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Daily news summary**UPSC daily news summary - 31 August 2026**

UPSC Civil Services · 31 August 2026 · Prelims and Mains

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Key developments include digitised fertiliser tracking tied to land records and national rules for ornamental fisheries under Mission Rangeen Machhli.

COMBINED SUMMARY

- **Fertiliser Management System:** Government integrates digital fertiliser tracking with state land records to verify farmer identity and monitor subsidies.
- **Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031:** A national policy initiative introduced to establish uniform biosecurity, breeding, and trade standards for the ornamental fisheries sector.
- **Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope:** NASA prepares to launch its next-generation space observatory aboard a SpaceX rocket to study dark energy, dark matter, and exoplanets.

1. DIGITAL FERTILISER TRACKING LAND RECORDS INTEGRATION**WHY IN NEWS**

- The Government of India is enhancing its digital fertiliser tracking system by directly linking farmer purchases with state land records.
- The system introduces consolidated tracking dashboards and mandatory electronic processing of subsidy bills starting January 2026.

WHAT IS THE NEW TRACKING MECHANISM?

- Integrates point-of-sale fertiliser purchases with digital land ownership records to verify genuine agricultural demand.
- Deploys automated dashboards to monitor real-time movement of soil nutrients across supply chains.
- Mandates electronic processing of all fertiliser subsidy bills to eliminate manual clearing bottlenecks by **January 2026**.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Prevents diversion of subsidised urea and compound fertilisers to non-agricultural industrial applications.

- Enables early detection of regional supply shortfalls and irregular purchasing patterns across districts.
- Improves fiscal targeting by aligning subsidy disbursement directly with verified landholding data.

KEY TERMS

- **Point of Sale (PoS) Device:** Handheld electronic machines installed at retail fertiliser outlets to record buyer biometric and land details before sale.
- **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS):** A government scheme providing fixed annual subsidy rates on non-urea fertilisers based on their nutrient content.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- Direct linking of land records with POS machines aims to curb industrial diversion of agricultural urea.
- NBS covers P&K fertilisers, whereas urea price is statutorily controlled by the Centre.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Role of digital public infrastructure in reforming agricultural input subsidies in India.
- Addressing structural leakages in the fertiliser distribution system while maintaining soil health balance.

KEY DATA

- **Implementation Target:** January 2026 - Deadline set for mandatory electronic processing of fertiliser subsidy bills.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers - Union ministry responsible for fertilizer pricing, supply distribution, and subsidy administration.

[Official source](#)

2. MISSION RANGEEN MACHHLI 2031 ORNAMENTAL FISHERIES

WHY IN NEWS

- The Government has launched 'Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031' to structure India's growing ornamental fisheries sector.

WHAT IS MISSION RANGEEN MACHHLI 2031?

- A national developmental roadmap to establish uniform standards for ornamental fish breeding, biosecurity, quality control, and trade.
- Aims to modernise value chains in non-food fisheries to generate rural and coastal livelihood opportunities.

KEY OPERATIONAL FOCUS AREAS

- Standardisation of biosecurity protocols to prevent disease transmission in captive breeding facilities.
- Establishment of certified quality inspection standards for domestic trade and live fish exports.
- Creation of cluster-based breeding infrastructure targeting island territories and coastal communities.

KEY TERMS

- **Ornamental Fisheries:** The sector involving the rearing, breeding, and trade of colourful aquatic organisms for aquariums and aesthetic keeping.
- **Biosecurity:** A set of preventive measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases in aquaculture.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- Mission Rangeen Machhli focuses exclusively on **ornamental fish** standardisation, **biosecurity**, and trade.
- Lakshadweep holds significant ecological potential for indigenous marine **ornamental species**.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Diversification of rural income streams through high-value non-food aquaculture enterprises.
- Challenges of biosecurity enforcement and export compliance in India's fisheries sector.

KEY DATA

- **Initiative Name:** Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031 - The dedicated framework governing ornamental fish breeding and trade standards.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying - Union ministry exercising regulatory and promotional authority over commercial aquaculture.

[Official source](#)

3. NANCY GRACE ROMAN SPACE TELESCOPE NASA SPACEX

WHY IN NEWS

- NASA is preparing for the launch of the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope aboard a SpaceX rocket to map dark energy and cosmic structure.

WHAT IS THE ROMAN SPACE TELESCOPE?

- NASA's next flagship wide-field infrared space observatory designed to investigate astronomical phenomena over large sky surveys.
- Equipped with a field of view 100 times larger than the Hubble Space Telescope at similar optical resolution.
- Primary scientific objectives include studying dark energy, mapping dark matter distribution, and surveying exoplanets.

KEY TECHNOLOGICAL FEATURES

- **Wide Field Instrument:** Measures light from billions of galaxies to trace cosmic evolution and dark energy expansion.

Coronagraph Instrument: Demonstrates advanced starlight-blocking technology to image exoplanets directly.

KEY TERMS

- **Dark Energy:** A hypothetical form of energy exerting a negative pressure, accelerating the expansion of the universe.
- **Coronagraph:** An optical attachment used to block the direct light from a star to reveal faint nearby objects like planets.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- The Roman Space Telescope operates in the infrared spectrum with a field of view 100 times wider than Hubble.
- Its primary objectives are cosmic acceleration (**dark energy**), large-scale structure (dark matter), and exoplanet demographics.

KEY DATA

- **Space Agency:** NASA - Lead agency developing and operating the Roman Space Telescope.

- **Launch Vehicle Provider:** SpaceX - Commercial launch provider contracted to deploy the observatory.

[Official source](#)

4. INCOME TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNAL ITAT VACANCIES

WHY IN NEWS

- A **Parliamentary Standing Committee** report highlighted severe staff shortages and vacancies in the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal.
- The panel noted that administrative and judicial vacancies directly impede case scheduling, record preparation, and court proceedings.

WHAT IS THE INCOME TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNAL?

- Established in 1941 under **Section 252** of the **Income Tax Act, 1961**, ITAT is the oldest **quasi-judicial tribunal** in India.
- Functions under the Ministry of Law and **Justice (Department of Legal Affairs)**, acting as the final fact-finding authority in direct tax disputes.

KEY ISSUES FLAGGED

- Unfilled vacancies across judicial and administrative cadres hamper overall supervision and case disposal rates.
- Delayed appellate proceedings prolong tax litigation, locking up substantial revenue and reducing tax certainty for corporate entities.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Streamlining tribunal appointments is essential to improving ease of doing business and reducing backlog in quasi-judicial tax bodies.

KEY TERMS

- **Quasi-judicial Body:** An entity other than a court that possesses legal power to hear arguments, weigh evidence, and deliver binding adjudications.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- ITAT operates under the **Ministry of Law and Justice**, not the Ministry of Finance.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Evaluating the structural impact of **quasi-judicial vacancies** on ease of doing business and pendency of tax litigation.

KEY DATA

- **Parent Statute:** **Income Tax Act, 1961** (**Section 252**) - Establishes the tribunal as the final fact-finding body for direct tax disputes.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Law and Justice - ITAT functions under the Department of Legal Affairs to maintain judicial independence from the Finance Ministry.

[Official source](#)

5. FISCAL CONSOLIDATION DEBT TO GDP TARGET 2030**WHY IN NEWS**

- The Union Finance Minister announced that India met its fiscal deficit target for FY 2025-26.
- The government reaffirmed its strategic path to lower the central government debt-to-GDP ratio to 50 percent by 2030.

WHAT IS FISCAL CONSOLIDATION?

- A policy framework aimed at reducing government fiscal deficits and public debt accumulation to maintain macroeconomic stability.
- Guided structurally in India by the Fiscal Responsibility and **Budget Management (FRBM)** Act, 2003.

KEY POLICY TARGETS

- The updated fiscal roadmap targets reducing the central government **debt-to-GDP ratio** to 50 percent by 2030.
- This aligns with post-pandemic consolidation plans following temporary relaxations under FRBM escape clauses.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Sustained debt reduction preserves sovereign credit ratings and frees up fiscal resources for productive capital expenditure.

KEY TERMS

- **Debt-to-GDP Ratio:** The metric comparing a country's total sovereign debt to its gross domestic product, indicating financial leverage and repayment ability.

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PRELIMS FACTS

- The **FRBM Act, 2003** mandates the Central Government to specify long-term targets for fiscal deficit and sovereign debt.

MAINS DISCUSSION

- Analyzing the trade-off between fiscal consolidation targets and the imperative for state-led public investment.

KEY DATA

- **Statutory Framework:** FRBM Act, 2003 - Governs the central government fiscal deficit reduction and debt sustainability rules.
- **Debt Target:** 50% of GDP by 2030 - Set as the long-term central government debt target for fiscal stability.

[Official source](#)

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