THE CAVALIER

SSB Weekly

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Week of 17 – 23 August 2026 · Current affairs for your SSB board

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Quick-fire facts · Lecturette: **Sports Culture in India** · GD: **Buy foreign or wait?**

THE WEEK

Five stories the board may ask about

1 SECURITY · BORDERS

The Home Minister reviews the 'Chicken's Neck'

On 22 Aug, Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed security of the **Siliguri Corridor** with the Army, BSF, SSB and West Bengal officials. He ordered time-bound infrastructure and safer vital installations under a **quadrangular approach**: border forces, State police, civil administration and local people as equal partners. The State was urged to add Sainik Schools, NCC cadets and Civil Defence.

WHY IT MATTERS

Only 20–22 km wide at its narrowest, this strip links the mainland to the eight north-eastern states. Road, rail and fuel lines share it, and China's Chumbi Valley overlooks it.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

A chokepoint is held by people as much as by posts. Bypass routes help, but the corridor itself must be hardened.

IO MAY ASK

Why did India treat China's road-building at Doklam, on ground Bhutan claims, as its own fight in 2017?

Source: PIB, MHA, 22 Aug

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2 DEFENCE · NAVY

The Navy leases two long-range Sea Guardian drones

On 17 Aug the MoD signed a ₹1,943 cr deal with US firm General Atomics to **lease** two **MQ-9B Sea Guardian** long-endurance drones for the Navy for 30 months, for **Maritime Domain Awareness** over the Indian Ocean. India already ordered 31 MQ-9Bs in 2024, but deliveries run to the end of the decade; the lease fills the gap now.

WHY IT MATTERS

About 95% of India's trade by volume moves by sea. A drone that stays up for more than a day watches far more ocean than a ship, with no crew at risk.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Leasing buys time, not a capability of our own. It is a sensible bridge while Indian drones mature, not the destination.

IO MAY ASK

If India is serious about self-reliance, why rent American drones?

Source: PIB, MoD, 17 Aug

3 INTERNATIONAL · JAPAN

India and Japan sign a maritime security pact

Japan's Defence Minister **Shinjiro Koizumi**, on his first visit to India, met Rajnath Singh in New Delhi on 20 Aug. They signed a **maritime security** arrangement covering information sharing, search and rescue and disaster relief, and agreed to explore joint warship design. Japanese fighters will visit India for the first time for exercise **Veer Guardian 26**.

WHY IT MATTERS

For decades Japan barred itself from exporting weapons. In April 2026 it opened almost all categories to case-by-case export, lifting the old ceiling on India–Japan defence ties.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Japan brings technology, India brings shipyards and scale. Both want a free, open Indo-Pacific; this is a natural partnership.

IO MAY ASK

Is all the Indo-Pacific talk really about containing China? Where should India stand?

Source: PIB, MoD, 19 & 20 Aug

4 NATIONAL · SOCIETY

Mission Zero: why people still die in sewers

At a workshop in Bhubaneswar on 22 Aug, the Social Justice Ministry set a goal of **zero deaths in sanitation work** and extended the **NAMASTE** scheme to 2031. It funds safety kits, health cover, machines and loans for workers to own desludging trucks. Manual scavenging has been banned since 1993, more firmly by a **2013 Act**, yet workers still die in sewers.

WHY IT MATTERS

The official toll was 48 in 2025; activists count far more. Contractors hire day labour off the books, and hydrogen sulphide gas dulls the sense of smell just as it turns deadly.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Laws alone have not worked. Machines, trained crews and real penalties for contractors will. No Indian should go down a manhole.

IO MAY ASK

Swachh Bharat built toilets across the country. Why hasn't it ended deaths in sewers?

Source: Cavalier daily, 22 Aug

5 SCIENCE · SPACE

National Space Day: from one landing to an industry

India marked its third **National Space Day** on 23 Aug, the anniversary of **Chandrayaan-3**'s landing near the Moon's south pole. On 21 Aug the PM met the founders of 20 space startups. Skyroot, whose **Vikram-1** became India's first private rocket to reach orbit in July, aims for a launch a month by mid-2027.

WHY IT MATTERS

Reforms since 2020 opened space to private firms, with IN-SPACe as the single-window regulator. That frees ISRO for big science such as Gaganyaan and Chandrayaan-4.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Private firms bring speed and money; ISRO brings know-how. Space is now too big a field for one agency alone.

IO MAY ASK

Should a country with so many poor people spend money on space?

Source: PIB, PMO, 21 & 23 Aug

QUICK-FIRE

Know these cold

MAITREE-XV	India–Thailand armies · Surat Thani, Thailand · 18–31 Aug · 9 Gorkha Rifles
Pitch Black · Udara Shakti	IAF Rafales with 20+ air forces in Australia, then with Malaysia · ended 22 Aug
Indigenisation list	6th Positive List, 18 Aug · 405 items · ≈ ₹3,070 cr
INS Mangrol	3rd anti-submarine shallow water craft from Cochin Shipyard · delivered 21 Aug
India–UK DCG (25th)	New Delhi, 21 Aug · jet engines, electric ship propulsion
Terrier Cyber Quest	Territorial Army's national cyber hackathon · launched 21 Aug

NCC	28 girl cadets on a 250-km, 30-day trek over Parang La (5,578 m) · flagged off 18 Aug
Subroto Cup (65th)	Opened 18 Aug, Delhi · 108 teams · named after the first Indian Air Chief
Sports Awards 2025	18 Aug · 17 Arjunas · institutional award to the Army Paralympic Node, Pune
Who's who	CDS Gen NS Raja Subramani · COAS Gen Dhiraj Seth · CNS Adm Krishna Swaminathan

TALKING POINT

India leased US drones, barred 405 more imports and opened shipbuilding talks with Japan. That is **self-reliance** done sensibly: build what you can, partner for the rest.

PRACTICE

Speak it

LECTURETTE OF THE WEEK

Sports Culture in India

Why now: This week SAI drew up a talent hunt for the 2036 Olympics, the National Sports Awards named 17 Arjuna awardees, the IAF's 65th Subroto Cup opened in Delhi, and BRICS sports ministers met at Visakhapatnam.

OPEN · 30S

"Medals are won in stadiums, but they are made in school playgrounds." Today I will speak on sports culture in India.

POINT 1 · 40S

Where we stand. India has talent but a thin pyramid; many medals came from individuals who rose despite the system. Sport is a State subject, so the Centre works through funding and schemes.

POINT 2 · 40S

What is changing. Khelo India widens the base and TOPS backs medal prospects. SAI's two-stage talent hunt for 2036 and a new National Coach Accreditation Board aim to build the pathway between them.

POINT 3 · 40S

The forces' role. The IAF has run the Subroto Cup for school footballers since 1960, and this year the Army Paralympic Node, Pune won the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar.

CLOSE · 30S

A sporting culture is not a medal tally. It is a country where every child plays, every coach is trained, and every talent finds a path upward.

Quote one number (17 Arjuna awards) and one example (the Subroto Cup). Practise aloud against a 3-minute timer.

How to give a lecturette → 110 lecturette topics →

GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE WEEK

"India should buy proven foreign weapons now

rather than wait for home-grown ones”

On 17 Aug the Navy leased two US-built **MQ-9B Sea Guardian** drones for ₹1,943 cr, because the 31 it ordered in 2024 arrive only by the end of the decade. A day later the MoD notified the **6th Positive Indigenisation List**: 405 items, about ₹3,070 cr, that may no longer be imported after set dates, taking the total past 5,400.

FOR

- Threats do not wait. A lease brings capability in months, not years.
- Proven kit carries less risk; a weak home-grown substitute can delay a capability.
- Using foreign platforms first trains crews and doctrine before our own arrive.
- Home-grown is often costlier, and the hardest items (engines, sensors) are still years away.

AGAINST

- A foreign supplier can withhold spares in a crisis, exactly when they matter most.
- A lease or import builds no factory, supply chain or skill in India.
- Industry invests only when assured of orders; dated import bans give that signal.
- Over 15,700 items have already been indigenised under the SRIJAN portal.

HOW TO CONCLUDE

Not either–or. Buy or lease to close today's gap, but on a fixed timeline that hands the job to Indian industry. Bridge now, build for tomorrow.

GD guide for the SSB →

OUR SSB FACULTY

Train with officers who sat on the board



Col Manoj Batra (Retd)



Col Vijayant Thakur (Retd)

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Facts from PIB press releases of the week. Views are framed for discussion practice.