

August - 17

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Sapta Dhara Framework

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has introduced the Sapta Dhara (Shakti Ki Sapta dhara) framework during his Independence Day address on 15 August 2026.
- ❖ It aims to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, covering seven major areas of national development.
- ❖ The seven areas are manufacturing; agriculture and food processing; technology and innovation; Gati Shakti; defence self-reliance; green and blue economy; and India's soft power.
- ❖ Under technology and innovation, the government plans to train 1 crore youth in Artificial Intelligence (AI) over the next year.
- ❖ India has set a target of 100 GW nuclear energy capacity by 2047, with five new nuclear reactors expected to become operational in the next 6–7 years.



### Modern Civil Defence Volunteer Force

- ❖ The Prime Minister announced a “massive, modern” Civil Defence volunteer force on 15 August 2026 during the Independence Day address at the Red Fort, New Delhi.

- ❖ The proposed force will strengthen civilian protection during modern security challenges and emergency situations.
- ❖ India's Civil Defence system is governed by the Civil Defence Act and Rules, 1968.
- ❖ Civil Defence volunteers support warning systems, evacuation, rescue, first aid, fire-fighting and protection of critical infrastructure during emergencies.
- ❖ The new volunteer force will receive modern training and advanced emergency-response protocols.
- ❖ Home Guards are a related auxiliary force under State control and assist the police, civil administration and disaster-response teams.



August 2026, the Prime Minister announced a "massive, modern" Civil Defence volunteer force during India's 80th Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort in Delhi. The proposed force is intended for civilian protection during modern security challenges and emergency situations.

### **AI Skilling of 1 Crore Youth**

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on 15 August 2026 that 1 crore (10 million) young Indians will be trained in Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills within one year.
- ❖ The initiative aims to equip youth with AI skills and prepare them for emerging technology opportunities.
- ❖ The announcement was made during the 80th Independence Day address from the Red Fort, New Delhi.
- ❖ It is part of the broader focus on technology and innovation under the Sapta Dhara framework.

- ❖ The government highlighted the rapid expansion of AI across different sectors.
- ❖ The initiative seeks to strengthen India's technology and innovation ecosystem and help youth participate in the global AI economy.



## Census 2027: 40 Questions

| NEW IN CENSUS '27               |                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Place of Covid-19 vaccination   | Father's particulars                                                                                             |
| No. of bank accounts            | Mother's particulars                                                                                             |
| Mobile number                   | Permanent address                                                                                                |
| Aadhaar number                  | *Caste                                                                                                           |
| Voter ID number                 | *Digital literacy status                                                                                         |
| Passport number                 | *Details of no. of children surviving/ever born alive/born alive during last one year are sought only from women |
| Spouse's name                   | (*Components added as extension to the existing questions in Census 2011)                                        |
| Nationality                     |                                                                                                                  |
| Availability of driving licence |                                                                                                                  |

**Centre notifies 40 questions for Census 2027; caste, SC, ST status included**

The Centre on Friday (August 14) notified 40 questions — caste, place of Covid vaccination being two of them — to be asked of respondents during the population enumeration phase of the Census, set to begin from September 1 in snow-bound areas, a government order said.

- ❖ The Centre has notified 40 questions for the second phase of Census 2027, including caste, Aadhaar, voter ID, bank accounts and other details.



- ❖ For the first time in independent India, caste will be recorded for all communities, apart from Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- ❖ The questionnaire includes 13 new questions compared with the 29 questions asked in Census 2011.
- ❖ New details include parents' particulars, spouse's name, nationality, digital literacy, permanent address and place of COVID-19 vaccination.
- ❖ It will also collect details on bank accounts, mobile number, Aadhaar, voter ID, passport and driving licence, where applicable.
- ❖ Population enumeration will begin in August/September 2026 in snow-bound areas and across most of India in February 2027.

### **Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026**

- ❖ The Lok Sabha has passed the Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026.
- ❖ The bill aims to improve efficiency, ensure independence, transparency, and uniformity in the qualifications, appointment of service of Chairpersons and Members of various Tribunals, as well as the administration and functioning of the Tribunals.
- ❖ The legislation also proposes to establish a National Tribunals Commission (NTC).
- ❖ The NTC will consist of a chairperson and four members: Two judicial members and two technical members.
- ❖ It will be chaired by a former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Chief Justice of a High Court.
- ❖ Headquartered in New Delhi, the NTC is designed to be an independent body tasked with conducting selection processes for tribunal vacancies, reviewing performance, and managing a new digital repository of case information.
- ❖ The Tribunals Reforms Bill seeks to bring uniformity and transparency to how tribunal leaders are chosen.
- ❖ Under the new framework, the NTC will constitute Search-cum-Selection Committees for each tribunal.
- ❖ These committees will include members of the commission, retired high court judges, and senior government secretaries.
- ❖ A unique addition is the empanelment of experts from relevant fields to assist these committees in assessing the suitability of candidates.
- ❖ Crucially, the bill mandates that the Central government must process these recommendations and make appointments within three months of receiving them, a move intended to reduce the chronic vacancy issues currently plaguing tribunals.





- ❖ To ensure stability and judicial independence, the bill standardises the terms of service across different tribunals.
- ❖ It proposes that chairpersons will hold office for five years or until they reach the age of 70.
- ❖ Plus, members will hold office for five years or until they reach the age of 67.
- ❖ Accountability is also a primary focus.
- ❖ The NTC will oversee the conduct of inquiries into complaints against tribunal chairpersons and members.
- ❖ While the Central government retains the power of removal for specific offenses – such as insolvency or moral turpitude – removal on grounds of misbehaviour or incapacity requires a formal inquiry by a committee headed by a Supreme Court judge.
- ❖ Reducing the data gap, the bill proposes the creation of the National Tribunals Data Grid.
- ❖ This portal will serve as a comprehensive repository of all case-related information for the tribunals specified in the bill, such as the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and the National Green Tribunal.

### **Background**

- ❖ The 2026 Bill is a legislative response to the Supreme Court's 2021 directive and is aimed at replacing the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021.
- ❖ The Supreme Court earlier identified as “inefficiency and lack of independence” of India's 16 tribunals.
- ❖ In the same ruling, the SC struck down key provisions of the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021, ruling that short tenures, restrictive age criteria, and heavy executive control over appointments violated judicial independence and the separation of powers.
- ❖ The Tribunals Reforms Bill could reshape the functioning of quasi-judicial bodies in India.
- ❖ The government aims to “insulate tribunals from executive interference”, which was the legal reasoning of the Supreme Court in the Madras Bar Association judgement.
- ❖ Even in the landmark seven-judge bench judgment of L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India (1997), the Supreme Court conceptualised the need for a single, independent nodal agency to insulate tribunals from executive interference.
- ❖ Here, the top court ruled that the power of judicial review vested in the high courts (under Article 226/227) and the Supreme Court (under Article 32) is an indelible part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

- ❖ The purpose of tribunals is not to replace courts but to function as complementary institutions in modern governance.
- ❖ They deal with specialized matters such as taxation, company law, environment, securities market, intellectual property, and other regulatory domains, with the objective of ensuring speedy and effective delivery of justice.



## 11 New International Ports



- ❖ The Union Ministry of Home Affairs under the Government of India notifies 11 more International Ports.

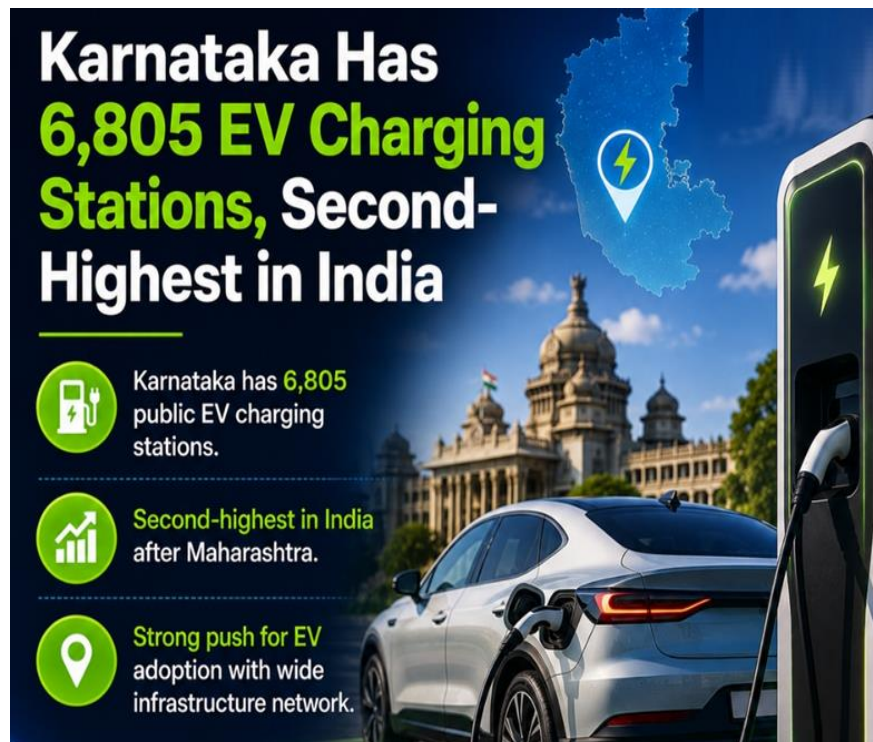


- ❖ It includes 09 land ports and 02 airports.
- ❖ The newly added land ports are Darranga, Gede, Ghojadanga, Haridaspur, Jaigaon, Dawki, Moreh, and Attari (Road), along with the airports in Bhopal and Tirupati.
- ❖ It will further enhance attractiveness and utility of electronic visa.
- ❖ India provides approximately 95% E-visas applications in less than 72 hours.
- ❖ Total number of International Ports for E-Visa holder foreigners' entry now goes up to 88.
- ❖ One significant step taken to liberalize and simplify the Indian Visa regime, especially the tourist visa regime, is the introduction of the e-Visa facility.
- ❖ E-visa facility, with Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), was introduced in 2014 for nationals of 43 countries.
- ❖ This facility is presently available to nationals of 172 countries.
- ❖ India now issues about 78 per cent visas as electronic visas.
- ❖ E-visa is currently available under 17 sub-categories, including mountaineering and group visas for cruise.
- ❖ International travellers holding a Pakistani passport or of Pakistani origin must apply for a regular visa at an Indian Mission, as the e-visa facility is not available to them.

### **EV charging stations across India 2026**

- ❖ Karnataka has emerged as one of India's leading States in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, with 6,805 electric vehicle charging stations (EVCS) installed as of July this year.
- ❖ It was the recent data according to data by the Ministry of Heavy Industries.
- ❖ Karnataka is marginally behind Maharashtra.
- ❖ Tamil Nadu has 3,839 charging stations, Telangana 3,739 and Kerala 3,399. Andhra Pradesh has 1,976 stations, while Goa has 314.
- ❖ Setting up EV charging stations is also an unlicensed activity, allowing private players to establish charging stations in accordance with the Ministry of Power's guidelines issued on September, 2024.
- ❖ The PM E-DRIVE Scheme, notified in 2024, is a key initiative of the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI).
- ❖ Under the PM E-DRIVE scheme, Central ministries, Central Public Sector Enterprises, States and Union Territories and their PSUs are eligible to submit proposals for public charging stations.

- ❖ They can establish and operate the facilities themselves or engage charge point operators.
- ❖ National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP 2020) outlines a strategic roadmap to accelerate the adoption and domestic manufacturing of EVs in India.
- ❖ It has the twin objective of strengthening energy security and promoting clean, sustainable mobility.
- ❖ Under the NEMMP 2020 framework, the FAME India scheme was launched in 2015 to drive EV adoption.
- ❖ The scheme offered incentives to buyers, supports creation of charging infrastructure, and manufacturing. Phase I continued until March 2019, followed by Phase II, implemented over five years until April 2024.
- ❖ The e-Amrit tool helps locate charging station based on one's location.



### **India's First Accreditation Scheme for Mobile Food Testing Laboratories**

- ❖ It was launched by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).
- ❖ The initiative aims to expand access to reliable, quality-assured and internationally benchmarked food testing services closer to communities.



- ❖ It establishes a framework for mobile food testing laboratories to provide reliable, quality-assured and internationally benchmarked testing services closer to communities.
- ❖ It is expected to strengthen food safety surveillance, improve access to quality testing, support faster regulatory interventions and enhance consumer confidence.
- ❖ NABL is a constituent board of the Quality Council of India (QCI), which is an autonomous body setup under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- ❖ It provides accreditation services to Conformity Assessment Bodies (Laboratories) in India.
- ❖ In India, NABL accreditation is usually the precursor to various government/ regulator/ statutory body recognitions.



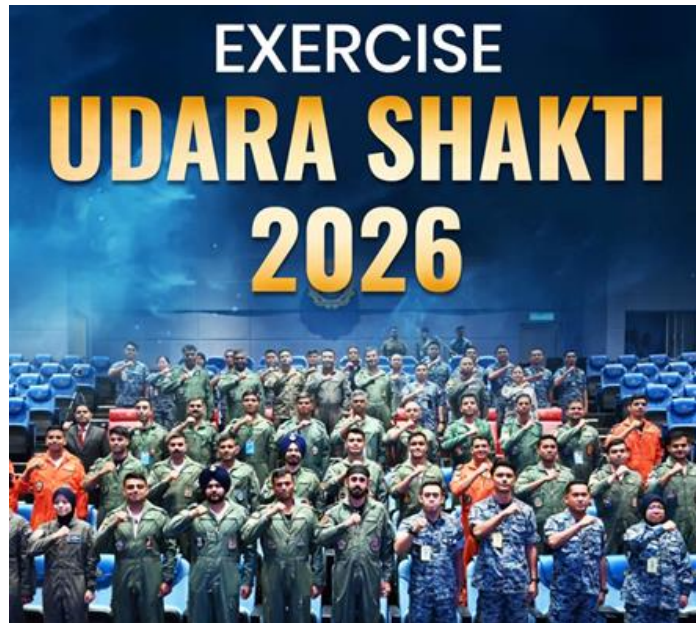
### **Exercise Udara Shakti 2026**

- ❖ The Indian Air Force and Royal Malaysian Air Force are conducting bilateral Exercise Udara Shakti 2026 at Subang Airbase, Malaysia.
- ❖ This year's exercise is notable for the debut appearance of Indian Rafale fighter jets.
- ❖ India and Malaysia have an additional Defence-industrial link through the Malaysian Su-30MKM fleet.
- ❖ Malaysia has also shown interest in the air-launched version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile.

- ❖ India has already exported the ground-based BrahMos system to the Philippines.

#### **About this exercise**

- ❖ It is the biennial exercise (held every two years).
- ❖ All editions have been hosted in Malaysia.



#### **Exercise Maitree 2026**



- ❖ The Indian Army will deploy a contingent to Thailand later this month for this year's edition of Exercise Maitree.

- ❖ Maitree is the bilateral exercise conducted alternately by India and Thailand.
- ❖ The previous, 14th edition was held at the Joint Training Node in Umroi, Meghalaya, in September last year.
- ❖ This year's exercise will be held in Thailand, marking the outbound leg of the alternating exercise.
- ❖ Maitree is one of India's long standing Army exercises with a Southeast Asian partner.

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY NEWS**

### **Maiden ISS Spacewalk - Anil Menon**



- ❖ Indian-origin Nasa astronaut Anil Menon has completed his first spacewalk outside the International Space Station (ISS).
- ❖ It was marking a major milestone in his first mission in orbit.
- ❖ Menon and Nasa astronaut Jessica Meir completed US Spacewalk 96 after spending 6 hours and 27 minutes outside the orbital laboratory.
- ❖ The astronauts' main job was to prepare the station's 3B power channel for future upgrades.



- ❖ This work is important because it will enable the installation of additional International Space Station Roll-Out Solar Arrays (IROSAs).
- ❖ These solar arrays will provide more electricity to the ageing orbital laboratory, helping power its systems and supporting its eventual safe and controlled deorbit.
- ❖ The astronauts completed their primary objectives, meaning the crucial work planned for the spacewalk was successfully carried out.
- ❖ A spacewalk is essentially an astronaut's most demanding maintenance shift.
- ❖ A spacewalk is any time an astronaut or cosmonaut leaves a spacecraft to operate outside in outer space.
- ❖ It is also called an EVA, which stands for extravehicular activity.
- ❖ Outside the ISS, astronauts work in the vacuum of space while relying entirely on their spacesuits for oxygen, temperature control and protection.
- ❖ They can repair satellites or spacecraft that are in space.
- ❖ By going on spacewalks, astronauts can fix things instead of bringing them back to Earth to fix.

## Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub - NITI Aayog Report



- ❖ NITI Aayog has released the report titled “Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub”.
- ❖ It is a structured and data-driven framework identifies major sectors that can fuel India’s ambition to become global manufacturing powerhouse.





### **Objectives**

- ❖ This report has extensively analyzed four sectors viz. Chemicals, Telecom & Networking Equipment, Textiles and Solar Photo Voltaic manufacturing.
- ❖ These are four high-potential sectors that could drive India's manufacturing growth and strengthen its position in global value chains.

### **Textiles Sector**

- ❖ It is one of the country's most important manufacturing sectors, contributing approximately 2% to national GDP, 11% to manufacturing GVA, and 9% of merchandise exports.
- ❖ It is also the second-largest employer after agriculture, providing livelihoods to more than 45 million people and supporting widespread MSME-led industrial development.
- ❖ In fiscal 2025, India exported textile products worth USD 37.7 billion and accounted for 4.1% of global textile and apparel exports, making it the sixth-largest textile exporter globally.

### **Telecom & Networking Equipment Sector**

- ❖ India is currently the world's second-largest telecommunications market with more than 1.2 billion subscribers, approximately 85% telecom penetration, and nearly 75% internet usage.
- ❖ Recognizing the sector's transformative potential, the National Telecom Policy 2025 (NTP-25) targets doubling the sector's contribution to GDP, doubling exports of telecom products and services, creating one million new jobs, and significantly increasing investment and R&D expenditure by 2030.

### **Solar PV Sector**

- ❖ India had installed 106 GW of solar capacity by March 2025 and needs to add about 174 GW to meet the 2030 target of 280 GW solar capacity.
- ❖ It will be followed by assessments of eight more sectors.

## **PERSONALITIES, AWARDS, AND EVENTS**

### **Thagaisal Thamizhar Award 2026**

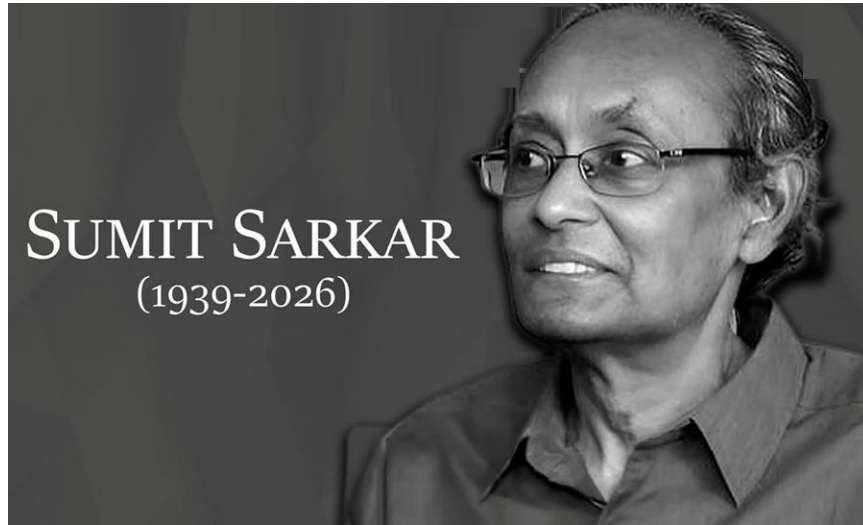
- ❖ Former Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president M. Krishnasamy was selected for the Thagaisal Thamizhar Award 2026.
- ❖ He represented the Vandavasi Lok Sabha constituency from 1991 to 1996 and the Arani Lok Sabha constituency from 2009 to 2014.
- ❖ The award was instituted in 2021 to honour eminent persons who contributed to the welfare of Tamil Nadu and the Tamil community.

- ❖ The award carries a ₹10 lakh cash prize and a citation.
- ❖ Previous awardees include N. Sankaraiah (2021), R. Nallakannu (2022), K. Veeramani (2023), Kumari Ananthan (2024) and K. M. Khader Mohideen (2025).

**கிருஷ்ணசாமிக்கு 'தகைசால் தமிழர்' விருது**

**2026 ஆம் ஆண்டுக்கான “தகைசால் தமிழர் விருதை” காங்கிரஸ் மூத்த தலைவரும் MLA செளமியா அன்புமணியின் தந்தையுமான கிருஷ்ணசாமிக்கு வழங்கினார் முதல்வர் விருதுடன் பாராட்டுச் சான்றிதழ், ரூ. 10 லட்சத்துக்கான காசோலையும் வழங்கப்பட்டது**

### **Sumit Sarkar Demise**



- ❖ Eminent historian Sumit Sarkar, known for his work on modern Indian history, died at the age of 87.
- ❖ He taught at Delhi University from 1974 to 2004, and also taught at the University of Calcutta, University of Burdwan and Oxford.
- ❖ His book Modern India brought peasants, workers and ordinary people into the study of Indian history.
- ❖ His Swadeshi Movement in Bengal examined the 1905 Partition of Bengal using sources such as newspapers, plays, novels and pamphlets.

- ❖ He studied nationalism, caste, religion, labour and the experiences of marginalised groups through historical evidence.
- ❖ His other works include *Modern Times and Khaki Shorts* and *Saffron Flags*, which examined different aspects of Indian society and politics.

### **India's First Woman Fighter Combat Leader - Bhawana Kanth**



- ❖ Indian Air Force Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth makes history as IAF's 1st woman 'Top Gun' pilot.
- ❖ She was commissioned into the Indian Air Force in June 2016 as part of the country's first batch of women fighter pilots, alongside Avani Chaturvedi and Mohana Singh.
- ❖ In 2019, she became the first Indian woman cleared to undertake daytime fighter combat missions.
- ❖ She also became the first woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day Parade in 2021 and later flew in the Republic Day fly-past in 2024.
- ❖ She is first woman fighter pilot to successfully complete the prestigious Fighter Combat Leader (FCL) course at the Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment (TACDE) in Gwalior.

- ❖ It is considered comparable to the US Navy's "Top Gun," which is officially called the Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor programme.

## MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

### 18 Monuments Delisted from Protected List

- ❖ The Centre has delisted 18 monuments from the centrally protected list since 2021 after they ceased to be of national importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.
- ❖ The 18 sites are Nicholson Statue and Platform, Bara Khamba Cemetery, Inchla Wali Gumti (Delhi); Kos Minar No. 13, Kos Minar (Haryana); Inscription in Fort of Bachhaun (Madhya Pradesh); 12th-century Temple, Inscription in Fort (Rajasthan); Kutumbari Area (Uttarakhand).
- ❖ In Uttar Pradesh, the sites are Ancient Banyan Grove, Closed Cemetery, Gunner Burkill's Tomb, Cemetery at Gaughat, Cemeteries at Jahraila Road, Tombs on Lucknow–Fyzabad Road, three small Linga temples at Ahugi, Telia Nala Buddhist Ruins and Tablet on the Treasury Building.
- ❖ The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) now maintains 3,688 centrally protected monuments and sites; Section 35 of the AMASR Act provides for delisting monuments that cease to be of national importance.
- ❖ India has retrieved 662 historical artefacts from foreign countries up to June 2026, including 589 from the United States, 51 from Australia, 21 from the United Kingdom and 1 from the Netherlands.

