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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 17 July 2026

BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION (BRO)



- BRO is the government of India's premier border infrastructure agency.
- It was formed on 7 May 1960 to secure India's borders and develop infrastructure in remote areas of north and northeastern states of the country.
- Since 2015–16, BRO has been functioning fully under the Ministry of Defence. Earlier, it was partially under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- **Motto: Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam** (everything is achievable through hard work).
- It develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
- This includes infrastructure operations in 19 states and three union territories (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Sri Lanka.
- Over the years, the organisation has diversified into the construction of steel bridges, airfields, townships, tunneling works, and hydroelectric projects.
- Beyond building roads, the BRO is often India's first line of defence against disasters. From the Himalayas to the North East and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, its teams restore lifelines when calamity strikes.
- It has an operational role during national emergencies and the outbreak of hostilities, when it provides direct support to the Army in the maintenance of roads in the forward zones and executes other functions specified by the government.
- It also provides the workforce for the rehabilitation of certain forward airfields of the Indian Air Force during operations.
- The executive head of the BRO is the Director General of Border Roads (DGBR), who holds the rank of Lieutenant General.

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PARIVARTAN SCHEME



- **PARIVARTAN** (Programme for Accelerated Renewal and Incentivization of Vehicle Assets for Reducing Transport Air Pollution and Network Emissions) was launched by the central government.
- It is aimed at facilitating the **replacement of older, highly polluting trucks and buses** operating in the **National Capital Region (NCR)** with cleaner **Bharat Stage (BS)-VI compliant or electric vehicles**.
- **Implementing Ministry:** It is implemented by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)**.
- **Funding:** It is funded by the **National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB)**
- **States Covered:** Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi issued notifications granting Motor Vehicle Tax concessions.
- **Incentives under the Scheme:**
 - Motor Vehicle Tax concessions, registration fee waivers,
 - **5% interest subvention** on vehicle loans,
 - A minimum **8% OEM discount** on eligible new vehicles,
 - Monthly fuel voucher support for eligible diesel and CNG replacement vehicles, and
 - One-time financial assistance for electric replacement vehicles and **Certificate of Deposit (CoD) trading**.
- It will be implemented through an integrated digital platform that will seamlessly interface with **VAHAN, V-Scrap, DigiELV, the Public Financial Management System (PFMS)**, participating lenders.
- MoHUA Approves Guidelines for PARIVARTAN Scheme to Accelerate Replacement of Old Trucks and Buses in NCR

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MOBILE PHONE MANUFACTURING SCHEME: INDIA'S PUSH FOR HOMEGROWN SMARTPHONE BRANDS

The Union Cabinet has approved the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) with an outlay of ₹62,500 crore.

- The MPMS will run for five years, from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31, as a follow-on to the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing, which concluded on March 31, 2026.
- The scheme focuses on local sourcing to boost domestic value addition, along with design, R&D, and export incentives for Indian brands.
- **Targets Set Under the Scheme**
 - Cumulative mobile phone production is expected to reach approximately ₹39 lakh crore over five years, with a significant rise in exports.
 - The scheme is projected to generate around 60,000 direct jobs.
 - It aims to strengthen India's position in global electronics supply chains.

Why Build an Indian Smartphone Brand?

- India manufactures nearly every smartphone sold domestically, yet Indian company names are largely absent from the market.
- Manufacturing alone does not guarantee control over an industry: a phone assembled in India can still be designed abroad, use foreign intellectual property, and be sold under a foreign brand.
- The scheme's stated objectives are to:
 - Achieve **technological sovereignty**;
 - Capture a larger share of the economic value generated by the sector;
 - Create **Indian patents** in design and R&D;
 - Encourage Indian companies to move deeper into the value chain, into design, R&D, intellectual property, component ecosystems, and brand ownership.

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- **Bridging the cost gap:** Four or five Indian companies are expected to build competitive smartphone brands, but may face an initial cost disadvantage of 10-15% compared to established players. The scheme aims to **bridge at least 5-6% of that gap through subsidies.**

Why Indian Brands Failed Earlier?

- Companies like **Micromax, Karbonn, and Lava** had established themselves in the feature-phone and low-cost handset segment but struggled to transition to smartphones as the market grew more technologically demanding.
- Chinese brands, by contrast, combined aggressive pricing, frequent product launches, heavy marketing, and expanding distribution networks.
- Companies like Xiaomi, Vivo, Oppo, and Realme offered competitive specifications and invested in retail networks, after-sales service, and brand-building, allowing them to dominate beyond just low pricing.

Broader Significance

- A stronger electronics manufacturing sector can help India reduce import dependence, attract global investment, create high-skilled jobs, and strengthen its position in global supply chains.
- Industry experts note that the scheme's focus on domestic value addition and design-led manufacturing provides the long-term policy certainty needed to attract fresh investment and position India as a preferred hub for advanced mobile manufacturing.
- If successful, the scheme could support India's broader ambition of becoming a global electronics powerhouse, aligned with the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

Conclusion

The MPMS signals India's ambition to move beyond being the world's assembly line for smartphones toward owning their design, technology, and brand value. Its success will depend on whether Indian companies can close the cost and innovation gap that let Chinese brands dominate the domestic market for over a decade.

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RBI'S NEW SPECIFIED NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS (SNFA) FRAMEWORK

- The Specified Non-Financial Asset (SNFA) is a new category introduced by the RBI under the Commercial Banks - Resolution of Stressed Assets Directions, 2025 (Third Amendment Directions, 2026).
- SNFAs refer to immovable properties acquired by banks in full or partial settlement of loans that have turned into Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).
- These assets are not part of banks' normal business operations but are acquired as a recovery mechanism when borrowers fail to repay loans.
 - Examples of SNFAs: Residential buildings, Commercial properties
Industrial land, Warehouses.
- Other immovable assets were transferred to banks in settlement of outstanding loans.

Need for the New Framework

- Banks occasionally acquire immovable properties while recovering bad loans. However, the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework resulted in:
 - Inconsistent valuation practices
 - Prolonged holding of non-core assets
 - Lack of transparency in disposal
 - Divergent accounting treatment across banks
- The new framework seeks to ensure that banks focus on banking activities rather than real estate ownership, while improving recovery, governance, and financial reporting.

Significance of the New Framework

- The framework is expected to strengthen India's banking system by:
 - Standardising the treatment of immovable assets acquired from defaulters
 - Preventing misuse of repossessed properties
 - Encouraging quicker recovery of stressed assets
 - Allowing banks to remain focused on their core lending activities rather than managing real estate

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SECURING CONNECTED BATTERY SYSTEMS - STRENGTHENING INDIA'S CYBER-PHYSICAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK

- The recent **incident in Delhi**, where certain **e-rickshaws** were remotely disabled through vulnerabilities in their Battery Management Systems (BMS), has highlighted a new dimension of cyber-physical security.
- While the controversy initially centred on Chinese-origin applications, the episode underscored a **deeper challenge**—the cybersecurity of software-defined, connected battery systems.

Why the Incident Matters?

- Certain diagnostic applications exploited weak authentication and default Bluetooth credentials in BMS, enabling **unauthorised access**.
- The apps were originally designed for battery diagnostics, maintenance and health monitoring, but poor access controls allowed **misuse**.
- This represents India's **first** prominent cyber-physical security incident involving connected battery systems. The core concern is insecure system design, not merely the country of origin of the software.

Growing Importance of Connected Battery Systems:

- Modern batteries are no longer passive storage devices but software-controlled, network-connected systems used in -
 - EVs and e-rickshaws
 - Grid-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)
 - Telecom towers
 - Warehouses and ports
 - Industrial automation
 - Defence platforms
- A successful cyberattack on such systems could disrupt essential services, threaten public safety and undermine critical infrastructure.

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Regulatory Gaps and Importance of Digital Supply Chain Security:

- **Major regulatory gaps:**
 - Absence of a **unified** cybersecurity framework for connected battery systems. Weak authentication and access-control mechanisms in BMS.
 - Limited **oversight** of software vulnerabilities in battery products. Fragmented institutional responsibilities.
 - Insufficient **regulation** of digital supply chains involved in battery manufacturing.
- **Importance:**
 - Modern batteries involve globally distributed components - hardware, firmware, Cloud services, and software libraries maintained by multiple developers.
 - Therefore, battery security depends not only on physical components but also on the **integrity**, traceability and security of the digital supply chain.

Way Forward for India: Rather than creating an entirely new regulatory regime, India can strengthen its existing framework by -

- Integrating CERT-In guidelines into battery standards.
- Mandating Software and Hardware Bills of Materials (**SBOM/HBOM**) for battery products.
- Enforcing secure software development practices throughout battery manufacturing.
- Requiring rigorous testing and verification of imported hardware, firmware and software.
- Strengthening authentication, encryption and access-control mechanisms for BMS.
- Promoting coordinated vulnerability disclosure and timely software updates.

Conclusion:

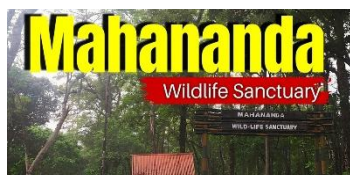
- The Delhi e-rickshaw incident illustrates that India's expanding digital infrastructure faces emerging cyber-physical risks.
- Therefore, a **comprehensive framework** will strengthen India's technological resilience while ensuring that digital trust—not geopolitical origin—becomes the foundation of battery security.

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MAHANANDA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



- It is situated in the Darjeeling district of **West Bengal**.
- It is located on the **foothills of the Himalayas** and in **between the Teesta and the Mahananda rivers**.
- It was started as a game sanctuary for children in 1955. In 1959 it got the status of a sanctuary **mainly to protect the Indian Bison and Royal Bengal Tiger**, which were facing the threat of extinction.
- **Vegetation:** It varies mainly from **riverine forests to dense mixed-wet forests** due to the difference in altitude.
- **Flora:**
 - It is the home to different kinds of plantations, but the prominent ones are **Sal, Simul, Sisco, and Khair**.
 - Some of the other trees include Lali, Jamur, Gamar, Bamboos, Fern, Orchids, Fern, Teak, Udal, and more.
- **Fauna:**
 - The important mammalian species include Royal Bengal Tiger, Indian elephants, Indian bison, spotted deer, barking deer, **many species of lesser cat**, Himalayan black bear, leopard including clouded leopard and many other smaller animals like rare mountain goat (Serow), porcupines, snakes, etc.
 - In the plain areas of the lower region, you will get to see several **elephants migrated from Nepal, Assam**, or other forests of West Bengal.
 - There are many avian species found here, including the **Himalayan pied hornbill**, peacock, peafowl, fowls, king fisher, drongo, robin, fly catchers, woodpeckers and others.
 - It is also a haven for the **migratory birds**, which arrive here from **Central Asia**.

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WHAT IS KOALA?



- It is an iconic **Australian animal**.
- Often called the koala “bear,” this **tree-climbing animal** is a **marsupial**—a mammal with a pouch for the development of offspring.

- Scientific Name: *Phascolarctos cinereus*
- It is the only extant representative of the family Phascolarctidae, and its **closest living relatives** are the **wombats**.

Habitat and Distribution:

- The koalas live in **eastern Australia** and range from northern Queensland to southwestern Victoria.
- They are primarily found in **regions with abundant eucalyptus trees**, which are essential for food and shelter.
- Koalas are **arboreal**, remaining mostly in the branches of the eucalyptus trees, where they are able to feed and stay out of reach of their predators.
- Generally **solitary**, individuals **move within a home range of more than a dozen trees**, one of which is favoured over the others.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**