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Top Stories of The Day

- *US removes Syria from terrorism list, easing sanctions and supporting reconstruction after 47 years.*
- *US launches Operation Economic Outcast against Iran, targeting major economic sectors and financial networks.*
- *France and Saudi Arabia sign \$7 billion theme park deal near Paris, advancing tourism and economic diversification.*
- *Government appoints three part-time directors to RBI Central Board for four-year terms.*
- *An Se-young and Alex Lanier win BWF World Championships singles titles for South Korea and France.*
- *East Bengal defeats Mohun Bagan to win Durand Cup 2026 after 22-year title wait.*
- *DRDO signs two technology transfer agreements, strengthening indigenous defence manufacturing and technological self-reliance.*
- *ICAR highlights NBSS & LUP soil database and first soil texture map for precision agriculture.*
- *Sophie Adenot becomes first French woman to conduct a spacewalk alongside NASA astronaut Anil Menon.*
- *Kaziah Liz Mejo crowned Miss Universe India 2026, becoming the first Keralite winner.*

US Removes Syria from State Sponsors of Terrorism List



- The United States has officially removed Syria from its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST), ending a designation that Syria had faced since 1979.
- The decision marks a major shift in US policy towards post-Assad Syria and is expected to facilitate economic activity, investment and reconstruction.

Key Highlights:

- The decision followed a 45-day Congressional review period after US President Donald Trump notified Congress in July 2026 of his intention to rescind Syria's designation.
- The US also revoked the terrorist designation of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly known as the al-Nusra Front.
- The move removes restrictions associated with Syria's SST status, including certain financial transactions, foreign assistance and defence-related restrictions, potentially improving Syria's access to international finance and investment.

Background:

- Syria was designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 1979. The designation imposed significant economic and diplomatic restrictions on the country.
- The development follows the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024 and the

emergence of Ahmed al-Sharaa as Syria's transitional leader. The US has subsequently sought greater engagement with the new Syrian government.

Significance:

- Economic recovery: Removal of major restrictions could encourage foreign investment and support Syria's post-war reconstruction.
- Diplomatic shift: Indicates a transition in US–Syria relations from isolation towards engagement.
- Regional stability: Greater economic integration could contribute to Syria's stabilisation.
- International finance: Delisting can facilitate banking and financial transactions involving Syria.

State Sponsors of Terrorism – Fact:

- The US State Sponsors of Terrorism designation is a US policy mechanism targeting governments determined to have repeatedly provided support for international terrorism. As of the Syria delisting, Iran, Cuba and North Korea remain on the US list.

Exam Focus Points:

- Country Removed: Syria
- Removed By: United States
- List: State Sponsors of Terrorism
- Syria Listed Since: 1979
- Date of Removal: 24 August 2026
- Key Leader: Ahmed al-Sharaa
- Former Leader: Bashar al-Assad
- Other Group Delisted: HTS
- Strategic Link: Sanctions relief, reconstruction, investment and US–Syria relations

US Launches “Operation Economic Outcast” Against Iran



- The United States has announced a major new economic pressure campaign against Iran, named “Operation Economic Outcast”, aimed at cutting off Iran’s revenue sources and isolating the country from the global financial system.
- The campaign was announced by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent at the direction of President Donald Trump.

Key Highlights:

- The US has imposed new sanctions targeting around 60 individuals, entities and vessels connected with Iran.

The measures focus on key sectors including:

- Oil and energy revenues
- Shipping
- Aviation
- Technology
- Gold
- Digital assets and financial networks
- The US has also warned countries and businesses continuing economic dealings with Iran that they could face secondary sanctions.
- The objective is to restrict Iran's ability to generate foreign exchange, finance its government and military activities, and access international financial networks.

Background:

- The latest move builds on the Trump administration's broader “maximum pressure” policy towards Iran. The US has previously

targeted Iran's oil trade, financial institutions, shipping networks and entities accused of supporting its military and regional activities.

- The development comes amid the ongoing US–Iran conflict and tensions in the Persian Gulf, including concerns surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important oil-transit routes.

Global Economic Impact:

- Iran is a major oil producer, while the Strait of Hormuz is a crucial route for global energy supplies. Any disruption could affect crude oil prices, inflation, shipping costs and global supply chains.
- For India, prolonged disruption in the region could have implications for crude oil imports, energy security, inflation and the current account.

Significance:

- Economic warfare: Demonstrates the use of financial sanctions as a geopolitical tool.
- Energy security: Iran's oil exports and the Strait of Hormuz have global significance.
- Financial system: Highlights the influence of the US dollar-based international financial system.
- Geopolitical tensions: Could further intensify US–Iran and wider West Asian tensions.

Exam Focus Points:

- Operation: Economic Outcast
- Country Targeted: Iran
- Initiated By: United States
- US President: Donald Trump
- US Treasury Secretary: Scott Bessent
- Date: 24 August 2026
- Key Targets: Oil, shipping, aviation, technology, gold and digital assets
- Major Strategic Route: Strait of Hormuz
- Policy: Maximum Pressure

- Key Tool: Economic sanctions and secondary sanctions

France–Saudi Arabia Sign \$7 Billion Theme Park Project Deal



- France and Saudi Arabia have agreed to develop a \$7-billion entertainment and theme-park project near Paris, marking a major investment partnership between the two countries. The project is expected to be developed by Saudi Arabia's Qiddiya Investment Company in collaboration with French entertainment group Compagnie des Alpes.

Key Highlights:

- The proposed project will be located at Villages Nature Paris, near the French capital. It is expected to feature a major theme park and entertainment destination, strengthening tourism and leisure infrastructure in the Paris region.
- The agreement was announced during Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to France, highlighting the growing economic relationship between France and Saudi Arabia.
- The project is part of Saudi Arabia's broader strategy to diversify its economy beyond hydrocarbons and develop tourism, entertainment and other non-oil sectors.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030:

- The investment aligns with Saudi Vision 2030, the country's long-term economic transformation programme.

Key objectives of Vision 2030 include:

- Reducing dependence on oil revenues.
- Developing tourism and entertainment.
- Attracting foreign investment.
- Creating employment opportunities.
- Expanding the private sector.
- Building globally competitive tourism destinations.
- Qiddiya is one of Saudi Arabia's major mega-projects under Vision 2030 and is being developed near Riyadh as an entertainment, sports and cultural destination.

France–Saudi Economic Relations:

- The agreement reflects the expanding economic partnership between France and Saudi Arabia in sectors beyond traditional energy cooperation, including tourism, infrastructure, technology, defence and investment.
- For France, large-scale foreign investment can contribute to tourism development, employment and regional economic activity.

Exam Focus Points:

Particular	Details
Project	Theme park/entertainment project
Estimated Investment	\$7 billion
Countries	France and Saudi Arabia
Location	Near Paris, France
Saudi Partner	Qiddiya Investment Company
French Partner	Compagnie des Alpes
Saudi Policy	Vision 2030
Key Sector	Tourism and entertainment
Strategic Objective	Economic diversification

Government Appoints Three Part-Time Directors to RBI Central Board



- The Central Government has appointed Annie George Mathew, Janmejaya Kumar Sinha and Syed Akbaruddin as part-time, non-official directors on the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a four-year term.
- The appointments were made by the government following approval by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).

Key Appointees:

Annie George Mathew:

- A former Special Secretary in the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, she is also associated with the 16th Finance Commission. Her experience includes public finance, government expenditure, audit and financial management.

Janmejaya Kumar Sinha:

- An economist and management consultant, he is Chairman of Boston Consulting Group (BCG) India and has served in several regulatory and advisory roles.

Syed Akbaruddin:

- A former diplomat and India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, he has also served as spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs. He is currently Dean of the Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad.

RBI Central Board:

- The Central Board of Directors is the apex governing body of the RBI. It is constituted under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 and is responsible for providing overall direction and oversight to the central bank.
- The recent appointments bring expertise in public finance, economics, corporate strategy and international diplomacy to the RBI's board.
- The government has also recently reappointed Anand Mahindra and appointed former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath as part-time, non-official directors.

Exam Focus Points:

- Institution: Reserve Bank of India
- Act: RBI Act, 1934
- New Directors: Annie George Mathew, Janmejaya Kumar Sinha, Syed Akbaruddin
- Category: Part-time, Non-official Directors
- Tenure: 4 years
- Effective From: 24 August 2026
- Appointing Authority: Central Government
- Approval: Appointments Committee of the Cabinet
- RBI Headquarters: Mumbai
- RBI Governor: Sanjay Malhotra

BWF World Championships 2026: An Se-young and Alex Lanier Win Singles

Titles

- The 2026 BWF World Championships concluded in New Delhi, with South Korea's An

Se-young and France's Alex Lanier winning the women's and men's singles titles respectively.

The tournament was held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.



Men’s Singles:

- Alex Lanier defeated Japan’s Kodai Naraoka 21–11, 21–11 to become the first Frenchman to win the BWF World Championships men’s singles title. The 21-year-old’s victory marked a historic breakthrough for French badminton.

Women’s Singles:

- World No. 1 An Se-young of South Korea defeated Japan’s Akane Yamaguchi 21–17, 21–14 to win her second World Championships title. She also became the holder of the major women’s singles titles across the Olympics, World Championships, Asian Games and Asian Championships.

Other Champions:

Category	Players	Country
Men’s Doubles	Liang Weikeng & Wang Chang	China
Women’s Doubles	Baek Ha-na & Lee So-hee	South Korea
Mixed Doubles	Thom Gicquel & Delphine Delrue	France

- South Korea achieved a clean sweep of the women’s events, while France created history by winning both the men’s singles and mixed doubles titles.

Additional Key Facts:

- Governing Body: Badminton World Federation (BWF)
- Edition: 2026 BWF World Championships
- Host City: New Delhi, India
- Venue: Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium
- Dates: 17–23 August 2026
- Men’s Singles Winner: Alex Lanier, France
- Women’s Singles Winner: An Se-young, South Korea
- Historic Achievement: First Frenchman to win men’s singles world title
- France: First-ever World Championships mixed doubles gold
- South Korea: Won both women’s events

Durand Cup 2026: East Bengal Ends 22-Year Title Wait



- East Bengal FC defeated arch-rivals Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the final of the 135th

IndianOil Durand Cup 2026 at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (Salt Lake Stadium), Kolkata. The victory ended East Bengal’s 22-year wait for the prestigious trophy.

Key Highlights:

- Edmund Lalrindika was the star of the final, scoring a first-half hat-trick. Bipin Singh scored East Bengal’s other goal, while Manvir Singh scored Mohun Bagan’s only goal.

- With this victory, East Bengal won its 17th Durand Cup title, equalling Mohun Bagan's record of 17 titles as the most successful teams in the tournament's history. East Bengal had last won the competition in 2004.
- The triumph also provided East Bengal with a measure of revenge for its 0–1 defeat to Mohun Bagan in the 2023 Durand Cup final.

About Durand Cup:

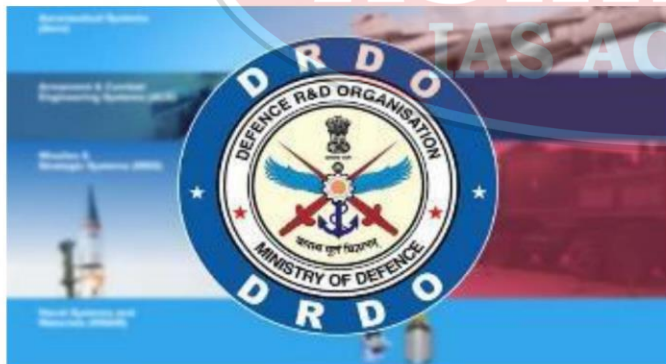
- The Durand Cup is one of India's oldest football tournaments and is widely regarded as Asia's oldest football tournament. The competition was first held in 1888 in Shimla.
- It was originally organised for the British Indian Army and was named after Sir Mortimer Durand, then Foreign Secretary of British India.

- The tournament is organised by the Durand Football Tournament Society, with participation from Indian armed forces and leading football clubs.

Exam Focus Points:

- Sport: Football
- Tournament: Durand Cup
- 2026 Winner: East Bengal FC
- Runner-up: Mohun Bagan Super Giant
- Edition: 135th
- Venue: Kolkata
- East Bengal Titles: 17
- Star Performer: Edmund Lalrindika
- Historic Achievement: 22-year wait ended
- Historical Significance: Asia's oldest football tournament

DRDO Signs Two Technology Transfer Agreements to Boost Indigenous Defence Manufacturing



threats from enemy anti-submarine warfare systems. It forms part of India's efforts to strengthen underwater warfare capabilities.

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has signed two Licensing Agreements for Transfer of Technology (LAToT) through its Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam, to strengthen indigenous defence manufacturing. The agreements were signed on 21 August 2026.

LM2500 Gas Turbine Technology:

- The second agreement concerns the fabrication, installation and commissioning of the LM2500 Gas Turbine for industrial use in India. This is important for developing domestic expertise in advanced gas-turbine technology and reducing dependence on foreign technology.

About NSTL:

- The Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL) is a DRDO laboratory located in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. It focuses primarily on technologies related to underwater warfare, naval systems and marine engineering.

Technologies Covered:

Submarine Fired Decoy (SFD):

- The technology is designed to enhance the survivability of submarines by helping counter

What is LAToT?

- Licensing Agreement for Transfer of Technology (LAToT) is a mechanism through

which DRDO transfers indigenously developed technologies to Indian industries for production and commercialisation.

- This helps bridge the gap between defence research and industrial-scale manufacturing.
- DRDO & Indigenous Defence Manufacturing:
- DRDO's Development-cum-Production Partner (DcPP) model facilitates collaboration between DRDO and Indian industry. As of March 2026, 2,180 technology transfer agreements had been signed and more than 2,780 IPRs had been opened for use by Indian industry.
- India's defence production reached a record ₹1.78 lakh crore in 2025–26, while defence exports reached ₹38,424 crore, reflecting the

country's expanding indigenous defence ecosystem.

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: DRDO
- Laboratory: NSTL
- Location: Visakhapatnam
- Agreements: Two LAToTs
- Key Technologies: Submarine Fired Decoy & LM2500 Gas Turbine
- Objective: Indigenous defence manufacturing
- Policy Link: Aatmanirbhar Bharat
- Key Concept: Technology transfer and defence indigenisation

NBSS & LUP Soil Database Crucial for Crop Improvement



- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has highlighted the importance of the soil database and information system developed by the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS & LUP) for crop improvement, agricultural development and decision-support systems. The remarks were made by ICAR Director General Dr. M. L. Jat at the 50th Foundation Day of NBSS & LUP in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

- The Bureau has recently developed India's first soil texture map using remote sensing and satellite data.
- The map provides hectare-level information, which can help farmers and agricultural planners identify suitable crops for specific areas.
- NBSS & LUP is also developing high-resolution water-retention maps, particularly for Maharashtra and southern states.

What is Soil Texture?

- Soil texture refers to the relative proportion of sand, silt and clay particles in soil. It influences important characteristics such as water retention, drainage, aeration and nutrient availability.
- Therefore, detailed soil-texture information can support crop selection, irrigation planning and efficient land-use management.

Key Highlights

- NBSS & LUP has made significant contributions to soil resource mapping, soil information generation and land-use planning in India.

Significance

- Crop Improvement: Soil characteristics provide an important basis for selecting and developing crops suited to particular agro-ecological conditions.

- Precision Agriculture: Satellite-based soil information can support location-specific agricultural decisions.
- Resource Management: Soil and water data can help improve the efficient use of scarce natural resources.
- Climate Resilience: Better understanding of soil properties can contribute to climate-smart agricultural planning.

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS & LUP)

- Parent organisation: Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
- Headquarters: Nagpur, Maharashtra
- Foundation: 1976
- 2026: 50th Foundation Day
- New initiative: India's first soil texture map
- Technology used: Remote sensing and satellite data
- Map resolution: Hectare-level insights
- Upcoming work: High-resolution water-retention maps

Sophie Adenot Becomes First French Woman to Conduct a Spacewalk



- Sophie Adenot, a European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut, created history by becoming the first French woman to perform a spacewalk outside the International Space Station (ISS). She conducted the spacewalk alongside NASA astronaut Anil Menon.

Key Highlights:

- The 6-hour 23-minute spacewalk was undertaken to replace a failed Space-to-Ground (S/G) antenna, which is important for high-speed communication and data transmission between the ISS and NASA's Mission Control in Houston.
- However, the astronauts could not complete installation of the replacement antenna because electrical cables and bolts took longer than expected to disconnect and loosen. The failed antenna was removed and secured, while the replacement installation was postponed to a subsequent spacewalk.

- A second spacewalk involving Adenot and Menon was scheduled for 25 August 2026 to resume the antenna work, with the Canadarm2 robotic arm expected to assist the operation.

About Sophie Adenot

- Nationality: French
- Organisation: European Space Agency (ESA)
- Profession: Engineer, helicopter pilot and astronaut
- She became France's first female helicopter test pilot in 2018.
- She was selected for the ESA Astronaut Class of 2022.
- She is the second French woman astronaut, after Claudie Haigneré.
- Her ISS mission is part of SpaceX Crew-12 / Expedition 74-75.

Additional Key Facts:

- Spacewalk: Also called Extravehicular Activity (EVA), it refers to an astronaut working outside a spacecraft or space station while wearing a spacesuit.
- ISS: A multinational space laboratory operated through cooperation among NASA, Roscosmos, ESA, JAXA and CSA.

- Canadarm2: A robotic manipulator system on the ISS used for maintenance, moving equipment and assisting astronauts.
- ESA: European Space Agency; headquarters in Paris, France.

Exam Focus Points:

- Astronaut: Sophie Adenot
- Country: France
- Achievement: First French woman to conduct a spacewalk

- Organisation: European Space Agency
- Space Station: International Space Station
- Co-Astronaut: Anil Menon (NASA)
- Date: 18 August 2026
- EVA Duration: 6 hours 23 minutes
- Main Task: Replacement of Space-to-Ground antenna
- Robotic Arm: Canadarm2
- Previous French Woman Astronaut: Claudie Haigneré

Kaziah Liz Mejo Crowned Miss Universe India 2026



Why is it in News?

- Kaziah Liz Mejo, a 19-year-old law student and model from Mavelikkara, Kerala, has won the Miss Universe India 2026 title at the grand finale in Jaipur. She will represent India at the 75th Miss Universe pageant in Puerto Rico in November 2026.

Key Highlights

- Winner: Kaziah Liz Mejo, Kerala
- Age: 19 years
- Profession: Law student and model
- Competition: Defeated 52 finalists from across India.
- First Runner-up: Vaishnavi Gannesh, Tamil Nadu

- Second Runner-up: Anushri Satavlekar, Gujarat, who also won Miss International India 2026.
- Historic Achievement: First Keralite to win the Miss Universe India title.

Exam Focus Points

Particular	Details
Miss Universe India 2026	Kaziah Liz Mejo
State	Kerala
Age	19 years
Finale Venue	Jaipur, Rajasthan
International Pageant	75th Miss Universe
International Venue	Puerto Rico
International Pageant	November 2026
First Keralite to win	Miss Universe India title

Lets Revise

- ❖ Which country was removed from the US State Sponsors of Terrorism list in August 2026? **Syria.**
- ❖ Which country announced “Operation Economic Outcast”? **United States**
- ❖ Which two countries agreed on a \$7-billion theme-park project near Paris? **France and Saudi Arabia.**
- ❖ Who have been appointed as part-time, non-official directors on the RBI Central Board in August 2026? **Annie George Mathew, Janmejaya Kumar Sinha and Syed Akbaruddin**
- ❖ Who won the men’s singles title at the 2026 BWF World Championships? **Alex Lanier of France.**
- ❖ Which team won the Durand Cup 2026? **East Bengal FC.**
- ❖ Which DRDO laboratory signed two Licensing Agreements for Transfer of Technology (LAToT) in August 2026? **Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam.**
- ❖ Which organisation developed India’s first soil texture map using remote sensing and satellite data? **NBSS & LUP.**
- ❖ Who became the first French woman to conduct a spacewalk? **Sophie Adenot.**
- ❖ Who won Miss Universe India 2026? **Kaziah Liz Mejo of Kerala.**
- ❖ Who will represent India at Miss Universe 2026? **Kaziah Liz Mejo.**
- ❖ Where will the 75th Miss Universe pageant be held? **Puerto Rico, in November 2026.**



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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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