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Headlines:

- India–Japan Partnership and the Free & Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)
- Artificial Intelligence in the Judiciary and the Need for Responsible AI Governance
- Mission Aagaman: India's First Private Orbital-Class Rocket Launch
- Undertrial Detention vs Liberty: Supreme Court's Bail Jurisprudence Debate
- Piracy in the Gulf of Aden: India's Naval Role as Net Security Provider



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1. India–Japan Partnership and the Free & Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

Context:

During the bilateral summit in New Delhi, India and Japan reaffirmed their shared priority for a "free, prosperous, and rules-based Indo-Pacific," anchoring their discussion on strategic cooperation, defense co-development, and maritime security amid growing regional geopolitical realignments.



Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) & India's Vision

- **FOIP Alignment:** Confluence of Japan's FOIP and India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) framework, ensuring inclusivity, freedom of navigation, and a rules-based order.
- **Maritime Architecture:** Champions the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and underscores ASEAN Centrality to prevent unilateral dominance in regional waters.

Strategic Significance & Maritime Security

- **Defense & Tech:** Transition from buyer-seller dynamics to co-development, exemplified by naval communication technologies, signaling deeper defense industrial integration.
- **Domain Awareness:** Expansion of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and joint naval exercises to secure vital Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) under the UNCLOS framework.

Regional, Global & Energy Geopolitics

- **Geopolitical Balancing:** Reinforces the QUAD architecture to check assertive military postures, uphold the rules-based order, and maintain stability across the Taiwan Strait.
- **Energy Resilience:** Focuses on the strategic vulnerability of choke points like the Strait of Hormuz through proposed crude oil strategic stockpiling and supply diversification.

Challenges & Way Forward

- **Strategic Bottlenecks:** Confronting China's coercive maritime maneuvers, North Korean proliferation, and West Asian trade route disruptions.
- **The Road Ahead:** Deepen trust-based technological collaboration (AI/Semiconductors), enhance supply chain resilience, and strengthen plurilateral partnerships to enforce a free and stable Indo-Pacific.

2. Artificial Intelligence in the Judiciary and the Need for Responsible AI Governance

Context:

The Supreme Court set aside an NCLT order that relied on fictitious, AI-generated case laws, declaring a strict "zero-tolerance" policy toward unverified machine outputs to protect judicial integrity.

AI Applications & Hallucinations

- **Applications:** AI serves an assistive role in legal research, document indexing, and improving administrative efficiency in governance.
- **Hallucinations:** Systems generate entirely fabricated, non-existent precedents, which insidiously contaminates the lifeblood of judicial adjudication.
- **Implications:** Relying on unverified machine outputs subverts the rule of law and deforms trust in public discourse.

Judicial Safeguards & Draft Regulations 2026

- **Human Oversight:** The Supreme Court emphasized that delegating core human reasoning to machines threatens the adjudicatory process.
- **Assistive Mandate:** Draft Regulations 2026 enforce that AI cannot supplant judges and must strictly remain in assistive roles.
- **Core Prohibitions:** The framework completely bans AI usage in critical judicial decisions like sentencing and granting bail.
- **Mandatory Disclosure:** Litigants and lawyers must explicitly disclose all AI-assisted filings to ensure complete transparency.

Institutional Role & Global Governance

- **BCI Mandate:** The Bar Council of India must formulate ethical guidelines and prescribe strict disciplinary actions for violations.
- **Global Divide:** The UN Preliminary Report highlights a stark North-South digital divide in advanced AI infrastructure and regulation.
- **Systemic Risks:** Unregulated proliferation fuels deepfakes, algorithmic bias, privacy breaches, and concentration of tech-firm monopolies.

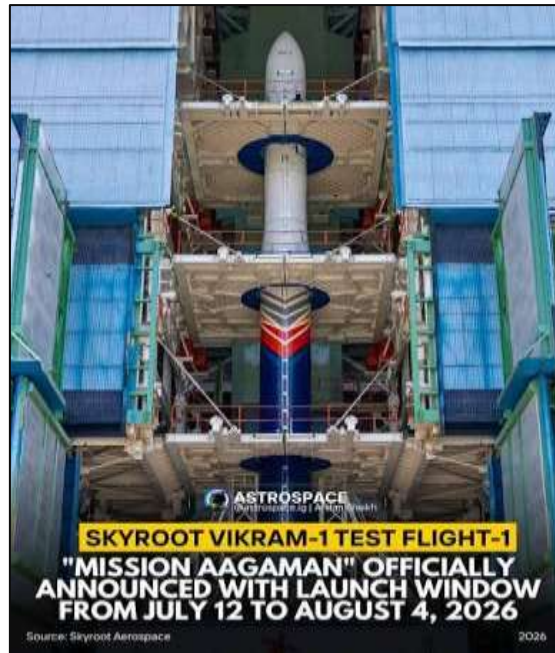
India's Approach & Way Forward

- **National Strategy:** India leverages the IndiaAI Mission and Digital Public Infrastructure to build safe, indigenous, human-centric systems.
- **Policy Resolution:** The way forward requires robust legal safeguards, mandated human accountability, and international cooperation for trustworthy AI.

3. Mission Aagaman: India's First Private Orbital-Class Rocket Launch

Context:

Skyroot Aerospace is set to launch Vikram-1 under 'Mission Aagaman' between July and August 2026. This historic mission marks India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket launch, signifying a major leap for the commercial space ecosystem.



Vikram-1 & Its Significance

- Developed by Skyroot Aerospace, it is India's first privately built, all-carbon composite orbital rocket.
- It demonstrates indigenous capabilities through in-house 3D-printed liquid engines and solid-fuel boosters.

Orbital vs Suborbital Launch Vehicles

- Suborbital vehicles reach space but fall back to Earth, serving to test foundational technologies.
- Orbital vehicles achieve the requisite velocity to permanently place and sustain satellites in orbit.

India's Space Sector Reforms

- Initiated in 2020, reforms aim to end the state monopoly and incentivize private commercialization.
- The objective is to rapidly expand India's market share in the trillion-dollar global space economy.

Institutional Framework

- **ISRO:** Shifts focus from routine launches to advanced R&D while facilitating private players.
- **IN-SPACE:** Serves as the independent, single-window nodal agency authorizing private space activities.

- **NSIL:** Acts as the commercial arm to scale up industry participation in space missions.
- **Indian Space Policy 2023:** Institutionalizes regulatory clarity for non-governmental space entities.

Importance of Private Space Start-ups

- They drive agile innovation, reduce costs, and offer customized small-satellite deployments.
- Start-ups generate high-skill employment and accelerate the development of indigenous deep-tech.

Strategic Significance

- Bolsters Atmanirbhar Bharat by securing critical, dual-use aerospace technologies.
- Positions India as a highly competitive, reliable hub for global commercial space launches.

Challenges

- Space ventures face massive capital requirements, long gestation periods, and funding constraints.
- Complex regulatory compliance, liability insurance, and intense global competition pose significant hurdles.

Way Forward

- Enhance public-private partnerships and expand dedicated commercial launch infrastructure.
- Improve ease of doing business, funding access, and international collaborative frameworks.

4. Undertrial Detention vs Liberty: Supreme Court's Bail Jurisprudence Debate

Context:

The Supreme Court's ongoing debate regarding prolonged undertrial detentions under stringent special laws has renewed the focus on balancing national security provisions with the constitutional right to personal liberty.

Constitutional Basis & Bail Jurisprudence

- **Article 21 Core:** Incarceration without trial violates the right to personal liberty and undermines the presumption of innocence.
- **Judicial Principle:** The doctrine of "Bail is the rule, jail is the exception" acts as a primary check against arbitrary detention.
- **Speedy Trial:** A swift trial is an established constitutional right essential to prevent procedural delays from becoming a punishment.

Statutory Friction & Judicial Perspective

- **UAPA Restrictions:** Special security legislations impose stringent statutory hurdles that frequently conflict with fundamental liberties.
- **Balancing Act:** Benches must critically weigh the gravity of alleged offenses against the actual duration of pre-trial detention.
- **Consistency Need:** Inconsistent judicial orders on similar facts weaken the rule of law and erode institutional predictability.

Systemic Challenges & Institutional Impact

- **Root Causes:** Massive case pendency, delayed investigations, and inadequate judicial capacity remain major systemic bottlenecks.
- **Human Rights Cost:** Prolonged undertrial detention causes severe prison overcrowding and robs unconvicted individuals of their liberties.
- **Governance Deficit:** Extreme delays in securing bail damage public trust in the equitable delivery of constitutional justice.

Way Forward

- **Time-bound Trials:** Implement strict statutory timelines for completing investigations and trials under special security laws.
- **Structural Reforms:** Expand judicial infrastructure, adopt risk-based bail assessments, and deploy technology-driven case management systems.
- **Constitutional Harmony:** Mandate continuous judicial oversight to balance collective national security interests with individual fundamental rights.

5. Piracy in the Gulf of Aden: India's Naval Role as Net Security Provider

Context:

The Indian Navy successfully thwarted a piracy attempt on a merchant vessel in the Gulf of Aden, highlighting India's critical role as a proactive net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.



Piracy & Its Impact

- **Meaning:** It involves illegal acts of violence, detention, or depredation committed on the high seas for private ends.
- **Causes:** Geopolitical instability, widespread poverty, and weak coastal law enforcement structurally fuel maritime piracy.
- **Impact:** Piracy disrupts global commercial shipping, inflates energy freight costs, and threatens the freedom of navigation.

Strategic Importance of the Gulf of Aden

- **Geographic Chokepoint:** It critically connects the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
- **Economic Lifeline:** The corridor is indispensable for global supply chains and securing India's vital trade and energy imports.

India's Maritime Security Framework

- **SAGAR Vision:** Prioritizes comprehensive maritime security and inclusive economic growth for all regional neighbours.
- **Domain Awareness:** India leverages continuous anti-piracy patrols to protect Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) across the IOR.

Role of the Indian Navy & Institutions

- **Naval Operations:** Warships actively conduct armed escort missions, advanced aerial surveillance, and swift humanitarian interventions.
- **Global Coordination:** The IFC-IOR enables real-time intelligence sharing in alignment with the IMO and UNCLOS frameworks.

Challenges & Way Forward

- **Emerging Threats:** A resurgence of Somali piracy, maritime terrorism, and illegal trafficking increasingly threaten global supply chains.
- **Strategic Path:** Expanding naval capabilities and strengthening international cooperative frameworks are essential for a secure, rules-based maritime order.