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Current Affairs - 28 July 2026

BHARGAVA STRA



- It is India's first **indigenous micro-missile system** designed to take on the **threat of swarm drones**.
- It was developed by the **Economic Explosives Ltd.**
- **Features of Bhargavastra:**
 - It has **dual-layered kill mechanism**.
 - It combines **unguided micro-rockets** with a **lethal radius of 20 metres** and **precision-guided micro-missiles** capable of intercepting targets up to **2.5 kilometres** away.
 - It can detect larger UAVs up to a range of **10 km** and **6 km for smaller drones**.
 - It uses a combination of radar, **Electro-Optical/Infrared (EO/IR)** sensors and passive radio-frequency (RF) sensors integrated through a Command, Control, **Communication, Computers and Intelligence (C4I)** architecture for UAV detection.
 - It is designed to operate **across diverse set of terrains**, ranging from deserts to snow-bound **high altitude regions over 5,000 metres**.
 - The system employs soft-kill techniques such as **electronic jamming**, providing a **comprehensive layered defence**.
 - It is capable of neutralising both **individual drones and coordinated swarms**.
 - The system offers a cheaper alternative to deploying expensive surface-to-air missiles against relatively low-cost drones.



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AUTHORITY (NBA)?

- It is an autonomous, **statutory body** established under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- **Headquarters: Chennai, Tamil Nadu.**

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- **Functions:** The NBA performs **facilitative, regulatory, and advisory functions** for the **Government of India**, particularly on matters related to the **conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biological resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits** derived from them.
- **Advisory Role:**
 - This includes **recommending policies, strategies, and action plans to both central and state**
 - A key advisory function involves **guiding state governments** on the **selection of areas** of biodiversity importance to be notified as **heritage sites** and recommending **measures for managing such sites**.
- **Regulatory Role:**
 - The NBA regulates activities and **issues guidelines for access to biological resources** and for **fair and equitable sharing of benefits**.
 - **Foreign individuals or corporate bodies** seeking to obtain **biological resources** or associated **traditional knowledge** for research, surveys, or commercial use **must obtain prior approval from the NBA**.
 - It is **mandatory** to obtain **prior approval from the NBA** before **applying for any intellectual property right – in India or abroad – that is based on a biological resource of Indian origin** or associated traditional knowledge.
- **Composition:**
 - **Chairperson:** An **eminent person with proven knowledge** and experience in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of biological resources.
 - **10 Ex officio Members:** Senior **representatives from Govt of India**, nominated to provide policy insights and ensure inter-ministerial coordination.
 - **5 Non-Official Members:** **Experts and professionals** from diverse fields related to biodiversity management, nominated to contribute independent perspectives and specialized expertise.
 - All members are **appointed by the Central Government**.

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NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP PROMOTION SCHEME-2



- It is implemented throughout the country since 2022-23 by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** with the aim to promote apprenticeship training across India.
- The **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme** (NAPS) was **launched in August, 2016** with the objective to promote apprenticeship training and to increase the engagement of apprentices.

Under NAPS-2, the Government provides **partial stipend support** to **apprentices** engaged under the **Apprentices Act, 1961**.

Features of NAPS-2:

- **Financial support through DBT:** Government provides stipend support to eligible apprentices engaged by establishments **under the Apprentices Act, 1961**.
 - The Government's share being released **directly to beneficiaries through a Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism**.
- **Industry-led training:** Apprenticeship training is conducted in actual work environments using the training facilities available with participating establishments, **enabling hands-on learning and industry exposure**.
- **Technology-enabled implementation:** A dedicated online portal facilitates end-to-end implementation of apprenticeship training, including registration, contract approval, monitoring and disbursement of benefits.
- **Facilitation through TPAs:** Mobilisation of apprentices and establishments, particularly MSMEs, is supported through empanelled **Third-Party Aggregators (TPAs)**.

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ATMANIRBHAR PANCHAYAT PROGRAMME



- It is a unique initiative of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- It enables **Gram Panchayats** and **Block Panchayats** to identify **local assets and opportunities** and develop them, with dedicated technical support from the Ministry, into bankable, revenue-generating projects that **build sustainable Own Source of Revenue (OSR)**.

Financing: It is facilitated through **Public-Private Partnerships**, **Corporate Social Responsibility contributions**, convergence with other schemes and bank finance, with NABARD and HUDCO as institutional partners.

Target: A **total of 350 projects** are to be developed over four years, comprising 50 projects in the first year and 100 in each of the following three years.

Eligibility: Gram Panchayats with a minimum OSR of **50 lakh** and **Block Panchayats** with a **minimum OSR of Rs. 1 crore**, each with at least three years of tenure remaining, are eligible to apply, with relaxed thresholds for special category States.

What is SAMARTH Portal:

- It is a **first-of-its-kind digital initiative** of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj designed to strengthen the financial capacity of Gram Panchayats through **technology-enabled management of OSR**.
- It is developed as a unified, configurable national platform which enables Gram Panchayats to **digitally manage the complete OSR lifecycle**, from taxpayer registration and demand generation to online payments, collection and real-time monitoring.
- **Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh** have already been onboarded on the portal.

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THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR INDIA'S EDUCATION MINISTRY: UNFINISHED REFORMS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi took additional charge of the Ministry of Education, succeeding Dharmendra Pradhan.

He inherits a wide range of structural education reforms initiated under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, many of which remain works-in-progress.

Foundational Literacy: Nipun Bharat

- Launched to address pandemic-era learning losses, Nipun Bharat aims to ensure every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27 — a core NEP recommendation.

Teacher Quality Initiatives

- **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST):** India's first initiative to assess and classify teachers as proficient, expert, or advanced against uniform national standards, with career progression tied to this ladder. **Not yet rolled out.**
- **National Mentoring Mission:** Aims to identify mentor teachers to guide others up this ladder via online sessions. However, awareness among India's 1 crore teachers remains low, and impact assessments are yet to be formalised.
- Since NPST itself hasn't launched, teachers have little incentive to engage with mentoring sessions.

Higher Education Reforms

- **Controversial UGC changes**
 - The 2025 draft UGC regulations on appointing teachers, Vice-Chancellors, and staff faced strong opposition — particularly for **giving governors a decisive say** in Vice-Chancellor appointments and for removing the cap on contractual professorships.
 - New UGC undergraduate/postgraduate degree rules — built around flexibility and multi-disciplinarity — have been formally in force since the 2025 academic year.

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- **Education-skilling convergence**
 - **Swayam Plus platform** offers over 500 industry-developed courses across 15 sectors, including emerging technologies, with 6.5 lakh registrations.
 - New "**AI for All**" **modules** (AI for Physics, AI for Chemistry, AI in Accounting, AI for Educators, AI/ML using Python) have drawn 1 lakh registrations.
 - **Key gaps:** State university-affiliated colleges remain resistant to flexible credit systems, and there is minimal funding allocated to State universities to implement such flexibility.
 - The proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan (VBSA) Bill, meant to replace the UGC, notably lacks a grant-giving function — a core UGC role.

The Three-Language Policy Controversy

- Pradhan pushed NEP adoption — particularly the three-language formula — by tying central funding for primary education schemes to state compliance.
- Tamil Nadu remains a holdout, though West Bengal's new government has accepted it.
- In CBSE schools, Pradhan mandated learning two Bharatiya languages from Classes 6 to 12, **prioritising Indian languages over English**.
- Some relief was granted to current students, but the government has held firm on this as the norm going forward — even though NEP itself, while championing Indian languages, simultaneously emphasises learning English and other foreign languages.

Conclusion

Pralhad Joshi takes charge of an education agenda rich in ambition but uneven in execution — from foundational literacy gains undercut by persistent learning gaps, to higher education reforms hampered by funding shortfalls, to a language policy facing continued federal pushback.

Carrying these reforms to genuine completion, rather than just headline announcements, will define the next chapter of India's education transformation.

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TO FIX UNEMPLOYMENT, FIX THE ECONOMY FIRST

- India possesses the world's largest youth population, making employment generation central to achieving **Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- While improving education is essential, it cannot alone solve unemployment.
- Structural economic reforms are required to create meaningful jobs, raise incomes, and ensure that **technological progress** through Artificial Intelligence (AI) supports rather than undermines employment.
- To fully harness its demographic dividend, **India must generate employment** across agriculture, manufacturing, and services, ensuring that growth is both inclusive and labour-intensive.

The AI Paradox: Productivity versus Employment

- AI is transforming sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and education by improving productivity, efficiency, and innovation.
- However, rapid automation also **threatens routine** and low-skilled jobs.
- **Benefits of AI**
 - Higher productivity and efficiency.
 - Improved quality and competitiveness.
 - Lower production costs.
 - Faster innovation and digital transformation.
- **Challenges**
 - Automation replacing labour.
 - Rising inequality between skilled and unskilled workers.
 - Greater youth unemployment.
 - Expanding digital divide.
 - Weak social security for displaced workers.
- India must ensure that **AI complements human labour** instead of replacing it.

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Need for Structural Economic Reforms

- **Agriculture**
 - Promote agro-processing and value addition.
 - Improve farmers' incomes and rural infrastructure.
- **Manufacturing**
 - Expand labour- intensive industries.
 - Strengthen MSMEs.
 - Encourage domestic production through Make in India.
- **Services**
 - Develop tourism, healthcare, education, logistics, and the digital economy.
 - Improve social security for gig workers.

Making AI Inclusive

- India should adopt a human-centric AI strategy by:
 - Expanding reskilling and **upskilling** programmes.
 - Making employers responsible for **workforce training**.
 - Strengthening **social security** for displaced workers.
 - Encouraging AI applications that complement human labour.
 - Establishing ethical AI regulations and public-private partnerships for digital skills.

Way Forward

- India should **prioritise employment-intensive growth** by increasing employment elasticity, strengthening labour rights, supporting MSMEs, expanding manufacturing, investing in human capital, and regulating AI responsibly.
- **Economic reforms** should integrate employment objectives with technological innovation to ensure that growth benefits all sections of society.
- By balancing innovation, inclusive growth, and social justice, India can transform its **workforce into its greatest strength** and realise the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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WHAT IS THE MUSEUM GRANT SCHEME?



- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** of the **Ministry of Culture**, Government of India.
- It was launched in **2013**.
- It provides **financial assistance** for **setting up new museums** and **strengthening and modernizing existing ones** at **regional, state, and district levels**.
- The scheme also promotes **digitization of museum collections** to make images and catalogues accessible online and focuses on **capacity building of museum professionals**.
- The scheme also **aims to develop at least 1 Central/State Government Museum** located in the **State Capital** each year.
- **Museums** are categorised into **three groups** under the scheme.
 - **Category I:** Existing renowned museums of the Central or State Governments located in the state capitals.
 - **Category II:** Central or State Govt. owned museums, including museums of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)
 - **Category III:** Projects of Societies, Autonomous bodies, local bodies, Public Sector Undertaking, Academic Institutions and Trusts registered as a society under the Indian Societies Act of 1860 (XXI) or a similar legislation of the state governments or as a Public Trust under any law.
- **Funding Pattern:**
 - The scheme allocates **up to Rs 15 crore** for **Category I museums**, **up to Rs 10 crore** for **establishing new Category II museums**, and **up to Rs 8 crore** for the **development of existing Category II**
 - For **Category III museums**, funding of **up to Rs 5 crore** is available to **set up new museums**, and **up to Rs 4 crore** for **improvement of existing ones**.