



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

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1. The country celebrated its 80th Independence Day with great fervour. At a grand ceremony held at the Red Fort in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hoisted the national flag, reviewed the ceremonial parade by the three armed forces, and addressed the nation. This was his 13th Independence Day address. In his approximately 75-minute speech, the Prime Minister said:

i. Five new nuclear reactors to be established

- The fact that some countries are weaponising resources and strategic sea routes poses a threat to India's energy security. In such circumstances, self-reliance is what protects us. Achieving self-reliance in critical sectors such as energy, minerals and advanced technologies is the need of the hour.
- After Parliament passed legislation allowing private participation in the nuclear power sector, a target of generating 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047 has been set. The Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at the Kalpakkam nuclear power station in Tamil Nadu recently began its nuclear fission process, marking an important milestone towards self-reliance in the sector. The Government has set a target of establishing five new nuclear reactors by 2030.
- Similarly, it is essential to accelerate exploration for crude oil and natural gas resources in deep-sea areas. Accordingly, restrictions have been eased in 99% of the country's coastal areas. An allocation of ₹85,000 crore has been made for the Samudra Manthan programme for the exploration and production of offshore energy resources.

ii. Civil Defence Force to be modernised

- The Civil Defence Force will be modernised to meet emerging challenges and ensure the safety of citizens. A comprehensive plan will be formulated for this purpose.

iii. Drug-free India

- A 100-week campaign aimed at creating drug-free youth for a developed India is currently under way across the country. As drug addiction is becoming a major challenge, young people should participate in this campaign in large numbers. Creating a drug-free India is the collective responsibility of all of us.

iv. With an eye on the Olympics

- India is a major contender for the opportunity to host the 2036 Olympic Games. With around 350 events across 40 sports at the Olympics, India is currently unable to qualify for nearly two-thirds of them. To change this situation, a nationwide initiative will be undertaken to identify talented youngsters between 5 and 15 years of age. This will help increase India's participation in the Olympics.

v. Ideological Naxalism

- The country has succeeded in eliminating armed Naxal terrorism from forested areas. At the same time, ideological Naxals are looking for opportunities to promote violence and anarchy in the country.
- Although the armed struggle has ended, the ideological challenge continues. People should remain vigilant against ideological Naxals, identify them and isolate them, he said.

vi. AI training for one crore youth

- Prime Minister Modi announced that one crore young people will be provided training in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology skills over the next year. He also announced that free online training would be provided to young people preparing for competitive examinations.

2. Chief Minister S. Joseph Vijay announced that the monthly pension for freedom fighters would be increased to ₹23,000. The announcements made by Chief Minister Vijay at the Independence Day celebrations held at Fort St. George in Chennai include:

(i) Increased marriage assistance for daughters of ex-servicemen

- In the interest of former servicemen who made selfless sacrifices for the motherland and served in the defence of the country, the marriage assistance provided for their two daughters will be increased from ₹25,000 to ₹50,000.

(ii) Increased financial assistance and freedom fighters' pension

- The monthly financial assistance provided to differently abled ex-servicemen and their dependants will be increased from ₹5,000 to ₹7,000.
- The monthly pension provided by the Tamil Nadu Government to freedom fighters will be increased to ₹23,000.

(iii) Increased family pension and special pensions

- The monthly family pension provided by the Tamil Nadu Government to the families of freedom fighters will be increased to ₹12,500.
- The monthly special pension provided to the descendants of Veerapandiya Kattabomman, Muthuramalinga Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi, the Marudhu Brothers and V.O. Chidambaranar will be increased to ₹11,500.

3. The national song Vande Mataram was played for the first time at the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort in Delhi.

- i. After Prime Minister Modi reviewed the ceremonial parade from the Red Fort, military musicians played all six stanzas of Vande Mataram. The special invitees who attended the ceremony also sang the national song.

4. M. Krishnasamy receives 'Thagaisal Thamizhar' award

This year's 'Thagaisal Thamizhar' (Distinguished Tamil) award of the Tamil Nadu government was presented to M. Krishnasamy, former president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.

Chief Minister S. Joseph Vijay presented the award to him at the Independence Day celebrations held at Fort St. George. Along with the award, he was presented with a citation and a cash prize of ₹10 lakh.

(i) Introduction of the award

- In 2021, then Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced on Independence Day that the 'Thagaisal Thamizhar' award would be presented to eminent personalities who had rendered distinguished service to Tamil Nadu and contributed to the development of the Tamil people.

(ii) Previous recipients

- The first 'Thagaisal Thamizhar' award was presented to veteran Communist leader N. Sankaraiah.
- In 2022, the award was presented to veteran Communist leader Nallakannu.
- In 2023, it was presented to K. Veeramani, president of the Dravidar Kazhagam.
- In 2024, it was presented to veteran Congress leader Kumari Ananthan.
- In 2025, it was presented to Kader Mohideen, leader of the Indian Union Muslim League.

(iii) This year's recipient

- This year, the first 'Thagaisal Thamizhar' award of the Vijay government has been presented to senior Tamil Nadu Congress leader Krishnasamy.

5. France's Supreme Court has blocked a bill that sought to prohibit children under the age of 15 from using social media.

- i. The court observed that the bill violated freedom of expression and individual rights and failed to specify appropriate procedures and conditions for age verification.

- ii. In view of the concerns raised by the Supreme Court, President Emmanuel Macron has asked the Prime Minister to modify the draft legislation. Reports indicate that Macron is determined to implement the reform before next year's Presidential election.

6. South Korea again calls for peace talks with North Korea

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung has once again called for peace talks with North Korea to establish lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

- i. He called for measures to prevent confrontation between the two countries and promote security arrangements that would enable them to coexist peacefully.
- ii. Speaking on Saturday at celebrations marking Korea's liberation from Japanese rule, President Lee Jae-myung said:
 - The 1950–53 Korean War ended only with an armistice agreement.
 - Therefore, all parties should hold talks to establish a formal peace treaty.
 - Constructive measures to control North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes could also be discussed.
 - South Korea would continue taking preventive measures to ease tensions along the border and prevent outbreaks of conflict.
- iii. However, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has continued to reject South Korea's calls for peace talks. He has also declared South Korea to be his country's "principal enemy" and has been strengthening its nuclear weapons capabilities and border security.

7. The 30th World Championships, organised by the Badminton World Federation (BWF), will be held at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi from August 17 to 23.

- i. As the tournament is being held on home soil, Indian players are expected to pose a strong challenge.

- Star players P.V. Sindhu, Lakshya Sen and Satwik–Chirag are aiming to win medals.
- Five other Indian players are also waiting for an opportunity to prove their capabilities.

8. Former champions India defeated Wales 3–1 to begin their campaign with a victory on Independence Day at the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026.

- The men's and women's Hockey World Cups are being held in the Netherlands and Belgium. The former champions, the Indian men's team, are aiming to end a 51-year wait and reclaim the World Cup title.
9. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has introduced a new scheme to tax foreign assets of small taxpayers.
- According to a notification issued by the CBDT, under the Foreign Asset Disclosure Scheme for Small Taxpayers (FAST-DS), those who voluntarily disclose previously undisclosed foreign assets and income will be subject to a total tax burden of 60%.
 - The scheme will come into effect from August 16, and small taxpayers can submit details of their assets online until December 31 this year.
 - The scheme aims to bring within the tax framework foreign students, young professionals, technology workers and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who have failed to disclose their foreign assets.
 - Accordingly, a 30% tax will be levied on the value of undisclosed foreign assets and income as of March 31, 2026. Since an additional amount equivalent to the tax is also imposed, the total tax burden rises to 60%.
 - Under FAST-DS, asset details can be disclosed under two categories:
 - For previously untaxed undisclosed foreign assets or income, the total value must be ₹1 crore.
 - If foreign assets or income worth ₹5 crore have already been taxed but were

not disclosed in the income-tax return, they can be brought under the scheme by paying a ₹1 lakh fee, along with the applicable tax.

- Income or assets disclosed under this scheme will not be added to the taxpayer's total income under the Income-tax Act, 1961, or the Black Money Act, the notification said.

10. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) under the Central Government has issued draft rules for the law permitting private companies to participate in nuclear power generation.

- i. Parliament passed the bill permitting private companies to participate in nuclear power generation in December last year.
 - After President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent, the bill became law.
 - It has been named the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025.
 - The Act enables private companies to participate in nuclear power generation, which was previously largely under government control.
- ii. The Department of Atomic Energy has recently released the draft rules.
 - Under these rules, companies operating nuclear power plants must maintain an insurance policy, financial security, or a combination of both to cover potential nuclear damage.
- iii. The Central Government must constitute an expert committee once every five years to review the maximum limit of compensation that a nuclear power plant operator is legally required to pay for nuclear damage.
- iv. If a nuclear power plant or reactor has a foreign design, the regulatory authority of the country where the design was developed must have approved that design. Such a nuclear power plant or reactor must also be operational either in that country or in another foreign country.
- v. The draft document containing these and several other rules has been published

on the website of the Department of Atomic Energy.

11. The Central Government has ordered a reduction, for two weeks from August 15, in the Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED), or windfall tax, imposed on exports of petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

- i. A windfall tax is imposed on sudden excess profits earned by a particular sector due to global price increases, wars or political developments.
 - The tax is intended to ensure adequate domestic supplies.
 - Accordingly, due to the conflict in West Asia, the Government had imposed a windfall tax on diesel and aviation fuel exports from March 27 and on petrol exports from May 16 to ensure adequate domestic availability.
 - The Government has now reduced these taxes for a two-week period.
- ii. The revised rates are:
 - Diesel: SAED reduced from ₹25.50 per litre to ₹24 per litre.
 - Aviation turbine fuel (ATF): SAED reduced from ₹22 per litre to ₹19.50 per litre.
- iii. The ₹3.50 per litre SAED on petrol exports has been completely withdrawn from August 15, according to a Government press release.
- iv. The Government clarified that there is no change in the existing tax rates on petrol and diesel meant for domestic consumption.