Current Affairs - 20 July 2026

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF MARITIME ADMINISTRATION

- It is the **apex maritime authority** of the Government of India which **was established in September 1949.**
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is functioning as an attached office of the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.**
- It deals with all executive matters, relating to merchant shipping.
- **Headquarters:** Mumbai

Functions of the Directorate General of Maritime Administration:

- The Directorate is responsible for the implementation of national shipping policy and legislation.
- It is responsible for promotion of maritime education and training in **coordination with the International Maritime Organization (IMO).**
- It extends to the **registration, survey and certification of vessels**, examination and certification of Merchant Navy Officers.
- **Issuing Licenses and Certifications to Seafarers:** DG Shipping issues various important certificates to merchant navy officers, ensuring that they are trained and qualified to work on board ships at sea.
- **Maritime Education and Training:** As part of the implementation of its mandate, DG Shipping ensures the continuous development of **maritime education and skills training.**
- **Protecting Seafarers' Rights:** One of the most important roles of DG Shipping is safeguarding the rights of Indian seafarers.
- **Ship Inspections:** DG Shipping **ensures that both Indian-flagged ships and foreign vessels operating** in Indian waters and ports are compliant with international conventions and regulations.

MANGAL PANDEY

- He was a brave **Indian soldier** during the **pre-independence era.**
- His **attack on British officers on March 29, 1857** is widely regarded as one of the earliest triggers of the Revolt of 1857, referred to in different historical traditions as the First War of Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny.
- He was **born** on July 19, **1827,** Ballia district in **Uttar Pradesh.**
- In **1849**, Pandey **joined the army** of the British East India Company at the **age of 22**.
- He **revolted** against the East India Company **for introducing cartridges** that were **greased with animal fat,** as it **hurt the religious sentiments** of the soldiers.
- Mangal Pandey **attacked two British officers on March 29, 1857**.
- Following this, he was **hanged to death** on April 8, 1857, in Barrackpore. He was **only 29 years old** when he was **executed**.
- However, **his act of revolt**, subsequent arrest, and hanging triggered a **nationwide uproar** and marked the **beginning of the revolt of 1857.**
- **Following this huge mass movemen**t, the British were forced to recognise the trouble and passed new rules through the **Government of India Act, 1858.**

NAMASTE SCHEME

- The **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)** ensures safety, dignity and **social security of sanitation workers** while accelerating transition towards mechanised sanitation across the country.

- It is jointly implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.**
- It aims to **eliminate hazardous manual cleaning of sewers** and septic tanks by promoting mechanised cleaning practices, skill development and comprehensive welfare measures for sanitation workers.

- **Implementing agency:** It is implemented by the **National Safai Karmacharis Finance Development Corporation (NSKFDC)** under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)
- **The scheme targets the following objectives:**
  - Zero fatalities in sanitation work,
  - Eliminates direct contact with human faecal matter,
  - Ensures all cleaning is done with safety devices by skilled workers,

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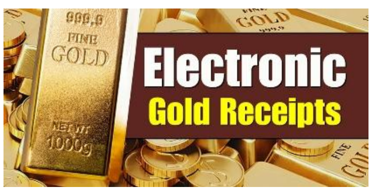
ELECTRONIC GOLD RECEIPTS



- Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) are **exchange-traded securities** representing ownership of **physical gold (specified purity)** stored in **SEBI-regulated vaults.**
- They can be **held electronically in a demat account, bought and sold in different denominations** on the bourse and converted into physical gold via prescribed process.
- **Buying and Selling of Electronic Gold Receipts:**
  - Like shares, EGRs follow a **T+1 settlement cycle** with the receipts credited to the buyer's demat account the next trading day.
  - Retail investors, jewellers, bullion traders, refiners, institutional investors and other eligible market participants can buy **EGRs via registered stockbrokers.**
  - Investors need both trading and demat accounts to buy and sell EGRs.
- The EGRs are available in **two purity standards:** 999 (99.9% pure gold) and 995 (99.5% pure gold).
  - In each purity category, **investors have six different denominations** such **as 10 mg, 100 mg, 1 g, 10 g, 100 g and 1 kg.**
- **Those who prefer physical gold can convert EGRs into gold whenever needed.**
- **Advantage:** This offers a transparent and standardised way to own gold while removing concerns over purity and personal storage.

REVIVING INDIA'S TEXTILE LEADERSHIP - BUILDING INSTITUTIONS FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

- India, once the world's leading textile producer and exporter, currently accounts for only about **3%** of the global apparel export market, despite possessing a fully integrated textile value chain.
- **Key historical milestones:**
  - Indian cotton fabrics were traded across Asia and Europe. **Dhaka muslin**, **Murshidabad silk**, and fine cotton textiles became globally renowned.
  - The Industrial Revolution in Britain shifted competitiveness from artisanal craftsmanship to **mechanised production**, resulting in India's decline in textile exports.

Current Status - Strong Capabilities, Weak Global Presence:

- India possesses an integrated textile value chain, covering cotton production, spinning, weaving, processing, garment manufacturing, and exports. However, its share in global apparel exports remains stagnant.
- For example, China's global apparel market share in 2024 was **29.4%,** Bangladesh (9.2%), Vietnam (6.4%), and India (3.0%).
- Although the global apparel market exceeds USD 520 billion, India's participation remains disproportionately low.

Major Challenges Before India:

- **Undervalued currency advantage elsewhere:** Countries like China enjoy an implicit export advantage due to relatively undervalued currencies, making their exports more competitive.
- **Missing "middle" in manufacturing:** India lacks mid-sized export-oriented firms capable of handling large export orders, delivering quickly, and achieving economies of scale. This remains a major structural weakness.

- **High cost of capital:** Real interest rates -India (6.2–8.2%), China (~1.3%), Vietnam (~1%), and Bangladesh (negative real interest rates). Higher financing costs reduce export competitiveness.
- **GST refund delays:** Delays in GST refunds, and export incentive disbursals create liquidity constraints for exporters.
- **Labour challenges:**

Apparel industry depends heavily on migrant labour from Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand. Key concerns include seasonal migration, high worker attrition; festival absenteeism; and labour shortages in manufacturing clusters like Bengaluru, Tiruppur and Surat.

  - There is the need to expand production into regions with abundant labour, such as Bihar, following examples like **Pearl Global's Muzaffarpur unit**.

- **Low female labour force participation:** Greater female workforce participation could reduce labour shortages, support labour-intensive manufacturing, and enhance inclusive growth.

Way Forward - Build Institutions, Not Just Incentives:

- India needs a **whole-of-ecosystem** approach rather than isolated policy interventions.
- **Priority reforms:**
  - Strengthen **PM MITRA** (Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel) Parks.
  - Develop globally competitive textile clusters.
  - Expand manufacturing scale.
  - Improve logistics and port connectivity.
  - Lower financing costs.
  - Accelerate GST refunds.
  - Promote MMF and technical textiles.
  - Encourage investment in spinning, weaving and processing.
  - Improve labour skilling and mobility.
  - Increase female labour force participation.
  - Create digitally enabled and predictable trade facilitation systems.

INDIA'S URANIUM QUEST: SECURING FUEL FOR NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

India has secured a long-term uranium supply deal with Australia, marking a key step toward operationalising the **India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement**, signed nearly 12 years ago.

The deal follows similar **long-term uranium agreements** with **Canada** and **Kazakhstan** signed earlier this year, reflecting India's push to diversify and secure fuel supplies for its nuclear power expansion.

India's Current Uranium Sourcing

- Uranium, though a common element found worldwide, requires several processing stages before becoming usable nuclear fuel: Mining and milling; Conversion; Enrichment (where required); Fuel fabrication.
- India's indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs), which run on **natural uranium**, source fuel through a mix of domestic production and imports.
- In contrast, **enriched uranium** used in India's two Light Water Reactor (LWR) plants, **Tarapur** and **Kudankulam**, is **entirely imported**.
- Domestic reserves
    - India's uranium oxide reserves stand at around 4**.3 lakh tonnes**, spread across 47 deposits in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
    - The state-owned Uranium Corporation of India Ltd (UCIL) holds the mandate to mine and process uranium, operating major mines at **Jaduguda** and **Turamdih** (Jharkhand) and **Tummalapalle** (Andhra Pradesh).
- **The supply gap**
    - Despite these reserves, domestic sources meet the uranium requirement for only **2.4 GWe** out of **India's total 8.7 GWe nuclear capacity;** the rest depends on imports.

Why India Depends on Imports?

- The core reason is economic: mining and processing domestic uranium into ore concentrate costs **three to four times** more than importing it internationally, largely due to the **poor grade of uranium ore found in India**.
- However, the Ministry of Power committee cautioned that the global push toward nuclear power could drive up international uranium prices in the coming years.
- It recommended that India consider **enhancing** domestic uranium production, even if costly, to maintain energy security, potentially through additional government equity infusion into UCIL to facilitate its expansion.

Conclusion

India's push to diversify uranium imports, from Australia to Canada and Kazakhstan, reflects the reality that domestic reserves alone cannot sustain its 100 GWe nuclear ambition by 2047.

Balancing import dependence with long-term investment in domestic uranium production will be central to ensuring both energy security and the pace of India's nuclear expansion.

THE SECOND PHASE OF US-IRAN WAR

- The US and Iran agreed to a ceasefire on June 14, followed by a MoU signed on June 17. Key terms included:
  - Iran would allow ships free passage for 60 days through the Strait of Hormuz.
  - Iran would work with Oman to define the strait's future administration and maritime services.
- However, tensions emerged almost immediately, suggesting the two sides never truly agreed on the strait's long-term status.
- Two days after the MoU, Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), established in May, circulated terms reasserting itself as the nodal transit authority, requiring vessels to hold passage permits and PGSA-approved insurance.

Breakdown of Doha Talks

- Later, US and Iranian officials met in Doha, where Iran and Oman reportedly proposed a **voluntary toll** modelled on the **Malacca-Singapore Straits**. The US rejected this in favour of restoring the pre-war status quo.
- Talks in Doha ultimately broke down over US resistance to any formal management arrangement for Hormuz.
- As a result, fighting resumed in mid-July.
    - On July 7, Iran struck three ships on the Omani route, including the India-bound Al Rekayyat, one of the largest LNG carriers built, an incident considered one of shipping's worst-case scenarios.
    - Trump declared the ceasefire over.

Military Lessons from the Conflict

- According to ISW, Iran has adapted its tactics, deploying high-speed, manoeuvrable missiles and increasingly using cluster munitions to compensate for accuracy issues seen in earlier strikes against Israel.
- For the US, the conflict has reinforced lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq: excessive, poorly targeted firepower tends to generate more adversaries rather than resolve conflict.

Stakes for India

- India faces both humanitarian and economic risks from the conflict:
    - **Human cost:** Fourteen Indians have died and two remain missing since the war began on **February 28**, mostly seafarers and workers in the Gulf. New Delhi has protested the loss of lives to both Iran and the US.
    - **Economic impact:** Rising energy prices linked to the conflict are already having an inflationary and market impact on India's economy.
- India has urged both parties to return to **dialogue and diplomacy**, cautioning against a global economic slowdown that would disproportionately hurt the Global South.

INDIA'S FIRST IMMERSIVE LANGUAGE MUSEUM

India's first immersive language museum, the Museum of Word, was recently opened at the National Library.

- **Museum of Word,** also known as **Shabdalok**, at the **National Library campus in Kolkata**, is India's first immersive language museum.
- It was **developed** by the **National Library under the Union Culture Ministry.**
- It showcases the **country's linguistic heritage** and **traces** the **evolution of oral and written traditions** through **interactive, technology-driven exhibits.**

- The first phase of the museum chronicles the diversity of Indian languages, scripts, and literature.
- Instead of being a conventional repository, it has been designed as an **immersive cultural experience** with **digital displays, holograms,** and **motion-sensor technology** to engage visitors.
- The museum has nine galleries that explore different facets of the history of languages and their influence on India's civilization and culture.

- Shabdalok **celebrates India's 22 official languages** and traces their journey from **oral traditions and ancient manuscripts** to **printed works** and **modern electronic texts**.

- One of its key attractions allows visitors to **trace the evolution of words over centuries,** illustrating how their pronunciation, meaning, and usage have changed over time.
