, beauty and travel.
- Annual preventive health check-up, including cancer-marker screening.
- Special birthday voucher.
- Buy-One-Get-One movie tickets and complimentary coffee at select mall outlets.
- Up to 10,000 YES Rewardz on milestone spending.



Financial Inclusion and Women:

- The launch reflects the growing focus of banks on customised financial products for women. Greater access to formal credit, digital banking and financial products can contribute to women's financial empowerment, economic participation and consumption-led growth.

About YES BANK:

- YES BANK is a private-sector bank in India, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It provides retail, corporate and digital banking services, including deposits, loans, credit cards and payment solutions.
- The bank has also developed other women-oriented financial products, reflecting a broader strategy of customer-segment-specific banking.

Exam Focus Points:

- Bank: YES BANK
- Launch: YES Essence Credit Card
- Target: Women customers
- Key Benefits: Rewards, health check-up, lifestyle and entertainment benefits
- Major Objective: Provide customised financial solutions for women
- Bank Type: Private-sector bank
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Strategic Link: Financial inclusion, women's empowerment and digital banking

Lets Revise

- ❖ How many sportspersons were selected for the Arjuna Award in National Sports Awards 2025? **17 sportspersons.**
- ❖ Which programme is being implemented in Chhattisgarh with financial support from Digital Bharat Nidhi to strengthen rural broadband connectivity? **Amended BharatNet Programme (ABP).**
- ❖ Which type of household fuel connection is targeted by the newly approved incentive scheme? **Domestic Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections.**
- ❖ Who became the first Indian and fourth player in the world to hit 100 sixes in Test cricket? **Rishabh Pant.**
- ❖ Who won the Open and Girls' Blitz titles at the Asian Junior Chess Championship 2026? **Vignesh Vermula and Saranya Devi, respectively.**
- ❖ What percentage of reservation has Karnataka announced for rural government-school students under Vidyarthi Sahayahasta? **7.5%, within the existing 15% rural reservation quota.**
- ❖ What is the new time limit for filing a commitment application under CCI's amended regulations? **60 days.**
- ❖ Who has been appointed as a director on the board of Air New Zealand? **Campbell Wilson, former CEO and Managing Director of Air India.**
- ❖ Which institution has signed a Master Research Agreement with Tata Power for next-generation clean-energy research? **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay).**
- ❖ Which credit card did YES BANK recently launch specifically for women? **YES Essence**



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IMPORTANCE OF CURRENT AFFAIRS IN UPSC EXAMINATIONS

Current Affairs hold a crucial place in the preparation for the UPSC Civil Services Examination. A comprehensive understanding of recent national and international developments helps aspirants strengthen their General Studies foundation and develop a well-rounded perspective on important issues. Topics such as government policies, schemes, economy, international relations, science and technology, environment, defence, social justice, governance, reports, indices, appointments, awards, and major global events are highly relevant for both the Prelims and Mains examinations. Regular study of current affairs not only enhances factual knowledge but also improves analytical ability, critical thinking, answer-writing skills, and decision-making aptitude. Since UPSC questions often connect contemporary developments with static subjects, consistent preparation of current affairs enables aspirants to understand issues in depth and present balanced, informed, and relevant answers. It also plays an important role in Essay writing, Ethics, and the Personality Test, giving candidates a strong edge throughout the examination process.

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