

UPSC- Current Affairs – Detailed analysis of the 9 current affairs topics from the July 13, 2026 newspapers

1. India–Taliban Agricultural Ties

Why in News: Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held talks with Afghanistan's Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Minister Mawlawi Ataullah Omari at the Pusa campus, New Delhi (July 9, 2026), resulting in an agreement to set up a Joint Working Group on agriculture and livestock cooperation.

Prelims Pointers:

1. **Areas of cooperation:** high-quality seeds (wheat, maize, potato), climate-resilient/bio-fortified crop varieties, irrigation, rainwater harvesting, watershed management, animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, fisheries, digital agriculture.
2. **ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)** to lead joint research, scientist/student exchange, and capacity building; MoU with the Afghan National Agricultural Science and Technology University is being extended.
3. This is **the 4th ministerial-level Taliban** visit to India in about 10 months (following Foreign, Public Health, and Commerce/Industry ministers).
4. India upgraded its technical mission in Kabul to a fully operational embassy in October 2025; in January 2026 India accepted a Taliban-appointed diplomat, Noor Ahmad Noor, as acting head of the Afghan Embassy in New Delhi.
5. India has not formally recognized the Taliban government (only Russia has done so among major states).

2. South China Sea Ruling — 10th Anniversary

Why in News: July 12, 2026 marked the 10th anniversary of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), The Hague award in Philippines v. China (PCA Case No. 2013-19) under UNCLOS Annex VII. A joint statement by 14 nations (US, Japan, Australia, Canada, UK, EU members, Philippines, etc.) reaffirmed the ruling as "final, legally binding and definitive." China rejected the statement and summoned Japan's envoy in protest.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Original ruling date: 12 July 2016.
2. Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).
3. The ruling rejected China's "Nine-Dash Line" claim, holding there is no legal basis for "historic rights" over resources inconsistent with UNCLOS-defined maritime zones.
4. 2026 significance: Philippines currently holds the ASEAN Chairmanship, coinciding with ongoing negotiations for a legally binding South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC).
5. China has never accepted the award, terming it "illegal, invalid, and having no binding force."
6. India is not a claimant but consistently calls for freedom of navigation/overflight and settlement of disputes per UNCLOS and international law — relevant to India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific strategy.

3. Debate over J&K's District Development Councils (DDCs)

Why in News: The five-year term of J&K's DDCs (constituted Feb 2021) ended on 24 February 2026, closing out the last surviving tier of the Panchayati Raj system in J&K (Panchayats' term ended Jan 2024; Urban Local Bodies' term ended late

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2023). With the elected Legislative Assembly restored (2024), a debate has intensified on whether DDCs should be revived/re-elected or wound up. The State Election Commission (SEC) is simultaneously preparing to hold Panchayat elections (likely post-Amarnath Yatra 2026), with final electoral rolls (72.24 lakh electors) published on 21 May 2026.

Prelims Pointers:

1. DDCs created via October 2020 amendment to the J&K Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 (executive order under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019), replacing the earlier unelected District Planning and Development Boards.
2. 14 elected members per district across J&K's 20 districts (total 280 members); first elections held Nov–Dec 2020.
3. 2020 result: People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) — 110 seats; BJP — single largest party with 75 seats.
4. DDC Chairpersons hold rank equivalent to a Minister of State; Vice-Chairpersons equivalent to Administrative Secretaries.
5. No anti-defection law currently applies to DDC members (unlike MLAs/municipal councillors), enabling frequent floor-crossing — J&K government has been examining legislation to plug this gap.

4. Disproportionate Deletions in Manipur Electoral Rolls (SIR)

Why in News: The Election Commission of India's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) — Phase III — of electoral rolls in Manipur has triggered concern over disproportionate deletion of names, particularly affecting the Kuki-Zo community, amid the state's ongoing ethnic conflict.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Manipur demographics: Meiteis ~54%, Kuki-Zo ~15%, Naga ~26%.
2. Ethnic violence since 2023 has caused 260+ deaths and displaced roughly 50,000–60,000 people, mostly Kuki-Zo.

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3. Draft roll data (as of June 28, 2026): out of 20,93,076 electors, 92.42% submitted enumeration forms; 1,08,283 electors flagged as shifted/non-returned forms; 43,000 found dead; 7,394 enrolled at multiple places. Overall deletion rate in Manipur: ~7.64% of the pre-SIR electorate (compare: Odisha ~6%, with 20.14 lakh names deleted there).
4. Claims and Objections period: 5 July – 4 August 2026 — window for restoring genuine but wrongly deleted voters.
5. Hill vs Valley discrepancy: Hill districts (Kuki-Zo/Naga dominated) show disproportionately higher deletions/uncollected forms than the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley.
6. Manipur tribals are not covered under the Sixth Schedule (unlike Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram); their special protection comes from Article 371C (Hill Areas Committee + special Governor responsibilities).
7. Relevant forms: Form 6 (new registration), Form 6A (overseas voters), Form 7 (objection/deletion), Form 8 (correction).

5. Judicial Infrastructure for Women

Why in News: Persistent gaps in gender-sensitive judicial infrastructure (washrooms, creches) remain in focus following Supreme Court observations in *Rajeeb Kalita v. Union of India* and continuing data from the India Justice Report and the Supreme Court's own "State of the Judiciary" report.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Women's representation (per India Justice Report 2025 / recent data): ~14% of High Court judges, ~3.1–8.8% of Supreme Court judges (varies by year — currently only Justice B.V. Nagarathna sits as the sole woman SC judge against a sanctioned strength of 34); ~36–38% in the subordinate/district judiciary.

2. Since 1950, only 11 women have ever been appointed as Supreme Court judges (out of 287 total appointees) — about 3.8%.
3. Justice B.V. Nagarathna is projected to become India's first woman Chief Justice, but for a tenure of only about 36 days (in 2027).
4. Infrastructure data: nearly 20% of district court complexes (2023) lacked separate toilets for women; only ~6.7% of district court infrastructure has been rated fully "female-friendly" (per then-CJI D.Y. Chandrachud); only 13.1% of district complexes had creche facilities (as of Sept 2023), with states like UP, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand having none.
5. Legal backbone: Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997) guidelines → codified in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, mandating Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).

6. Economic Value of Unpaid Domestic Work

Why in News: Renewed research attention (EPW special article, June–July 2026; earlier PIB policy brief; Supreme Court and High Court rulings) on quantifying and legally recognising the economic value of women's unpaid domestic/care work in India.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Time Use Survey (NSO, 2019): 81% of females (6+ years) spend over 5 hours/day on unpaid domestic work (rising to 92% for the 15–59 age group), vs only 24.5% of males. Women average 299 minutes/day on unpaid household services vs 97 minutes for men.
2. GDP contribution estimates (vary by methodology): PIB policy brief — women's unpaid care work valued at ~₹30.7 lakh crore (~5% of GDP) under the minimum-wage method, rising to ~₹34.5 lakh crore (~17% of GDP) under weighted-average-wage method. Earlier SBI Ecwrap (2023)

estimated ~7.5% of GDP (₹22.7 lakh crore); ORF (2022) estimated ~3.1% of GDP. International comparators: unpaid work is 10–60% of GDP across nations (Australia ~41.3%, Thailand ~5.5%).

3. UN SDG linkage: SDG 5, Target 5.4 — "recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work" via public services, infrastructure, and shared household responsibility.
4. Judicial recognition (2026): In a landmark judgment (11 June 2026), the Supreme Court recognised a distinct compensation head — "loss of unpaid domestic care" — under the Motor Vehicles Act, setting a notional monthly income of ₹30,000 for homemakers (with 10% increase every 3 years) for compensation calculation. The Madhya Pradesh High Court similarly enhanced compensation (March 2026) holding that domestic work cannot be equated with unskilled labour.
5. Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) stood at 32.8% (2022–23), constrained significantly by unpaid care burden.

7. India's Oil Import Conundrum

Why in News: India's crude oil imports from Russia hit fresh highs (Russia supplied over 50% of India's crude imports in June 2026) after a temporary US sanctions waiver, even as India navigates continuing US tariff pressure and sanctions on Russian oil majors Rosneft and Lukoil.

Prelims Pointers:

1. India imports nearly 87% of its crude oil requirement; it is the world's 3rd largest oil consumer, with the IEA (World Energy Outlook 2025) projecting India will drive nearly half of global incremental oil demand growth over the next decade.
2. Russia's share in India's crude basket rose from below 1% pre-2022 to becoming India's top supplier, touching over 50% in June 2026.

3. August 6, 2025: US imposed a total 50% tariff on Indian imports — a 25% "reciprocal tariff" plus a further 25% explicitly tied to India's Russian oil purchases.
4. October 2025: US sanctioned Russia's two largest oil firms, Rosneft and Lukoil, causing Indian refiners (IOC, Reliance) to briefly pause and then resume purchases from non-sanctioned entities; imports dipped to 1.38 mbpd (Dec 2025), a 22% fall, before further dipping to 1.215 mbpd (Jan 2026) — yet Russia remained India's top supplier.
5. February 2026: India–US trade agreement announced; US claims India agreed to phase down Russian oil purchases, but India's MEA maintains energy security is its "supreme priority" and denies any binding commitment.
6. India's Ministry stance: "India has never depended on permission from any country to buy Russian oil."
7. Comparator: China imports even more Russian crude in absolute volume (2024: ~2.17 mbpd vs India's ~2.07 mbpd) but has faced comparatively less Western pressure — cited as "selective enforcement."

8. China's Helium Export Ban

Why in News: On 10 July 2026, China's Ministry of Commerce and General Administration of Customs jointly issued Announcement No. 29 of 2026, imposing an immediate temporary export prohibition on helium (Customs Code 2804290010), citing global supply disruption from the renewed US–Israel–Iran conflict.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Legal basis: China's Foreign Trade Law (notably not the Export Control Law or dual-use regulations) — signalling this is emergency supply management, not a strategic/national-security control regime.
2. China itself is paradoxically a net importer: it sources over 80% of its helium from abroad while producing only ~1.6% of global helium output.

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3. Global helium supply shares: USA ~43% (largest producer; privatised its Federal Helium Reserve in 2024, sold to Messer Group), Qatar ~33% (critical for Asia).
4. Trigger: The US–Israel war on Iran disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and forced closure of a major Qatari LNG-linked helium facility, removing nearly one-third of global helium supply; Qatar's export capacity is expected to remain ~14% lower even after partial resumption.
5. Russia separately restricted helium exports outside the Eurasian Economic Union (special approval required) from April 2026, with the regime lasting until end-2027.
6. Spot helium prices in Northeast Asia surged to \$150–205 per thousand cubic feet in June 2026, almost double late-2025 levels.
7. Strategic uses of helium: semiconductor wafer cooling (plasma etching), MRI machines (superconducting magnets), aerospace, fibre optics, quantum computing, leak detection.

9. Drones for TB Testing

Why in News: A study by AIIMS Bibinagar and ICMR (published 2026 in the International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease — Open and Digital Health) evaluating the ICMR i-Drone initiative in Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana, found drone-based transport of TB sputum samples dramatically cut patient out-of-pocket costs and diagnostic delays.

Prelims Pointers:

1. Programme context: Falls under India's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), which aims to eliminate TB (India's original target year was 2025).
2. ICMR i-Drone is described as India's pioneering drone-based medical logistics initiative — also used for onco-pathology samples, blood products, and high-altitude/sub-zero medicine delivery.
3. Key study findings: Average pre-treatment Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) for TB patients fell from ₹9,451 to ₹90.90 (approx.) after the drone-

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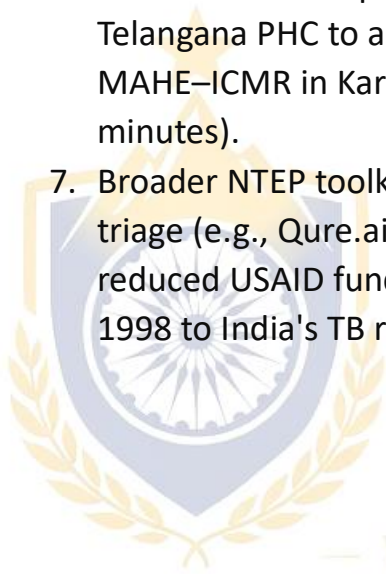
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based hub-and-spoke model replaced manual courier transport over difficult terrain.

4. Study design: tracked 840 individuals across two phases — ground transport phase (206 patients) and drone transport phase (634 patients).
5. Model: Local health worker (ASHA/ANM) collects sputum at a sub-centre → drone flies it directly to the district diagnostic hub, bypassing intermediate microscopy centres → drone returns with anti-TB medicines on the same flight.
6. Earlier field example: A drone covered ~55 km in 20 minutes from a Telangana PHC to a hospital (compared to hours by road); similar trials at MAHE–ICMR in Karnataka (Karkala to Manipal, 37 km cut from 60 to 16 minutes).
7. Broader NTEP toolkit mentioned alongside drones: AI-powered chest X-ray triage (e.g., Qure.ai) and mobile testing vans, partly compensating for reduced USAID funding (which historically contributed \$140+ million since 1998 to India's TB response).



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