

Current Affairs Capsule (18/June/2026)

National News

National Statistical Commission Gets New Leadership

The Government of India has appointed a new Chairperson and three Members to the National Statistical Commission (NSC), strengthening the country's apex statistical advisory body. Approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on 17 June 2026, the appointments include Dr. Saibal Chattopadhyay as Chairperson and Prof. Shubhabrata Das, Satyendra Bahadur Singh, and Madhavan Mukund as Members. Established in 2005, the NSC advises on statistical standards, quality, and transparency. The appointments are expected to enhance data-driven governance, improve statistical coordination, and strengthen the credibility and effectiveness of India's official statistical system.

India-UK CETA and Social Security Pact Implemented

India and the United Kingdom implemented the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Double Contribution Convention on 15 June 2026. The agreements aim to boost bilateral trade, investment, and mobility of professionals. Under CETA, the UK offers zero-duty access on nearly 99% of India's tariff lines and expanded market access across 137 services sub-sectors. The Double Contribution Convention exempts Indian professionals from dual social security payments during temporary assignments of up to five years. The agreements are expected to benefit exporters, investors, businesses, and skilled professionals in both countries.

₹22 Crore Approved for Green Hydrogen Startups

The Government of India approved ₹22 crore in financial assistance for nine startups under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. The support forms the first tranche of the mission's ₹100 crore startup assistance programme. Announced by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, the initiative promotes innovation in hydrogen production, storage, transportation, and associated technologies. The government also launched the Green Hydrogen Certification Portal of India to ensure transparency and regulatory compliance. With a target of producing 5 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030, the initiative supports India's clean energy transition and global leadership ambitions.

State News

Odisha Approves ₹76,611 Crore Investment Projects

The Odisha government approved investment proposals worth ₹76,611.86 crore across 20 projects through the High-Level Clearance Authority chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. The projects are expected to generate over 50,500 jobs across nine districts. Major sectors include renewable energy, healthcare, railways, steel, critical minerals, and infrastructure. Investments from Tata Power Renewable Energy, Larsen & Toubro, Rashmi Metallurgical Industry, and Shyam Metalics are among the key proposals. The approvals also mark Odisha's entry into lab-grown diamond manufacturing and advanced materials, supporting industrial diversification, sustainable development, and economic growth.

Madhya Pradesh to Introduce UCC Bill in Assembly

The Madhya Pradesh government is set to introduce a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill during the Monsoon Session of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly, scheduled from 20 to 24 July 2026. Announcing the move on 17 June 2026, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that the Bill could be passed in the same session, alongside the first supplementary budget for 2026-27. A UCC seeks to establish a common set of civil laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession, and is envisaged under Article 44 of the Constitution, a Directive Principle of State Policy. To draft the legislation, the state constituted a six-member committee in April 2026 headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prasad Desai, which consulted communities across the state and studied UCC models adopted by

Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Meanwhile, Congress MLA Arif Masood questioned the proposed law's uniformity if tribal communities are excluded and raised concerns regarding provisions related to live-in relationships. Uttarakhand became India's first state to enact a UCC law in 2024.

Bengaluru Ranks Second in Asia's AI-Native Startup Clusters, Strengthening India's Innovation Leadership

Bengaluru has been ranked second among Asia's AI-native startup clusters, behind Beijing, in the Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2026 released at the VivaTech 2026 in Paris on 17 June 2026. The report also placed Bengaluru 15th among the world's top 40 startup ecosystems and valued its startup ecosystem at \$153 billion. Bengaluru scored 8 out of 10 in the AI-native cluster category, 9 in performance and R&D, and 7 in funding and market reach. The city had 30 unicorns as of June 2026, significantly above the global average of 11 per city, and attracted \$39 billion in venture capital funding between 2021 and 2025. Recognized as the world's second-largest AI talent hub, Bengaluru hosts around 600,000 AI and machine learning professionals and 606 AI-native startups, including 239 funded ventures, reinforcing its status as India's leading technology and innovation hub.

Elusive Mishmi Takin Recorded in North Sikkim

The first-ever video evidence of a herd of the elusive Mishmi Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) has been recorded in the Tingda Reserve Forest of North Sikkim, marking a major wildlife discovery in the region. The sighting was made during a routine patrol in the Bakuchen area, where forest officials documented a group of eight individuals—the largest herd ever recorded in this locality. The species, often called a "goat-antelope," is classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and is an important indicator of alpine ecosystem health. The Mishmi Takin inhabits high-altitude Himalayan regions, ranging up to 4,500 metres, and is known for its adaptability to harsh mountainous conditions. Officials stated that Sikkim represents the westernmost range of the species, making this documentation highly significant for conservation research. Wildlife experts believe the sighting reflects strong ecological health and highlights the importance of habitat protection and ecological connectivity in the Eastern Himalayas for long-term species survival.

International News

UPI Launches at Galeries Lafayette in France

India expanded the global reach of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) by launching its services at Galeries Lafayette Nice Massena on 16 June 2026. The launch was led by Piyush Goyal and was facilitated through collaboration between NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and Lyra Collect. UPI, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India, enables instant bank-to-bank transfers and QR-code-based payments. The integration allows Indian tourists and shoppers in France to make seamless digital payments using a familiar platform. UPI is now operational in nine countries, including Singapore, the UAE, France, Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius, Qatar, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. The expansion strengthens India-France digital cooperation and promotes greater interoperability in cross-border digital payment systems.

US Renames Indo-Pacific Command Back to Pacific Command

The United States has renamed the United States Indo-Pacific Command back to the United States Pacific Command on 16–17 June 2026. Originally established on 1 January 1947 by President Harry S. Truman, the command was known as the Pacific Command until 2018, when it was renamed Indo-Pacific Command under Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to reflect the Indo-Pacific strategic concept. The latest decision restores its historical name without changing its mission, personnel strength, or area of responsibility. The command remains the oldest and largest of the U.S. unified combatant commands and is headquartered at Camp H. M. Smith. Its operational region continues to span from the U.S. West Coast to the western border of India. The renaming is largely administrative and symbolic, reflecting a return to its traditional designation while maintaining existing defence structures and strategic functions.

US and Iran Sign Interim Pact to Halt Conflict and Reopen Strait of Hormuz

The United States and Iran announced the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, a 14-point interim agreement designed to reduce tensions and facilitate broader diplomatic negotiations. The agreement establishes a 60-day negotiation period and includes commitments to avoid military escalation, halt hostilities, and respect sovereignty. A key provision involves reopening the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy transit routes. The United States agreed to discuss sanctions relief and facilitate Iranian oil exports, while Iran reaffirmed its commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons. The agreement is expected to improve regional stability and support global energy markets.

Business News

Sarvam AI Becomes India's Newest Unicorn

Bengaluru-based Sarvam AI entered the unicorn club after raising \$234 million in the first close of its Series B funding round, achieving a valuation of approximately \$1.5 billion. Founded in 2023 by Vivek Raghavan and Pratyush Kumar, the company develops sovereign AI solutions tailored to India's linguistic and business needs. The funding round was led by HCLTech with a \$150 million investment and supported by Bessemer Venture Partners, Khosla Ventures, and Peak XV Partners. The capital will be used to build advanced AI models, strengthen computing infrastructure, and expand enterprise AI deployments across multiple sectors.

Appointments News

Hitesh Joshi Appointed CMD of GIC Re

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of Hitesh Joshi as Chairman and Managing Director of the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re). He had been serving as acting CMD since October 2025 following the retirement of N. Ramaswamy. A Fellow of the Insurance Institute of India, Joshi possesses extensive expertise in reinsurance, enterprise risk management, strategic planning, finance, governance, and digital transformation. Prior to his appointment, he served as Executive Director overseeing multiple critical functions. GIC Re remains India's leading reinsurer, supporting risk management and insurance sector stability.

Sundarraaj Pattilingam Appointed NIA Inspector General

The Union Government has appointed Sundarraaj Pattilingam, a 2003-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, as an Inspector General in the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The appointment was approved on 16 June 2026, and the Ministry of Home Affairs directed the Chhattisgarh government to relieve him for central deputation. Sundarraaj was serving in Chhattisgarh and played a key role in anti-Naxal operations in the Bastar Range, where he spent nearly 12 years, including seven consecutive years as Inspector General. He coordinated closely with central paramilitary forces in efforts to combat Maoist insurgency in the region. Established under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008, the NIA functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs and investigates terrorism, insurgency, and offences affecting India's sovereignty, security, and integrity. His appointment is expected to strengthen the agency's operational and investigative capabilities.

Defense News

Air Force to Join Exercise Pitch Black 2026 in Australia

The Exercise Pitch Black is scheduled from 20 July to 7 August 2026 in Australia's Northern Territory, with participation from the Indian Air Force along with other allied and partner nations. Hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force, it is one of the largest biennial multinational air combat exercises focused on complex, large-scale combat training scenarios. More than 100 aircraft and personnel from 19 countries, including India, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and others, will participate. The exercise will be conducted from major bases such as

RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Tindal, and RAAF Base Amberley. It includes advanced air combat integration, tactical training, and multinational coordination, strengthening interoperability among participating air forces. The event also features community engagements like air displays and open days, showcasing operational capabilities and international cooperation.

Sports News

Deepti Sharma Equals International Wicket Record

Indian all-rounder Deepti Sharma equalled the record for the most wickets in women's international cricket during India's ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 match against the Netherlands. She reached 355 international wickets after dismissing Dutch opener Phebe Molkenboer. Deepti now shares the record with former Indian captain Jhulan Goswami and England legend Katherine Sciver-Brunt. The milestone reflects her remarkable consistency and longevity across formats. Her achievement is one of the standout moments of the tournament and further highlights India's growing influence and success in women's international cricket.

Important Days News

Autistic Pride Day 2026 Observed Worldwide

Autistic Pride Day was observed globally on 18 June 2026 to celebrate neurodiversity and promote acceptance, inclusion, and equal opportunities for autistic individuals. The 2026 theme, "Recognition, Representation, and Reform," emphasizes dignity, visibility, and systemic improvements for autistic communities. First observed in 2005, the day encourages society to view autism as a natural variation of human neurology rather than a disorder requiring correction. The observance highlights the strengths and contributions of autistic individuals while advocating better access to education, employment, healthcare, and public participation. The rainbow infinity symbol remains its prominent symbol.

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was observed on 17 June 2026 with the theme "Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore." The observance highlighted the importance of grasslands, savannahs, shrublands, and tundra ecosystems in supporting biodiversity, food security, water conservation, and climate resilience. It also emphasized the need to restore degraded land and support communities dependent on rangelands. In India, activities were conducted across 813 project areas under the Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana 2.0, promoting sustainable land management, drought mitigation, and ecosystem restoration.