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# National

## IR Launched 1st-ever LNG diesel dual-fuel DEMU Train in Ahmedabad

Indian Railways (IR) successfully launched India's 1st-ever Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)-diesel dual-fuel Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) train at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in January 2026.

### Key Features:

**Dual-fuel System:** The Integrated Coaching Depot (ICD), Sabarmati has successfully modified two 1,400 Horse Power (HP) DEMU Driving Power Cars (DPCs) equipped with 2,200-liter (lt) LNG tank to operate on a dual-fuel system, enabling up to 40% diesel substitution with LNG.

**Operational Efficiency:** Both modified units have successfully completed more than 2,000 kilometers (kms) of field trials.

- After the successful trials, the train is now capable of covering a maximum 222 km of daily operation on a single full refill.

**Economic Significance:** Trial-based estimates indicate an annual savings of nearly Rs 11.9 lakh per DPC and about Rs 23.9 lakh annually for an 8-coach DEMU train.

**Environment Impact:** The use of LNG will help in reducing the levels of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), and particulate matter.

## Overview of Wings India 2026 Held in Hyderabad, Telangana

Union Minister Rammohan Naidu, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), inaugurated Asia's largest civil aviation event 'Wings India 2026', held from 28 to 31 January 2026, at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad, Telangana.

### About Wings India 2026:

**Theme:** The theme of Wings India 2026 was "Indian Aviation: Paving the Future- From Design to Deployment, Manufacturing to Maintenance, Inclusivity to Innovation and Safety to Sustainability".

**Organised by:** The 4-day biennial event was organised by the MoCA in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

**PM Modi Addressed Event:** Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi virtually addressed the Wings India 2026. While addressing the event, he highlighted that India has emerged as the world's 3rd-largest domestic aviation market.

**Wings India 2026 Awards:** These awards were formally presented by the Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu and MoCA Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha.

- Delhi International Airport Limited was awarded with the Best Airport of the Year.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was named the Best Contributor to Atmanirbhar Bharat).
- Uttarakhand, Telangana, and Gujarat were awarded with the 'Best State for Promotion of Aviation Ecosystem' award at the event, while Andhra Pradesh (AP) won the Best State with a Dedicated Outlook for the aviation sector.

**Key Announcements by Air India:** Air India placed an order for additional **30 fuel-efficient Boeing** narrowbody aircrafts, comprising 20 Boeing 737-8 and 10 Boeing 737-10 aircraft, bringing its total orders with Boeing to 250 planes.

- In addition to that, Air India has revamped its existing partnership with **Airbus**, converting 15 A321neo orders into the more advanced **A321XLR (Extra Long Range)variant**.

### **Gujarat Becomes India's Largest Contributor to Renewable Energy Capacity**

Gujarat emerged as the largest contributor to India's Renewable Energy(RE) capacity, with cumulative installations of **42.583 Gigawatt (GW)**, accounting for 16.50% of the country's total RE capacity.

#### **About RE Leadership:**

**Overall Rank:** It ranks first in total installed RE capacity (42.583 Gigawatt(GW)), first in wind power capacity (14,820.94 Megawatt(MW)), second in solar power capacity (25,529.40 MW), and first in rooftop solar installations.

**Rooftop Scale:** It crossed 11 lakh rooftop solar installations with a cumulative capacity of 6,412.80 MW.

**Solar Pumps:** Gujarat installed 12,700 standalone off-grid solar water pumps under Component B of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Surakshaevam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme, generating 89.54 MW.

**Wind Policy:** Gujarat pioneered wind energy development in India by launching the country's **first Wind Power Policy** and has an installed wind capacity of 14,820.94 MW.

**National Goals:** Gujarat is contributing significantly to achieving India's net-zero emissions target by 2070 and the goal of sourcing 50% of electricity from RE by 2030.

### **GoI Withdraws 18% Excise Duty on Unmanufactured Tobacco**

Government of India (GoI) withdrew the **18%** Central Excise Duty levied on **unmanufactured tobacco or tobacco refuse** when it was cleared without a brand name and not packed for retail sale, effective **February 1, 2026**.

#### **Key Details:**

**Background:** Previously, all unmanufactured tobacco cleared from factories or warehouses was subject to 18% excise duty.

**New Amendment:** Under the new amendment, unbranded and non-retail packed unmanufactured tobacco will now attract nil excise duty, providing relief, especially to farmers, small suppliers, and businesses in the unorganized segment.

- Other forms of unmanufactured tobacco such as those that are branded or packaged for retail sale will attract the 18% excise duty.

**Cigarette Duty:** It has been clarified that excise duty on cigarettes continues to remain unchanged regardless of stick length.

### **India Hosts 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi**

The Government of India (GoI) hosted the **2nd India–Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting (IAFMM)** in New Delhi, Delhi, renewing high-level diplomatic engagement with the Arab League after nearly a decade since the inaugural meeting in 2016.

- The meeting was co-chaired by Union Minister **Dr. S. Jaishankar**, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and **Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar**, Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

### **Highlights of the India-Arab Ministers' Meeting 2026:**

**Participation:** The event brought together foreign ministers and senior diplomats from India and all 22 Arab League member states, along with Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS).

**Significance:** The 2026 meeting marks the first meeting in India and the first in 10 years since the inaugural session was held in Bahrain in 2016.

**Delhi Declaration Adoption:** India and the LAS formally adopted the New Delhi Declaration of the 2nd India-Arab Summit. It reflects deeper India-Arab cooperation on regional and global issues amid evolving geopolitics in West Asia and beyond.

### **About United Arab Emirates (UAE):**

**President** – Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

**Capital** – Abu Dhabi

**Currency** – UAE Dirham (AED)

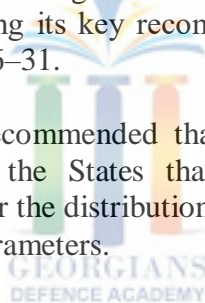
### **16th Finance Commission recommends 41% tax devolution to States**

The Union Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the **16th Finance Commission (FC) report** in Parliament alongside the presentation of the Union Budget for 2026–27, with the government accepting its key recommendation to retain the states' share in central taxes at **41%** for the period 2026–31.

### **Key Recommendations**

**Share of States:** The 16th FC has recommended that the Central Government (CG) retain the **41%** share of tax devolution to the States that had been implemented since 2021.

**Criteria for Devolution:** To provide for the distribution of central taxes among states, FC define a formula with weightage for certain parameters.



### **Alwar Becomes India's First District to Achieve 100% Insurance Coverage**

Alwar (Rajasthan) became the first district in India to achieve 100% insurance coverage under “**Insurance for All by 2047**”, a joint initiative by the Government of India (GoI) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (**IRDAI**) a statutory body under the Ministry of Finance.

### **About 100% Insurance Coverage in Alwar:**

**Overview:** The achievement covers a set of nine villages where all eligible adults are now insured. Previously, 1,367 people aged over 10 were brought under insurance after door-to-door surveys, bringing coverage in the district to full saturation.

**Fully Insured Villages:** It includes Bhulla Ka Bas, Bichpuri, Palankheda, Antapada, Hanumanta, Kalyanpura, Morodkhurd, Kodalka, and Lalpur.

**Premium Funding:** The premiums for all eligible adults in these villages were funded by a Non-Government Organization (NGO), ensuring they receive coverage without financial burden.

**Issuer:** The insurance policies were issued by the United India Insurance Company Limited (UIIC)

### **Adani Defence Partners Leonardo for Helicopter Manufacturing in India**

Adani Defence & Aerospace, the defence and aerospace arm of Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Leonardo**, an Italian aerospace, defence and security, with an aim to develop a fully integrated helicopter manufacturing ecosystem in India.

#### **Key Details of the MoU:**

**Key Signatories:** The agreement was signed by Ashish Rajvanshi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Adani Defence & Aerospace, and Stefano Villanti, Senior Vice President (SVP) – Helicopters, Leonardo, in the presence of Rajesh Kumar Singh, Defence Secretary, and A. Anbarasu, Director General (DG) – Acquisition, Ministry of Defence (MoD).

**Role of Entities:** The MoU will cover manufacturing and assembly of helicopter platforms in India, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities to support lifecycle services.

- It will also cover pilot training infrastructure to build operational capabilities domestically and phased indigenisation of components and systems over time.

**Focus Helicopter Models:** The partnership will focus on two helicopter platforms of Leonardo, including AugustaWestland (AW)169M and AW109 TrekkerM.

**Alignment:** The initiative aligns with the Government of India (GoI)'s vision of "Make in India" and "Aatmanirbhar Bharat"

### **Union Minister Amit Shah Launches India's First Cooperative-sector taxi service 'Bharat Taxi' in New Delhi**

Union Minister Amit Shah, Ministry of Cooperation and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), launched **India's first** cooperative-sector ride-hailing service '**Bharat Taxi**', at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi (Delhi).

- The initiative aims to strengthen the cooperative sector, ensure driver ownership, and promote inclusive, citizen-centric mobility solutions.

#### **About Bharat Taxi:**

**Overview:** Bharat Taxi is a cooperative-led ride-hailing platform that enables booking of cars, three-wheelers(3W), and two-wheelers(2W), providing an indigenous alternative to private aggregator-based services.

**Establishment:** Bharat Taxi is registered under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**, established on **06 June 2025**, and operates as the world's first and largest cooperative-based ride-hailing platform.

**Management & Cooperatives:** Bharat Taxi is operated by Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited and major cooperative institutions, including IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited), AMUL (Anand Milk Union Limited), NCDC (National Cooperative Development Corporation), NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development), NDDDB (National Dairy Development Board), KRIBHCO (Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited), NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India), and NCEL (National Cooperative Electronics Limited).

**Operations & Expansion:** The platform began pilot operations on **02 December 2025** in **Delhi-National Capital Region(NCR)** and **Gujarat**, with plans to expand to all States and Union Territories (UTs) across India within the next two to three years.

**Driver-Centric Model:** Drivers are known as **Sarathis (charioteers)** and are placed at the centre of ownership, operations, and value creation.

- **Principle:** ‘Sarathi Hi Malik’ (Driver is the owner)

**Revenue Model:** Under this model, Bharat Taxi retains only **20%** of total earnings, with the remaining 80% credited directly to the Sarathi’s (driver’s) bank account without any delay.

**Women Empowerment Initiatives:**

- **Bike Didi:** More than 150 women drivers have joined the platform.
- **Sarathi Didi:** It offers a dedicated app window for women passengers, where rides are provided exclusively by women drivers on two-wheelers.

### **RBI Approves Blackstone to Acquire 9.99% Stake in Federal Bank**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) granted its approval to American private equity firm **Blackstone** to acquire an **up to 9.99% stake** in the **Federal Bank Limited**, an Indian private sector bank.

- This proposed investment by Blackstone is set to mark one of the biggest private equity entries into India’s private banking system.

#### **Key Details:**

**Background:** In December 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved Blackstone to acquire a 9.99% stake in Federal Bank through convertible warrants.

**Total Investment:** As per the proposed arrangement, Blackstone will invest **Rs 6,196.51 crore** (around USD 700 million) in the private lender through its subsidiary **Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd** via a preferential issue on a private placement basis.

**Significance:** On the completion of transaction, Blackstone will be authorised to nominate a director to the bank’s board as long as its shareholding remains at or above 5%.

### **India-USA Agree on Framework for Interim Trade Agreement**

India and the United States of America (USA) agreed on a framework for an Interim Trade Agreement (ITA), marking a significant step towards a full USA-India Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

#### **Key Elements of the Framework for India-USA Interim Trade Agreement:**

**Tariff Reduction:** India will reduce or remove tariffs on all industrial goods and many agricultural and food products, including Animal feed such as Distillers’ Dried Grains (**DDGs**), Red Sorghum, tree nuts, fruits (fresh and processed), soybean oil, and wine and spirits, from the USA.

**USA’s Reciprocal Tariffs:** USA will impose an **18%** reciprocal tariff under Executive Order 14257 of April 2, 2025 (Regulating Imports With a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices That Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits) on Indian exports such as textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastics and rubber, chemicals, handicrafts, home decor, and some machineries.

**Aircraft & Auto parts:** The USA will remove security-related tariffs on Indian aircraft and aircraft parts, grant preferential access (quota-based) for auto parts exports, and determine outcomes for pharmaceuticals based on the findings of national security review of the USA.

**India's Trade Purchases:** India plans to buy **USD 500 billion** worth products over 5 years from the USA, including energy products, aircraft and parts, technology products, precious metals, and coking coal.

**Digital Trade:** Trade in advanced technology products, including Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and data-center equipment, will be expanded.

**About United States of America (USA):**

**President** – Donald John (J) Trump

**Capital** – Washington D.C.

**Currency** – United States Dollar (USD)

**VOC Port Becomes 1st Port in India to Deploy Advanced 'Anti-Drone System'**

V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC)Port located in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu (TN), becomes the **1st port** in India to initiate installation of an advanced '**Anti-Drone System**', marking a major step in the protection of critical port infrastructure.

- This development also marks a significant step towards strengthening maritime and coastal security.

**Key Details of Project:**

**Aim:** The initiative aims to bolster airspace surveillance, ensuring adherence with emerging coastal defence norms, and enhancing emergency response preparedness at the port.

**Signatories:** The agreement for the proposed project was signed by **A. Ganesan**, Chief Mechanical Engineer, VOC Port Authority (VOCPA) and **Anurag Agarwal**, who represented the Central Electronics Limited (CEL).

**Timeline:** The project is expected to be completed within the **next 3 months**.

**Deployment:** The project includes the deployment of a comprehensive, integrated Radio Frequency (RF) and radar-based drone detection and jamming system, specifically designed for complex port environments.

**Coverage:** The advanced 'Anti-drone' system provides **360 degree** coverage, omnidirectional bearing, with an effective range of up to 5 kilometer (km).

**Union MoS Jitendra Singh Along with AP CM N. Chandrababu Naidu Laid Foundation Stone for India's 1st Quantum Valley in Amaravati, AP**

Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T) along with Nara (N.) **Chandrababu Naidu**, Chief Minister (CM) of Andhra Pradesh (AP), laid the foundation stone for **India's 1st Quantum Valley**, Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV) at Uddandarayunipalem village in Thullur mandal, **Amaravati**, AP.

- This newly unveiled project supported by the National Quantum Mission (NQM), aims to be a global hub for emerging technologies like quantum computing and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

**About Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV):**

**Key Partners:** The AP Government has collaborated with some of the leading companies such as: International Business Machine (IBM), Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T), C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics) and C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) and leading quantum startups, to establish India's

1st **133-qubit** quantum computer centre in Amaravati.

**Key Focus Areas:** The new facility will mainly focus on Research & Development (R&D), innovation, manufacturing, and skill development in areas like: quantum computing, AI, cybersecurity, healthcare, defence, and finance.

**Key Facilities:** The project will host an IBM–TCS Quantum Innovation Centre, a specialized Quantum Talent Hub, and a Quantum Reference Facility to be established by SRM University.

**Project Timeline:** The government plans to complete the Quantum Valley complex by August 2026 and install the quantum computer by December 2026.

### **World's First Doctor-Led AI-Powered Home Healthcare Ecosystem 'iLive Connect' Launched**

**India** launched '**iLive Connect**', the world's first doctor-led, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered healthcare ecosystem, aimed at providing round-the-clock medical monitoring from patients' homes, especially for senior citizens and high-risk patients.

#### **Key Features:**

**Developers:** iLive Connect was developed by cardiothoracic surgeon **Dr Rahul Chandola** and interventional cardiologist **Dr Viveka Kumar** to function as a personalised Intensive Care Unit (ICU)-like care system at home.

**Devices:** The system uses Food and Drug Administration (FDA)- and European Conformity (CE)-certified wearable devices, including a chest-mounted biosensor patch and a wristband, for continuous real-time health monitoring.

**Parameters:** iLive Connect tracks vital parameters such as two-lead Electrocardiogram (ECG), heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygen saturation, body temperature, blood pressure trends, physical activity, and heart rate variability.

**Monitoring:** The collected data is securely transmitted to a cloud platform and monitored round the clock by specialist doctors at a central medical command centre.

### **Rajasthan Becomes Largest Wool Producer in India**

Rajasthan became the largest wool producer in India with 16,013.50 thousand kilogram (kg), accounting for nearly **47.5%** of national output.

- As per government data, Jammu and Kashmir (**J&K**) secured second place with 7,770 thousand kg, followed by **Karnataka** (3rd rank) (6,472 thousand kg).

#### **About India's Wool Production:**

**Overview:** The ranking is derived from the Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics (BAHS) 2024–25, which reports that India has the second-largest sheep population in the world, with about **77.4 million** sheep, and is also a major global wool producer, ranking ninth worldwide in total wool output.

- The total wool production in Financial Year 2023-24 (**FY24**) was about **33.69 million kg**.

**Sheep Contribution:** Most of the wool production comes from ewes, contributing about 71.13%, rams and wethers account for around 14.54% and lambs contribute approximately 14.33% of the total wool output.

**Wool Grades:** India mainly produces three grades of wool. It includes:

- Carpet-grade wool accounting for 85% of total production and used for carpets and rugs
- Apparel-grade wool making up around 5% for clothing
- Coarser-grade wool contributes about 10%, used for rough blankets and mats.

#### **About Rajasthan:**

Chief Minister (CM) – Bhajan Lal Sharma

Governor – Haribhau Kisanrao Bagde

Capital – Jaipur

#### **India Chaired 1st BRICS Sherpas' Meeting in New Delhi**

The 1st meeting of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Sherpas' and Sous Sherpas hosted by the Government of India (GoI) held from February 09 to February 10, 2026 in New Delhi, Delhi.

- **Sudhakar Dalela**, Secretary (Economic Relations), India's BRICS Sherpa, on behalf of the GoI chaired the meeting.
- He was supported by **Shambhu L. Hakki**, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Economic Relations), India's BRICS Sous Sherpa.

#### **Key Details of Meeting:**

**Key Participants:** The meeting saw the participation of BRICS Sherpas and senior officials from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**Theme for BRICS Summit 2026:** During the meeting, India outlined the priorities for its BRICS Chairship in 2026 under the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability'.

**Priority Areas of Cooperation:** Also, various Ministries and Departments of the GoI presented India's priorities and proposed activities under various thematic areas like: cooperation in health, agriculture, labour and employment, disaster risk reduction, environment, climate change, energy, innovation, among others.

**BRICS Summit 2026:** India will chair BRICS Summit for the **4th time** in 2026.

- Previously, India chaired the summit in 2012, 2016 and 2021.

#### **DAC Approved Rs. 3.25 Lakh Cr Deal for 114 Rafale Fighter Jets**

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD), approved a proposal worth **Rs.3.25 lakh crores** (approximately USD 40 billion) to acquire additional **114 Rafale** fighter jets from France.

- DAC also approved other defence purchases such as six additional Boeing P-8I maritime patrol aircraft for the Indian Navy (IN).

**Significance:** The approval grants the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN), a key step in India's procurement process, enabling the government to proceed with detailed contract negotiations and pricing.

#### **About the Proposal for Procurement of 114 Rafale Fighter Jet:**

**Delivery:** Under the deal, 18 Rafale jets will be delivered in fly-away condition by Dassault Aviation, France, the remaining 96 aircraft will be manufactured in India under the Make in India initiative.

**India's Rafale Fleet:** With this move, India's total Rafale fleet to 176 jets, including the 36 already inducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF) and 26 Rafale-M jets for the IN.

**About Dassault Aviation:**

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Eric Trappier

Headquarters – Saint-Cloud, France

Established – 1929

**PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates Seva Teerth complex in New Delhi**

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated the new integrated facility named 'Seva Teerth Complex' in New Delhi, Delhi.

- This new complex will house the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) (Seva Teerth-1), the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) (Seva Teerth-2) and the Cabinet Secretariat (Seva Teerth-3), which were previously located separately.

**Key Details of Complex:**

**Unveiled Plaque:** PM Narendra Modi unveiled the plaque of Seva Teerth, inscribed in **Devanagari script** on the wall of the complex, and below the plaque the motto 'Nagrik Devo Bhava (citizen is akin to God)'.

**New Names:** After the inauguration, PMO will now be called Seva Teerth, while the Central Secretariat buildings have been named Kartavya Bhawan, and Rajpath has been renamed as Kartavya Path.

**Ministry Hub:** Several key Ministries such as: Ministry of Finance (MoF); Ministry of Defence (MoD); Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW); Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA); Ministry of Education (MoE); Ministry of Culture (MoC); Ministry of Law and Justice (MoLJ); Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB); Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW), will now be housed at **Kartavya Bhawan 1 and 2**.

**MoD signs Rs 2,312 Crore Deal with HAL for 8 Dornier Aircraft Equipment for ICG**

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract worth **Rs 2,312 crore** with Kanpur-based Transport Division of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Indian Defence Public Sector Enterprise (PSE), for the procurement of **08 Dornier 228 Aircraft** along with Operational Role Equipment (ORE) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

- This deal is part of a mission to boost the Coast Guard's air fleet from 80 to 100 by 2030 and the MoU was signed under the **Buy (Indian)** category in the presence of Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, MoD in New Delhi, Delhi.

**About Dornier 228 Aircraft:**

**Type:** It is a **19-seater** high versatile multi-purpose light transport aircraft.

**Manufactured by:** This German-origin Short Take Off and Landing (STOL) twin turboprop aircraft is manufactured by HAL at its Kanpur facility in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

**Key Specifications:** Dornier 228 Aircraft, powered by **Garrett TPE 331 engine**, has 16.56 meter (m) length and 4.86 m height.

### **Kerala Becomes India's First State to Draft and Approve Comprehensive Urban Policy**

Kerala became the first state in India to formally draft and approve a comprehensive Urban Policy, a long-term strategic plan to manage rapid city growth, infrastructure, sustainability, and governance.

- The draft policy, prepared by the Local Self-Government Department (LSGD), was approved by the State Cabinet under **Pinarayi Vijayan**, Chief Minister (CM) of Kerala.

### **About Kerala Comprehensive Urban Policy:**

**Vision for 2050:** According to estimates by the Kerala Urban Policy Commission, the state's urban population is expected to reach nearly **80% by 2050**.

**Scientific Planning:** The policy envisions Kerala as a continuous network of climate-smart cities and towns, promoting scientific planning, good governance, and climate resilience.

- The policy emphasizes planning in environmentally sensitive areas and using urbanization to support economic growth.

**Reforms:** The policy aims to promote inclusive development and reduce social/spatial inequalities, improve urban infrastructure quality, strengthen institutional systems, local governance, people-centric services, and strategic planning.

### **Overview of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Assam on February 14, 2026**

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi undertook a day-long official visit to Assam, where he inaugurated several transformative development projects worth over Rs 5,450 crore.

Highlight of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Assam:

**Visit to Dibrugarh:** PM Narendra Modi commenced his visit by making a historic landing aboard an Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J SH (Super Hercules) aircraft at the newly inaugurated Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on the Moran Bypass National Highway-37 (NH-37) in Dibrugarh district.

**Visit to Guwahati:** He inaugurated the **Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu**, a six-lane bridge across the River Brahmaputra connecting Guwahati with North Guwahati reducing travel time from 30 minutes to seven minutes.

- He virtually inaugurated the National Data Centre (NDC) for the North Eastern Region at Amingaon in Kamrup district, Assam.
- He also unveiled the temporary campus of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) **Guwahati** (Assam).
- He also virtually flagged off **225 electric buses** (e-Buses) under PM-eBus Sewa Scheme, to promote sustainable public transport across four Indian cities.

### **PM Narendra Modi Approves Launch of 'PM RAHAT Scheme' for Road Accident Victims**

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi approved the launch of the 'Pradhan Mantri (PM) RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalization and Assured Treatment) scheme', to provide immediate, life-saving medical care to road accident victims across India, from his newly inaugurated office Seva Teerth, New Delhi (Delhi).

- He also approved doubling the **Lakhpati Didis** target to 6 crore and increasing the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund** outlay from Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 2 lakh crore.

**About PM RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalization and Assured Treatment) scheme:**

**Purpose:** The scheme focuses on delivering cashless treatment up to **Rs 1.5 lakh per victim** for 7 days from the date of accident.

**Integration:** This new scheme is integrated with the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) **112 helpline** ensures victims reach hospitals within the Golden Hour.

**Implementation:**

- **Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH):** Policy oversight and integration via Electronic Detailed Accident Report (eDAR) platform.
- **National Health Authority (NHA):** Claims processing through Transaction Management System (TMS 2.0).

### **Supreme Court Declares 'Menstrual Health' as a Fundamental Right under Article 21**

Supreme Court of India (SCI) bench comprising Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan delivered a landmark ruling in the case of Dr. Jaya Thakur v. Government of India & Ors., officially recognizing 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)' as a **Fundamental Right** under **Article 21** (Right to Life and Dignity) of the Constitution of India.

#### **Implementation Framework:**

**Provision:** All government and private schools must provide free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins (Classes 6–12) through vending machines and establish Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) corners with spare uniforms, innerwear, and disposal bags.

**Infrastructure:** Schools must ensure functional, gender-segregated toilets with running water, soap, and safe disposal systems in compliance with Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026.

**Oversight:** District Education Officers (DEO) must conduct annual inspections, while the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) supervise compliance, supported by anonymous student feedback mechanisms.

### **President Murmu Inaugurates Centenary Celebrations of Ol Chiki Script in New Delhi**

The President of India **Droupadi Murmu**, inaugurated the **Centenary Celebrations of the Ol Chiki script** in New Delhi, Delhi, organized by the **Ministry of Culture** to mark 100 years of the script, highlighting it as a powerful symbol of Santal identity and a vital tool for preserving the Santhali language worldwide.

- During the event, President Droupadi Murmu released a **commemorative coin** and a **special postage stamp** and felicitated 10 achievers from the Santal community for their contributions to promoting the script.

#### **About Ol Chiki :**

**Origin:** Before Ol Chiki, Santhali was written in Roman, Devanagari, Odia, Bengali and other local scripts in Nepal, Bhutan and Mauritius, which failed to capture its original phonetics.

**Inventor:** The script was devised in 1925 by Pandit Raghunath Murmu of Rairangpur,

Mayurbhanj (Odisha) to create a phonetic, culturally rooted writing system with 30 letters.

**Recognition:** Santhali, an Austroasiatic language spoken across Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal (WB), Assam, Bihar and beyond, was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India in 2003 with Ol Chiki as its official script.

**Initiatives:** The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination is now conducted in the Ol Chiki script, and the Constitution of India was translated into the Santali language in December 2025.

### Overview of 2nd AI Summit Held in New Delhi – Part I

The 2nd India–AI Impact Summit 2026 commenced on 16 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Delhi, where Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026, marking the start of the five-day global summit (16–20 February 2026) as the first major Artificial Intelligence (AI) event hosted in the Global South. About India–AI Impact Summit 2026

**Organisers:** The summit is organized by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in collaboration with the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, and various academic institutions.

**Sutras:** The summit was guided by three foundational Sutras: **People, Planet** and **Progress**.

**Official Partnership:** The United States of America (USA)-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) announced its role as an Official Partner of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, in collaboration with the MeitY to Advance USA–India AI Collaboration.

**Key Launches:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), launched six AI Impact Casebooks covering 170+ deployed innovations across key sectors.

### Overview of French President Emmanuel Macron's Visit to India from February 17 to February 19, 2026

Emmanuel Macron, President of France undertook a 3-day visit to India from February 17 to February 19, 2026, at the invitation of Narendra Modi, Prime Minister (PM) of India. This marked French President Macron's 4th visit to India.

- During his visit, he participated in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit 2026.

#### Key Highlights of Macron's Visit to India:

**Inauguration of H125 Helicopter Assembly Line:** PM Modi along with French President Emmanuel Macron, virtually inaugurated the final assembly line of **H-125 helicopters**, developed jointly by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and Airbus at Vemagal in Karnataka.

**6th Annual Defence Dialogue:** Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD) along with his French counterpart **Catherin Vautrin** co-chaired the 6th India-France Annual Defence Dialogue held in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

**India-France Year of Innovation 2026:** PM Modi and French President jointly inaugurated the India-France Year of Innovation 2026 in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

### Tata Group and OpenAI Partner to Build India's 1st Large-Scale AI Data Centre

Tata Group partnered with OpenAI to establish India's first large-scale Artificial Intelligence (AI)-ready data centre under the global Stargate initiative, with OpenAI becoming the first

customer of Tata Consultancy Services(TCS) HyperVault data centre business.

#### **About Tata–OpenAI AI Infrastructure Partnership:**

**Infrastructure:** TCS HyperVault data centre unit will host AI-ready systems beginning with 100 megawatts (MW) capacity scalable to 1 gigawatt (GW), powered by green energy and AI-optimised hardware to support large-scale training and inference workloads.

**Investment:** TCS plans to invest up to **USD 7 billion** to build 1 GW data centre capacity in India as part of the USD 500 billion Stargate global initiative.

**Enterprise:** Tata Group also intends to roll out ChatGPT Enterprise, a product offered by OpenAI, across the organisation over the coming years, initially covering hundreds of thousands of employees.

**Certification:** OpenAI will expand its certification programme in India, with TCS becoming the first participating organisation outside the United States of America (USA), and plans to establish offices in Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Bengaluru (Karnataka) in 2026.

#### **Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan Releases Book on Sree Narayana Guru**

Vice-President (VP) of India, Chandrapuram Ponnusami (C. P.) **Radhakrishnan**, released the book titled **‘The Sage who Reimagined Hinduism: The Life, Lessons and Legacy of Sree Narayana Guru’** authored by Member of Parliament (MP), **Dr. Shashi Tharoor**, at the India International Centre (IIC) in New Delhi (Delhi).

- The book was published by Aleph Book Company.

#### **About Book on Sree Narayana Guru:**

**Subject:** The book presents a detailed biography and analytical study of Sree Narayana Guru, the 19th-century spiritual leader and social reformer from Kerala who led a movement against casteism and social discrimination.

**Philosophy:** It highlights his core message, ‘One Caste, One Religion, One God for humankind,’ advocating equality, self-respect, social justice, and universal brotherhood.

**Reforms:** The work explores his inclusive temple consecrations, promotion of education for disadvantaged communities, and the establishment of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam in 1903 to advance socio-economic upliftment.

#### **NPCI Extends ‘UPI One World’ Wallet Service at India AI Impact Summit 2026**

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) extended the **‘UPI(Unified Payments Interface)- One World’ wallet** for foreign delegates from more than 40 countries who participated at **India Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit 2026** held from February 16 to February 20, 2026 in New Delhi, Delhi.

- This new initiative enables the foreign visitor to make UPI-based payments without any need of an Indian mobile number or bank account.

#### **Other Key Launches:**

**FiMI:** NPCI has also launched the Finance Model for India (**FiMI**), an AI-based small language model, designed to resolve UPI-related disputes, customer service, regulation and ecosystem queries.

**Key Collaborations:** NPCI has collaborated with **Razorpay** to launch AI-powered UPI pilot, enabling the users to order food, groceries, and daily essentials from Zomato, Swiggy, and Zepto using the UPI within the same conversation.

- NPCI entered into a strategic partnership with **Nvidia** to boost and advance its sovereign AI model capabilities purpose-built for India's payments ecosystem.

### **Waaree Energies to Establish India's Largest Battery Gigafactory in AP**

Waaree Energies announced its plan to set up India's largest integrated lithium-ion battery **gigafactory** at Rambilli in Anakapalli district in Andhra Pradesh(**AP**), marking a major boost to the country's energy storage and clean-energy manufacturing ecosystem.

#### **About Lithium-ion battery Gigafactory:**

**Budget:** The project involves a total planned investment of approximately **Rs. 8,175 crore** (USD 890 million) and is expected to have a production capacity of around 16 gigawatt-hours (GWh).

**In-Principle Approval:** The project has received in-principle approval from the AP State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB), chaired by Chief Minister (CM) of AP N. Chandrababu Naidu.

**Facility:** The factory will be a greenfield facility covering the full battery manufacturing chain, from lithium-ion cell production to battery packs and large-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).

### **Bihar Cabinet Approves Greenfield International Airport in Sonpur**

The cabinet of Bihar government, chaired by **Nitish Kumar**, Chief Minister (CM) of Bihar approved the construction of a **Greenfield International Airport in Sonpur**, Saran district of the state.

- The newly approved airport will be the **24th** Greenfield airport in India.
- The proposed greenfield airport is part of 35 key proposals including major infrastructure and flood-control projects approved by the state cabinet.

#### **Key Details:**

**Estimated Cost:** The state government has sanctioned funds worth **Rs 1,302 crore** for land acquisition for the project, which is expected to be completed **by 2030**.

**Location:** The newly approved airport will be developed on an area of about 4,200 acres in the Dariyapur Chanwar area, located between Hajipur and Dumaria (Gaya).

**Significance:** Once completed, the Sonpur airport will be India's **5th** largest airport, after Delhi, Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai and Noida (Jehar) International Airports.

- The airport is expected to give a major boost to regional connectivity in Bihar.

### **Overview of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Meerut, UP on February 22, 2026**

Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi** visited **Meerut**, Uttar Pradesh (**UP**), where he flagged off the Meerut Metro and the 82 kilometre (km) Delhi–Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor and developmental projects worth approximately **Rs 12,930 crore** to the Nation.

#### **Highlights of the Visit:**

**Delhi–Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor:** PM Narendra Modi dedicated the **82 kilometre (km) Delhi–Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor**, India's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS).

- The RRTS is designed for **180 kilometres per hour (kmph)** with an operational speed of 160 kmph, connecting Delhi with Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Modinagar, and Meerut.
- Four Namo Bharat stations were commissioned as part of the inauguration with Sarai Kale Khan serves as the originating station of the corridor.

**Meerut Metro:** The 21 km Meerut Metro corridor operates between Meerut South and Modipuram across 12 stations. Meerut Metro was **India's fastest metro system**, with a maximum operational speed of around 120 kmph.

It operates on shared infrastructure with Namo Bharat, creating **India's first** integrated intercity and intra-city rapid transit model.

### **Embraer, Mahindra Collaborate to Establish C-390 MRO Facility in India**

Brazilian aerospace manufacturer **Embraer** and India's **Mahindra Group** have announced plans to collaborate on establishing a state-of-the-art Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (**MRO**) facility in India for the **C-390 Millennium military transport aircraft**.

- This facility is subject to the selection of the C-390 aircraft by the Indian Air Force (IAF) under its Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) procurement programme.

#### **Key Details:**

**Background:** A Strategic Cooperation Agreement (SCA) signed in **October 2025** aims to produce the C-390 Millennium in India and strengthen the 'Make in India' initiative.

**Scope:** The proposed MRO capability is envisaged to provide end-to-end support, covering base and heavy maintenance, structural inspection and testing, component repair and overhaul, avionics support, as well as training services.

**Support:** The proposed facility will provide comprehensive in-country maintenance and sustainment support for the C-390 fleet to ensure high operational readiness and improved aircraft availability.

**Aircraft :** The C-390 Millennium is a multi-mission military transport aircraft with a payload capacity of up to **26 tons**, offering higher speed, greater operational range, and enhanced performance compared to other medium-sized transport aircraft.

### **VP Radhakrishnan Launches Constitution of India in Gujarati and Tamil**

Vice President (VP) **C.P. Radhakrishnan** launched the Constitution of India in **Gujarati** and **Tamil** on International Mother Language Day (21st February) at Uprashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, Delhi.

- He also launched the 8th Edition of the Legal Glossary translating legal terms from English to Hindi.

**About Constitution in Regional Languages:** The official translations are also available in Boro, Dogri, Santali, and other languages for the first time.

- It enables citizens to understand their rights, duties, and democratic responsibilities in their mother tongues.
- He also noted that last year, the Constitution was released for the first time in Nepali for the Nepali-speaking population of Bharat.

**About Legal Glossary:** The 8th edition was launched to simplify legal terms for broader understanding and was described as an “instrument of empowerment” for lawmakers, students, judicial officers, researchers, translators, and policymakers.

### **Overview of 2nd India AI Impact Summit Held in New Delhi, Delhi – Part II**

Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi** formally inaugurated the **2nd** edition of **India-Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit**, held from February 16 to 20, 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Delhi.

#### **Key Highlights:**

**MANAV Framework:** During the inaugural ceremony of the summit, PM Narendra Modi unveiled the ‘**MANAV(Human in Hindi) framework**’ stands for:

- **M**-Moral and Ethical Systems; **A**- Accountable; **N**– National Sovereignty; **A**- Accessible and Inclusive; and **V**- Valid and Legitimate.
- This newly launched framework for AI governance focused on ethics, accountability, national data sovereignty, accessibility, and legal validity.

**Opening Ceremony Addresses:** Emmanuel Jean-Michel Frédéric Macron, President of France, and António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations(UN), delivered speeches at the opening ceremony of the AI Impact Summit 2026.

**New Delhi Declaration:** The 5-day long India AI Impact summit concluded successfully with the adoption of ‘**New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact**’, endorsed by 91 countries and international organisations.

**AI Impact Summit 2027:** During the summit, **Guy Parmelin**, President of Switzerland announced that the next edition of AI Impact Summit will be held in Geneva (Switzerland) in 2027.

### **Overview of Brazilian President Lula’s Visit to India From February 18 to 22, 2026**

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, undertook a State visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, from **18–22 February 2026**, during which he participated in the 2nd India Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit 2026 and held bilateral meetings in New Delhi (Delhi).

#### **India–Brazil Strategic Engagement 2026:**

**Ceremonial Reception:** President of India Droupadi Murmu received President Lula at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Delhi, on 21 February 2026 and hosted a state banquet in his honour.

**Bilateral Meeting:** PM Narendra Modi and President Lula held bilateral discussions at Hyderabad House, New Delhi.

- President Lula set a target to expand bilateral trade to **USD 30 billion by 2030** from the current USD 15.21 billion, where India maintains a surplus of about USD 1.5 billion.

**Key Events:**The inauguration of the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil) office in New Delhi was announced to enhance investment and trade promotion.

- The India–Brazil Economic Forum held in New Delhi discussed cooperation in defence, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and expansion of the India–Mercosur Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

**MoUs signed:** India and Brazil signed multiple MoUs to strengthen cooperation in MSMEs, postal services, pharmaceuticals, trade promotion, R&D, rare earths and critical minerals, steel, digital trade (e-COO), education, cinema, and heritage preservation. Both sides also agreed to extend multiple-entry tourist and business visas from 5 to 10 years, boosting people-to-people ties.

### **Cabinet Approves Proposal to Rename the State of 'Kerala' as 'Keralam'**

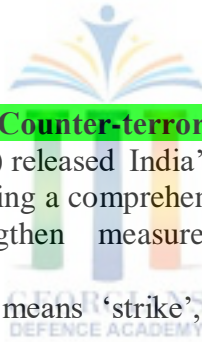
The **Union Cabinet** chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, **approved** a proposal to officially change the name of the state of '**Kerala**' to '**Keralam**', during its first meeting held at the newly inaugurated Seva Teerth office complex in New Delhi, Delhi.

#### **Renaming of Kerala to Keralam:**

**Approval:** The approval was followed by unanimous resolutions passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly in August 2023 and June 2024.

**Procedure:** Under Article 3 of the Constitution of India, the President refers the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to the State Legislature for its views before it is introduced in Parliament, after which it must be passed by a simple majority in both Houses and receive Presidential assent.

**Amendment:** The change requires modification of the First Schedule (listing states) and consequential updates to the Fourth Schedule (allocation of Rajya Sabha seats) of the Constitution.



### **MHA Releases India's First National Counter-terrorism Policy & Strategy 'PRAHAAR'**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released India's new national counter-terrorism policy and strategy titled '**PRAHAAR**', outlining a comprehensive and proactive framework to address evolving terror threats and strengthen measures to curb and counter terrorism.

#### **About PRAHAAR:**

**Core Pillars:** The term '**PRAHAAR**' means 'strike', which represents **7 key pillars** of the country's counter-terrorism framework:

- Prevention of terrorist attacks to protect Indian citizens and interests;
- Response, which are swift and proportionate to the threat posed;
- Aggregating internal capacities for achieving synergy in a whole-of-government approach;
- Human Rights and 'Rule of Law' based processes for mitigation of threats;
- Attenuating the conditions enabling terrorism, including radicalization;
- Aligning and shaping the global efforts to counter terrorism;
- Recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

**Approach:** The framework adopts a **whole-of-government** and **whole-of-society approach**, encouraging coordination between law enforcement agencies, private sector stakeholders and civil society organisations.

### **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Constitutes 'Parliamentary Friendship Groups' with 64 Countries**

Om Birla, Speaker of Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Parliament) constituted 'Parliamentary

Friendship Groups(PFGs)' with 64 countries to bolster inter-parliamentary cooperation and legislative dialogue.

#### **About Parliamentary Friendship Groups:**

**Significance:** This new initiative will enable the Indian lawmakers to interact directly with their counterparts abroad, share legislative experience.

- It will also facilitate regular dialogue, exchange of legislative practices, and will boost cooperation on trade, technology, culture, and shared global challenges.

**Structure:** Each Parliamentary Friendship Group typically consisted of 11 members, with a designated Chairperson/Group Leader leading the group.

**Members:** The groups comprise Members of Parliament (MPs) from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha across the political spectrum.

#### **MeitY Constitutes High-Level Committee for DigiLocker; Launches Blockchain India Challenge**

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**), constituted a **high-level committee** to harmonise the regulatory framework of **DigiLocker** and also launched the Blockchain India Challenge to promote startup-driven blockchain solutions for digital governance.

- The committee is headed by **Ajay Sawhney**, Former Secretary, MeitY, and includes legal experts, technology specialists, and industry representatives.

#### **About Blockchain India Challenge:**

**Implementation:** The challenge is implemented by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (**C-DAC**), Hyderabad (Telangana), with support from MeitY.

**Prizes & Structure:** It offers a total prize pool of **Rs. 8.80 Crores**, progressing through three stages Prototype Stage (Rs. 1.5 Lakh each, up to 40 participants), Minimum Viable Product (MVP) Stage (Rs. 4 Lakh each, up to 30 participants), and Deployment Stage (Rs. 10 Lakh each, up to 20 participants).

- Top performers from each of the 10 Use Case Categories will compete for the ultimate prize of **Rs. 50 Lakh** per category.

#### **GoI Mandates Sale of E20 Petrol with Minimum RON 95 Nationwide from April 01, 2026**

The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (**MoPNG**) issued notification that mandated the sale of petrol with a **maximum 20%** of ethanol and a minimum Research Octane Number (**RON**) of **95** across all states and Union Territories (UTs) from **April 01, 2026**.

- This move aligns with India's ambitious Ethanol Blended Programme (EBP), which aims to reduce reliance on crude oil imports, lower carbon emissions, and support the agricultural economy.

#### **Significance:**

**Ethanol:** Ethanol, a bio-fuel made from sugarcane, maize, or grain, is renewable, locally produced that can be blended with petrol to create a cleaner fuel alternative.

**Key Reason:** RON is a measure of a fuel's resistance to engine knocking (pre-ignition) that prevents engine damage.

- As per the MoPNG, ethanol naturally has high octane value (nearly 108 RON) which means blending 20% ethanol in petrol will increase knock resistance.

**About EBP:** The EBP was originally launched in January 2003 by the MoPNG, with an initial target of 5% ethanol blended petrol.

- Ethanol blending is a process which involves mixing plant-based biofuel ethanol with petrol cleaner, more sustainable fuel.



# International

## Walmart Becomes World's First Retail Company to Reach USD 1 Trillion Market Value

Walmart Inc., an American multinational retail corporation, became the first retail company globally to achieve a market capitalisation of USD 1 trillion, following a strong rally in its share price over the past year.

### Key Highlights:

**Stock Performance:** Walmart's shares rose by nearly 26% over the last 12 months and about 468% over the past decade, outperforming the S&P 500, which gained around 264% during the same period.

**Nasdaq-100:** In December 2025, Walmart was added to the tech-focused Nasdaq-100 Index, which features the world's most valuable non-financial companies.

**AI Adoption:** Walmart invested billions of dollars in Artificial Intelligence(AI)-enabled supply chains to improve inventory planning, fresh produce delivery, and delivery speed, enabling the company to exceed same-store sales estimates for 15 consecutive quarters.

**Peer Group:** Other companies with market capitalisation exceeding USD 1 trillion include Nvidia, Alphabet, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, Tesla, and Broadcom.

## Union Minister Rajnath Singh Flags Off Mount Aconcagua Expedition

Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD), flagged off a joint mountaineering expedition to Mount (Mt) **Aconcagua** in Argentina, the highest peak in South America and the tallest mountain outside Asia with an elevation of about **6,960 metre (m)**, from New Delhi, Delhi.

### About Mt Aconcagua Expedition:

**Organizers:** The expedition was organized by Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM), Uttarkashi (Uttarakhand), in collaboration with Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering & Winter Sports (JIM & WS), Pahalgam (Jammu & Kashmir, J&K).

**Expedition Team:** The Indian mountaineering team comprising six members, is led by Colonel Hem Chandra Singh, Principal of NIM.

## Airbus and GSV Inaugurate Centre of Excellence for Aerospace Research in Gujarat

Airbus inaugurated a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for aerospace studies at the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (**GSV**), a Central University focused on the transportation and logistics sector, in **Vadodara, Gujarat** to strengthen India's aerospace ecosystem through research, innovation, and skill development.

- The CoE was inaugurated by Jürgen Westermeier, President and Managing Director (MD), Airbus India and South Asia, in the presence of Shubhanginiraje Gaekwad, Member of the Court of GSV, and Prof. (Dr.) Manoj Choudhary, Vice Chancellor of GSV.

### About CoE-SAF Initiative:

**R&D:** The Centre of Excellence (CoE) conducts Research and Development (R&D) on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and future aerospace technologies including Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)-to-SAF conversion.

**Partnership:** The Airbus-GSV partnership is developing an integrated aerospace ecosystem in

India and offers 45 full scholarships to meritorious and underprivileged students, with one-third of the scholarships reserved for women.

**Academics:** Airbus established a Chair Professor at GSV for Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate (PG), and executive aerospace programmes.

### **Delhi Most Affordable City for International Students: Report**

The Knight Frank India, Deloitte India and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) jointly released a report titled “India’s 155 Million Student Mandate”, in which it highlighted that New Delhi, Delhi has emerged as “world’s most affordable student city, ranked first globally”

#### **Key Highlights**

**Data:** The report cross-references its findings with data from the QS Best Student Cities 2026 and the QS International Student Survey 2025, which show a marked improvement in the global perception of Indian cities.

**QS Ranking:** The QS Best Student Cities 2026 ranking showcases the most attractive urban destinations for international students.

**Categories:** The rankings are based on a diverse variety of indicators grouped under six key categories

- Around **150 cities** were assessed across these equally weighted categories, namely affordability, employer activity, university ranking, city desirability, student voice and student mix.

### **Overview of PM Narendra Modi’s Visit to Malaysia from February 7 to 8, 2026**

Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi** was on a two-day official visit to **Malaysia** from February 7 to 8, 2026, at the invitation of PM of Malaysia H.E.Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

- This visit marked PM Narendra Modi’s third official visit to Malaysia, reinforcing the longstanding diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations.

#### **Highlights of PM Narendra Modi’s Visit to Malaysia:**

**Bilateral Engagements:** PM Narendra Modi and Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim held restricted and delegation-level meetings, deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) between India and Malaysia, established in 2024.

- They reviewed cooperation across sectors, including trade and investment, defense and security cooperation, digital economy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Semiconductors, infrastructure development, clean energy and tourism, education, health, and maritime cooperation.

**10th India-Malaysia CEO Forum:** During the visit, PM Modi attended the 10th India-Malaysia Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Forum, held in Kuala Lumpur, to discuss trade, investment, and economic cooperation.

**MoUs Signed:** India and Malaysia signed several MoUs to boost bilateral cooperation. Key areas included AV co-production, disaster management, anti-corruption, UN peacekeeping, semiconductors, wildlife conservation, social security, vocational education, security, and health.

- An MoU was signed between University of Cyberjaya (UoC), Selangor (Malaysia), and Institute of Training and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA), Jamnagar (Gujarat), on academic collaboration in Ayurveda.

**Other Initiatives:** India set up a Consulate General in Malaysia to strengthen diplomatic, commercial, and people-to-people ties.

- Thiruvalluvar Centre was set up to promote Tamil language, literature, and Indian culture in Malaysia.
- NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), a wholly owned subsidiary of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and PayNet of Malaysia agreed to link their payment systems.

### **USGBC LEED List 2025: China Topped the List, India Rises to 2nd Position**

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) and Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), released the latest ‘Annual list of 10 countries and regions for Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) in 2025’, outside the United States of America(USA).

- As per the list, **India** climbed from 3rd place in 2024 to **2nd in 2025** in terms of total LEED-certified space, recording over 16,111,512 Gross Square Meters (GSM) across **611 projects** during the year.
- **Mainland China** topped the list with 26,645,737 Gross Square Meters (GSM) of LEED-certified space across 1,939 projects.

### **Key Findings of USGBC LEED List 2025:**

**LEED Certification:** There was significant growth in LEED certification globally last year, with more than 7,500 commercial projects certified, totaling over 147 million GSM.

**Global Leader:** The USA remains the global leader in LEED adoption, with 50,129,093 GSM of certified space across 2,228 projects.

**Other Countries in the list:** **Canada** ranked third with 288 projects covering 8,450,146 GSM, followed by **Republic of Korea** with 100 projects (3,879,192 GSM) and **Mexico** with 144 projects (3,294,953 GSM).

- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) secured the 6th position with 3,158,950 GSM across 96 projects, followed by Brazil in 7th place with 2,933,631 GSM across 171 projects. Vietnam, made its debut in the top 10 rankings for the first time, ranked 8th with 2,602,797 GSM across 100 projects, while Sweden held the 9th position with 2,564,921 GSM across 183 projects. The United Arab Emirates completed the top 10, recording 2,251,714 GSM across 174 LEED-certified projects.

**Projects Leading:** In 2025, the most significant and exponential growth in LEED-certified space occurred in industrial manufacturing and warehousing.

### **Network Readiness Index 2025: USA Tops; India Ranks 45<sup>th</sup>**

The Portulans Institute published the 2025 Network Readiness Index (NRI 2025), titled “AI Governance in a Global Context: Policy and Regulatory Approaches”, in which **India** climbed four places to secure the **45<sup>th</sup>** position out of 127 economies with a score of 54.43 out of 100.

- Among lower-middle-income economies, India ranked 2nd, behind Vietnam (40th).
- The United States of America (USA) retained 1st place globally with a score of 79.13, marking its fourth consecutive year at the top, followed by Finland (2nd, 75.82) and Singapore (3rd, 75.46).

#### **Key Findings of NRI 2025:**

**Income Distribution:** The 2025 rankings comprise 52 high-income, 34 upper-middle-income, 32 lower-middle-income, and 9 low-income economies.

**Top 10:** Denmark secured 4th place (75.14), followed by Sweden (5th, 75.09), the Netherlands (6th, 75.08), and Germany (7th, 74.12). The United Kingdom ranked 8th (73.85), Switzerland placed 9th (73.63), and the Republic of Korea rounded out the top ten at 10th (72.38).

**Top 25:** Among the top 25 countries, Europe is represented by 17 nations, East and Southeast Asia by 4, North America includes 2 economies and Oceania is represented by 2.

- China's ranking fell by 7 spots to 24th, but still remains the only middle-income economy in the NRI's top 25.

**Pillar Toppers:** In the 2025 edition, the USA, Switzerland, and the Netherlands recorded the highest scores in the **Technology** pillar.

- The USA also led the **People** pillar, followed by the Republic of Korea and Israel.
- Northern European economies continued to feature prominently in **Governance**, with Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands occupying the top positions.
- The **Impact** pillar was led by Finland, followed closely by Ireland and Denmark.

#### **ISRO Identifies Mons Mouton-4 as Lander Site for Chandrayaan-4 Mission**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) identified Mons Mouton-4 (MM-4), a designated landing site in the Mons Mouton region near the Moon's south pole, as the prospective touchdown zone for the **Chandrayaan-4 mission**, marking a key step toward India's first lunar sample-return mission.

#### **About the Landing Site MM-4:**

**Coordinates:** The MM-4 site lies at approximately 84.289° (degree) south latitude and 32.808° east longitude within a geologically significant mountainous terrain.

**Data Analysis:** Researchers at the Space Applications Centre (SAC) evaluated high-resolution multi-view datasets from the Orbiter High Resolution Camera (OHRC) onboard Chandrayaan-2 to assess hazards, slopes, and landing safety.

#### **CPI 2025: India Ranks 91st Among 182 Countries; Denmark Retains Top Position**

Germany-based International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Transparency International (TI) released the annual edition of '2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2025)'. As per the report, **India** has improved its ranking by 5 places to the **91st spot** out of 182 countries with a score of **39 out of 100**.

- This marks a marginal increase of one point in India's score compared to last year (96th spot with a score of 38).

**Global CPI Average:** For the 1st time, the global CPI average has declined to just 42 out of 100, the lowest in more than a decade.

**Top 3 Countries:** **Denmark** retained the top position in CPI for an 8th consecutive year, with the highest score of **89**.

- It is followed by **Finland (score: 88)** and **Singapore (score: 84)** ranked at **2<sup>nd</sup>** and **3<sup>rd</sup>** position, respectively.

### **WIPO : India Ranks 7th in Global R&D Spending in 2024; China Tops**

According to the latest data from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) based on the Global Innovation Index 2025 (**GII 2025**) and related Research and Development (R&D) expenditure estimates, **India** ranked **7th** in 2024, investing approximately **USD 75.73 billion** in research activities.

- As per the report, **China** ranked first with USD 785.9 billion in R&D spending, followed by the United States of America(USA)(USD 781.8 billion) and Japan (USD 186.0 billion).

### **Highlights of R&D Spending in 2024:**

**Global R&D Spending:** World R&D expenditure rose to **USD 2.87 trillion** in 2024, up from USD 2.78 trillion in 2023, reflecting an approximate 3% year-on-year(Y-o-Y) growth, according to estimates.

- R&D spending as a share of global GDP has increased significantly, rising from around 1.48% in 2000 to about 2% in 2024.

**Other countries in Top 10:** Germany ranked 4th with USD 132.2 billion, followed by South Korea with USD 126.4 billion. The list also includes the United Kingdom (6th, USD 86.5 billion), France (8th, USD 65.8 billion), Türkiye (9th, USD 43.2 billion), and Brazil (10th, USD 38.4 billion).

### **UP FM Suresh Khanna Presents Rs 9.12 trillion Budget for FY27**

Suresh Kumar Khanna, Finance Minister (FM) of Uttar Pradesh (UP), presented a **Rs 9,12,696.35 crore** (Rs 9.12 trillion) budget for the Financial Year 2026-27 (FY27), in the state legislative assembly in Lucknow, UP.

- The budget outlay for FY27 witnessed an increase of **12.9%** compared to previous financial year (Rs 8.08 trillion) with a focus on infrastructure expansion, employment generation, and healthcare.
- The UP government allocated over Rs 45,000 crore for new schemes in the FY27 Budget, with major sectoral shares directed towards education (12.4%), followed by agriculture and allied activities (9%) and health (6%).

### **Key Estimates State's Financial Indicators:**

**Fiscal Deficit:** The state government has fixed the fiscal deficit limit at **3%** for FY27, in line with the recommendations of the 16th Central Finance Commission (16th FC), applicable till 2030-31.

**CapEx:** The Capital Expenditure (CapEx) of the state has been estimated at **19.5%** of the total

budget outlay.

**State's GSDP:** The budget has estimated the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at **Rs 30.25 lakh crore** for FY25, representing 13.4% growth.

### **Henley Passport Index – February 2026: Singapore Topped; India Climbs to 75<sup>th</sup>**

Henley & Partners, a British consultancy expertized in investment migration, released Henley Passport Index (HPI) Global Ranking – February 2026. India's passport improved its global position to **75<sup>th</sup>** rank, up from 80<sup>th</sup> in January 2026 and 85<sup>th</sup> in 2025, reflecting gradual progress in travel freedom.

- India, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to **56 destinations**, shares its ranking with Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Madagascar, and Mauritania.

#### **Highlights of Henley Passport Index(HPI) 2026:**

**Topped by: Singapore** topped the Henley Passport Index 2026 with visa-free access to 192 destinations, followed by Japan and South Korea with 187 destinations each.

**Other Top Ranked Countries:** The 4<sup>th</sup> rank is shared by Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland with a visa-free score of 185, while the 5<sup>th</sup> rank is held by Austria, Greece, Malta, and Portugal with a score of 184.

**Least Country: Afghanistan** ranked last (101<sup>st</sup>) on the February 2026 Index , with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to only 24 countries.

### **India Joins US-led Pax Silica to Strengthen AI and Semiconductor Supply Chains**

India formally joined as the 12<sup>th</sup> Country in the United States of America (USA)-led Pax Silica coalition, a strategic alliance of nations aimed at building secure, resilient, and innovation-driven supply chains for critical minerals, semiconductors, and artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure.

#### **India's Strategic Role in Pax Silica:**

**Security:** The initiative builds resilient supply chains in critical minerals, rare earth elements (REE), semiconductors, and AI, while promoting public-private collaboration and technology transfer.

**Sovereignty:** It aims to reduce global dependence on China in rare earth processing and semiconductor manufacturing, reinforcing technological and economic security.

**Contribution:** As a signatory, India contributes a large engineering talent base, advanced chip design capabilities including 2-nanometre (nm) technology, ten semiconductor plants under development, and 8.52 million tonnes (MT) of rare earth reserves aligned with the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) and India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).

- The coalition later expanded to include Greece, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Netherlands, and India, strengthening its trusted technology partnership network.

### **2026 Marks 50th Anniversary of Bonded Labour System Abolition Act, 1976**

The Government of India (GoI) marked the **Golden Jubilee (50 years) of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, a landmark legislation enacted to eliminate bonded labour and debt bondage in India.

#### **About Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:**

**Background:** The Act was passed in 1976 during the tenure of former Prime Minister (PM) of

India, Indira Gandhi. It came into force on **February 9, 1976**.

**Implementation:** The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) oversees implementation at the national level.

**Labour System Abolishment:** The act abolished the bonded labour system across India, cancelled all bonded debts, liberated bonded labourers from exploitative obligations, and prohibited forced labour arising out of debt or social customs.

**Framework:** The act provides for District Magistrates to ensure enforcement, Vigilance Committees at district and sub-divisional levels, and identification, rescue, and rehabilitation of bonded labourers.

### **Indian Mountaineers Summit South America's Highest Peak Aconcagua**

A six-member team from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM), Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand and the Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering and Winter Sports (JIM&WS), Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, (J&K), successfully summited **Mount Aconcagua** in Argentina, marking a major significant achieved for Indian mountaineering.

- The expedition was formally flagged off by **Union Minister Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD) on February 05, 2026.

#### **About Expedition to Mt. Aconcagua:**

**Expedition led by:** The expedition team was led by Colonel (Col.) Hem Chandra Singh, Principal of NIM and JIM&WS.

**Summit:** Before launching their summit, the team 1st scaled **Mt. Bonete Peak**, at an altitude of 5,050 meters (m) above sea level.

- During their expedition, they faced extreme weather conditions, including strong winds and temperatures ranging from -20 degrees Celsius and -30 degrees Celsius.

#### **About Mt. Aconcagua:**

**Highest Peak in South America:** Mt. Aconcagua is the highest peak in South America and the 2nd-highest mountain peak in the world outside Asia at **6,967.15 meters (m)** above mean sea level.

**Significance:** Mt. Aconcagua, known as the 'Stone Sentinel' is the highest peak in the Southern and Western Hemispheres, with extreme altitude and rapidly changing weather.

**Seven Summits:** It is one of the Seven Summits which include Mount Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (South America), Denali (North America), Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mount Elbrus (Europe), Mount Vinson (Antarctica), and Mount Kosciuszko (Australia).

### **World Bank's WBL Report 2026 : Women's Economic-opportunity Laws only Half-enforced Globally**

The World Bank Group (WBG) released the 11th edition of Women, Business and the Law (WBL) report titled 'Women, Business And the Law 2026: Benchmarking Laws for Jobs and Inclusive Growth'. The report revealed that, on average, laws aimed at providing equal economic opportunities for women are **only half-enforced globally**, highlighting persistent gaps in gender equality in the workplace.

#### **About Women, Business and the Law(WBL) 2026 Report:**

**Overview:** The report is a global benchmarking project that assesses how laws, regulations, and policies help in shaping women's economic opportunities and private sector development across **190 economies**.

**Global Average Score:** Legal frameworks (67 out of 100); Enforcement perceptions (53) and Supportive frameworks (47).

- It also showed that the global average score for enforcement perceptions is **53** which indicates women's rights are only partly held and no economy scores above 90 in this pillar. The global score supportive frameworks index is **47**, the lowest among all the three pillars.

**Inequitable Legal Rights Access:** The report noted that even if laws were fully enforced, women will be able to access **just 2/3rd (66.66%)** of the legal rights of men.

**Negligible Full Legal Equality:** As per the report, **only 4%** of women globally, live in economies that provide nearly full legal equality.



# Defence

## 13th India–Kyrgyzstan Joint Military Exercise KHANJAR-XIII Commences in Assam

The 13th edition of the 14-day joint military exercise KHANJAR (KHANJAR-XIII) between India and Kyrgyzstan is being conducted from 4-17th February 2026, at Misamari, located in Sonitpur district of Assam, to enhance interoperability between the **Special Forces** of both nations.

### About Exercise KHANJAR XIII:

**Participants:** The exercise involves the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces, SF) of the Indian Army (IA) and Kyrgyzstan's Scorpion Brigade, both elite special forces units.

**Training:** Joint drills include urban warfare, counter-terrorism, sniping, reconnaissance, surveillance, room intervention, building clearance, and mountain craft under a United Nations (UN) mandate.

**Background:** Exercise KHANJAR, initiated in 2011, is an annual joint military exercise between India and Kyrgyzstan, aimed at sharing best practices in special operations.

- The 12th edition was held on 10-23 March 2025 at Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan.

## Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile 'Agni-3' Successfully Test-Fired in Odisha

India successfully test-fired the Agni-3 missile, an Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM), from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha.

- The launch, conducted under the Strategic Forces Command (SFC), validated all operational and technical parameters, strengthening India's strategic deterrence capabilities.

### About Agni-3 Missile:

**Developer:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

**Type:** Surface-to-surface missile

**Propulsion:** The missile uses a two-stage, solid-fuelled propulsion, where the second stage ignites after the first stage burn, enhancing range, stability, and targeting accuracy.

**Dimensions:** The Agni-3 missile measures 16.7 metres (m) in length, 2 metres (m) in diameter, and has a launch weight of 48,300 kilograms (kg).

**Range:** 3,000–3,500 kilometer(km)

**Payload:** Up to 1,500 kg; capable of carrying conventional or nuclear warheads

**Launch Platform:** Road and rail-mobile

**Navigation:** Uses a Strapdown Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by the Global Positioning System (GPS) for enhanced guidance accuracy.

**Speed:** Mach 15 (~18,522 km per hour km/h)

### About Strategic Forces Command (SFC):

Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) – Lieutenant General Dinesh Singh Rana

**Headquarters** – New Delhi, Delhi

**Established** – 2003

## **Indian Navy Hosts IFR 2026, MILAN 2026 & IONS Conclave of Navy Chiefs 2026 at Visakhapatnam, AP**

The Indian Navy (IN) hosted three major international engagements at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP): Exercise MILAN 2026, the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026, and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Ninth Conclave of Navy Chiefs from 15 to 25 February 2026.

**About Exercise MILAN 2026:** Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD) inaugurated the 13th edition of Exercise MILAN-2026 at Visakhapatnam, AP, which was conducted from 19–25 February 2026 in the Bay of Bengal as a biennial multilateral naval exercise hosted by IN.

- **Theme:** The theme of MILAN 2026 was “Camaraderie, Cooperation, Collaboration.”

**About International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026:** IFR 2026 was held on 18 February 2026 off Visakhapatnam, AP, under the theme “**United through Oceans,**” and was presided over by President Droupadi Murmu, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

**About Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave 2026:** The 9th Conclave of Chiefs of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was held on 20 February 2026 at Visakhapatnam, AP.

- **Tenure:** India will lead the IONS for the 2026–2028 term, marking its second tenure as Chair since the forum was launched in 2008 in New Delhi (Delhi).
- **Chairmanship:** Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy (IN), assumed the Chairmanship of IONS from the Royal Thai Navy (RTN).

### **About Indian Navy (IN):**

Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) – Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi

Headquarters– New Delhi, Delhi

Established-1950

Motto – “Sam no Varunah”



## **IA's Konark Corps Tests Strela-10 Air Defence Missiles in Pokhran, Rajasthan**

The Indian Army's (IA)'s **Konark Corps**, specifically the Air Defence Warriors of the **Blazing Skies Brigade**, successfully conducted a high-intensity test firing of the **Strela-10** Very Short Range Air Defence System (**VSHORADS**) at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in the desert sector of **Pokhran, Rajasthan**.

### **About Live Firing Test of Strela-10 VSHORADS:**

**Accuracy & Operational Readiness:** The missile system demonstrated precision targeting capabilities by accurately engaging aerial targets, reinforcing the Army's operational readiness and air defence preparedness in challenging terrain

**Crew Coordination:** The exercise objectives included sharpening crew coordination, validating firing standards, and reinforcing air defence preparedness in demanding environments.

**Effective Air Defence:** The test also demonstrated the seamless coordination between target surveillance, acquisition systems, and missile deployment units, a significant factor in effective air defence.

**About Strela-10 system:** The Strela-10 is a very short-range air defence missile system designed to counter low-altitude aerial threats such as helicopters, low-flying aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The successful test underscored the Indian Army's capability to enhance battlefield air defence, validating the system's effectiveness under live-fire

conditions.

**Range:** The Strela-10 air defence missile system has an engagement range of approximately 6–10 kilometres (km)

### **Indian Air Force & Thai Air Force Undertake Joint in-situ Air Exercise**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) of Thailand are conducting a **joint in-situ air exercise** to enhance operational coordination and interoperability between the two air forces.

#### **About India-Thailand In-Situ Exercise:**

**In-Situ Training:** It refers to training exercises where military forces operate together under realistic conditions at or near their actual mission locations, rather than in isolated or simulated environments.

**Purpose:** The exercise aims to strengthen operational coordination in aerial operations, foster interoperability between IAF and RTAF, and reinforce Indo-Thai defense cooperation and regional synergy.

**IAF aircraft:** The IAF deployed Su-30MKI fighter jet, a multirole combat aircraft, Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS), Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C), and IL-78 mid-air refueling aircraft.

**RTAF aircraft:** RTAF participated with Gripen fighter aircraft, a Sweden-made multi-role fighter.

### **First Indigenous Cadet Training Ship 'Krishna' Launched at L&T Kattupalli, Chennai**

The first indigenously designed and built Cadet Training Ship (CTS) 'Krishna(Yard 18003)' of the Indian Navy(IN) was launched at Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Shipbuilding facility at Kattupalli near Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- It was launched by **Anupama Chauhan**, President of Defence Wives Welfare Association (DWWA) in the presence of General **Anil Chauhan**, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and other senior officials of the Indian Armed Forces and M/s L&T Shipbuilding.

#### **About CTS Krishna :**

**Name:** The newly inaugurated ship, the first of the three CTS under construction at M/s L&T, is named after **River Krishna**, India's 3rd longest river.

**Key Specifications:** 122 meter(m)-long Krishna ship, with maximum speed of nearly 20 knots, has displacement of 4,700 tonnes and endurance of nearly 60 days at sea.

**Key Functions:** These ships are mainly designed to provide basic training to Naval cadets that will include seamanship, navigation drills, ship handling and practical exposure to life on board a navy vessel.

### **16th Edition of India-USA Joint Special Forces Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR Commences in HP**

The Indian Army (IA) and the United States Army (USA) commenced the **16th** edition of the India-the United States of America(USA) Joint Special Forces Exercise '**VAJRA PRAHAR**' at the Special Forces Training School (SFTS), **Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh (HP)**.

- The exercise will continue until 16 March 2026.

### **About Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2026:**

**Aim:** The exercise is conducted to strengthen combined capabilities for carrying out joint Special Forces operations in mountainous terrain.

#### **Participating Forces:**

- IA: Represented by 45 personnel from its Special Forces units.
- USA: Represented by 12 personnel from the Green Berets of the US Special Forces.

### **Indian Army Conducts 'Exercise Agni Varsha' in Pokhran, Rajasthan**

Indian Army (IA) conducted 'Exercise Agni Varsha' at the Pokhran Field Firing Ranges in Pokhran, Rajasthan, to test and demonstrate its operational readiness and combat capabilities in a realistic battlefield environment.

#### **About Exercise Agni Varsha:**

**Led by:** The Integrated Fire and Manoeuvre Exercise was led by the IA's **Southern Command**.

**Validation:** The exercise validated the coordinated use of combined arms, precision long-range firepower, and network-enabled command and control, demonstrating the effective synergy and combat readiness of mechanised forces across multiple domains.

**Combat Elements:** It includes T-90 Main Battle Tanks, Infantry Combat Vehicles, K-9 Vajra self-propelled howitzers, Sharang and Bofors artillery systems, Rocket artillery systems, indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) weapon system-integrated helicopters, Apache attack helicopters, Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and drones, and networked surveillance and counter-drone systems.

**Technology & Modernization:** The exercise highlighted IA's emphasis on technology infusion, indigenization of defence capabilities, network-centric command and control, and multi-domain warfare readiness.

### **7th Edition of India and Japan Joint Military Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN Began in Uttarakhand**

The 7th edition of the annual joint military **Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN** between **India** and **Japan**, began on Feb 24, 2026 at Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia, Uttarakhand, which will be continued till March 9 2026.

#### **About Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN 2026:**

**Indian Contingent:** It is represented by troops of the Indian Army (IA), with soldiers drawn from the Ladakh Scouts, who are known for their expertise in high-altitude and rugged terrain operations.

**Japanese Contingents:** It is represented by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), with personnel from the 32nd Infantry Regiment, and approximately 120 personnel from each side are participating in the exercise.

**Enhanced Interoperability:** The exercise aims to strengthen military-to military cooperation, enhance interoperability between IA and JGSDF, improve joint operational capabilities, and promote mutual understanding, trust, and camaraderie.

#### **Training Activities:**

**Tactical Operations:** The exercise includes the establishment of Temporary Operating Bases, conduct of cordon and search operations, house intervention and close-quarter battle drills, and the setting up of mobile vehicle check posts.

## Appointments or Resign/Retired

### Sunetra Pawar Becomes First Woman Deputy CM of Maharashtra

Sunetra Pawar, a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP), was sworn in as Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister (DyCM), becoming the **first woman** to assume the post in the state's history.

- The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Maharashtra Governor Acharya Devvrat at Raj Bhavan in Mumbai (Maharashtra), in the presence of CM Devendra Fadnavis and other cabinet ministers.

### Background:

**Vacancy:** The Deputy CM post became vacant after a tragic plane crash killed **Ajit Pawar**, leader of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and late husband of Sunetra Pawar, on January 29, 2026.

**Legislative Requirement:** Currently Sunetra Pawar is not a member of the Maharashtra legislature. As per constitutional provisions, She will need to become a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) or Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) within six months to continue holding the Deputy CM post.

### About Maharashtra:

Chief Minister (CM) – Devendra Fadnavis

Governor – Acharya Devvrat

Capital – Mumbai

Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) – Radhanagari WLS, Rehekuri Blackbuck WLS

### RBI Approves Vinay Muralidhar Tonse as MD & CEO of YES Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the appointment of **Vinay Muralidhar Tonse** as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of YES Bank for a term of three years. His appointment is further subject to Shareholder approval.

- He will succeed **Prashant Kumar**, whose tenure is scheduled to end in April 2026.

### About Vinay Muralidhar Tonse:

**Profile:** He is a banker with over three decades of experience in Indian and international banking. He has worked across multiple business lines and held senior leadership roles in banks such as State Bank of India (SBI).

**Career:** In 1988, he joined SBI as a Probationary Officer (PO) and spent over 30 years rising through banks.

**Leadership Positions:** He worked as Deputy MD at SBI and looked after the Corporate Accounts Group (CAG), managing relationships and credit facilities for large corporate clients.

- He served as MD & CEO of SBI Funds Management Limited (SBI Mutual Fund), the asset management arm of SBI.
- He also served as the Managing Director (MD) (Retail Business & Operations) until 30 November 2025.

### About Yes Bank:

Founded in 2003 by Rana Kapoor and Ashok Kapur, YES Bank received its banking licence

from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in May 2004 and is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

### **Yumnam Khemchand Singh Sworn In As Manipur CM after One Year of President's Rule**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Manipur Legislative leader **Yumnam Khemchand Singh** took oath as the new Chief Minister (CM) of the State, nearly a year after President's rule was imposed.

#### **Key Highlights**

**Other Ministers:** BJP's **Nemcha Kipgen**, from the Kuki community, and Naga People's Front Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) **Losii Dikho**, from the Naga community, took oath as deputy CM, with Kipgen becoming the **first woman** to hold the post in Manipur.

**President Rule:** On February 13, 2025, 5 days after the resignation of N.Biren Singh and breakdown of the constitutional machinery, the president rule was imposed in Manipur under **Article 356** of the constitution.

### **IOC Elects Soraya Aghaei Hajiagha as Iran's First Female IOC Member**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) elected **Soraya Aghaei Hajiagha**, youngest current IOC member, as its **107th** member with 95 votes during the 145th IOC Session in Milan, Italy.

- She became the **first Iranian woman** and the third Iranian overall to be elected to the IOC, ending a more than 20-year absence of Iranian representation.

#### **About Soraya Aghaei Hajiagha:**

**Profile:** She is a professional badminton player from Iran. She represented Iran in badminton at the **Tokyo 2020 Olympics** (Japan), where she became the first Iranian female badminton Olympian.

**Leadership:** She has served on the Athletes' Commission of the Iranian National Olympic Committee and was previously a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission.

**About IOC:** It was founded in **1894** by Pierre de Coubertin in Lausanne, Switzerland. IOC governs the Olympic movement, organizes the games, selects host cities, promotes Olympic values, and supports athletes.

- It comprises 107 members and ensures fair play, global sports development, and gender equality worldwide.

### **Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi's party secures 'landmark victory' in snap elections**

Japan's ruling party Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by the country's 1st female Prime Minister (PM) **Sanae Takaichi**, along with its coalition partners secured a landmark victory in snap elections.

#### **Key Details of Elections:**

**Electoral Milestone:** LDP alone won **316 seats**, surpassing a 261-seat absolute majority required in the 465-member of the lower house of Japan's Parliament (the National Diet).

- This represents a major milestone ever since the party was founded in 1955 as it breaches the previous record of 300 seats won in 1986 by late PM Yasuhiro Nakasone.

**Coalition Partner:** LDP's coalition partner, Japan Innovation Party (JIP), known as Ishin secured 36 seats, bringing the total seats won by the ruling coalition to 352 and a super-majority of two-thirds of seats.

**Opposition Parties:** Opposition parties in total secured only 111 seats, with major opposition Centrist Reform Alliance winning only 49 seats (down from 167).

**Voter Turnout:** The voter turnout for this year's election stood at marginally **over 56%** which is around 2 percentage points higher than last election.

**About Japan:**

**Capital-** Tokyo

**Currency-** Japanese Yen (JPY)

**Anutin Charnvirakul Won Thailand's 2026 General Election**

Thailand's caretaker Prime Minister (PM), **Anutin Charnvirakul**, leader of the conservative Bhumjaithai Party (BJT), won the general election for the 500-member House of Representatives, as per preliminary results announced by the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT).

- In September 2025, Anutin Charnvirakul assumed the position of PM of Thailand following a period of political turbulence, later continuing in the role as caretaker PM during the election period.

**Election Result:**

**Result:** The party secured a strong mandate to form the next government, marking a decisive victory in the national polls.

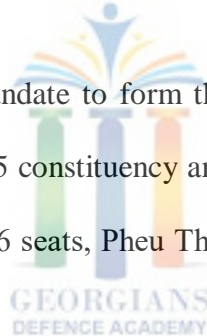
**Majority :** The BJT won 194 seats (175 constituency and 19 party-list), falling short of the 251-seat majority.

**Others:** The People's Party secured 116 seats, Pheu Thai 76 seats, while KLa Tham won 57 and the Democrat Party 22.

**About Thailand:**

**Capital** – Bangkok

**Currency** – Thai baht (THB)



**Indian Cricketer Shikhar Dhawan Appointed as Brand Ambassador of Inaugural Delhi Khel Mahakumbh**

Former Indian cricketer and Arjuna Awardee **Shikhar Dhawan** was appointed as the brand ambassador of the inaugural **Delhi Khel Mahakumbh** by the Government of Delhi.

**About Delhi Khel Mahakumbh:**

**Overview:** The event will be held on February 13, 2026, in 16 locations across all 12 districts of Delhi.

- It is a large-scale grassroots sports festival launched by the Directorate of Education and Sports, Government of Delhi to strengthen sports participation at grassroots level.

**Sports Included:** The event includes games such as basketball, football, athletics, kabaddi, wrestling, squash, and volleyball.

**About Shikhar Dhawan:** He represented India across all formats, scoring over 6,700 One Day International (ODI) runs with 17 centuries and 39 fifties, more than 2,300 Test runs with a

highest score of 190, and 1,759 runs in 68 Twenty-20 International (**T20I**). He was also the top scorer in the 2013 ICC Champions Trophy, playing a key role in India's title victory.

### **CA Prasanna Kumar D Elected as the President of the ICAI**

Chartered Accountant (CA) **Prasanna Kumar D** elected as the **74th** President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), under Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), for the **2026-27 term**, with immediate effect. He succeeds CA Charanjot Singh Nanda.

- **CA Mangesh Pandurang Kinare** has been elected as Vice-President (VP) for 2026-27 term.

### **About CA Prasanna Kumar D:**

**Profile:** He is a senior CA from Visakhapatnam with over four decades of professional experience in areas, encompassing practice, institutional governance, policy involvement, and member welfare initiatives.

**Early Career & Qualification:** He qualified as a Chartered Accountant (CA) in 1984 and is a Fellow Member of ICAI, a distinction awarded to members with extensive professional experience and significant contributions to the accounting profession. He hails from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP).

**Leadership at Branch & Regional Level:** He served as Chairman of the Visakhapatnam Branch of ICAI (2001–02). Subsequently, he was a Member of the Southern India Regional Council (SIRC) from 2007 to 2016, and held the position of Chairman of SIRC (2013–14).

**Role in ICAI Central Council:** He was elected to the 24th, 25th, and 26th Central Councils of ICAI, serving multiple consecutive terms. Prior to becoming President, he served as the Vice President of ICAI for the 2025–26 term.

### **About the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA):**

**Union Minister** – Nirmala Sitharaman (Rajya Sabha – Karnataka)

**Minister of State (MoS)** – Harsh Malhotra (Constituency – East Delhi, Delhi)

### **Barbados PM Mia Mottley Re-elected as PM of Barbados for Third Consecutive Time**

Prime Minister (PM) of Barbados **Mia Amor Mottley** has been re-elected as PM of Barbados for the **third straight term** after the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) won all 30 seats in the 2026 general election held on 11 February 2026.

#### **Election Results:**

**Vote Share:** The BLP obtained approximately 69.83% of the total votes polled, while the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) secured around 27.31% of the popular vote.

**Parliamentary Seats:** The BLP achieved a clean sweep by winning all 30 seats in the House of Assembly, leaving no representation for the opposition.

- PM Mia Amor Mottley defeated opposition leader **Ralph Thorne**, with the opposition failing to win any seat in the election.

### **About Barbados:**

**Capital** – Bridgetown

**Currency** – Barbadian Dollar (BBD)

### **Gujarat Govt Appoints Uday Kotak as Chairman of GIFT City**

The Gujarat Government, led by Chief Minister (CM) Bhupendra Patel, appointed industrialist and veteran banker **Uday Suresh Kotak** as the **Chairman** of Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Company Limited (**GIFTCL**), with immediate effect.

- He replaces **Hasmukh Adhia**, a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and former Secretary of Ministry of Finance(MoF), who had been serving as the non-executive chairman of GIFT City since June 19, 2023.

### **About Uday Suresh Kotak:**

**Profile:** He is one of India's most distinguished bankers and entrepreneurs, renowned as the founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited(KMBL), one of the nation's top private-sector banks.

**Previous roles:** He is the Non-Executive Non-Independent Director of KMBL and served as Managing Director (MD) & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) until 1 September 2023.

**Awards:** He received **Padma Bhushan** in **2026** in the field of Trade and Industry.

### **Tarique Rahman Sworn in as 11th PM of Bangladesh**

Tarique Rahman, the Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), was sworn in as the **11th Prime Minister (PM) of Bangladesh** after the formation of a new government following the 2026 general elections. He became the first PM of Bangladesh following the July Revolution.

- Tarique Rahman's swearing-in ended the 18-month interim administration led by **Muhammad Yunus**, who served as Chief Adviser from August 2024 to February 2026 and resigned on 16 February 2026.

### **Bangladesh Transition 2026:**

**Oath:** The swearing-in ceremony held at the Bangabhaban (Presidential Palace) in Dhaka, where the oath of office was administered by Mohammed Shahabuddin, President of Bangladesh.

- Alongside the PM, 25 cabinet ministers and 24 state ministers took their oaths.

**Electoral Mandate:** In the 2026 general elections, the BNP and its allies won 212 of 299 seats in the 13th parliamentary polls, which recorded a 59.44% voter turnout.

- The Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies secured 77 seats, the National Citizen Party (NCP) won 6 seats, and Independents claimed 7 seats.

### **Rob Arnoldus Adrianus Jetten Sworn in as Youngest PM of the Netherlands**

Rob Arnoldus Adrianus Jetten was sworn in as the youngest-ever Prime Minister(PM) of the Netherlands at the age of 38, also becoming the **country's first openly gay** head of government, marking a historic milestone in Dutch politics and inclusive leadership.

- He succeeded Dick Schoof, who served as Prime Minister from 2024 and continued in a caretaker role after the government collapsed in June 2025 until the new coalition took office.
- The swearing-in ceremony was administered by Willem-Alexander, King of the Netherlands, at Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague, Netherlands.

### **Background:**

**Formation of the Coalition Government:** Rob Jetten leads a minority coalition government formed after a closely contested election held in October 2025, in which his centrist, pro-European party, **Democrats 66 (D66)**, emerged strongly and later forged a coalition with the Christian Democrats (CDA) and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD).  
**Parliamentary Strength:** The coalition commands 66 of the 150 seats in the lower house of the Dutch Parliament, necessitating continuous cooperation with opposition parties to secure legislative approval.

### **Abhinav Bindra Concludes IOC Athletes' Commission Tenure**

Indian shooting legend **Abhinav Bindra**, India's first individual Olympic gold-medallist, announced the completion of his **eight-year tenure** (2018-2026) as **Vice-Chair of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission**

- He was succeeded by Humphrey Kayange, a Kenyan rugby player, as the Second Vice-Chair IOC Athletes' Commission during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games.

### **About Abhinav Bindra:**

**Olympic Gold:** Abhinav Bindra became India's first individual Olympic gold medalist by winning the men's 10-metre (m) air rifle at the 2008 Summer Olympics, Beijing, China, and was the first Indian to simultaneously hold both the World Championship (2006) and Olympic titles in the same event.

**Major Games:** His achievements include seven medals at the Commonwealth Games (CWG) and three at the Asian Games (AG).

**Honours:** He received the Arjuna Award (in 2000), Major Dhyana Chand Khel Ratna (in 2002), and Padma Bhushan (in 2009) for his contribution in the field of Sports.

**Authorship:** He penned *A Shot at History: My Obsessive Journey to Olympic Gold* (2011), published by HarperCollins India.

**IOC Journey:** He was elected as a member IOC in 2018, elevated to the position of Vice Chair in 2024, and his current term is set to conclude in 2028.

**About IOC's Athletes' Commission:** It consists of Chair Pau Gasol and three Vice-Chairs Maja Włoszczowska, Humphrey Kayange, and Oluseyi Smith and 10 elected and 7 appointed members. It was established in 1981.

### **Legendary Indian Cricketer Sachin Tendulkar Appointed as UN Global Road Safety Champion**

Legendary Indian cricketer **Sachin Tendulkar** was designated a **Global Champion for Road Safety** by the United Nations (UN), joining other international figures to support global road safety awareness efforts.

### **About Make a Safety Statement Campaign:**

**Participation:** He released a video promoting safe road practices under the UN-JCDecaux #MakeASafetyStatement campaign.

**Launches:** **Jean Todt**, the Special Envoy for Road Safety of United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, launched "**Make A Safety Statement**", in New Delhi, Delhi.

**Safety Actions Promotion:** The campaign promotes everyday safety actions such as wearing seat belts and helmets, observing speed limits, avoiding mobile phone use while driving, not driving under the influence, and respecting pedestrians and cyclists.

**Digital Billboards:** The digital billboards and posters with campaign messages will appear in

New Delhi, Mumbai (Maharashtra), Chennai (Tamil Nadu, TN), and Bengaluru (Karnataka).

**Sustainable Road Safety Initiative:** Alongside the campaign, the UN launched the ‘Sustainable Financing for Road Safety in India – A Collaborative Approach’ project under the UN Road Safety Fund, implemented with technical support from World Health Organization(WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund(UNICEF), and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific(UNESCAP).

### **IAS Officer Nidhi Chhibber Given Additional Charge as CEO of NITI Aayog**

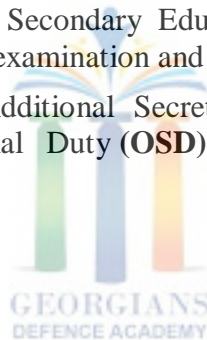
The Appointments Committee of the **Cabinet (ACC)**, chaired by Prime Minister (**PM Narendra Modi**) gave the additional charge of Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) of National Institute of Transforming India (**NITI Aayog**) to Indian Administrative Service (**IAS**) officer **Nidhi Chhibber**.

- She assumed the role on February 24, 2026, following the completion of the tenure of **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam**, CEO of NITI Aayog.

### **About Nidhi Chhibber:**

**Career:** Currently, she serves as the Director General of the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (**DMEO**) at NITI Aayog.

- She led the Central Board of Secondary Education (**CBSE**), India’s largest national education board and oversaw examination and policy reforms during her tenure.
- Earlier, she also served as Additional Secretary in NITI Aayog. She was briefly appointed Officer on Special Duty (**OSD**) in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (**MoFPI**).



## Honours/ Awards

### Patna Bird Sanctuary & Chhari-Dhand Designated as India's 97th & 98th Ramsar Sites

Union Minister **Bhupender Yadav**, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), announced that **Patna Bird Sanctuary** in Etah, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and **Chhari-Dhand** in Kutch, Gujarat were designated as **Ramsar wetlands** of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

- With this move, the total Ramsar sites in India have grown to **98**.

#### About Newly Added Ramsar Sites:

**Patna Bird Sanctuary:** The Patna Bird Sanctuary, spanning an area of approximately 109 hectares, is located at Patna village in Etah. It is located on the banks of the Upper Ganga Canal, which provides water to the wetland.

- It is a key habitat for migratory and resident birds, especially during the winter season. It supports diverse avian species, including waterfowl such as ducks, geese; waders and shorebirds; and Kingfishers, herons, egrets, and other wetland birds.

**Chhari-Dhand:** Chhari-Dhand is situated in the Kutch district, part of the Great Rann of Kutch. It is a seasonal wetland, forming a shallow water body during the monsoon and drying out in the summer.

- It is surrounded by salt flats and desert-like terrain, making it a unique ecosystem in western India.

#### Ramsar Sites in India:

**First Sites:** Chilka Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (NP) (Rajasthan) were designated as India's first Ramsar sites in 1981.

**Top Ramsar Sites:** Tamil Nadu (TN) with 20 Ramsar Sites, followed by UP with 11 sites and Odisha with 6 sites, are the top 3 states in India by number of Ramsar sites.

**Largest Ramsar Site:** The Sundarban Wetland in West Bengal (WB) is the largest Ramsar Site in India, covering an area of 4,230 Km<sup>2</sup>.

**Smallest Ramsar Site:** Renuka Lake in Himachal Pradesh (HP) is the smallest Ramsar Site in India, with an area of just 0.2 km<sup>2</sup>.

### SAIL Earns 'Great Place to Work' Certification for Third Consecutive Time

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a Maharatna Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) and India's largest steelmaker, earned the '**Great Place to Work**' certification for the period **February 2026 to February 2027**.

- This marks the **third consecutive year** that SAIL has received the certification, following a company-wide assessment conducted by the Great Place To Work Institute, India.

#### About SAIL's Recognition:

**Commitment:** This recognition reflects SAIL's commitment to nurture a workplace culture that is contemporary, agile and deeply aligned with the professional and personal growth of its people.

**Assessment :** SAIL achieved a notable increase in its TRUST INDEX© score, indicating a high

level of positive feedback from employees during the evaluation.

**Performance Transparency:** SAIL continues to introduce progressive Human Resource (HR) initiatives, with *SAIL DARPAN* promoting a transparent, performance-driven system that ensures objective evaluation, aligned target setting, and empowers employees to take ownership of their growth.

### **68th Grammy Awards 2026: Dalai Lama, K-Pop Win First Grammys, Bad Bunny Wins Album of the Year**

The 14th **Dalai Lama**, Tenzin Gyatso, won his first Grammy Award in the Best Audio Book, Narration, and Storytelling Recording category for “**Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama**”, a project blending his spoken reflections with music and cultural elements, at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, United States of America (USA).

- Singer-songwriter **Rufus Wainwright** accepted the award on behalf of Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso.
- The track “**Golden**” from KPop Demon Hunters won Best Song Written for Visual Media, marking the first Grammy win for a Korean Pop (K-Pop).

### **Highlights of the Grammy Awards 2026:**

#### **Major Four Categories:**

**Best Music Film:** Steven Spielberg earned his first Grammy for Best Music Film as a producer on Music for John Williams, a documentary honoring John Williams’ career.

**Album of the Year:** Bad Bunny won the Album of the Year (AOTY) award for *Debi Tirar Mas Fotos*, marking the first win for a Spanish language album.

**Record of the Year:** The song “Luther”, a collaborative track by Kendrick Lamar and SZA, won the Record of the Year award.

**Song of the Year:** The song “Wildflower”, written by Billie Eilish and Finneas O’Connell, won the Song of the Year award.

**Best New Artist:** Olivia Dean, singer-songwriter, won the Best New Artist award.

### **Union Minister Rajnath Singh Approves Miniratna Category-I Status for Yantra India**

Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD), approved **Miniratna Category-I status** for Yantra India Limited (**YIL**), a Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU).

- With Miniratna Category-I status, YIL’s board can approve capital expenditure up to **Rs.500 crore** on projects and equipment without prior government approval, boosting operational and financial autonomy.

#### **About Yantra India Limited:**

**Formation :** YIL was established on 1 October 2021 after the corporatisation of the former Ordnance Factory Board(OFB) into seven new DPSUs. It is a Schedule ‘A’ DPSU under the Department of Defence Production(DDP) under the MoD.

**Products:** The main products of YIL include carbon fibre composites, ammunition assemblies, armoured vehicle parts, artillery guns, Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), glass composites, aluminium alloys, etc.

**YIL’s Performance:** The sales of YIL grew from Rs.956.32 crores in Second Half (H2) of Financial Year 2021-22 (FY 22) to Rs.3,108.79 crores in FY 25.

### Indian-Origin Climate Scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan Awarded 2026 Crafoord Prize in Geosciences

Indian-origin climate scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan was awarded the 2026 Crafoord Prize in Geosciences by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, one of the highest international honour described as the ‘Nobel of Geosciences’.

- He recognised for decades of pioneering climate research, particularly on aerosols, super-pollutants, and atmospheric brown clouds, which have reshaped the understanding of global warming and the Earth’s energy balance.
- The award will be presented during Crafoord Days in Stockholm and Lund, Sweden, in May 2026.

#### About Veerabhadran Ramanathan:

**Profile:** He is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego in California, United States of America (USA) and serves as an adjunct professor in global development at Cornell University(USA).

**Scientific Contributions:** In 1975, he discovered that Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) trap heat up to 10,000 times more efficiently than Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), a groundbreaking revelation in climate science.

**Key Research Initiative:** He spearheaded major projects like the Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX), which identified widespread atmospheric brown clouds over South Asia and demonstrated their impact on regional climate, including weakened monsoons and accelerated glacier melting.

### Indian Teacher Rouble Nagi Wins Global Teacher Prize 2026

Rouble Nagi, an Indian teacher and social activist, won the Global Teacher Prize 2026, which is described as the “Nobel Prize for Teaching”, at the World Government Summit held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

#### About the Global Teacher Prize:

**Overview:** An annual international award honouring an exceptional teacher for outstanding contributions to education and society.

**Background:** The award was instituted in 2014 by Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) Education and the Varkey Foundation, in collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

**Cash Prize:** The award includes a cash prize of USD 1 million, awarded to one winner every year.

#### About Rouble Nagi:

**Profile:** Rouble Nagi, an Indian teacher, artist, and social reformer from Mumbai (Maharashtra), is widely known for integrating art with education to drive social change. She transitioned from conventional teaching to grassroots social intervention.

- She worked directly in villages and urban slums, focusing on children who had never attended school or were at risk of dropping about.

**Founder:** She founded the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation (RNAF) to institutionalise her work, designing education programmes, mobilising communities, and training volunteers.

- Through RNAF, she established 800+ learning centres across India and created educational murals in public spaces to teach literacy, maths, science, and history.

#### **About Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) Education:**

**Chairman** – Sunny Varkey

**Headquarters** – Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Established** – 1959

#### **Smriti Mandhana Named BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025**

The 6th edition of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Indian Sportswoman of the Year (ISWOTY) Awards 2025 was held in New Delhi, Delhi recognising the outstanding achievements of Indian sportswomen across various disciplines.

- Star cricketer Smriti Mandhana was honoured with the BBC ISWOTY 2025 for playing a key role in India's 2025 International Cricket Council (ICC) Women's World Cup triumph with 434 runs as vice-captain and for captaining Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to their second Women's Premier League (WPL) title.

#### **Other Significant Awards from the Ceremony:**

**BBC Emerging Player of the Year 2025:** Divya Deshmukh was awarded the BBC Emerging Player of the Year 2025 in recognition of her landmark Women's World Cup triumph.

**BBC Para-Sportswoman of the Year 2025:** Preethi Pal was recognised as the BBC Para-Sportswoman of the Year 2025 for her outstanding Paralympic performance.

**BBC Lifetime Achievement Award 2025:** Anjali Bhagwat was conferred with the Lifetime Achievement Award 2025 in recognition of her trailblazing contributions to Indian shooting.

#### **About British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC):**

**Director-General (DG)** – Timothy Douglas Davie

**Headquarters** – London, United Kingdom (UK)

**Established** – 1922

#### **Union Minister Rajnath Singh Felicitates 'Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Award 2026' in Coimbatore, TN**

Union Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Ministry of Defence (MoD), felicitated distinguished individuals with the **inaugural Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Award** during the **Mahashivaratri celebrations** at the Isha Yoga Centre, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu (TN).

#### **About Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Award:**

**Institution:** The award, was launched in 2026 by the Isha Foundation under Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, is a national-level honour presented annually.

**Categories:** Presented across seven key categories including Science and Technology, Arts and Culture, Sports, National Security, Corporate Leadership, Literature, and Community Welfare.

**2026 Awardees:** Nambi Narayanan and A. S. Kiran Kumar were honoured for space research, Alarmel Valli and N. Rajam for contributions to classical arts, Vikram Sampath for literature, Saina Nehwal for sports, and the Indian Armed Forces for service during Operation Sindoor.

#### **India's Vasai Cathedral Wins 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation**

The 475-year-old Our Lady of Grace Cathedral, located in Vasai, Maharashtra, received the Award of Merit at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization(UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2025, becoming the only religious site from India to receive recognition.

- The announcement was made in Bangkok, Thailand, during the **25th anniversary** ceremony of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, where **ten projects** from six countries were recognised.

#### **About 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation:**

**Award Categories:** The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation are presented under four categories: Award of Distinction, Award of Merit, Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts, and Special Recognition for Sustainable Development.

**Participation:** A total of 90 entries from 16 countries were assessed by a seven-member international jury, marking the highest number of submissions in the Awards' history.

**Projects Recognised in 2025:** The 2025 edition honoured **10 outstanding projects** from six countries: **China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and Vanuatu.**

- The Award of Distinction, the highest honour in 2025, was jointly conferred on the Sihang Warehouse Conservation Project in Shanghai, China, and the Iwami Ginzan Library Conservation Project in Oda, Japan.
- Notably, Nepal secured two Awards of Merit in 2025.

#### **Manipuri Film 'Boong' Wins BAFTA Award for Best Children's & Family Film**

The Manipuri-language film '**Boong**', became the **first Indian** film to win the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (**BAFTA**) Award for **Best Children's & Family Film** at the 79th edition of the ceremony held at the Royal Festival Hall in London, the United Kingdom (UK).

- At the ceremony the trophy was presented by Paddington Bear from Paddington The Musical, and Bollywood actor Alia Bhatt attended as a guest presenter.

#### **About the film 'Boon'g:**

**Film:** Boong is a Manipuri-language coming-of-age comedy-drama directed by debutant Lakshmi Priya Devi and produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani under Excel Entertainment.

**Plot:** It follows a young boy, Boong, who embarks on a journey with his friend Raju to reunite his mother Mandakini with his father Joykumar.

**Acting Honours:** In the acting categories, Robert Aramayo won Best Leading Actor for his role in 'I Swear', while Jessie Buckley received Best Leading Actress for 'Hamnet', which also earned the Outstanding British Film award.

#### **Mangaluru Airport Wins 2025 Global ASQ Best Arrivals Award for Second Consecutive Year**

Mangaluru International Airport (MIA), Mangaluru, Karnataka, was honoured with the 2025 Airports Service Quality (ASQ) Customer Experience Award in the 'Best Airport at Arrivals' category, marking its second consecutive win.

#### **About 2025 ASQ Awards:**

**Organiser:** The Airports Council International (ACI), in partnership with gold sponsor International Aeronautical Telecommunications Society (**SITA**), organises the ASQ Awards.

**Key Categories:** Awards included Best Airports at Arrivals (6 airports), Best Airports at Departures (88 airports), Most Dedicated Staff (23 airports), Easiest Airport Journey (26 airports), Most Enjoyable Airport (23 airports), and Cleanest Airport (29 airports).

**Indian Airports:**

- **At Arrivals category:** Out of six global winners in Best Airports at **Arrivals**, four were from India: MIA (Mangaluru, Karnataka), Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport (Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, UP), Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (Hyderabad, Telangana), and Kempegowda International Airport (Bengaluru, Karnataka).
- **At Departures category:** In the over 40 million passengers/year category, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (Mumbai, Maharashtra) and Indira Gandhi International Airport (New Delhi, Delhi) were recognized, while Lucknow's CCS International Airport topped the 5–15 million passengers/year segment.



# Sports

## **Australian Open 2026: Carlos Alcaraz & Elena Rybakina Win Men's and Women's Singles Title**

Carlos Alcaraz from Spain won the Men's Singles title while Elena Rybakina from Kazakhstan won the Women's Singles title at the Australian Open (AO) 2026, the first Grand Slam of the year, was held at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, from January 18 to February 1, 2026.

- It was the **114th edition** of the tournament, the **58th** in the Open Era.

### **Highlights of Australian Open 2026:**

**Men's Singles:** Spain's Carlos Alcaraz **defeated Novak Djokovic** 2–6, 6–2, 6–3, 7–5 to win his first Australian Open title. At 22 years and 272 days, he became the **youngest man** in the Open Era to complete a career Grand Slam, surpassing Don Budge's record from 1938.

**Women's Singles :** Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina defeated World No.1 Aryna Sabalenka 6–4, 4–6, 6–4 to claim her second Grand Slam singles title and became the **first Kazakh woman** to win the Australian Open singles crown.

**Men's Doubles:** Christian Harrison (the United States of America, USA) and Neal Skupski (the United Kingdom, UK) defeated Australia's Jason Kubler and Marc Polmans 7–6(7–4), 6–4 to win the title.

**Women's Doubles:**Elise Mertens (Belgium) and Zhang Shuai (China) defeated Anna Danilina(Kazakhstan) and Aleksandra Krunic(Serbia) 7–6(7–4), 6–4 to win the title.

**Mixed Doubles:** Australia's Olivia Gadecki & John Peers defeated France's Kristina Mladenovic & Manuel Guinard 4–6, 6–3, [10–8], becoming the first team since 1989 to defend the Australian Open mixed doubles title.

**Australian Open Deaf Championships 2026:** Italian player **Marco Carretta** won both Men's Singles and Doubles titles at the 2026 Australian Open Deaf Tennis Slam in Melbourne Park, marking a historic double victory in the Deaf tennis category.

DEFENCE ACADEMY

## **Devika Sihag Claimed Maiden Super 300 Title at Thailand Masters 2026**

Indian Shuttler Devika Sihag (from Haryana) won her maiden Badminton World Federation (BWF) Super 300 title after Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei retired midway through the women's singles final of the Thailand Masters 2026 held in Bangkok, Thailand.

- In the Men's Singles category, Mohammad Zaki Ubaidillah(Indonesia) clinched the title in the final match of Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters which carries a cash prize of USD 250,000.

### **About Thailand Masters 2026:**

**3rd Indian Women:** With this victory, she became only the third Indian woman to win a BWF Super 300 title, following two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu and Olympic bronze medallist Saina Nehwal.

**Other Key Accomplishments:** She won her 1st BWF International Title at the Malaysia International in August 2025.

- She finished runner-up at the Indonesia Masters Super 100 and competed for 4 BWF titles in 2024, winning trophies at the Swedish Open and Portugal International.

### **Royal Challengers Bengaluru Clinch 2nd WPL Title 2026 Against Delhi Capitals**

Royal Challengers Bengaluru Women's cricket team (**RCB-W**) clinched their **second** Women's Premier League (**WPL**) **title 2026** by defeating Delhi Capitals Women's cricket team (**DC-W**) by **six wickets** in the **WPL 2026 final** held at Vadodara International Cricket Stadium, Vadodara (Gujarat).

- The **4th edition** of the tournament was held from **9th January to 5th February 2026** in Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Vadodara (Gujarat).
- The TATA Group is the title sponsor of the WPL 2026

### **About Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026:**

**Overview:** WPL is a women's franchise Twenty20 (T20) cricket league organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

**Teams:** WPL featured five teams namely Gujarat Giants – Women cricket team (GG-W), RCB-W, Mumbai Indians – Women cricket team (MI-W), DC-W and UP Warriorz – Women cricket team (UPW-W).

**Format:** The tournament follows a double round-robin league stage followed by playoffs to determine the champion.

**Prize Money:** The winners **RCB-W** received a cash prize of Rs 6 crore, while the runner-up **DC-W** received Rs 3 crore.

**First Edition:** The inaugural WPL season was held in 2023 and was won by MI-W after defeating DC-W in the final.

### **Highlights of WPL 2026 Finals:**

**Chase:** RCB-W chased 204/4 in 19.4 overs, achieving the highest successful run chase in WPL final history.

**Captain:** Smriti Mandhana led RCB-W and scored 87 off 41 balls, finishing as WPL 2026's leading run-scorer with 377 runs.

**Partnership:** Mandhana and Georgia Voll (79 off 54) stitched a 165-run second-wicket stand, the highest in a WPL final.

**Records:** DC's 203/4 became the highest first-innings total in a WPL final, and finished as runners-up for the fourth consecutive season while RCB-W's win marked their second WPL title, joining MI-W as the most successful teams.

### **India Wins Sixth ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Title 2026 by Defeating England**

India's Under-19(U19) men's cricket team clinched their record sixth International Cricket Council (ICC) U19 Men's Cricket World Cup(CWC) title by defeating England by 100 runs in the final at Harare Sports Club, Zimbabwe, as the **16th edition** of the tournament was held from **15 January to 6 February 2026** across Zimbabwe and Namibia.

- India's victory was highlighted by **Vaibhav Suryavanshi's** remarkable 175-run knock off 80 balls, the highest individual score ever achieved in a U19 World Cup final, reaching 150 in 71 deliveries and ending the tournament with 439 runs and 30 sixes.

### **Overview of ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026:**

**Leadership:** Captain Ayush Mhatre scored 53 off 51 balls and shared a 142-run second-wicket partnership with Vaibhav Suryavanshi to rebuild the innings.

**India Innings:** India posted 411/9 in 50 overs, the highest total ever recorded in a U19 World Cup final, with contributions from Abhigyan Kundu (40), Kanishk Chouhan (37), Vedant

Trivedi (32) and Vihaan Malhotra (30).

**Bowling Effort:** RS Ambrish led India's bowling with 3/56, supported by Deepesh Devendran (2/64) and Kanishk Chouhan (2/63).

**England Chase:** Led by captain Thomas Rew, England Under-19s were bowled out for 311 in 40.2 overs despite notable contributions from Caleb Falconer (115), Ben Dawkins (66) and Ben Mayes (45).

**Player of the Match (Final):** Vaibhav Suryavanshi (India)

**Player of the Tournament:** Vaibhav Suryavanshi (India) – 439 runs, 30 sixes, average 62.71, strike rate 169.49

**Leading Run-Scorer:** Ben Mayes (England) – 444 runs in 7 matches

**Leading Wicket-Taker:** Manny Lumsden (England) – 16 wickets in 7 matches

**Highest Score of the Tournament:** Viran Chamuditha (Sri Lanka) – 192

**Best Bowling Figures:** Shaquan Belle (West Indies) – 6/40

#### **About International Cricket Council (ICC):**

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Sanjog Gupta

**Headquarters** – Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Established** – 1909

#### **Services Defeat Kerala to Clinch 8th Santosh Trophy Title 2025-26 in Assam**

Services Football Team clinched their eighth Santosh Trophy title 2025-26 by defeating Kerala Football Team 1–0 in extra time in the 79th National Football Championship final at Dhakuakhana Football Stadium, Assam.

- The tournament was held from 15 December 2025 to 8 February 2026.

#### **About Santosh Trophy 2025–26:**

**Organiser:** The Santosh Trophy, founded in 1941 and organised by the All India Football Federation (AIFF), is India's premier senior national football championship.

**Teams Participated:** A total of 38 teams participated in the tournament with the 12 teams in the Final Round divided into two groups of six each.

**Services Composition:** The team is managed by the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) and consists of players serving in the Indian Army (IA), Indian Navy (IN), and Indian Air Force (IAF).

**Winning Goal:** Abhishek Pawar scored the decisive goal in the 109th minute to seal the title for Services.

**Prize:** Services earned Rs. 5 lakh as winners and Kerala received Rs. 3 lakh as runners-up.

#### **India Tops Medal Tally with 94 Medals at Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2026 in Delhi**

India topped the medal table for the second consecutive year with a remarkable haul of 94 medals, comprising 51 gold, 23 silver, and 20 bronze across senior and junior events at the 17th edition of the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2026, held from February 2 to 14, 2026 at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi (Delhi).

- **Kazakhstan** secured the position of second rank with 26 medals (3 Gold, 16 Silver, 7 Bronze), while **Uzbekistan** finished as the third with 4 medals (3 Gold, 1 Silver).

#### **About Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2026:**

**Organisers:** The championship, organized by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI)

under the supervision of the Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC).

**Participants:** Featured over 300 athletes from 20 countries.

**Events:** Competitions were held in senior and junior categories, covering individual and team events in rifle and pistol disciplines, including Olympic and non-Olympic events such as 10 metre(m) Air Rifle, 10m Air Pistol, 25m Pistol, and 50m Rifle 3 Positions.

### **Magnus Carlsen Wins Inaugural FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship in Germany**

Norwegian Grandmaster (GM) **Magnus Carlsen** won the the first-ever International Chess Federation or Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) **Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026** held in **Weissenhaus, Germany** from 13–15 February 2026, by defeating United States of America (USA) GM **Fabiano Caruana** in the final with a score of 2.5–1.5.

- This victory marks Magnus Carlsen’s **21st world title** across various formats (Classical, Rapid, Blitz, and Freestyle/Chess960), further consolidating his position as one of the greatest players in the history of the sport.

### **About FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship 2026:**

**Organiser:** FIDE and Freestyle Chess Operations GmbH

**Prize Fund:** The total prize fund was **USD 300,000**, with Magnus Carlsen receiving USD 100,000 for first place, Fabiano Caruana receiving USD 60,000 for second place, and Nodirbek Abdusattorov receiving USD 40,000 for third place.

**Qualification:** The top three finishers Carlsen, Caruana, and Abdusattorov directly qualified for the **2027 Freestyle World Championship**.

**Other Highlights:** Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzbekistan) secured third place by defeating Vincent Keymer (Germany) 2.5–1.5..

- Vincent Keymer (Germany) finished fourth after losing to Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzbekistan) 1.5–2.5 and earned USD 30,000.

GEORGIAN'S  
DEFENCE ACADEMY

### **Padma Awardee Pankaj Advani Wins Inaugural Liber Win Champions Cup 2026**

Pankaj Advani, Indian billiards, snooker player and Padma awardee, won the inaugural Liber Win Champions Cup 2026 by defeating Kamal Chawla 6–3 in a best-of-11 final at the Karnataka State Billiards Association (KSBA) in Bengaluru (Karnataka).

- Following his victory, Pankaj Advani was named **Liber Win’s Indian Brand Ambassador**, joining global stars Ronnie O’Sullivan, John Higgins, Mark Selby, and Shaun Murphy.

### **About Liber Win Champions Cup 2026:**

**Overview:** It is a professional invitational snooker tournament sponsored by Liber Win Cloth that features top cue sport players while promoting elite competition and supporting the growth of cue sports in India.

**Highlights:** The three-day invitational event featured 16 top professional cueists, Kamal Chawla registering the highest break of 140, and both finalists staging 5–4 comeback wins in the semi-finals against Laxman Rawat and Sourav Kothari respectively.

### **IPC Lifts Ban on Russia & Belarus for Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics**

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) **lifted the ban** on athletes from **Russia** and **Belarus**, confirming that they will be allowed to compete under their national flags at the Milano Cortina **2026 Winter Paralympics**, scheduled from 6–15 March 2026 in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

- The decision permits the display of national flags and the playing of national anthems if athletes win medals.

#### **Key Highlights:**

**Background :** Russian athletes were initially banned in **2022** due to the Ukraine conflict and previously competed only as neutrals. This marks the first return of Russia's flag at the Winter Paralympics since 2014, following earlier doping and geopolitical bans.

**Russia Quota:** The IPC allocated six quota slots to Russia, including one male and one female athlete each in para-alpine skiing and para-cross country skiing, along with two male athletes in para-snowboard.

**Belarus Quota:** The IPC allocated four quota slots to Belarus, comprising one male and three female athletes in cross-country skiing.

**Scope:** The IPC ruling applies only to the Winter Paralympics and does not automatically extend to the 2026 Winter Olympics.

### **Overview of 2026 Winter Olympics Held in Italy; Norway Tops Medal Tally**

The XXV Winter Olympic Games, officially known as Milano Cortina 2026, were held from 6 to 22 February 2026 across multiple venues in Lombardy and Northeast Italy, including Milan, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Bormio, and Val di Fiemme, marking the first time two cities officially co-hosted the Games.

- **Norway** topped the medal tally with 18 gold, 12 silver, and 11 bronze medals (total 41), followed by the United States of America (USA) with 12 gold, 12 silver, and 9 bronze medals (total 33), while the **Netherlands** secured third place with 10 gold, 7 silver, and 3 bronze medals (total 20).

#### **About XXV Winter Olympic Games:**

**Venues:** Events were held across four clusters—Milan (ice events), Cortina d'Ampezzo (women's alpine and sliding sports), Valtellina/Livigno (freestyle and snowboard), and Val di Fiemme (Nordic events).

**Organiser:** The Games were organised under the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the presidency of Kirsty Coventry, marking the first Olympics under her leadership.

**Sports:** Games featured 16 winter sports, including: Alpine Skiing, Biathlon, Cross-Country Skiing, Snowboarding, Freestyle Skiing, Ski Jumping, Figure Skating, Speed Skating, Short Track Speed Skating, Ice Hockey, Curling, Bobsleigh, Skeleton, Luge, Nordic Combined, and Ski Mountaineering.

**Italy:** Host nation Italy finished fourth in the medal standings with 10 gold, 6 silver, and 14 bronze medals (total 30), marking its best-ever Winter Olympic performance.

**India:** India fielded a two-member contingent—Arif Mohammad Khan (Alpine Skiing), who registered the nation's best-ever finish in men's slalom, and Stanzin Lundup (Cross-Country Skiing)—though the country did not secure a medal.

**World record:** Xandra Velzeboer is a Dutch short track speed skater who won gold medals in

the 500 metres (m) and 1000 m at the 2026 Winter Olympics, setting a world record in the 500 m semi-finals.

### **Belgium's Hanne Vandewinkel Clinches ITF W100 Bengaluru Women's Singles Title**

Belgium's Hanne Vandewinkel defeated India's Shrivalli Bhamidipaty Adkar for 6-0,6-1, in the final to clinch KPB Family Trust International Tennis Federation (ITF) Women's 100 (W100) Bengaluru Tournament held from 16 to 22 February 2026 at SM Krishna Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

#### **About ITF W100 Bengaluru Women's Singles Title:**

**Cash Prize:** Vandewinkel, seeded third and ranked around World No:124, earned 100 Women's Tennis Association (WTA) ranking points and USD 15,239 as prize money.

- Vaishnavi Adkar from Pune (Maharashtra) ranked around World No: 690, earned 65 ranking points and USD 8,147 despite the loss.

**India's Significance:** Vaishnavi Adkar became the first Indian woman since Sania Mirza(2009) to reach an ITF W100 final.

### **Indian Army Won 6th Edition of Khelo India Winter Games 2026 Team Championship Title in J&K**

The Indian Army (IA) successfully defended its team championship title at the **6th edition** of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) **2026**, which concluded its second leg held at **Gulmarg Golf Course, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) on 23-26 February 2026**, having secured a total of **nine gold medals**, eight from Gulmarg and one from the first leg of KIWG 2026 which was held in Leh, Ladakh from 20–26 January 2026.

- The IA emerged as overall champion with a total of 23 medals including 9 gold, 6 silver and 8 bronze followed by Himachal Pradesh (HP) with a total of 14 medals including 6 gold, 7 silver and 1 bronze and Haryana secured third place with 7 total medals including 4 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze.

#### **About Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) 2026:**

**Host:** The Games were hosted by the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council (JKSC) and managed by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

**Mascot:** Sheen-E-She (Shan), the Snow Leopard, symbolizes resilience, agility,

# Obituary

## Former CBSE Chairman and Padma Shri Father Thomas V.Kunnunkal Passed Away

Father Thomas V. Kunnunkal, a Jesuit priest and one of the most prominent personalities in India's post-Independence education system, passed away at the age of **99** in New Delhi, Delhi. He was born on July 03, 1926 in Alappuzha, Kerala.

- He was awarded with the **Padma Shri**, India's 4th highest civilian honor, in **1974** in the field of 'literature and education'.

### About Father Thomas V Kunnunkal :

**CBSE Chairman:** Father Kunnunkal widely known as **Father Stany**, served as Chairman of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) from 1980 to 1987.

**Other Key Roles:** He played a pivotal role in founding the **National Open School** in November 1989 as an autonomous organisation in pursuance of the National Education Policy (NEP 1986) by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

**Books:** In 2005, he published a book titled 'The Role of Teachers on National Regeneration'.

## Travel Writer and Padma Shri Awardee Hugh Gantzer Passed Away

A prominent travel **writer** and Padma Shri Awardee **Hugh Gantzer** passed away at the age of 95 in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. He was born on January 9, 1931, in Patna, Bihar.

- He was conferred with the **Padma Shri**, India's fourth highest civilian award, in the field of Literature and Education in 2025.

### About Hugh Gantzer:

**Profile:** He was widely known for his travel writing, bringing India's diverse landscapes and cultures to readers through books, articles, and travel documentaries.

**Career:** Earlier, he served in the Indian Navy (IN) and retired as a Commander before turning to full-time travel writing with his wife Colleen Gantzer.

- He was associated with The Times of India (ToI) for several decades and authored the iconic weekly column "Sexes and the City", which ran for over 40 years.

**Contributions:** He produced 52 documentaries for Doordarshan, authored over 30 books, and contributed travel columns to several leading English newspapers.

## Padma Awardee Dr. Andre Beteille Passed Away

Renowned Indian sociologist **Dr. Andre Beteille** passed away at the age of 91 in New Delhi, Delhi. He was born on 30 September 1934 in Chandannagar, West Bengal (WB).

- In **2005**, he was conferred **Padma Bhushan**, the third-highest civilian award, for his contributions in the field of **literature and education**.

### About Andre Beteille:

**Profile:** Beteille was a Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Delhi (New Delhi) and one of India's most respected scholars of caste, class, inequality and social change.

**Career:** He served as Professor of Sociology, teaching and mentoring generations of students who later became leading sociologists, civil servants, policymakers, and academics. He became the **Professor of Emeritus** in 2003.

**Author:** His influential books include **Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village** (1965), which is based on intensive fieldwork in a village in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu (TN). It transformed how Indian sociologists analyse social hierarchy.

- It also includes books such as *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* (1974), *Society and Politics in India: Essays in a Comparative Perspective* (1991), and *The Idea of Natural Inequality and Other Essays* (1983), *Universities at the Crossroads* (2010)

### **Oscar-Winning Actor Robert Duvall Passes Away**

Legendary American actor **Robert Selden Duvall**, best known for his iconic roles in the *Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, passed away at the age of **95** in Middleburg, Virginia, the United States of America (USA).

- He was born on January 05, 1931 in San Diego, California, the USA.

#### **About Robert Duvall:**

**Profile:** He was a legendary American actor and filmmaker, regarded as one of the finest performers in Hollywood history, with a career spanning over six decades.

**Breakthrough Role:** In 1962, he got his 1st film role as the mysterious Boo Radley in the adaptation of **‘To Kill a Mockingbird’**.

**Notable Work:** *Network* (1976), *The Great Santini* (1979), *The Eagle Has Landed* (1976), *The Natural* (1984), among others.

**7-time Oscar Nominee:** During his 60 years-long career in the film industry, he was nominated **7-time** for Oscars (Academy Awards).

- In 1983, he won the Award in the ‘Best Actor’ category for his performance in *Tender Mercies*.

**Other Nominations:** He also received a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), and Primetime Emmy Awards.

**Awards/Accolades:** He also won 4 Golden Globe award and was awarded a National Medal of Arts in 2004.

### **Oscar-Winning Filmmaker Frederick Wiseman Passed Away**

Renowned American documentary filmmaker **Frederick Wiseman** passed away at the age of 96 in Massachusetts, the United States of America (USA). He was born on January 1, 1930, in Boston, Massachusetts.

- In 2016, he received an Honorary **Academy Award** (Oscar) from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to documentary filmmaking.

#### **About Frederick Wiseman:**

**Profile:** He was an American documentary filmmaker and was widely regarded as a master of observational filmmaking.

**Career:** Over a career spanning more than five decades, he directed over 40 documentaries focusing on institutions such as schools, hospitals, courts, libraries, police departments, and cultural organizations.

**Notable Works:** He was best known for his influential documentaries such as *Titicut Follies*,

High School, Welfare, Juvenile Court, Boxing Gym, La Danse, Central Park, and Crazy Horse. He also directed 'The Last Letter', his only fiction feature film.

### **Shillong MP Ricky Andrew J Syngkon Passed Away**

Ricky Andrew J Syngkon, Member of Parliament (MP) from the Shillong constituency in Meghalaya, passed away at the age of 54 in Shillong. He was born on 6 January 1972 in Shillong.

#### **About Ricky Andrew J Syngkon:**

**Profile:** He was an assistant professor in Economics at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU).

**Political Entry:** He began his political journey with the Voice of the People Party (VPP), a Meghalaya-based regional party focused on local issues, community development, and grassroots empowerment.

**Parliamentary Role:** In the 2024 General Elections, he contested from the Shillong Lok Sabha constituency and defeated Vincent H. Pala of the Indian National Congress (INC), entering the 18th Lok Sabha as a first-time MP.

**Key Focus Areas:** During his tenure, he prioritised connectivity development, tribal welfare, youth empowerment, and inclusive governance.

### **Former Union Railway Minister Mukul Roy Passes Away**

Former Union Minister **Mukul Roy**, Ministry of Railway (MoR) and a founding member of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), passed away at the age of 71 in Kolkata, West Bengal (WB). He was born on 17 April 1954 in Kanchrapara, WB.

#### **About Mukul Roy:**

**Parliament:** He was first elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) to the Rajya Sabha in 2006 and re-elected for a subsequent term, and he served as the leader of the TMC in the Rajya Sabha 2009 to 2012.

**Ministry:** In the United Progressive Alliance (UPA II) government under Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh, he served as Minister of State (MoS) for Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) (2009–2011) and later as the 32nd Union Minister for MoR from March to September 2012.

## Important Days with theme

### Indian Coast Guard Day 2026 – February 1

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Day is observed annually on **1 February** to commemorate the establishment of the ICG under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and to honour its crucial role in safeguarding India's coastlines and enforcing maritime laws.

- **1 February 2026** marks the **50th Raising Day** of the ICG.

#### Background:

**Declaration:** The Indian Parliament declared ICG Day on 18 August 1978.

**First Observance:** The first ICG day was observed on 1 February, 1979.

#### History of Indian Coast Guard(ICG):

**Establishment:** In 1977, the Union Cabinet approved the creation of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), with 2 frigates and 5 patrol boats transferred from the Indian Navy (IN).

**Legal Formation:** The ICG was officially formed on **1 February 1977** under the Coast Guard Act, 1978.

- The ICG was formally inaugurated by the then Prime Minister(**PM**) **Morarji Desai** on **19 August 1978**.

**First Coast Guard Vessel:** In **1978**, the first Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS), **Kuthar (Pennant No. 31)**, was transferred from the Indian Navy(IN) to the ICG.

**Key Responsibilities:** It is responsible for maritime security and surveillance, search and rescue operations, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy actions, protection of fishermen, and disaster relief support during cyclones, floods, and other emergencies.

### World Wetlands Day 2026 – February 2

The United Nations (UN's) **World Wetlands Day (WWD)** is observed annually across the globe on **2 February** to raise global awareness about the importance of wetlands for environmental sustainability and human well-being.

- The day commemorated the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), signed on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, which celebrated its **50th anniversary** in 2026.

- **2026 Theme:** "Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage"

#### Background:

**Origins:** WWD was first observed in **1997**, organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and celebrated by its Contracting Parties.

**UN Status:** The day was declared a UN International Day by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) through Resolution A/RES/75/317, adopted on 30 August 2021.

**UN Observance:** The first UN-recognized World Wetlands Day was observed on **2 February 2022**.

#### Ramsar Convention on Wetlands:

**Total Ramsar sites:** As of January 2026, the Ramsar List remained the world's largest network of protected wetlands, with over 2,520 sites across 172 countries, covering nearly 2.5 million sq km.

**World's First:** The world's first Ramsar Site, **Cobourg Peninsula** in Australia, was designated in 1974.

### **World Cancer Day 2026 – February 4**

World Cancer Day (WCD) is observed annually across the globe on **4th February** to raise awareness about cancer prevention, early detection, and equitable access to treatment.

- 4 February 2026 marks the **27th observance** of WCD.
- **2026 Theme:** “United by Unique” is the second year of the three-year global campaign 2025-2027.

#### **Background:**

**Adoption:** On **February 4, 1999**, the Charter of Paris comprising 10 articles was adopted at the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium held in Paris, France.

**Proclamation:** Under Article X of the Charter of Paris, WCD was officially proclaimed to be observed annually on 4 February.

**First Observance:** The first observance of WCD held on **February 4, 2000**.

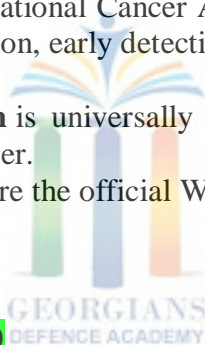
**Lead Initiative:** WCD is an initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), established in 2000 to unite and support the global cancer community.

**Related Observance:** India observes National Cancer Awareness Day annually on 7 November to raise awareness about cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment.

#### **Symbol:**

**Ribbon Symbol:** The **lavender ribbon** is universally recognized as a symbol of support for individuals affected by all forms of cancer.

**Awareness Colors:** **Blue and orange** are the official WCD colors, representing hope, solidarity, and collective action against cancer.



### **World Pulses Day 2026 – February 10**

The United Nations' (UN) World Pulses Day (WPD) is observed annually on **10th February** across the globe to highlight the critical role of pulses, such as lentils, chickpeas, beans, peas, and lupins, in achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agrifood systems.

- 10 February 2026 marks the **8th** observance of the WPD.

**2026 Theme:** “Pulses of the World: From Modesty to Excellence”

**Focus:** The theme highlights pulses as nutritious, versatile foods that support sustainable diets and climate-smart agriculture.

#### **Background:**

**UN Resolution:** On 20 December 2013, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** adopted Resolution A/RES/68/231 declaring 2016 as the International Year of Pulses to promote their nutritional and environmental benefits.

**Observance:** On 20 December 2018, the UNGA adopted Resolution A/RES/73/251 proclaiming 10 February as World Pulses Day, following a proposal by **Burkina Faso**.

**First Event:** The first-ever World Pulses Day was observed on 10 February 2019.

**FAO Role:** The observance was established after the successful implementation of the International Year of Pulses 2016 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

## 2026 Event:

**Event:** The main global celebration was organised by the FAO in partnership with the Kingdom of Spain at the Miguel Delibes Cultural Centre in Valladolid, Spain, marking only the second time the observance was held outside FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.

## World Radio Day 2026 – February 13

The United Nations (UN's) **World Radio Day (WRD)** is observed annually on **13th February** across the globe to honour the role of radio as a trusted communication medium.

- **2026 Theme:** “Radio and Artificial Intelligence(AI): AI is a tool, not a voice”

### Background:

**Resolution:** In **2011**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed February 13 as WRD during its 36th General Conference, following a proposal by the Spanish Radio Academy (Spain) in 2010.

**Adoption:** In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution A/RES/67/124, formally endorsing UNESCO's proclamation.

**First Observance:** The first WRD was observed on **February 13, 2012**.

### 2026 Event:

**WRD Conclave:** On 13th February 2026, **Akashvani Raipur**, a local broadcasting of All India Radio (AIR), in collaboration with UNESCO, organised the WRD Conclave 2026 in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, focusing on AI-driven accessibility and inclusive broadcasting.

## National Women's Day 2026 – February 13

National Women's Day is observed annually on 13 February across India to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu, popularly known as the 'Nightingale of India' and 'Bharat Kokila'.

- 13 February 2026 marks the **147th birth anniversary** of Sarojini Naidu.

### About Sarojini Naidu:

**Contribution to Women's Rights:** In 1917, she co-founded the Women's Indian Association (WIA) along with Annie Besant and other leaders to promote women's rights and welfare.

**Indian National Movement:** A key leader in India's freedom struggle, she played a significant role in the Indian Nationalist Movement and became the first woman President of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1925.

**Leadership:** In 1930, she became the President of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). In 1931, she was also appointed President of the All-Asian Women's Conference (AAWC).

**First Woman Governor:** Post-Independence, she became the first woman Governor of Independent India, serving as the Governor of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh, UP) from 15 August 1947 until her death.

## World Day of Social Justice 2026 – February 20

The United Nations (UN's) **World Day of Social Justice** is annually observed across the globe on **February 20** to promote awareness of social justice issues, including poverty alleviation, employment, gender equality, and equitable access to education, healthcare, and social services.

- **2026 Theme:** “Renewed Commitment to Social Development and Social Justice”.

### **Background:**

**Resolution:** On 26th November 2007, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution A/RES/62/10 during its 62nd session, declaring 20 February as World Day of Social Justice.

**First Observance:** Held on 20th February 2009.

### **2026 Events:**

**Global Event:** On 20 February 2026, a commemorative meeting was hosted by the Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN in collaboration with the ILO and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in New York, United States of America (USA).

**Event in India:** The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment (DoSJE) under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE), organised the World Day of Social Justice 2026 in collaboration with National Law University (NLU), Dwarka, New Delhi (Delhi).

### **Central Excise Day 2026 – February 24**

The Central Excise Day is annually observed across India on 24th February to commemorate the enactment of the **Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944**, and to honour the contributions of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (**CBIC**) in tax administration and national development.

- Central Excise Duty (CED) is an indirect tax levied and collected by the Government of India (GoI) on goods manufactured or produced within India for domestic consumption.

### **About Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944:**

**Enactment:** The Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944 was the first comprehensive legislation imposing excise duties on goods manufactured in India and consolidated 11 earlier excise laws into a unified framework.

**Amendments:** In 1966, the Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944 was renamed as the Central Excise Act, 1944, and in 1985, the Central Excise Tariff Act was enacted to prescribe detailed schedules outlining duty rates and valuation principles.

### **National Protein Day 2026 – February 27**

National Protein Day is annually observed across India on 27 February to educate people about the crucial role of **protein** in maintaining health, supporting growth and development, and promoting diverse protein-rich dietary options.

- 27th February 2026 marks the **7th observance** of National Protein Day in India.

### **Background:**

**Establishment:** National Protein Day began in India in 2020 with the launch of the “**Right to Protein**” (RTP) campaign, a national-level public health initiative to raise awareness about the importance of adequate protein consumption.

**1st Observance:** The first-ever National Protein Day was observed on **27th February 2020**.

**Global Campaign:** RTP Campaign, led by the United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC), promotes plant-based proteins, better nutrition, and public health awareness.