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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 26 July 2026

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW



Recently, India's External Affairs Minister addressed the inaugural session of international conference of 60th anniversary commemoration of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

- It is a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly **established in 1966**.
- It is the core legal body of the U.N.'s system in the field of **international trade law**.
- **Mandate:** To further the progressive harmonization and unification of the law of international trade.
- **Function:** The organization is responsible for helping to facilitate international trade and investment.
- It is formulating modern, fair, and harmonized rules on commercial transactions.

Member Countries: The Commission is **composed of 70 member States** elected by the General Assembly.

- There are **five regional groups represented within the Commission**: African States; Asian States; Eastern European States; Latin American and Caribbean States; Western European and Other States.

Term of Members: The General Assembly elects members for terms of **six years**; every three years the terms of half of the members expire.

- **India is a founding member** of this organization.

Headquarters: Vienna, Austria

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INDIA'S RICE FIELDS AMONG WORLD'S TOP METHANE SOURCES - STUDY FINDINGS

- A new study published in Nature Food has found that greenhouse gas emissions from paddy fields worldwide have doubled since the 1960s, with eastern India's rice fields emerging among the global methane hotspots.

Methane Emissions from Rice Cultivation

- Methane (CH_4) is a potent greenhouse gas, approximately 25 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period.
- Agriculture is one of the largest anthropogenic sources of methane, and rice cultivation is the primary agricultural contributor.
- **How Rice Fields Produce Methane?**
 - Rice is typically grown in flooded (submerged) fields, which create low-oxygen (anaerobic) conditions in the soil. Under these conditions:
 - Methane-producing microbes (methanogens) thrive.
 - They decompose organic matter in the soil and release methane as a by-product.
 - The gas escapes into the atmosphere through the water column and the rice plants themselves.
 - The longer a field remains flooded, the more methane it produces. Continuous irrigation, a common practice in intensive rice farming, significantly amplifies emissions.

India's Mitigation Efforts

- While India has not set specific goals to reduce emissions from agriculture, several techniques and incentives are available to farmers.
- **System for Rice Intensification (SRI)** - The National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project recommends the System for Rice Intensification (SRI) technique:

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- Young seedlings are transplanted precisely.
- Fields are not continuously flooded during irrigation.
- This reduces both water use and methane emissions.
- **Other Recommended Practices** - Experts suggest that a combination of the following measures could reduce global rice-related greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 10% by mid-century, even under a warming climate:
 - Improved irrigation practices, including alternate wetting and drying (AWD).
 - Optimised fertiliser use to reduce excess nitrogen application.
 - Residue management to control the decomposition of organic matter.
 - Reduced tillage to preserve soil carbon.

Challenges in Adoption

- Despite the availability of mitigation techniques, farmers remain reluctant due to several barriers:
 - Labour shortages for precision techniques like SRI.
 - Lack of technical knowledge and awareness.
 - Changes in rainfall patterns make alternative methods risky.
 - Regional variation in emission reduction potential, which current methods do not adequately address.

Significance for India's Climate Goals

- **Agricultural Emissions and Climate Commitments**
 - While India has committed to reducing emission intensity under the Paris Agreement, agriculture remains a challenging sector to address. Rice cultivation alone accounts for a substantial share of agricultural methane emissions.
- **Food Security vs Emission Reduction**
 - India must balance food security concerns with climate commitments.
 - Rice is a staple food for over half of India's population. Any reduction in paddy cultivation must be accompanied by alternative crop support and procurement guarantees.

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SARNATH



Recently, the “Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath” got inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

- **Location:** It is located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- It is counted among the **holy pilgrimage sites of Buddhism**.
- It is described in ancient **Buddhist scriptures** such as **Rishipattan, Ishipatana, Mrigadava**.
- It is now **India’s 45th** and Uttar Pradesh’s fourth **World Heritage Site**.
- It is the **ancient** sacred land where Lord Buddha, after attaining enlightenment, delivered his first sermon to humanity and set in **motion the ‘Dharmachakra Pravartan’**.

The inscribed serial property comprises two component parts – **Chaukhandi Stupa** and the **Archaeological Remains of Sarnath** (Dhamekh Stupa, Dharmrajika Stupa, Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Ashokan Pillar, etc.).

In historical period Sarnath was developed over centuries through **royal, monastic and lay patronage**.

- The site comprises an ensemble of ancient monuments constructed from the **pre-Mauryan period** (5th-4th centuries BCE to 3rd century BCE) up until the destruction of Sarnath in the **12th century CE**.

Sarnath has been one of the most extensively excavated sites by the Archaeological Survey of India which resulted in a stratified settlement spread across 16 centuries (5th-4th centuries BCE to 12th century CE).

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RISING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: THE DEEPER CRISIS BEHIND INDIA'S PROTESTS

The NEET paper leak triggered the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP)-led protests, and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has resigned as a result.

However, economists argue that the unrest exposes a far deeper structural problem — **rising youth unemployment** that threatens India's demographic dividend.

The Numbers

- According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), unemployment among Indian youth (15–29 age bracket) rose to **16.2% in June 2026**, up from **13.8% in April 2025** — the highest on record since monthly data collection began.
- **Caveat:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has cautioned that monthly fluctuations don't necessarily indicate secular trends, given seasonal, academic, and labour market variations.

Two Troubling Trends

- **Broad-based rise:** Unemployment increased across all six youth categories tracked over 15 months — males and females, at the all-India, urban, and rural levels.
- **Falling participation, rising unemployment:** Youth unemployment rose even as the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) — the share of people looking for work — declined in nearly every category.
 - Overall youth LFPR fell from 42.7% to 40.3%.
 - Only urban male LFPR rose, reaching 60.1% (up 1 percentage point).
 - Normally, a falling LFPR should reduce unemployment even without new job creation — but this hasn't happened, signalling deeper labour market stress.
- For context: The overall unemployment rate (15+ age group) was a comparatively stable 5.5% in June (versus 5.6% in April 2025), with LFPR at 54.4%.

A Long-Term, Not Just Cyclical, Problem

- Annual data confirms the trend isn't new:

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- Of 36 states/UTs, youth unemployment in 2025 was higher than in 2022 in 13 of them — including Andhra Pradesh (16.2% from 15.1%), Delhi (14.4% from 5.9%), Telangana (18.1% from 12.6%), and West Bengal (10.6% from 8.4%).
- For young women, the situation is worse: 16 states/UTs saw rising unemployment over the same period.

Weakening Informal Sector

- The informal sector — traditionally a job-absorption cushion — is also faltering:
 - Informal sector job creation fell to **74.5 lakh in 2025**, down sharply from **1.1 crore** in the year ending September 2024 (MoSPI's Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises).
 - Wage growth slowed to **3.9%**, down from **13%**.

The Education-Employment Mismatch

- Despite years of additional schooling, less than 7% of male Indian graduates find a permanent salaried job within a year of graduating (Azim Premji University's State of Working India 2026 report).
- For white-collar jobs specifically, this figure drops to just 3.7%.
- An estimated 1.1 crore of 6.3 crore graduates aged 20–29 were unemployed in 2023.
- Graduate youth unemployment (under 25) rose to 39.33% in 2023, up from 35.02% in 1983 — showing this is a persistent structural issue, not a recent shock.

Why This Threatens India's Demographic Dividend?

- India's median age (~29 years) is rising and expected to **reach 38 by 2050**.
- The current period is the critical window for India's working-age population to earn and drive economic growth — not just build future safety nets.
- As per an Observer Research Foundation paper (March 2026): by the 2040s, the dependency ratio will rise and fiscal space will tighten, meaning demography will no longer automatically drive growth.
- Without productivity, innovation, and institutional gains, progress could stall once India's population peaks.

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KEY FACTS ABOUT MAHANADI RIVER

- It is one of the major **east-flowing peninsular rivers** located in the states of **Chhattisgarh and Odisha**.
- It is the **third-largest peninsular river** after the Godavari and Krishna.
- **Course:**
 - It **originates** from the **Sihawa Hills** in Dhamtari district, **Chhattisgarh**.
 - Before **joining the Bay of Bengal at False Point** through several channels near the major seaport town of **Paradip**, the river **enters the plains of Odisha** near **Cuttack** and forms a delta.
 - **Close to one of its mouths** is the famous pilgrimage site of **Puri**. Farther up the coast is **Konark**, the site of an ancient temple dedicated to the sun.
- The Mahanadi **basin extends** over the states of **Chhattisgarh and Odisha** and comparatively smaller portions of **Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- It passes through several major **cities** and towns, including **Raipur, Sambalpur, and Cuttack**.
- **Tributaries:** The main tributaries of Mahanadi are **Seonath River, Jonk River, Hasdeo River, Mand River, Ib River, Ong River and Telen**

Major Dams:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ○ Hirakud Dam (Odisha), | Kalma Barrage (Odisha) |
| ○ Gangrel Dam (Chhattisgarh), | Tandula Dam (Chhattisgarh) |
| ○ Sondur Dam (Chhattisgarh), | Hasdeo Bango Dam (Chhattisgarh) |

Chilika Lake: Chilika, named a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, gets 61% of its inland flow from the Mahanadi River system, mainly from its distributaries – Daya and Bhargabi.

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ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

- Established in 1994, it is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific.
- It provides a setting in which members can discuss current security issues and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the region.
- **Objectives of the ASEAN Regional Forum:**
 - To foster **constructive dialogue and consultation** on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and
 - To make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The ARF is characterised by **consensus-based decision-making** and frank dialogue.
- **Members:** It comprises **27 members**: the **11 ASEAN member states**, **10 ASEAN Dialogue Partners** (Australia, Canada, China, European Union (EU), **India**, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and United States) and other members.
- **Chairmanship:** The ARF is chaired by the **ASEAN Chair of that year**.



WHAT IS INSAT-3DR?

- INSAT-3DR (**Indian National Satellite-3DR**) is an advanced **meteorological satellite** developed by **ISRO**.
- **Objectives:** Improve **weather forecasting**, **cyclone tracking**, disaster warning, **environmental monitoring over India** and the **surrounding region**.
- It was **launched** aboard the **GSLV-F05** launch vehicle.
- It is configured with an **Imaging System**, and an **Atmospheric Sounder**.
- Like its predecessor **INSAT-3D**, **INSAT-3DR** carries a **Data Relay Transponder** as well as a **Search and Rescue Transponder**.
- It provides **half-hourly multispectral images** over the **Indian region** from a **geostationary position**.

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- Thus, INSAT-3DR will provide service continuity to earlier meteorological missions of ISRO and further augment the capability to provide various meteorological as well as search and rescue services.
- The significant improvements incorporated in INSAT-3DR are:
 - Imaging in the middle infrared band to provide nighttime pictures of low clouds and fog.
 - Imaging in two thermal infrared bands for estimation of Sea Surface Temperature (SST) with better accuracy.
 - Higher spatial resolution in the Visible and Thermal Infrared bands.

SONE RIVER



- The Sone River, **also called Son**, is a principal southern tributary of the Ganges (Ganga) River after the Yamuna River.
- **Origin:** It is a perennial river that originates in the **Amarkantak hills of the Maikal Range in Madhya Pradesh**.
- It flows through the states of **Madhya Pradesh** (around 500 km), **Uttar Pradesh**, **Jharkhand**, and **Bihar**.
- **Course:** The River flows in a **north-northwest** direction till Bansagar reservoir, after which it changes its course sharply eastwards, flowing parallel to Kaimur Range, and joins Ganga River upstream of Patna in Bihar.
- **Tributaries:** Major tributaries of the Son River are **Banas**, **Gopad**, **Rihand**, **Kanhar** and **North Koel**.
- The Sone valley is bordered by the **Kaimur Range to the north** and the **Chota Nagpur plateau to the south**.
- **Dams and Hydroelectric Projects:**
 - **Bansagar Dam** in Madhya Pradesh.
 - **Rihand Dam** in Uttar Pradesh
 - **Indrapuri Barrage** in Bihar