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National

MoF Notifies New Tax Structure for 'Sin Goods' from February 1, 2026

The Ministry of Finance (**MoF**), notified a revised tax framework for '**sin goods**' such as tobacco, pan masala and others, introducing an additional excise duty and a health cess to replace the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Compensation Cess, effective from **February 1, 2026**. **Key Details**

of the Revised Sin Goods Tax Structure:

Objective: The move seeks to rationalize GST rates on sin goods while balancing government revenue and public health goals.

GST Rates: Pan masala, cigarettes, and other tobacco products continue to attract **40% GST**, while biris remain taxed at **18%**.

- **New Levies:** From 1 February 2026, tobacco products will have an extra excise duty, and pan masala will incur a Health and National Security Cess, in addition to the existing GST.

Additional excise duty is set at 91% for gutkha, 82% for chewing tobacco and jarda scented tobacco, 33% for hookah, and Rs. 2,050–Rs. 8,500 per 1,000 sticks for cigarettes based on length and filter.

Valuation Rules: An Maximum Retail Price (MRP)-based valuation and machine-capacity-linked levy will apply to smokeless tobacco and gutkha under the 2026 packing machine rules.

India Overtakes Japan to Become World's 4th Largest Economy at USD 4.18 Trillion

The Government of India (**GoI**) announced that India has overtaken **Japan** to become the world's 4th largest economy with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at **USD 4.18 trillion**.

- With this, India now lags behind only the United States of America (USA) which continues to be the world's largest economy, followed by China (2nd) and Germany (3rd).

Key Details:

Other Key Projections: The GoI further mentioned that India is on track to surpass Germany and become the world's third-largest economy within the next 2.5–3 years, with its GDP projected to reach approximately **USD 7.3 trillion by 2030**.

GDP Growth: As per the GoI's official data, India's real GDP has increased by **8.2%** in 2nd Quarter(Q2: July-September) of Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26) compared to 7.8% and 7.4% recorded in Q1FY26 and Q4FY25, respectively.

Key Target: India aims to attain the High Middle-Income (HMI) status by **2047**, marking the centenary (100th) of the country's Independence.

Foreign Exchange Reserves: As of November 2025, India's foreign exchange reserves stood at USD 686.2 billion, providing a strong import cover of over 11 months.

Current Account Deficit (CAD): The CAD moderated from 2.2% of GDP in Q2 FY25 to **1.3%** in Q2 FY26. Inward remittances rose by 10.7% year-on-year in Q2 FY 2025-26.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): The FDI captured strong momentum in H1 FY26. From April to September 2025, Gross FDI grew 19.4% to USD 51.8 billion from USD 43.4 billion a year ago, while Net FDI surged 127.6% to USD 7.7 billion from USD 3.4 billion.

Indian Army Declares 2026 as 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity'

The Indian Army (IA) under the leadership of Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) **General Upendra Dwivedi**, declared **2026** as the '**Year of Networking & Data Centricity**', as part of the IA's official 2026 vision, to drive digital integration, enhance connectivity, enable real-time decision-making, and build a future-ready, technologically advanced force.

About Year of Networking & Data Centricity (2026):

Objective: It aims to treat data as a core operational asset to enhance situational awareness, decision speed, and combat effectiveness.

Transformation: The initiative supports the IA's decade-long transformation driven by reforms, jointness, innovation, and self-reliance.

Networking: Seamless digital connectivity is being established among soldiers, command centres, sensors, weapon platforms, intelligence, and logistics units.

Data-Centricity: Real-time collection, processing, and sharing of battlefield data enable simultaneous and precise actions across platforms.

Indigenisation: Indigenous communication systems, battlefield management platforms, and secure defence networks form the backbone of this initiative.

Previous Theme: The declaration builds on the 2024–25 'Year of Technology Absorption' by operationalising absorbed technologies.

Goa CM Pramod Sawant Launches New Edition of Book 'History That India Ignored'

Goa Chief Minister (CM) **Pramod Sawant** launched the second edition of the book titled '**History That India Ignored**', authored by **Prem Prakash**, a veteran journalist and the Chairman of Asian News International (ANI), in Panaji, Goa.

- The book was first published in April 2025 by Vitasta Publishing Private Limited.

About Book 'History That India Ignored':

Focus: The book revisits India's freedom struggle from lesser-known angles.

Content: It highlights unsung heroes, revolutionary movements, the Indian National Army (INA), and overlooked uprisings like the Vellore Mutiny (1806) and the Battle of Imphal.

Perspective: The book challenges mainstream narratives, showing that independence was shaped not just by popular non-violent movements but also by revolutionary resistance and marginalized contributors.

Significance: Reinforces the responsibility to preserve and teach overlooked historical events to students and history enthusiasts.

Indian Navy to Establish New Naval Base at Haldia, West Bengal

The Indian Navy (IN) initiated the establishment of a new naval base (detachment) at **Haldia**, West Bengal (WB), to strengthen its operational presence, maritime surveillance, and rapid response capabilities in the Bay of Bengal (BOB) amid evolving regional security dynamics.

About Haldia Detachment:

Purpose: The detachment aims to strengthen India's maritime security in the BOB by enhancing surveillance, coastal defence, rapid response, and protection of sea lanes amid rising extra-regional naval activity.

Location: Located on the **Hooghly River** near the Haldi River, 130 kilometer (km) from the

Sandheads, the base leverages the Haldia Dock Complex with a jetty, admin-logistics facilities, and accommodation for ~100 personnel.

Operations: The base, as a naval detachment, will conduct coastal security, anti-piracy patrols, maritime domain awareness, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and non-combatant evacuations.

Platforms: The facility will primarily support small, high-speed warships such as Fast Interceptor Crafts (FICs) and New Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts (NWJFACs), aligned with Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)-cleared procurement to boost coastal security.

Existing Naval Commands: India's existing naval commands are the Western Naval Command (WNC) in Mumbai (Maharashtra), the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) in Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh, AP), and the Southern Naval Command (SNC) for training in Kochi (Kerala).

CJI Surya Kant Inaugurates India's First Fully Paperless District Court in Kalpetta, Kerala
Chief Justice of India (CJI) **Surya Kant** virtually inaugurated **India's first fully paperless district court system** in **Kalpetta, Wayanad, Kerala**, marking the district judiciary's complete transition to digital functioning.

About Paperless District Court System:

Developer: The digital platform was developed in-house by the Kerala High Court(HC) and incorporates Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based judicial assistance tools.

Operations: All judicial proceedings, from filing to final judgment, are conducted electronically using a centralized digital system.

AI Integration: In-house AI generates structured case summaries, enables interactive Questions and Answers (Q&A), supports digital annotations, and accurately transcribes depositions and judicial dictations via voice-to-text.

Authentication: All orders and judgments are validated with secure digital signatures to ensure integrity and legal validity.

Efficiency: The system reduces clerical delays, repeated court visits, costs, and storage requirements while speeding up communication of orders.

India Becomes the World's First Country to Commercially Produce Bio-Bitumen

Union Minister **Nitin Gadkari**, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (**MoRTH**), announced **India** has become the first country globally to commercially produce **bio-bitumen** at a Council of Scientific Industrial Research(CSIR) Technology Transfer (TT) ceremony titled "**From Farm Residue to Roads**" in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Union Minister of State(MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Dr Jitendra Singh, Ministry of Science & Technology (MoS&T) termed it "Clean, Green Highways era" during CSIR technology transfer.

About Bio-Bitumen:

Partial Replacement: It is a binder material for road construction made by converting agricultural waste such as paddy straw and other crop residues into bio-oil through a pyrolysis process, which is then blended with conventional bitumen.

- With 15% blending, India can save nearly Rs. 4,500 crore in foreign exchange and substantially reduce its dependence on imported crude oil.

Developer: The technology was developed by the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR)-Central Road Research Institute (CRRRI) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (CSIR-IIP).

Commercialization: Licenses have been issued to multiple Indian manufacturers to produce bio-bitumen, enabling industrial-scale production.

Uttarakhand Police Ranks First in ICJS 2.0 National Rankings

Uttarakhand Police ranked first with a score of 93.46 in the second edition of the national Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) 2.0 rankings, released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

- Haryana Police (93.41) secured second place, followed by Assam 93.16.

About ICJS:

Overview: It is a digital platform connecting all pillars of the criminal justice ecosystem, including police, courts, prosecution, prisons, forensic labs, and fingerprint and crime databases.

About ICJS 2.0: It is an upgraded version that promotes real-time data sharing, enables “One Data, One Entry” principle, makes investigations faster, more transparent, and evidence-based, and allows tracking of cases from First Information Report (FIR) to conviction digitally.

Uttarakhand Police Recognition: The Uttarakhand Police demonstrated excellence in digital policing and crime data management, integrating district-level systems with the national ICJS platform, and training officers for effective use of ICJS.

- Uttarakhand State Disaster Response Force(SDRF) earned Uttar Pradesh (UP) government medals for exemplary service at Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025.

Akasa Air Becomes Fifth Indian Airline to Join IATA

Akasa Air became the 5th Indian member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), global body representing over 360 airlines and more than 80% of global air traffic.

About International Air Transport Association (IATA):

Overview: The IATA is a global trade association representing the airline industry.

Requirement: Membership followed the successful completion of the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) in December 2025.

Focus: Membership enables participation in industry-wide dialogue on safety management, digital transformation, and sustainable aviation.

Indian Members: The other four Indian carriers that are IATA members are Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, and SpiceJet.

About Akasa Air: India’s youngest airline founded in 2020 by Vinay Dube and late Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, connects 26 domestic and six international cities, operates 31 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft with plans to expand to 226, and has served over 23 million passengers to date.

Book on Life of Droupadi Murmu Released in Visakhapatnam, AP

The Telugu book ‘Agni Sarassulo Vikasinchina Kamalam Droupadi Murmu’ (Lotus Blooming in the Fire of Coals), chronicling President Droupadi Murmu’s life from tribal roots to Rashtrapati Bhavan, was released at Andhra University in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP).

- Authored by former Member of Parliament (MP) **Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad** (Vishwa Hindi Parishad President), it was unveiled by a sanitation worker, symbolizing empowerment from humble origins.

Symbolic Release Ceremony:

Unveiled by: The book was unveiled by **Lakshmmamma**, a woman sanitation worker who cleans the road at Andhra University, embodying Murmu's empowerment narrative for marginalized communities.

Significance: Highlights resilience amid personal tragedies (husband/children deaths) and political battles, inspiring democratic participation in tribal areas.

Murmu's Landmark Achievements:

Firsts: Tribal President, born post-Independence (youngest at 64), Odisha's first female Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Career: Junior assistant (1979-83), teacher (1994-97), Odisha Minister (Commerce/Irrigation), anti-corruption crusader.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Announced the Launch of Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48 Services

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Madhavrao (M.) Scindia, Ministry of Communications, announced the launch of two new India Post products, **Speed Post 24** and **Speed Post 48**, during a programme held at Pichor in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh (MP).

- This initiative marked as a major step in the ongoing modernization of India's postal system.

Key Details:

Assured Delivery: These new services will set new standards for punctuality, reliability, and speed in the Indian Post network.

- Speed 24 will deliver the important documents and parcels to the designated address within a day (24 hour), while Speed Post 48 will deliver the shipments within two days (48 hours).

Other Key Launches: Apart from these two new products, Union Minister Scindia inaugurated the **renovated Pichhor sub-post office**, upgraded at a cost of **Rs 2 lakh** and also laid foundation stone for a **new sub-post office building** which is estimated to be built at a cost of **Rs 1.11 crore**.

Reforms through NCSS: While addressing the event, Union Minister highlighted that the Department of Telecommunications (**DoT**), through the National Centre for Communication Security (NCCS), has launched several transforming reforms aimed to strengthen indigenous manufacturing and testing capabilities.

Overview of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Gujarat from January 10 to 12, 2026

Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi** was on a 3-day official visit to Gujarat from January 10 to 12, 2026, to participate in key cultural, developmental and diplomatic programmes.

Highlights of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Gujarat:

Somnath Swabhiman Parv: It was observed from January 8 to 11, 2026, marking 1,000 years since the first recorded attack on the temple in 1026 Common Era (CE) by Mahmud of Ghazni and coincides with the 75th anniversary of its post-independence reconstruction.

- On January 10, 2026, PM Narendra Modi reached Somnath Temple, Prabhas Patan, Veraval in Gujarat to participate in devotional Omkar mantra chanting during the Somnath Swabhimana Parv celebrations.

Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference: On January 11, 2026, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference** for Kutch and Saurashtra Region, held from 11-12 January 2026, at the Marwadi University in **Rajkot** (Gujarat) for the Kutch and Saurashtra regions, aimed at boosting investment, industrial growth, and regional development in western Gujarat.

Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar Metro Phase 2 Inauguration: On January 11, 2026, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the final stretch of Phase 2 of the Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar Metro Rail Project by flagging off metro services from the Mahatma Mandir Metro Station in Gandhinagar.

International Kite Festival: On 12 January 2026, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the International Kite Festival (IKF) 2026, as part of the official celebration of Uttarayan, at the Sabarmati Riverfront, Ahmedabad, with **German Chancellor Mr. Friedrich Merz** attending as the Chief Guest.

Overview of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's Visit to India from January 12 to 13, 2026

The Federal Chancellor of Germany, **Friedrich Merz** was on a two-day official visit to India from January 12 to 13, 2026, at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi**, marking his first official visit to India and the Asian region.

Highlights of German Chancellor Friedrich's Visit to India:

Visit to Gujarat:

Sabarmati Ashram: Friedrich Merz and PM Narendra Modi visited the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), the residence of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation and paid floral tributes.

International Kite Festival: Friedrich Merz and PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the International Kite Festival 2026, held from January 10 to 14, 2026, at the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad as part of Gujarat's traditional Uttarayan or Makar Sankranti celebrations.

Bilateral Engagements: Both leaders held a high-level bilateral meeting in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, to review the India–Germany Strategic Partnership, which has recently completed 25 years.

India-Germany CEO Forum: During his visit, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attended the India–Germany Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Forum in Ahmedabad.

NITI Aayog's 4th Export Preparedness Index 2024: Maharashtra Tops Large States; Uttarakhand Tops Smaller States

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam**, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog released the 4th edition of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024 a comprehensive assessment of the export readiness and performance of **Indian States and Union Territories (UTs)** at an event held in New Delhi, Delhi.

- **Maharashtra** has emerged as the top-ranked **large state** with 68.01 Score, followed by **Tamil Nadu (TN)** with 64.41 and **Gujarat** with 64.02, while among the **smaller states**, **Uttarakhand** holds the top position with 52.07, followed by **Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)** with 51.08 and **Nagaland** with 46.42

About Export Preparedness Index 2024:

Edition: The 2024 report is the fourth edition of the EPI, while its inaugural edition was launched in August 2020.

Methodology: Export performance for Financial Year 2021-22 (FY2022)–FY 2024 is assessed using an indicator-based, normalized, and weighted methodology, enhanced in 2024 for greater robustness, comparability, and policy relevance.

Objective: Promotes competitive federalism, evaluates export performance and potential, and helps states identify structural gaps in their export ecosystems.

Grouping: States and UTs are divided into Large States, Small States, North Eastern States, and UTs.

Categories: Entities are classified as Leaders (high preparedness), Challengers (moderate preparedness), or Aspirers (early-stage ecosystem development) within their peer groups.

Purpose: Provides an evidence-based tool to support India's goal of USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030.

Pillars: The EPI 2024 is structured around 4 pillars, 13 sub-pillars, and 70 indicators.

About National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog:

Chairman – Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi

Headquarters – New Delhi, Delhi

Establishment – 2015

Union Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar Launches Logo, Theme and Website of BRICS India Chairship 2026

The Union Minister **Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar**, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), unveiled the **logo, theme** and **official website** of **India's BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) **Chairship 2026** at a launch ceremony held in New Delhi (Delhi).

About BRICS India Chairship 2026:

Chairship: India assumed the BRICS Chairship from 1 January to 31 December 2026, marking its fourth tenure and coinciding with the 20th anniversary of BRICS.

Theme: India's BRICS Chairship 2026 is guided by the theme **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"**, inspired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's "Humanity First and People-centric" vision.

Logo: The BRICS India 2026 logo is inspired by the **lotus flower** and blends tradition with modernity to reflect inclusivity, dialogue, and shared growth.

- Symbolism:** Lotus petals depict the vibrant colours of BRICS members symbolising unity, while the central "Namaste" gesture conveys warmth, respect, and harmonious collaboration.

AP CM N. Chandrababu Naidu Lays Foundation for World's Largest Green Hydrogen & Ammonia Project at Kakinada

Andhra Pradesh (AP) Chief Minister (CM). **N. Chandrababu Naidu** and Deputy CM Konidala Pawan Kalyan laid the **foundation stone** for the world's largest **green hydrogen** and **green ammonia plants** at **Kakinada, AP**.

About World's Largest Green Hydrogen & Ammonia Project:

Project Area: The green ammonia plant will be developed over 495 acres, reinforcing AP's clean energy and green industrial growth initiatives.

Developer: The mega project, being developed by **AM Green**, a company of the Greenko Group, will transform an existing ammonia-urea complex into an integrated green hydrogen and green ammonia.

Investment: The project, with an estimated investment of **USD 10 billion** (Rs.84,000-Crore).

Capacity: The project has a total planned capacity of **1.5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)** of green ammonia.

- The commissioning will take place in stages, beginning with 0.5 MTPA by 2027, scaling to 1.0 MTPA in 2028, and reaching full capacity of **1.5 MTPA** by 2030.

Integrated energy Infrastructure: The project features an integrated system comprising 7.5 Gigawatt (GW) of solar and wind capacity, 1,950 Megawatt (MW) of electrolyser capacity, and 2 GW of round-the-clock renewable power, supported by pumped hydro storage, including the Pinnapuram pumped storage project in Andhra Pradesh.

Policy Alignment: The project aligns with AP's Integrated Clean Energy Policy, 2024, under which the state is seeking to attract investments in green hydrogen and green ammonia.

Employment opportunity: The project will generate up to 8,000 jobs during the construction phase, generate high-skill employment during operations and across allied industries.

Applications : The green ammonia from the facility will serve as shipping fuel, power generation input, and a feedstock for green hydrogen, contributing to international decarbonisation initiatives.

Export energy: The project would enable India's first exports of green ammonia, with initially planned for markets such as Germany, Japan and Singapore.

About Andhra Pradesh(AP):

Chief Minister(CM)– N. Chandrababu Naidu

Governor– Sayed Abdul Nazeer

Capital – Amaravati

Ramsar Site – Kolleru Lake

Overview of PM Narendra Modi's Visit to WB & Assam from January 17-18, 2026

Prime Minister (PM) **Narendra Modi** undertook a two-day official visit to West Bengal(WB) and **Assam** on January 17 to 18, 2026, focusing on infrastructure development, cultural engagement and regional connectivity initiatives across the two states.

Key Highlights of PM Narendra Modi's Visit:

In West Bengal: On January 17 2026, PM Narendra Modi visited Malda to dedicate projects to the nation and lay the foundation stones for multiple rail and road infrastructure initiatives worth **Rs.3,250 crore**.

- PM Narendra Modi flagged off **India's 1st Vande Bharat Sleeper Train** between Howrah (WB)and Guwahati (Kamakhya) (Assam) at Malda town railway station, Malda, WB. In addition to that, he virtually flagged off the Guwahati-Howrah Vande Bharat Sleeper.

- He also laid the foundation stone of 4 major railway projects in WB. He also dedicated to the nation, the electrification of the New Coochbehar-Bamanhat rail sections, enabling cleaner and energy-efficient train operations.

- He also virtually flagged off 4 new Amrit Bharat Express trains and two new train services equipped with Link Hofmann-Busch (LHB) coaches.

Extended Port Gate System: He laid the foundation stone of the **Extended Port Gate System at Balagarh**, including an Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal and a Road Over Bridge (ROB).

Hybrid Electric Aluminium Catamaran: He also launched a **50-passenger** hybrid electric aluminium catamaran, developed at a cost of **Rs 12 crore**, marking a significant milestone in the transition toward green inland water transport.

- He also flagged off a new passenger train between Jayrambati and Maynapur and 3 Amrit Bharat Express trains.

Overview of 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth Held in New Delhi

The Government of India (GoI) hosted the **28th** Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (**CSPOC**), organized by the Parliament of India, from January 14 to 16, 2026 at the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, part of the Parliament House Complex in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The conference was chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla**.
- India hosted the conference for the **fourth time**, after earlier editions in 1970–71, 1986, and 2010.

Highlights of CSPOC 2026:

Standing Committee Meeting: The CSPOC 2026 commenced on 14 January 2026 with a meeting of the **CSPOC Standing Committee**, which oversaw the organisation's activities and comprised 15 members, with five members constituting the quorum.

Inauguration of CSPOC 2026: On 15 January 2026, the conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- He also inaugurated the 9th Group of Twenty (G20) Parliamentary Speakers' (P20) Summit, held on the sidelines of CSPOC 2026 in New Delhi.

Participation: The 2026 event witnessed the largest participation, with 61 Speakers and Presiding Officers from 42 Commonwealth Countries and representatives of 4 semi-autonomous parliaments.

Other Events: Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** also chaired the Lightning Round, the Special Plenary, and the Closing Plenary, and delivered the keynote address during the Special Plenary on "The Role of Speakers and Presiding Officers in Maintaining Strong Democratic Institutions."

Chairmanship Handover: During the event, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla handed over the chairmanship of the 29th CSPOC to **Lindsay Hoyle**, Speaker of the United Kingdom (UK) House of Commons.

- The 29th CSPOC will be held in London (UK) in 2028.

Overview of Japan's FM Toshimitsu Motegi 3-Day Visit to India from January 15 to 17, 2026

Japan's Foreign Minister (FM) Toshimitsu Motegi undertook a 3-day official visit to India from January 15 to 17, 2026.

Key Highlights of Visit:

Metro Project: During his visit to India, Japanese FM Motegi, along with Japanese Ambassador to India **Ono Keiichi** took a ride on the Delhi Metro in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Also, Japan International Cooperation Agency (**JICA**) has committed to provide financial support to the Delhi Metro Project since Phase-I.

Dialogue: Union Minister S. Jaishankar, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) along with Japanese FM Motegi participated in the **18th India-Japan Strategic Dialogue** held in New Delhi, Delhi.

Key Outcomes : Both countries will convene the private security dialogue under the Economic Security initiative, aimed to strengthen public-private cooperation in the field of economic security.

- India and Japan launched the Artificial Intelligence (**AI**) **Dialogue** to be led by FMs.
- Both countries have agreed to convene the Joint Working Group (**JWG**) on **critical minerals** in early 2026.

Economic Security Dialogue: The second round of the Economic Security Dialogue, co-led by the Foreign Secretary of India and the Japanese Vice Minister, was scheduled to take place in the 1st half of 2026.

Overview of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Visit to India on January 19, 2026

The President of United Arab Emirates (UAE) **Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan** undertook a one-day visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi.

- The visit marks his third visit as UAE President and fifth visit overall to India.

Highlights of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Visit to India:

Bilateral Meeting: PM Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed held bilateral meetings, with a focus on trade expansion, and reviewed and strengthened the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

Key Outcomes:

During UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit, India and the UAE announced several initiatives in trade, technology, energy, digital cooperation, culture, and people-to-people ties to strengthen long-term bilateral relations and economic integration.

- India and the UAE agreed to expand their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), aiming to double bilateral trade to over USD 200 billion by 2032.
- They also announced a collaboration between Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (**C-DAC**) and G-42 to establish a supercomputing cluster, agreed to partner

in advanced nuclear technologies including large reactors and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and planned to promote trade and investment with the First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and DP World operating from GIFT City, Gujarat.

Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan Releases Book 'Chalice of Ambrosia: Ram Janmabhoomi- Challenge and Response'

Vice President (VP) **C.P. Radhakrishnan** released a book titled '**Chalice of Ambrosia : Ram Janmabhoomi- Challenge and Response**', authored by Dr. Surendra Kumar Pachauri, former Secretary to the Government of India (GoI), at the VP's Enclave in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The book was published by **Har-Anand Publications**.

Key Details:

Book Overview: It chronicles the long and complex Ram Janmabhoomi movement, a campaign to reclaim and build a temple at the birthplace of Lord Ram, a Hindu god, in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh (UP).

- It blends historical context with legal developments, cultural context and contemporary politics to provide a comprehensive narrative in modern Indian history.

About Surendra Kumar Pachauri: He is a retired 1968-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from Andhra Pradesh (AP) cadre. He served as the Secretary of the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Inquiry, which examined the events surrounding the Babar Masjid.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign Completed 11 Years

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, a flagship initiative of Government of India (GoI) which aims to protect, educate, and empower the girl child in India, completed **11 years** of successful implementation.

About Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme:

Launch: The scheme was originally launched by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015 in Panipat, Haryana.

Nature of Scheme: It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) which means **100%** funding by the Central Government in all districts of the country under Sambal vertical of 'Mission Shakti'.

Aim: To address the decreasing Child Sex Ratio (CSR), prevent gender -biased sex-selective elimination and promote the survival, protection and education of the girl child.

Key Ministries Involved: Originally, the scheme was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Education (MoE).

- Later, **MoWCD** collaborated with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (**MSDE**) and Ministry of Minority Affairs (**MoMA**) to expand the scope of BBBP.

Key Progress Made under BBBP Scheme:

Improvement in SRB: As per GoI's data, due to the efforts made under BBBP scheme, the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) has increased from around 918 (in 2014-15) **to 930 (in 2023-24)** at the national level.

Increase in GER for Girls: Also, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls at the secondary level (Class 9-10) in India has witnessed significant improvement, increasing from 75.51% (in 2014-15) to **78.0% (in 2023-24)**.

- In addition to that, as per the UDISE report, the GER of girls at secondary level has increased to 80.2% (in 2024-25).

ECI Hosts India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management 2026 in New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) hosted the inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (**IICDEM 2026**) at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi (Delhi) from 21-23 January 2026.

- The three-day international conference was organised by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (**IIDEM**) under the aegis of the **ECI**.

IICDEM 2026 Overview:

Theme: “Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient, and sustainable world”

Inaugural Reception: The conference began with a formal reception, where Gyanesh Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) along with Election Commissioners (EC) Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, welcomed international delegates representing heads of election management bodies worldwide.

Launch of ECINET: The ECI launched the ECINET (Election Commission of India Network) at the IICDEM 2026.

- ECINET provides voter registration, Know Your Candidate (KYC), e-Voter Identification (ID) cards (e-EPIC) download, and Book-a-Call facilities with Booth Level Officers (BLOs), while also offering services for Divyang (Saksham) citizens and access to election-related learning material.

- It has been developed in English along with all 22 scheduled languages of India.

MoU Signed: India and Namibia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on election management on the sidelines of IICDEM 2026.

Adoption: On 23 January 2026, the ECI concluded the three-day IICDEM 2026 with the unanimous adoption of the ‘Delhi Declaration 2026’.

Indian Railways Deploys First Humanoid Robot ‘ASC ARJUN’ at Visakhapatnam Railway Station

Indian Railways (IR) deployed its first humanoid robot, ‘ASC ARJUN’, at Visakhapatnam Railway Station, East Coast Railway (ECoR), Andhra Pradesh (AP), to enhance passenger safety, station security, and operational efficiency, under the supervision of the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

- The deployment was unveiled by Inspector General, Railway Protection Force (IG RPF) Alok Bohra and Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Lalit Bohra in the presence of Senior Divisional Security Commandant (SDSC) A.K. Dubey.

About Indian Railways Humanoid Robot ASC ARJUN:

Development: Supports RPF operations during peak hours and was developed in Visakhapatnam over one year using indigenous technology.

Security: Detects intruders via Face Recognition System (FRS) with real-time Internet of Things (IoT) alerts to Railway Protection Force (RPF) control rooms.

Crowd Management: Uses Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based monitoring, automated announcements, semi-autonomous platform patrolling, and fire & smoke detection to manage passenger density and enhance safety.

Engagement: Delivers automated announcements in English, Hindi, and Telugu, performs friendly gestures and interactive guidance for passengers, and provides real-time situational awareness via an integrated dashboard.

Safety: Conducts semi-autonomous 24×7 platform patrols with obstacle avoidance, detects fire and smoke for instant alerts, and optimizes manpower while enhancing passenger convenience with indigenous technology.

COAS General Upendra Dwivedi Launches Book 'Red Lines Redrawn: Operation Sindoor and India's New Normal'

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi launched the book titled '**Red Lines Redrawn: Operation Sindoor and India's New Normal**' at the India International Centre in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The book was published by Konark Publishers Private Limited.

About the Book:

Author: The book was co-authored by Major General Bipin Bakshi (Retired), Air Marshal Rajesh Kumar (Retired), Amb Anil Trigunayat (Retired) and Brig Akhelesh Bhargava (Retired).

Overview: The book provides a comprehensive, multi-domain account of 'Operation Sindoor', detailing India's decisive response to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism during the 88-hour campaign launched in **May 2025** as a response to the Pahalgam terrorist attack on 22 April 2025.

Strategic Insights: The book underscores the integration of land, air, sea, cyber, and diplomatic domains during Operation Sindoor, showcasing how coordinated planning and joint execution across services can achieve decisive outcomes.

India Celebrates 77th Republic Day on 26 January 2026

India celebrated its **77th Republic Day (R-Day)** on 26 January 2026, commemorating the adoption of the Constitution of India on January 26, 1950. The Republic Day parades and events took place at Kartavya Path (formerly known as Rajpath) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- President of India **Droupadi Murmu** unfurled the National Flag, followed by the National Anthem and a 21-gun salute using 105-millimeter (mm) Light Field Guns by the 1721 Ceremonial Battery of the 172 Field Regiment.

Highlights of 77th Republic Day Celebrations :

Theme: The 77th republic celebrations were held under the theme titled "**150 Years of Vande Mataram**"

Paid Tribute: The ceremony started with Prime Minister(PM) Narendra Modi paying tribute at the National War Memorial, followed by him and other dignitaries witnessing the parade at

Kartavya Path.

Chief Guests: **Antonio Costa**, President of the European Council; and **Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission, participated at the event as Chief Guest, marking the first time the top leaders of the EU were invited together.

Music Composer: Oscar-winning composer M.M. Keeravani composed a special musical piece for the Republic Day Parade 2026, with the performance marking the 150th anniversary of the Vande Mataram.

Parade Command: The parade was commanded by Lieutenant General **Bhavnish Kumar**, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, a second-generation officer, while Major General Navraj Dhillon, Chief of Staff(CoS), Headquarters(HQ) Delhi Area and a third-generation officer, served as the Parade Second-in-Command.

Beating Retreat Ceremony: The Beating Retreat will be held on 29 January 2026 at Vijay Chowk(New Delhi), marking the formal end of Republic Day celebrations. It followed the centuries-old military tradition of troops ceasing battle, sheathing arms, and returning to camp at sunset.

Overview of EU Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen's Visit to India

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Union (EU) Commission and Antonio Luis **Santos da Costa**, President of the EU Council were on an official visit to India from **January 25 to January 27, 2026**, as the Chief Guests for the **77th** Republic Day of India, at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi.

- Both leaders were accompanied by a high-level delegation including **Kaja Kallas**, Vice-President(VP) of the EU Commission, which marked her first official visit to India.

Key Highlights:

16th India-EU Summit: PM Narendra Modi along with the President of EU Council Costa and President of EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen co-chaired the summit held in New Delhi. The last India-EU summit was conducted virtually in July 2020.

Joint India-EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda: Both India and the EU endorsed the “2030 Joint India-EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda” for the next 5 years, which aims to further bolster the strategic partnership by widening, deepening and better co-ordinating EU-India cooperation.

- This newly adopted strategic agenda covers key areas of bilateral cooperation such as: prosperity and sustainability, technology and innovation, security and defence, connectivity and global issues.
- Following this announcement, India-EU FTA has now become India's **22nd FTA partner**.

International

Bulgaria Adopts Euro as its Currency from January 1, 2026

Bulgaria has adopted the Euro(EUR) as its official currency with effect from January 1, 2026, replacing the Bulgarian lev (**BGN**) after more than two decades following approval by the Council of the European Union(**EU**) on July 8, 2025.

- Which confirmed that the country met all Maastricht convergence criteria and set the irrevocable conversion rate at 1 EUR = 1.95583 BGN,

Bulgaria's adoption of the Euro:

Eurozone Member: With the adoption of the euro, Bulgaria became the 21st member of the Eurozone, the group of European countries that use the euro as their official currency, marking a major milestone in Bulgaria's deeper economic integration with the European Union.

Currency Transition: During January 2026, both the BGN and the EUR will be accepted for payments across Bulgaria, with change provided only in euros. From February 1, 2026, the euro will become the sole legal tender, and the Bulgarian lev will be fully withdrawn from daily circulation, completing the currency transition.

Joined Euro system: The Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) has joined the Eurosystem, becoming part of the European Central Bank (ECB) framework. As a result, Bulgarian banks will now fall under the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), strengthening financial stability and banking oversight.

USA Withdraws from 66 International Bodies Including India-led ISA

United States of America (USA) President **Donald Trump** issued an executive order and presidential memorandum announcing the **withdrawal** of the USA from **66 international organizations**, treaties, and commissions, including the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) and several United Nations (UN)'s—**affiliated entities**.

- The decision forms part of the administration's "America First" review of multilateral engagements, citing concerns over national sovereignty, resource use, and alignment with USA interests.

Overview of Withdrawal:

Sovereignty: Executive Order(EO) 14199 mandated a review of USA involvement in international organizations, prompting withdrawal from those deemed wasteful, mismanaged, or misaligned with USA sovereignty and interests.

Scope: The withdrawal covers a total of 66 entities, comprising 35 non-UN organizations and 31 UN-affiliated bodies.

Non-UN Bodies: Key non-UN organizations exited include the ISA, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

UN Entities: Major UN-affiliated bodies affected include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Water, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Peacebuilding Commission.

ISA Exit: The USA formally exited the India–France–led ISA, ending its participation and approximately USD 2.1 million in contributions made between 2022 and 2025 to support global solar energy efforts.

Legality: The USA Constitution requires Senate approval to enter treaties, but provides no clear process for withdrawal, leaving unilateral exits legally uncertain and open to judicial challenge.

About International Solar Alliance(ISA):

The idea of the formation of ISA was conceived as a joint effort of India and France during the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) held in Paris, France in 2015.

Director General (DG)– Ashish Khanna

Headquarters– Gurugram, Haryana

Established – 2015

UNGA Declares 2026 as International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared **2026** as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), at its 76th session held in New York, the United States of America (USA).

- IYRP 2026 aims to raise awareness about rangelands and pastoralists and promote policies for their sustainable management and livelihoods.
- **Key Goals:** Promote pastoralist knowledge, innovation, partnerships, and policies for sustainable rangelands and livelihoods

About IYRP 2026:

Resolution Adoption: On 28 February 2022, the UN General Assembly(UNGA) adopted a resolution initiated by Mongolia and backed by 60 Member States worldwide.

Implementing Agency: The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has been declared the leading agency to celebrate the Year in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders.

Key Goals: IYRP 2026 aims to share pastoralist knowledge, encourage innovation, build partnerships, and support policies for sustainable rangelands and livelihoods.

Significance: Rangelands which cover nearly 50% of the Earth's land surface, supporting more than 2 billion people and over 50% of the world's livestock.

- These rangelands play a pivotal role in conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem regulation, ecosystem regulation and climate resilience.

Henley Passport Index 2026: Singapore Topped for the Third Time; India Climbs to 80th

Henley & Partners, a British consultancy expertized in investment migration, released Henley Passport Index (HPI) 2026 Global Ranking. As per the index, **India** has ranked **80th** position, up from 85 in 2025, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival to **55 destinations**, shared with Algeria and Niger.

- **Singapore** remains the most powerful passport for the third time with access to 192 destinations without a prior visa, followed by Japan and South Korea (188) sharing second place.

- **Afghanistan** ranked last with access to only 24 countries, creating a 168-country gap.

Highlights of Henley Passport Index(HPI) 2026:

Other Top 5 Ranked Countries: Countries such as Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland share third position with Luxembourg and Denmark with visa-free score of 186. Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, and Norway share fourth place with a visa-free score of 185.

- Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) share fifth place with 184 destinations.

Other Top 10 Countries: Countries such as Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Malta, New Zealand, and Poland share sixth place with visa free access to 183 destinations.

- Australia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, and the United Kingdom (UK) (7th rank) (182 destinations), followed by Canada, Iceland, and Lithuania share 8th place (181 destinations).

- Malaysia secured 9th place (180 destinations) and the United States of America (USA) secured 10th place with 179 destinations.

Other Least Powerful Passports: Syria ranked 100th with visa-free score of 26 destinations, Iraq (99th place) (29 destinations), Pakistan, Yemen (98th place) (31),

Numbeo Safety Index 2026: Mangaluru Ranked Safest City in India; Qingdao Tops Globally

According to Numbeo Safety Index 2026 rankings by Numbeo, a crowd-sourced global database, Mangaluru (Karnataka) emerged as the safest city in India, securing the **46th** rank globally with a safety score of **74.4**.

- **Qingdao** (Shandong, China) topped the global list with an exceptional safety score of **89.2**, followed by Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates, UAE) in second place with 88.9, and Doha (Qatar) in third place with 84.5.

Performance of the Cities:

Other Top 10 Cities Globally: Sharjah(United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranked 4th globally with a score of 84.5, followed by Dubai in 5th place with 83.9.

- Taipei (Taiwan) ranked 6th with a score of 83.5, followed by Manama (Bahrain) at 7th (82.0). Muscat (Oman) secured the 8th position with 81.3, while the Netherlands featured prominently with The Hague (9th, 80.0) and Eindhoven (10th, 79.1) completing the global top ten.

Top 3 Safest Cities in India: According to global safety rankings, Mangaluru(Karnataka) is the safest city in India, ranking 46th globally with a safety score of 74.4. It is followed by Ahmedabad (Gujarat) at 87th globally (68.5) and Jaipur (Rajasthan) at 106th (65.3).

Most Unsafe City Globally: Pretoria (South Africa) was ranked at the bottom (304th) with a score

of 18.2, preceded by Caracas (Venezuela) at 303rd (18.6) and Johannesburg (South Africa) at 302nd (19.2).

Top Safest and Least Safe Countries:

Top 10 Safest Countries Globally: The UAE tops the list with a safety index of 86.0, followed by Qatar and Andorra at 84.8 each. Taiwan ranks 4th (83.0), Macao (China) 5th (81.8), Oman 6th (81.6), Isle of Man 7th (79.1), Hong Kong (China) 8th (78.6),

Least Safe Countries: According to Numbeo's 2026 safety index, Papua New Guinea had a safety score of 19.1, Venezuela scored 19.6, and Haiti scored 19.9, placing all three among the least safe countries globally.

Indian-Origin NASA Astronaut Sunita Williams Retires After 27 Years of Service

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that Indian-origin astronaut **Sunita Lyn Williams** retired from service effective December 27, 2025, marking the end of a 27-year illustrious career in human space exploration.

- In **2008**, she was conferred with the **Padma Bhushan**, the third highest civilian award, in the field of Science and Engineering.

About Sunita Williams:

Profile: She was born on September 19, 1965, in Ohio, the United States of America (USA). She is a former Navy officer of the USA, who became one of NASA's most experienced and accomplished space explorers.

Space Career: In 1998, She was selected by NASA as an astronaut candidate. She trained in spacecraft systems, robotics, T-38 jet flight, survival training, and Russian space operations, preparing for long-duration missions to the International Space Station (ISS). She trained in Russia on the ISS program and worked on the station's robotic arms.

Space Expeditions: She completed three space missions during her 27-year career: Expedition 14/15, Expedition 32/33 aboard the International Space Station (ISS), and the Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test mission.

Achievements & Records:

Time in Space: She has logged **608 days** in space across her three missions, making her second on NASA's list for cumulative time in orbit.

- She is jointly ranked sixth for the longest single spaceflight by an American, alongside NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore, with both spending **286 days** in space during the Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew-9 missions.

Spacewalks: She performed **nine** spacewalks totaling **62 hours and 6 minutes**, the most spacewalk time by a woman and fourth overall in NASA history.

First Marathon in Space: During her first mission, she ran the first marathon ever in space on a treadmill aboard the ISS, completing the Boston Marathon distance of 42.195 kilometers (kms).

Overview of 56th Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum Held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland – Part I

The **56th** annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) was held from January 19 to 23, 2026, in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

- The 2026 annual meeting was held under the theme titled **"A Spirit of Dialogue"**.

Highlights of 56th Annual Meeting of WEF:

Participation: The event witnessed the participation of around 3,000 leaders from 130 countries, 400 top political leaders, 65 heads of state and government, a majority of Group of Seven (G7) leaders, around 830 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chairs, and nearly 80 tech unicorn founders and innovators, marking it one of the largest participations.

Indian Delegation: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Ministry of Railways (MoR), led the Indian delegation.

Tech Mahindra Limited has been included in the WEF's list of organizations recognized for making AI work in the real world as part of the WEF's MINDS programme.

USA Officially Withdraws from World Health Organization

The United States of America (USA) formally **withdrew** from the World Health Organization (WHO), ending its 78-year membership amid criticism of the WHO's COVID-19 response, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and perceived failures affecting Americans.

- The withdrawal completed a one-year notification process initiated by President Donald J. Trump through Executive Order 14155, signed on January 20, 2025.

About the USA Withdrawal:

Cessation: All USA funding and staffing for the WHO ended on January 22, 2026, including annual dues of USD 111 million and average voluntary contributions of USD 570 million.

Funding Impact: The USA accounts for about 18% of the WHO's total funding, with the WHO's 2024–2025 budget estimated at USD 6.8 billion.

Microsoft Unveils Second-Generation 'Maia 200' In-House AI Chip

Microsoft introduced the second generation of its in-house artificial intelligence processor, '**Maia 200**', along with a new suite of Artificial intelligence (AI) focused software tools, strengthening its push to build an integrated AI ecosystem.

- This new chip builds on Microsoft's first Maia chip, which was originally introduced in 2023.

About Maia 200 AI chip:

Manufacturing Details: The Maia 200 AI chip is manufactured by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) using advanced 3-nanometer(nm) process technology and incorporates high-bandwidth memory.

Deployment: It is now operational at a Microsoft data centre in Iowa, marking its first live deployment, with plans underway to expand to additional facilities.

Enhancements: The Maia 200 improves upon its predecessor with higher compute capability, increased memory bandwidth, and better energy efficiency, enabling faster and more cost-effective AI workloads.

Defence

India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives Conducts 17th Trilateral Coast Guard Exercise 'DOSTI 17' in Maldives

The **17th** edition of the biennial **trilateral Coast Guard exercise 'DOSTI 17'** involving the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG), and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) Coast Guard, commenced in **Male, Maldives**.

- The biennial maritime exercise was held from 17 to 19 January 2026.

Background:

History: Exercise DOSTI was initiated in 1991 as a bilateral exercise between the ICG and the MNDF Coast Guard, and expanded into a trilateral exercise including Sri Lanka in 2012.

Previous Edition: The last DOSTI exercise was conducted in February 2024 in the Maldives.

About DOSTI 17 Maritime Exercise:

Delegations: India is represented by a four-member ICG delegation led by Director General (DG) Paramesh Sivamani, while Sri Lanka is represented by Admiral Rohan Joseph, DG of the SLCG.

Phases: The harbour phase was held from 17–19 January 2026 and was followed by an operational sea phase.

Sea Phase:

- **Participants:** ICG ships and aircraft will participate to test operational coordination in open-sea conditions.
- **Operations:** Focuses on search and rescue (SAR) missions and tactical maritime security drills.

Established – 1977

Motto – Vayam Rakshamah (We Protect)

IA Creates Modern Warfare Force 'Bhairav' with over 1 Lakh Drone Operatives

The Indian Army (**IA**) announced the creation of a modern warfare force named '**Bhairav**', aimed at enhancing India's combat capabilities by integrating drone technology and establishing a pool of over **1 lakh** trained drone operatives.

- Currently, Bhairav is being trained to tackle the complexities of modern warfare with its advanced drone operations capabilities.

About	Bhairav	Battalions:
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Overview: The Bhairav unit is prepared for modern warfare, with all operatives trained to use drones for targeting enemy bases and formations in real operations.

Key Functions: The Bhairav battalions, raised by IA, have been specifically created to provide a dedicated force for high-speed, offensive operations, carrying out Special Forces tasking at various levels as per requirements.

Aim: To bridge the gap between the Para Special Forces (SF) and regular Infantry battalions, carrying out special operations at tactical to operational depth.

Current Status: So far, the IA has raised approximately **15** Bhairav battalions, which have been deployed across various formations along both borders.

- In addition to that, IA is already planning to raise **around 25** such battalions in the near future.

Army Day Parade: The new battalions will make their 1st appearance at Indian Army Day Parade at Jaipur, Rajasthan on **January 15, 2026**.

Other Modern Warfare: Considering the operation requirements of the force, IA has also created '**Rudra Brigades**' which are all-arms formations that combine infantry, mechanised units, tanks, artillery, special forces and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs).

IAF Commemorates 25th Anniversary of Tejas First Flight

The Indian Air Force (IAF) marked the **25th** anniversary of the historic maiden flight of the indigenously developed Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).

About Tejas LCA Journey:

Background: In 1983, the Government of India (GoI) established the LCA programme with the initial goal of developing indigenously built LCA to replace the obsolete fleet of the IAF.

Maiden Flight Test: The Tejas LCA made its historic maiden flight on 4 January 2001, flown by Wing Commander **Rajiv Kothiyal** in the Technology Demonstrator-1 (TD-1) from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) airport in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Induction: The flight test initiated Tejas' evaluation, leading to its induction into the IAF and the development of advanced variants like **Tejas Mk-1A**.

Key Agreement: In late 2025, HAL secured a major order for 97 more Mk-1A jets in a deal worth more than Rs 62,370 crore.

Pakistan Conducts Successful Flight Test of 'Taimoor ALCM'

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) conducted a successful flight test of the indigenously developed Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM), which was deployed from a Mirage IIIE fighter aircraft during a live-trial exercise.

- **About Taimoor Missile:**

Developer: It is a new Pakistani ALCM developed primarily by Pakistan's Air Weapons Complex. It is a turbojet-powered subsonic cruise missile designed to strike both land and sea targets.

Explosive warhead: It carries a conventional high-explosive warhead optimized for precise damage to defended infrastructure.

Range: It is designed to deliver high-precision strikes at targets located up to approximately **600 kilometres(km)** away.

Capability: The missile features a state-of-the-art navigation and guidance system and can operate at very low altitudes, enabling it to evade hostile air defences and missile interception systems.

Appointments or Resign/Retired

Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak Appointed as CJ of Jharkhand HC

The Department of Justice (DoJ), Ministry of Law and Justice (MoL&J), announced that the President of India, **Droupadi Murmu**, approved the appointment of Justice **Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak**, a judge of the Bombay High Court (HC), as the Chief Justice (**CJ**) of the **Jharkhand High Court (HC)** under Article 217(1) of the Constitution of India (CoI), in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

- He will assume office following the retirement of the incumbent CJ, Justice **Tarlok Singh Chauhan**, on January 8, 2026.

About Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak:

Enrollment: Enrolled as an Advocate with the Bar Council of Maharashtra & Goa in October 1988.

Legal Practice: He practiced at Panaji Bench of the HC of Judicature, Bombay(Mumbai, Maharashtra) in civil & constitutional law, labour & service law, environmental law, commercial & tax laws, company law and public interest litigations.

Government Roles: Served as Additional Standing Counsel for the Central Government and Special Counsel for the State Government.

Judicial Career: Appointed as an Additional Judge of the Bombay HC in June 2013.

Retirement: Scheduled to retire on 27 November 2026.

Justice A Muhamed Mustaque Takes Oath as 24th CJ Sikkim HC

Justice Muhamed Mustaque Ayumantakatha, senior-most Judge of Kerala High Court(HC), officially sworn-in as the **24th** Chief Justice(CJ) of Sikkim HC. The oath of office was administered by **Om Prakash Mathur**, Governor of Sikkim at a function held at the Lok Bhawan in Gangtok, Sikkim.

- Sikkim's Chief Minister (CM) Prem Singh Tamang, along with his council of ministers and senior officials, attended the oath ceremony.
- He succeeded **CJ Biswanath Somadder** who retired as the CJ of Sikkim HC on December 14, 2025.

Key Details of Appointment:

Recommended by Collegium: Justice Mustaque appointment was recommended by the Supreme Court (SC) Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India (**CJI**), **Justice Surya Kant**.

Notified DoJ: Following the collegium recommendation, the Department of Justice (DoJ) under the Ministry of Law and Justice (MoL&J), announced that the President of India Droupadi Murmu approved the appointment of Justice Mustaque as CJ of Sikkim HC, under **Article 217(1)** of the Constitution of India.

Acting CJ of Sikkim HC: At present, **Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai** is serving as the Acting CJ of Sikkim HC.

About A. Muhamed Mustaque:

Enrollment: Enrolled as an advocate in 1989 and practised before various courts and statutory authorities, mainly in Kannur.

Judicial Career: He was appointed as an Additional Judge of Kerala HC in 2014, a Permanent Judge in 2016, and later, served as Acting Chief Justice (CJ) from July 2024 to September 2024.

K. Balasubrahmanian Assumes Charge as Chairman of AERB

The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, appointed distinguished scientist **A. K. Balasubrahmanian** as the **Chairman** of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (**AERB**), India's apex nuclear safety regulator, for **three years**.

- He succeeded **Dr. D.K. Shukla**, who completed his tenure on December 31, 2025.

About A.K. Balasubrahmanian

Experience: His career spans almost 40 years in the design, development, safety assessment, construction, and commissioning of Nuclear Power Plants (NPP).

Key Role: Held the position of Director (Technical) on the Board of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).

Previous Role: He served as Chairman of the Project Design Safety Committee for Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)-based nuclear power plants and as a member of the Safety Review Committee for Operating Plants (SARCOP) of the AERB.

Innovation: Contributed to first-of-a-kind systems with indigenous safety features, promoted self-reliance in nuclear reactor technology, and represented India in international conferences and technical forums on reactor technology and safety.

About AERB: It was constituted on November 15, 1983 by the former President of India, Giani Zail Singh under the Atomic Energy Act(AEA), 1962, and is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta Appointed CJ of Uttarakhand HC

The Department of Justice (**DoJ**) under the Ministry of Law and Justice (**MoL&J**) through its official notification announced that the President of India in exercise of powers given under Article 217(1) of the Indian Constitution, appointed **Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta**, a senior judge of Allahabad HC, as the new Chief Justice (CJ) of Uttarakhand High Court (HC).

- He will officially assume the office following the retirement of the incumbent CJ, **Justice Guhanathan (G.)Narendra** on January 09, 2026.
- Justice Gupta appointment was recommended by the Supreme Court (SC) Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India (**CJI**), **Justice Surya Kant**.

Exam Hints:

- **What?** Appointment of CJ of Uttarakhand
- **Who?** Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta
- **Appointed by:** President of India
- **Appointed under:** Article 217(1) of the Constitution of India

• ~~**Predecessor:** Justice Guhanathan (G.)Narendra~~

About Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta:

Enrolled: He was enrolled as an advocate on December 06, 1987 and 25+ years practised mainly on the civil, rent control and constitutional sides.

Judicial Career: He was elevated to Additional Judge of Allahabad HC on April 12, 2013 and later appointed as a Permanent Judge in April, 2015. Acting CJ of Allahabad HC on Nov 22, 2023.

- Also, he is serving as a Member of Administrative Committee of Allahabad HC.
- He is also the Executive Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh (UP) State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and is scheduled to retire on October 08, 2026.

Justice Revati Mohite-Dere Sworn in as First Woman CJ of Meghalaya HC

Justice Revati Mohite-Dere, a judge of the Bombay High Court(HC), was sworn in as the first **woman** Chief Justice(CJ) of **Meghalaya HC** with oath of office administered by Chandrashekhar H. Vijayashankar, Governor of Meghalaya, at the Durbar Hall of Lok Bhavan in Shillong, Meghalaya.

- She succeeded Justice **Soumen Sen**, who was transferred to the Kerala HC.
- HC judges in India are appointed by the President under Article 217 of the Constitution of India.

About Justice Revati Mohite Dere:

Legal Practice: Practiced criminal, civil, and constitutional law at the Bombay HC and Sessions Court.

Special Roles: Served as Assistant Government Pleader, Writ Cell, Bombay HC, Senior Counsel (Group I & II) for the Union of India, Government Pleader (GP) and Public Prosecutor (PP) for the State of Maharashtra, and Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) for the Union of India.

High Court Tenure: Appointed as an Additional Judge of the Bombay HC on 21st June 2013 and elevated as a permanent Judge on 2nd March 2016.

Judicial Contributions: Known for significant rulings in constitutional law, criminal law, and Public Interest Litigations (PILs).

Meta Appoints Dina Powell McCormick as President and Vice Chairman

Mark Zuckerberg, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of **Meta Platforms Inc.**, (the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger and Threads), announced the appointment of **Dina Powell McCormick** as its new **President** and **Vice Chairman**, as part of a leadership restructuring to accelerate its Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy.

About Dina Powell McCormick:

Experience: She has over 25 years of experience in global finance, national security, and economic development.

Goldman Sachs: She spent 16 years at Goldman Sachs as a partner, management committee member, and head of Global Sovereign Investment Banking.

Public Service: She served as Deputy National Security Advisor(NSA) under President Donald Trump and held senior White House and State Department roles under President George W. Bush.

Board Experience: She has held board positions at major corporations, including Meta and Exxon Mobil.

Recent Role: She previously served as Vice Chair, President, and Head of Global Client Services at BDT & MSD Partners.

President Droupadi Murmu Appoints Praveen Vashista as Vigilance Commissioner in CVC

President of India, Droupadi Murmu, has appointed Praveen Vashista as Vigilance Commissioner (VC) in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) for four years or until the incumbent attains the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

- The appointment was made through a warrant dated 12 December 2025 under Section 4(1) of the CVC Act, 2003.

About Praveen Vashista :

Experience: He brings more than 30 years of expertise in law enforcement, criminal investigations, and internal security management.

Background: He is an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1991 batch, belonging to the Bihar cadre.

State-Level Experience: He held key positions in Bihar, including Inspector General (IG) roles in the Economic Offences Wing and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), as well as serving as Superintendent of Police (SP) in districts such as Ranchi, Dumka, and Garhwa.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI): At the central level, he served in the CBI as SP and Deputy Inspector General (DIG).

Central Deputation: He occupied senior roles in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), including Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary, Officer on Special Duty (OSD), and Special Secretary (Internal Security).

ICICI Bank Re-appointed Sandeep Bakshi as MD & CEO till 2028

ICICI Bank Limited re-appointed Sandeep Bakshi as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for another two years, with effect from October 04, 2026 to October 03, 2028.

- His reappointment is subject to further approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), stakeholders, and such other approvals as may be required.
- Apart from his reappointment, the Board of Directors (BoDs) of the bank has also re-appointed Ajay Kumar Gupta as Executive Director (ED) of the bank for another two years with effect from November 27, 2026 to November 26, 2028.

About Sandeep Bakshi:

Previous Tenure: Bakshi was appointed as the MD and CEO of the bank for the 1st time in October 2018 and later, his term was extended until October 2026.

Previous Role: Prior to his appointment as MD & CEO, he served as a Whole-time Director (WTD) and the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the bank.

Other Roles: Bakshi has been associated with the ICICI Group since 1996 and has held various senior positions across the group in ICICI Limited, ICICI Lombard General Insurance, ICICI Bank and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance.

ACC Appoints New Directors General of NIA, BSF & ITBP

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), headed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, approved the proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for the appointments of **Rakesh Aggarwal** as Director General (DG) of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), **Praveen Kumar** as DG of the Border Security Force (BSF), and **Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor** as DG of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

About Rakesh Aggarwal:

Profile: He is a 1994-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Himachal Pradesh (HP) cadre.

Tenure: He will serve as DG of NIA until his superannuation on 31 August 2028.

Previous Role: He served as Special DG in the NIA, held additional charge as DG, and took interim charge of the agency following the repatriation of **Sadanand Date** (1990-batch IPS, Maharashtra cadre).

About NIA: Established in 2008 after the Mumbai (Maharashtra) terror attacks; motto – *Rashtrarakshanam Adyakartavyam* (Protection of the nation is the first duty); headquartered in New Delhi, Delhi.

About Praveen Kumar:

Profile: He is a 1993-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal (WB) cadre.

Tenure: Appointed as DG of BSF until 30 September 2030 or further orders.

Predecessor: He succeeded **Daljit Singh Chawdhary** (1990 Batch IPS officer from Uttar Pradesh, UP) as BSF DG, taking interim charge before his formal appointment on 1 December 2025.

About BSF: Established on 1 December 1965; motto – Duty Unto Death (Jeevan Paryant Kartavya); headquartered in New Delhi.

About Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor:

Profile: He is a 1990-batch IPS officer of the Haryana cadre

Tenure: Appointed as DG of ITBP until 31 October 2026 or further orders.

Predecessor: He succeeds **Praveen Kumar**, who was appointed as DG of BSF.

Previous Role: Before becoming ITBP DG, he was the Director General of Police (DGP) of Haryana

About ITBP: Established on 24 October 1962 after the India-China war; motto – ‘Shaurya, Dridhata, Karm Nishtha’ (Valor, Steadfastness, and Commitment); headquartered in New Delhi.

Deepinder Goyal Resigns as CEO of Eternal Group; Albinder Dhindsa to Take Over

Deepinder Goyal resigned as the Director, Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of **Eternal Limited** which is the parent company of food delivery platform “Zomato” and commerce delivery arm Blinkit, with effect from February 1, 2026.

- **Albinder Singh Dhindsa**, CEO of Blinkit, has been appointed CEO and Key Managerial Personnel of the company with effect from February 1, 2026.

Veteran Indian Sports Administrator Randhir Singh Steps Down as President of OCA

veteran Indian sports administrator and 5-time Olympic shooter **Randhir Singh** announced the end of his tenure as President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) prematurely due to health issues.

- Following his resignation, the members of OCA elected **Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani** who is currently serving as the President of Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), as their new President during the General Assembly in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

About Randhir Singh:

Previous Tenure: In September 2024, Randhir Singh scripted history becoming the 1st Indian to be elected as President of OCA for a **4-year term** (till 2028) during the 44th General Assembly of the continental body held in New Delhi, Delhi.

Previous Role in OCA: Prior to his appointment as OCA President, he served as acting President of the continental body since 2021, filling in for Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who was handed a 15-year ban due ethics violations.

Other Key Roles: During his long career in sports administration, he held various posts in Indian and Asian sports bodies like: served as the Secretary General of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 1987 to 2012.

- He also served as a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) between 2001 and 2014 and later continued as the honorary member of the international sports body.

Honours/ Awards

British-Indian Comedian, Author Meera Syal Awarded Damehood in King's New Year Honours

Renowned British-Indian comedian, actress, and writer **Meera Syal** was awarded a **Damehood(DBE)** in **King Charles III's New Year Honours List 2026** in recognition of her outstanding contributions to literature, drama, and charity.

- Earlier, she was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in 1997 and Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2015.

About King Charles III's New Year Honours list:

Total Recipients: This year, a total of **1,157 recipients** have been recognised for their exceptional contributions in arts, sports, community service, and politics.

- They have been honoured with various titles such as MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire), OBE (Officer), CBE (Commander), and DBE/KBE (Dame/Knight Commander).

Prominent Personalities: Renowned British actor Idris Elba, singer and actor Cynthia Erivo, and 1984 Winter Olympics gold medallists Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean.

Oldest and Youngest Recipient: The oldest recipient is 102-year-old John Hearn (BEM), and the youngest is 20-year-old Toby Roberts (MBE), Britain's first Olympic gold medallist at Paris 2024.

Other British Indians: Other British Indians honoured include Upadhaya (Damehood), Dhruv Patel and Neeta Akhtar (CBE), and Pavan Popat (OBE).

NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang Conferred 2026 IEEE Medal of Honour

Jensen Huang, Chief and Executive Officer (CEO), NVIDIA, was awarded the 2026 IEEE Medal of Honor, the highest recognition from Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

About IEEE Award 2026:

Revolutionizing Computing: Jensen Huang received the award for his outstanding contributions to the field of Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and accelerated computing, which have revolutionized computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and High-Performance Computing (HPC) worldwide.

Cash Prize: The 2026 award includes a USD 2 million cash prize, marking the second consecutive year that IEEE has attached a monetary award to this honor.

Award: The IEEE Medal of Honour, established in **1917**, is awarded annually to individuals who have made exceptional contributions or achieved outstanding accomplishments in electrical, electronics, and computer engineering.

Five Indian Films Qualify for Best Picture Eligibility at 98th Academy Awards

Five Indian films, Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1, Tanvi The Great, Mahavatar Narsimha, Tourist Family and Sister Midnight were included in the list of 201 feature films eligible for the Best Picture category at the 98th Academy Awards (Oscars 2026), released by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

Indian Films at Oscars 2026

Kantara A Legend – Chapter 1: Written and directed by Rishab Shetty, produced by Vijay Kiragandur and Chaluve Gowda under Hombale Films, with Rishab Shetty also starring in the lead role as Berme.

Mahavatar Narasimha: It is an animated film directed by Ashwin Kumar, produced by Shilpaa Dhawan, Kushal Desai, and Chaitanya Desai of Kleem Productions in association with Hombale Films, with Harjeet Walia voicing the lead character, Lord Narasimha.

Tanvi The Great: Directed by veteran actor Anupam Kher and produced by Anupam Kher under Anupam Kher Studio in association with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), starring Shubhangi Dutt as the titular protagonist, Tanvi Raina.

Tourist Family: It marks the directorial debut of Abishan Jeevinth and is produced by Nazerath Pasilian, Magesh Raj Pasilian, and Yuvaraj Ganesan under Million Dollar Studios and MRP Entertainment, starring M. Sasikumar in the lead role alongside Simran.

Sister Midnight: A dark comedy written and directed by Karan Kandhari, produced by Alastair Clark and Anna Griffin under Wellington Films and Griffin Pictures, with Radhika Apte starring as the lead character, Uma.

About Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS):

President – Lynette Howell Taylor

Headquarters – Beverly Hills (California), United States of America (USA)

Established – 1927

Overview of Golden Globes Awards 2026: ‘One Battle After Another’ Bags Four Golden Globes Awards

The 83rd Annual Golden Globe Awards, presented annually by Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), held at the Beverly Hilton in California, the United States of America (USA), celebrating excellence in film and television for productions released in 2025.

- The ceremony was hosted by comedian Nikki Glaser for the second consecutive year.

Highlights of Golden Globe Award 2026:

Overview: The Golden Globe Awards are one of the most prestigious international honors in the entertainment industry, recognizing outstanding achievement in film and television each year. It was presented for the first time in **1944**.

- It is referred to as “**Hollywood’s Party of the Year**” and is the largest award show in the world.

New Category: In the 2026 awards, the category “**Best Podcast**” was awarded for the first time, broadening the Globes’ recognition of modern entertainment forums.

- American actress **Amy Poehler** won the inaugural Golden Globe for Best Podcast for Good Hang With Amy Poehler.

Best Actor: Brazilian actor Wagner Moura made history by becoming the **first Brazilian actor** to win the Golden Globe for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for his role in ‘The Secret Agent’.

Most-Awarded Film: The film “**One Battle After Another**”, directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, won **four** Golden Globes out of nine nominations, including Best Picture (Musical or Comedy), Director, Screenplay, and Supporting Actress.

- The Television (TV) series “**Adolescence**”, directed by Philip Barantini, also won four Golden Globes, including Best Limited Series, Best Actor (Limited Series), Best Supporting Actor (TV), and Best Supporting Actress (TV).

Indian Presence: No Indian film was nominated, but Priyanka Chopra Jonas presented an award.

BSE Wins Asia Best Employer Brand Award 2026 at Hong-Kong Leadership Awards

The Bombay Stock Exchange Limited (**BSE**), Asia’s 1st and oldest stock exchange, was conferred with the **Asia Best Employer Brand Award 2026 at Hong Kong Leadership Awards & Chief Marketing Officer(CMO) Asia Awards** held at InterContinental Grand Stanford, Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region (SAR), China.

- BSE received this award in recognition of its people-first approach, commitment to professional development and sustained efforts toward creating inclusive, high-performance environment.

About Award:

Aim: To recognise excellence in workplace culture and employee engagement.

Significance of Award for BSE: This recognition reflects BSE’s continued efforts to build a strong workplace culture, empower its workplace and foster excellence across the company.

Indian Mountaineer Aritra Roy Summits Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina

Indian mountaineer **Aritra Roy** summited **Mount (Mt.) Aconcagua** in Argentina (in South America), the highest peak outside Asia at 6,967.15 meters (m) above mean sea level, marks the fourth milestone in his ongoing Seven Summits challenge.

About Mt. Aconcagua Expedition

Summit: He summited after a 10.5-hour push, spent 45 minutes at the peak, and completed a 44-kilometre (km) climb in minus 40 degrees Celsius (–40°C) temperatures, snowstorms, and blizzards.

Camps: The route included Confluencia (3,340 meter, m), Plaza de Mulas (4,350 m), and three high camps at 5,050 m, 5,650 m, and 6,000 m.

Sponsor: The solo expedition was fully sponsored by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (**HAL**), a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Previous Expedition: He previously summited Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mount Elbrus (Europe), and Mount Everest (Asia), completing a solo ascent of Everest on May 19, 2025.

About Mt Aconcagua:

Location: Mt. Aconcagua is a towering mountain situated in the Principal Cordillera of the Andes, in Mendoza Province, Argentina, close to the Argentina–Chile border.

Significance: Mt Aconcagua, known as the “Stone Sentinel,” is the highest peak in the Southern and Western Hemispheres, noted for its extreme altitude and rapidly changing weather.

Seven Summits: Mt. Aconcagua 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).

About Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL):

HAL was originally established as Hindustan Aircraft on 22 December 1940 and restructured as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in 1964.

Chairman and Managing Director (CMD)– Dr. D.K. Sunil
Headquarters– Bengaluru, Karnataka

Major Swathi Shantha Kumar Wins UN Secretary-General's Award 2025

Indian Army(IA) officer Major **Swathi Shantha Kumar** from Bengaluru(Karnataka) received the the United Nations (UN) **Secretary-General's Award 2025** in the Gender Category for her project “**Equal Partners, Lasting Peace**” while serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

About UN Secretary-General's Award:

Award Citation: Announced by Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of UN. The award recognises her leadership in advancing gender parity through effective deployment of the Indian Engagement Team, enhancing patrols, community outreach, and trust-building in conflict zones.

Recognition: The UN Secretary-General's Awards are annual honours instituted by the United Nations to recognise outstanding contributions by UN personnel, peacekeepers, and teams demonstrating exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment to UN values.

Purpose: The awards promote a culture of excellence and accountability, recognise initiatives with measurable impact on peace and development, and support core UN priorities such as gender equality, inclusion, sustainability, and innovation.

2025 Awards Categories: The 2025 awards covered categories including Innovation, Collegiality, Gender, Diversity & Inclusion, Multilingualism, and Leadership/Service Excellence.

About Swathi Shanthakumar: She is an Indian Army officer from Bengaluru, Karnataka, serving in the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) with the rank of Major.

About Project Equal Partners, Lasting Peace:

Overview: It is a comprehensive initiative to deploy and integrate engagement teams that strengthened grassroots connections with women in conflict-affected areas and improved gender-responsiveness in UNMISS.

American Biologist Toby Kiers Won 2026 Tyler Prize for Shedding Light on Hidden Fungal Network

Renowned American biologist Dr. Toby Kiers was named the winner of 2026 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, also known as ‘Nobel for the Environment’, in recognition of her groundbreaking research revealing the important role of mycorrhizal fungal networks in carbon cycling and nutrient exchange.

- She will officially receive the award at a ceremony scheduled for 23 April 2026 in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

About Tyler Prize:

Background: It is one of the 1st international premier environmental awards established in 1973 by the late John and Alice Tyler.

- The award recognises ‘exceptional’ scientific work in environmental science, health and energy that benefits humanity.

Administered by: The award is administered by The University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles, the United States of America (USA).

Monetary Prize: The recipient of the award (i.e. any individual or organisation from any part of the world) receives a cash prize of **USD 250,000**.

Total Recipients: Since 1974, the Tyler Prize has honored **88 laureates** from 18 countries .

Previous Winner: In 2025, Brazilian Eduardo Bronizio and Argentinian Sandra Diaz were honoured with Tyler Prize.

Brand Finance Global 500 2026 Report: India's Infosys Ranks Third; Accenture Topped;

Brand Finance released a report titled "Brand Finance Global 500 2026". As per the report , Infosys ranked the world's third most valuable Information Technology (IT) Services Brand, valued at **USD 16.4 billion**, with a Brand Strength Index (**BSI**) score of **86.8** out of 100, achieving a 15% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) over the last six years.

- Accenture's top spot in the IT services category reflects its continued investments in technology, consulting and digital services.

Key Highlights of the Report:

Other Top 3 IT services Brands: Accenture remains the world's first IT services brand, valued at USD 42.2 billion with a BSI score of 90.7. Tata Consultancy Services (**TCS**), valued at USD 21.2 billion (84.6) secured the second place for the fifth consecutive year and achieves AAA rating for the first time, indicating extremely strong brand.

Top 25 Brand Value: The combined brand value of the world's top 25 IT services brands stood at USD 167.2 billion in 2026.

Other Indian IT Companies in the List: Indian IT Companies such as HCLTech, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, LTIMindtree, Persistent Systems, and Hexaware have secured place among the top 25.

Dr Chandrakant Lahariya Becomes First Indian to Receive Wiley Research Heroes Award

Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, former staff member of the World Health Organisation (WHO), was awarded the **Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025** in the category "Impact Beyond Academia."

- He is the **first and only Indian** to receive this prestigious Wiley Research Heroes Prize, chosen as one of five global winners from over 2,000 nominations worldwide.

About Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025:

Recognition: Dr Chandrakant Lahariya was selected for his outstanding research contributions that have a direct impact on public policy and societal welfare.

Other winners: The other four winners of the Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025 include Dr. Katie Brooker from Australia, Professor Trevor Charles from Canada, Professor Deborah Esan from Nigeria, and Dr. Maria Elena Indelicato from Portugal.

Award overview: An international recognition by Wiley honouring researchers whose work is inclusive, innovative, and creates real-world impact beyond traditional academic outputs.

Prize Amount: Five global winners are selected annually, each receiving global recognition and a monetary award of around **USD 2,000**.

Padma Awards 2026: President Approves 131 Padma Awards, includes 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced the **Padma Awards for 2026**, a day before the **77th Republic Day of India**.

- This year's list comprises 5 Padma Vibhushan; 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri awardees.

About Padma Awards 2026:

Total Winners: Droupadi Murmu, the President of India has approved the conferment of **131 Padma Awards**, including **2 duo case cases** (in a duo case, the award is counted as one) for year 2026.

- Among these Padma awardees, there are **19** women and the list also comprises **06** persons from the category of foreigners or Non-Resident Indians (NRI) or Person of Indian Origin (PIO) or Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), along with **16** Posthumous awardees.

States Representation: Among the states, **Maharashtra** received the highest number of Padma awards (15), followed by Tamil Nadu (TN) (13); Uttar Pradesh (UP) and West Bengal (WB) (11 each) and Kerala (8).

Prominent Padma Vibhushan Winners: Among 5 Padma Vibhushan awardees, veteran actor **Dharmendra Singh Deol** (Arts, Maharashtra) and former Chief Minister (CM) of Kerala **V.S. Achuthanandan** (Public Affairs, Kerala) have been conferred with the award, posthumously.

- Other 3 eminent personalities featured on the list are: former Judge of Supreme Court (SC) **K.T. Thomas** (Kerala); educationist **P. Narayanan** (Literature and Education, Kerala); and violinist **N. Rajam** (Art).

Prominent Padma Bhushan Winners: **Shibhu Soren** (Posthumous), founder of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) party and former Chief Minister (CM) of Jharkhand; **Bhagat Singh Koshyari**, former CM of Uttarakhand; renowned Malayalam actor **Mammootty**; famous playback singer **Alka Yagnik**; **Uday Kotak**, were among this year's Padma Bhushan laureates.

Prominent Padma Shri Winners: Some of the famous sports personalities such as: former Captain of Indian Test Cricket team **Rohit Sharma**; Captain of Indian Women's cricket team **Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar**; para-high jumper **Praveen Kumar**; hockey player **Savita Punia** and also, coach of Indian women's hockey team **Baldev Singh**, have been conferred with the Padma Shri.

President Murmu Approved Gallantry Awards 2026 for 70 Armed Forces Personnel

The President of India Droupadi Murmu approved 'Gallantry awards 2026' for 70 Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), including 06 posthumous honours, in recognition of their exceptional courage and sacrifice on the eve of the 77th Republic Day.

- The awards include **17 peacetime gallantry decorations**: one Ashoka Chakra, three Kirti Chakras, and 13 Shaurya Chakras (including one posthumous). Additionally, honours

comprise 1 Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry), **44** Sena Medals (Gallantry) (including five posthumous), **6** Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry), and **2** Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry).

Key Winners:

Ashoka Chakra: Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla (from Indian Air Force, IAF), who scripted history by becoming the 1st Indian to set foot on the International Space Station (ISS), honoured with the **Ashoka Chakra**, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Kirti Chakra: Three Kirti Chakra (India's 2nd highest-peacetime gallantry award) awardees are: Major Arshdeep Singh from 1 Assam Rifles; Naib Subedar Doleshwar Subba from 2 Para (Special Forces) and **Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair**, one of the 4 astronauts who underwent training for India's 1st human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan.

Shaurya Chakra: This year, two women officers of the Indian Navy (IN): Lieutenant Commander Dilna K. and Lieutenant Commander Roopa A were conferred with the Shaurya Chakra, India's 3rd highest peace-time gallantry award.

Other Key Awards:

Military Decorations: Apart from the e gallantry awards, the President of India also approved **301 military decorations** to Armed Forces and other personnel.

- These include 30 Param Vishit Seva Medals (PVSMs); 04 Uttam Yudh Seva Medals (UYSMs); 56 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals (AVSMs); 09 Yudh Seva Medals (YSMs); two distinguished Bars to the Sena Medal (SM); 43 distinguished Sena Medals (SMs); 08 distinguished Nao Sena Medals; 14 distinguished Vayu Sena Medals; and 135 Vishisht Seva Medals (VSMs).

MoD Announces Winners of the 77th Republic Day Parade : IN Tops Marching Contingent; Maharashtra Wins Best Tableau

Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced the winners of the Best Marching Contingents and Best Tableaux of the 77th Republic Day Parade 2026, held at Kartavya Path, New Delhi (Delhi), based on a dual evaluation process comprising assessments by three expert judging panels and an online public vote through the MyGov portal for the Popular Choice category.

Highlight of

77th Republic Day Parade 2026 Awards:

Judging Panels: Three separate judging panels were constituted to evaluate marching contingents of the three Armed Forces (AFs), Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other auxiliary forces, and tableaux presented by States, Union Territories (UTs), and Central Ministries/Departments (CMDs).

Online Poll: An online poll was conducted on the MyGov portal, allowing citizens to vote for their favourite Marching Contingents and Tableaux under the 'Popular Choice' category.

Central Ministries/Departments Tableau Awards: The **Ministry of Culture** won the Best Tableau Award in the Central Ministries/Departments category for its impactful tableau "Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation," marking 150 years of the iconic patriotic song.

- The Department of School Education and Literacy (**DSEL**), Ministry of Education (MoE), received the People's Choice Award for Best Tableau among Central Ministries/Departments for its theme on National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Sports

Kaamya Karthikeyan Becomes the Youngest Indian to Ski to South Pole

Eighteen-year-old **Kaamya Karthikeyan**, Skier from Mumbai (Maharashtra), became the youngest Indian and second-youngest woman in the world to ski to the South Pole of 2,385 meter (m), on December 27, 2025, after trekking 115 Kilometer(km) in -30°C(degree Celsius) temperatures and gale-force winds while pulling a sled with expedition load.

- The Indian Navy(IN) congratulated her historic achievement.

About Kaamya Karthikeyan:

Overview: Kaamya Karthikeyan is an adventurer, mountaineer, and is the daughter of an Indian Navy (IN) officer.

Expedition Details: Started from 89° South, covered 60 nautical miles (~115 km) over 11 days across featureless Antarctic ice. Continuous daylight, extreme cold tested endurance.

Achievements: In 2019, she became the youngest girl to scale Aconcagua (Argentina) of 6,962 m, the highest peak in South Africa. In 2023, she became the youngest Indian to summit Mount (Mt) Everest (Nepal and China) from the Nepal side.

- In 2024 and 2025, she completed the seven summits challenge, finishing with Mt. Vinson in Antarctica, becoming one of the youngest climbers globally to achieve it.

About Seven Summits Challenge: It is one of the most prestigious mountaineering achievements in the world. It involves climbing to the highest peak on each of the seven continents, including:

- Mt Everest (8,849 m), Asia
- Aconcagua (6,962 m), South America
- Mt McKinley (6,194 m), North America (Alaska, United States of America, USA)
- Mt Elbrus (5,642 m), Europe (Russia)
- Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m), Africa (Tanzania)
- Mt Vinson (4,892 m), Antarctica
- Mt Kosciuszko (2,228 m), Oceania (Australia)

About Explorers Grand Slam: It is one of the toughest adventure challenges in the world. It involves the completion of the Seven Summits and skiing to both the North Pole and the South Pole.

Renowned Australian Cricketer Usman Khawaja Announced Retirement from International Cricket

In January 2026, renowned Pakistan-born Australian cricketer **Usman Tariq Khawaja** announced his **retirement** from international cricket following the fifth and final Ashes Test held at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) in Sydney, Australia, marked his 88th Test match.

About**Usman****Khawaja:**

Debut Match: He, Australia's first Muslim Test cricketer, started his international cricket career debuting against England in the final Test Match of 2010-11 series.

• In 2018, he scored his 1st Ashes century (171 runs) at the SCG against England.

Test Match Career: He scored **6206 runs** in **87** test matches and 157 innings at an average of 43.39, including 16 hundreds (100s) and 28 fifties (50s) in the longest format.

ODI Career: He scored 1554 runs in 40 One Day Internationals (ODIs) matches and 39 innings at an average of 42, including two centuries and 12 fifties.

Australia Women's Cricket Team Captain Alyssa Healy Announced Retirement from All Forms of Cricket

Australia Women's Cricket Team Captain, **Alyssa Healy** announced her retirement from all formats of cricket, following the upcoming multi-format series against India which is scheduled to be held in February-March 2026 in Australia.

• She has a record of winning the **World Cup title 8-times**, that includes six Women's T-20 World Cup (in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020, and 2023) and two One Day International (ODI) World Cup titles (in 2013 and 2022).

About Alyssa Healy:

Wicketkeeper: She will retire as the most successful wicketkeeper in women's international cricket, taking **269 dismissals** to date across all 3 formats of cricket, including 24 in 10 Test matches; 119 in 123 ODIs, and 126 in 162 T20 Internationals (T20Is).

Highest Scorer: During her 15 year- long cricket career, she played almost 300 matches across all formats of cricket, **scoring 7,106 runs** at an **average of 30**, behind Meg Lanning (8,352) and Ellyse Perry (7,607) among Australian women.

Test Match Career: She scored **489 runs** in 10 Test matches at an average of 30.56, with highest score of 99, including 3 fifties (50s), along with 22 catches and 2 stumpings.

ODI Career: She scored **3,563 runs** in 123 ODIs matches at an average of 35.98 and strike rate of 99.72, with highest score of 170, including 7 centuries (100s) and 12 fifties (50s).

T20Is Career: She scored **3,054 runs** in 162 T20Is matches, at an average of 25.45 and a strike rate of 129.79, with a highest score of 148 (not out), including one century (100) and 17 half-centuries (50s).

Padma Awardee Saina Nehwal Announced Retirement from Competitive Badminton

Indian Olympic medallist, Padma Awardee and former world No. 1 Badminton player **Saina Nehwal** announced her **retirement** from competitive **badminton**, concluding a 21-year career.

• She was honored with **Padma Shri** in **2010** and Padma Bhushan in 2016 for her contribution in the field of Sports.

- (2016), Padma Shri (2010), Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna (2009–10), Arjuna Award (2009)

Achievements:

Olympics: She clinched the bronze medal in women's singles at the 2012 London Olympics in London, United Kingdom (UK), becoming the first Indian badminton player to win an Olympic

medal.

World Ranking: Became the first Indian woman to achieve World No. 1 ranking in singles in 2015.

BWF Superseries: Won her first Badminton World Federation (BWF) Superseries title at the Indonesia Open in 2009 (Jakarta, Indonesia), the first for an Indian, and accumulated 10 Superseries titles including Singapore, Hong Kong, Denmark, Australia, China, and India Opens.

Junior Titles: Won the World Junior Badminton Championships in 2008 and the Commonwealth Youth Games girls' singles gold in 2008 in Pune, Maharashtra.

Commonwealth Games: Secured gold in women's singles at the 2010 New Delhi (Delhi) and 2018 Gold Coast editions in Australia.

BWF GP Titles: Claimed 10 BWF Grand Prix (GP) titles including Philippines, Chinese Taipei, India, Swiss, Thailand, Syed Modi, and Malaysia Masters.

Awards:

Padma Bhushan (2016): Awarded on March 28, 2016, by President Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan for her 2015 World No. 1 ranking, China Open Superseries Premier win

Padma Shri (2010): Conferred on April 2010 (age 20) as first badminton player with this honor, recognizing 2009 Indonesia Open gold (first Indian Super Series win) and Commonwealth Games success.

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna (2009): India's highest sporting honor, awarded 2009 as Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (age 19) for historic rise from world rank 100+ to top 10, Indonesia Open victory. First badminton player; only second woman after Karnam Malleswari.

Arjuna Award (2009): Awarded in 2009 in recognition of her outstanding achievements in international badminton, marking her emergence as a global force in the sport.

Vidarbha Clinches its Maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025–26 Champions

The **Vidarbha cricket team** won its maiden **Vijay Hazare Trophy** (2025–26 season) title after defeating Saurashtra by 38 runs in the final held at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Key Performances:

Match Score: Vidarbha scored 317 runs for 8 wickets in 50 overs and then bowled out Saurashtra for 279 runs in 48.5 overs to secure the win.

Key Performances: **Atharva Taide** scored 128 runs off 118 balls and received the Player of the Match award. **Yash Thakur** secured 4 wickets for 50 runs.

- **Aman Mokhade** of Vidarbha received the Player of the Tournament award, scoring 814 runs in the series.

About Vijay Hazare Trophy: It is India's premier domestic 50-over One-Day cricket tournament, named after legendary Indian cricketer Vijay Hazare. The tournament, started in 2002-03, features state and regional teams competing in List A matches.

Obituary

Former Union Minister Suresh Kalmadi Passed Away

Senior Indian National Congress (INC) leader and former Union Minister of State (MoS) **Suresh Kalmadi**, Ministry of Railways (MoR), **passed away** at the age of 81 in Pune, Maharashtra. He was born on May 1, 1944 in Madras, Madras Province, British India (now in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN)).

About Suresh Kalmadi:

Early Career: He served as a pilot in the Indian Air Force (IAF) from 1964 to 1974, before transitioning into public life and politics.

Political Career: He began his political career in 1977 as President of the Pune based Indian Youth Congress (IYC).

Parliamentary Career: In 1982, he became a member of the Rajya Sabha and went on to serve three additional terms in the Upper House.

- In 1996, he was elected to the Lok Sabha, represented the Pune constituency several times as a Member of Parliament (MP). He also served as MoS, for the Ministry of Railways from 1995 to 1996.

IOA Leadership: Served as President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 1996 to 2012 and was appointed Life President in 2016.

Sports Administration: Played a key role in Indian athletics administration, including overseeing the selection trials for the 1980 Moscow Olympics as President of the Maharashtra Athletics Association (MAA).

- Served as Chairman of the Organising Committee (OC) for the 2010 Commonwealth Games (CWG) and as President of the Asian Athletics Association (AAA) from 2000 to 2013, later becoming its Life President.

Renowned Ecologist & Conservationist Madhav Gadgil Passed Away

Ecologist, Scholar, and Conservationist **Madhav Dhananjaya Gadgil** passed away at the age of 83 in Pune, Maharashtra. He was born on April 24, 1942 in Poona, Bombay Province, British India (now Pune, Maharashtra).

- He was honoured with the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award, in 1981 in the field of Civil Service and the Padma Bhushan in 2006 in the field of Science and Engineering.

About Madhav Gadgil:

Profile: Madhav Gadgil, recognized as the father of modern Indian ecology, was a distinguished Indian ecologist, academic, author and environmental conservationist known for his pioneering contributions to ecological science and policy.

Career: In the 1960s, he began his career as a scientist and researcher in ecology. He joined the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru (Karnataka). Later, he became a founding faculty member of the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) at IISc and played a crucial role in designing curricula in ecology, establishing long-term ecological field studies, and training students in scientific methods.

- From 1981 to 2005, he served as Professor of Ecology at IISc, researching forest ecosystems and biodiversity, mentoring students, and contributing to environmental education, documentation, and sustainable development initiatives.

Key Positions: In 2010, he was appointed as Chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), also known as the Gadgil Commission.

- Served as a member of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- He served on the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister(PM) and chaired international bodies, including the Science and Technology Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility.

Key Contributions: He was instrumental in creating India's first Biosphere Reserve (BR), **Nilgiri BR**, and in framing the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Scholarly Contributions: Authored more than 250 papers on ecology and conservation, with many translated into multiple Indian languages.

Awards : In 2024, he was honored with the United Nations (UN) Champion of the Earth Award. He also received the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2015), Harvard Centennial Medal (2002), and Vikram Sarabhai Award (1990).

Former Indian Hockey Player and Olympian Davinder Singh Garcha Passed Away

Former Indian hockey player and Olympian **Davinder Singh Garcha** passed away at the age of 73 in Jalandhar, Punjab. He was born on December 7, 1952 in Amritsar, Punjab.

- In 2021,he was honoured with the **Major Dhyan Chand Award**, India's highest lifetime achievement award in sports, by the Government of India (GoI), in recognition of his exceptional contributions in hockey.

About	Davinder	Singh	Garcha:
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International Hockey Career: Overall, he played over 30 international matches and scored 19 goals in 3 major tournaments.

Olympic Gold-Medal: He was a member of the Indian Hockey team that clinched the gold medal at the **1980 Moscow Olympics** in Moscow, Russia.

- During the tournament, he scored 8 goals across 6 matches and played a major role in India's record **8th Olympic Gold medal**, defeating Spain by 4-3 in the final match.

Police Career: Davinder Singh, former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, has served as Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Punjab Police.

Post-Playing Career: After retirement from hockey, he worked actively in promoting hockey and served as the President of **Olympian Surjit Hockey Society**, which organises hockey tournaments annually.

- He was also the President of Mohinder Singh Munshi Hockey Tournament, All India-Under-19 (U-19) tournament held in the memory of former Olympian Mohinder Singh Munshi, a member of 1975 World Cup -winning team.

Veteran Journalist & Padma Awardee Mark Tully Passed Away

veteran journalist and renowned broadcaster **Sir William Mark Tully**, who was widely known as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)'s '**voice of India**', passed away at the age of **90** in New Delhi, Delhi. He was born on October 24, 1935 at Tollygunge, Calcutta (now Kolkata, in West Bengal(WB)), then part of British-ruled India.

- He was honored with the **Padma Shri**, India's 4th highest civilian honor, in 1992 in the field of Literature and Education; and the **Padma Bhushan**, India's 3rd highest civilian honor, in 2005 in the field of Literature and Education.

About Sir William Mark Tully:

Profile: He was a veteran journalist, renowned broadcaster, and acclaimed author who made India his home and became one of the most respected foreign correspondents covering the subcontinent.

Early Career: He joined the BBC in the 1960s and was later posted to India as junior administrative assistant in 1965.

- He served as Bureau Chief for BBC, New Delhi (India) for 22 years.

Author: Apart from being an award-winning journalist, he was also a renowned author and had written several books on India for instance: 'No Full Stops in India'; 'India in Slow Motion'; and 'The Heart of India'.

Key Events Covered in South Asia History: During his several decades long career in journalism, he covered the most turbulent events in South Asia history, specifically India, which included:

- 1971 Bangladesh war; the Emergency between 1975 and 1977;
- Operation Blue Star; the assassination of former Prime Minister (PM) of India **Indira Gandhi** and the anti-Sikh riots and the Bhopal Gas tragedy (thousands of people died due to leakage of methyl isocyanate in Madhya Pradesh, MP) in 1984;
- The assassination of former PM of India **Rajiv Gandhi** in 1991; and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992.

Awards/Accolades: He was also knighted (KBE) by the British government in 2002 for his exceptional services to journalism.

Former BCCI president Inderjit Singh Bindra Passed Away

Inderjit Singh Bindra, former president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and a key architect of modern cricket marketing and administration in India, passed away at the age of 84 in New Delhi, Delhi.

About Inderjit Singh Bindra:

Profile: He was a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, serving in the Punjab cadre before his long association with cricket administration.

Cricket Administration: He served as the President of the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) from 1978 to 2014, marking one of the longest tenures in cricket administration

- He served as BCCI President (1993–1996), modernising its operations, governance, and commercial strategy, and strengthening Indian cricket's global stature.

- He retired from cricket administration in 2014, also served as the Principal Adviser to the International Cricket Council (ICC).

International Contributions : Played a key role in bringing the 1987 and 1996 ICC Cricket World Cups to India.

Commercial Reforms: In 1994, Bindra ended Doordarshan's cricket monopoly, bringing ESPN and TWI to India and expanding the cricket market globally.

Honour: In 2015, the PCA stadium was renamed **IS Bindra Stadium** to honour his outstanding contributions as a cricket administrator.

Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar Passed Away

Ajit Pawar, Deputy Chief Minister(DyCM) of Maharashtra and chief of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), passed away at the age of 66, in the Learjet 45 aircraft (VT-SSK) crash at Baramati Airport in Pune, Maharashtra.

- He was born on July 22, 1959, in Deolali Pravara in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra.

About Ajit Pawar:

Profile: Ajit Pawar was a senior Indian politician whose strong presence in western Maharashtra and deep grassroots connections allowed him to play a key role in shaping state politics and forming coalition governments.

Early Work: He began his public career in 1982 when he was elected to the board of a sugar cooperative.

- In 1991, he assumed the role of chairman of the Pune District Cooperative Bank and served in that position for 16 years.

Entry into Politics: He was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) to the Lok Sabha from Baramati(Maharashtra) in 1991 before turning his focus to state-level politics.

State Politics: He won the Baramati Assembly seat in 1991 and went on to represent it continuously for over three decades, securing his eighth victory in November 2024.

Party Chief: He became the chief of the NCP faction in February 2024 after the party split, following recognition of his group by the Election Commission (EC).

Deputy CM: He is one of the **longest-serving DyPM** of Maharashtra.

- He served as Deputy CM six separate times between 2010 and 2026 under different CMs, including Prithviraj Chavan, Uddhav Thackeray, Devendra Fadnavis, and Eknath Shinde.

Important Days with theme

World Braille Day 2026 – January 4

The United Nations (UN's) **World Braille Day** is observed annually across the globe on **4th January** to mark the birth anniversary of **Louis Braille** and underscores the importance of the Braille system for the visually impaired.

- January 4, 2026, marks the observance of the **8th** World Braille Day and the 217th birth anniversary of Louis Braille.

Background:

Establishment: World Braille Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 17, **2018**, through the adoption of resolution A/RES/73/161.

Tribute: The day honors the pioneering work of Louis Braille, who created the Braille system at the age of 15 in 1824.

First Observance: The first World Braille Day was observed on **January 4, 2019**.

About Louis Braille:

Early Life: Louis Braille was born on January 4, 1809, in Coupvray, France, and lost his eyesight completely by the age of 5 following an eye injury sustained at 3.

Invention: Inspired at age 12 by Charles Barbier's "night writing," he developed the Braille system, which he first published in **1829** in his book Method of Writing Words, Music, and Plain Songs by Means of Dots for the blind.

Death: He passed away at the age of 43 on January 6, 1852.

About Braille:

Definition: It is a touch-based writing system that uses six-dot (3×2) cells to help blind and partially sighted people read letters, numbers, and symbols by touch.

History: Before Braille, visually impaired individuals used the **Haiüy system**, which embossed Latin letters on thick paper, but Louis Braille simplified this into an easier-to-use system requiring less training.

UN's Role in Promoting Braille:

Convention: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) recognizes Braille as essential for communication, education, and freedom of expression for visually impaired individuals.

Standardization: UNESCO initiated efforts in 1949 to standardize Braille and helped universalize the Braille alphabet by 1950.

Recognition: In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially declared Braille to be as legitimate a language as any other.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas – January 9

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (**PBD**), also known as Non-Resident Indian (**NRI**) **Day**, is biennially observed across India on **9 January** to recognise and honour the significant contributions of the overseas Indian community to the nation's development.

Background:

Early Observation: Observed annually on 9th January since 2003 to mark Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915 to lead India's freedom struggle.

Organizer: In October 2015, former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that PBD would be held biennially in alternate years, under a theme-based format.

PBD Convention: It is the MEA's flagship event, first introduced in 2003 by the Government of India (GoI) under Prime Minister (PM) Atal Bihari Vajpayee, celebrates and engages the overseas Indian community for their contributions to India's development.

Previous Event: The 18th PBD Convention was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha from 8th to 10th January 2025 under the theme "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat (Developed India)."

Next Event: The 19th PBD Convention will be held in 2027.

PBSA: The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA), India's highest honour for overseas Indians, is presented by the President of India during the PBD Convention's Valedictory Session and is awarded to NRIs, Person of Indian Origin (PIOs), or organizations/institutions run by them for exceptional contributions.

World Hindi Day 2026 – January 10

World Hindi Day, also known as Vishwa Hindi Diwas, is annually observed across the globe on **10 January** to promote awareness of the Hindi language and to honour the contributions of Hindi speakers around the world.

Background:

Decision: The follow-up committee of the World Hindi Conference decided to designate January 10 as World Hindi Day during its meeting on 8 June 2005.

Approval: The decision was officially approved by the then Prime Minister (PM) of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

First Celebration: The first-ever World Hindi Day was celebrated on **10 January 2006**.

- Since then, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been organising annual events and activities to promote Hindi globally.

Why January 10?

UN Milestone: **January 10** marks the first use of Hindi in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1949.

Conference Legacy: The date commemorates the first World Hindi Conference held from 10–12 January 1975 in Nagpur, Maharashtra, inaugurated by former PM Indira Gandhi.

National Observance:

In India, Hindi Diwas, or Hindi Day, is observed annually on **14 September** to mark the 1949 decision of the Constituent Assembly to adopt Hindi in the Devanagari script as one of the 22 official languages of India.

National Youth Day 2026 – January 12

National Youth Day, also known as Rashtriya Yuva Divas and Vivekananda Jayanti, is observed across India on **12th January** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Swami Vivekananda**, a renowned Hindu spiritual leader, philosopher, and social reformer who played a significant role in shaping modern Indian thought.

- 12 January **2026** marks the **163rd** birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

Background:

Declaration: In 1984, the Government of India (GoI) declared 12 January, the birth anniversary

of Swami Vivekananda, as National Youth Day.

First Observance: National Youth Day was first celebrated across India on 12 January 1985

2nd Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBYLD 2026):

Event: The Department of Youth Affairs (DYA) under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) organised the 2nd edition of the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBYLD 2026) from 9 to 12 January 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, Delhi, a reimagined national platform National Youth Festival, with the final day coinciding with National Youth Day.

Leadership: Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi interacted with the participants and reviewed ten high-impact thematic presentations by young leaders.

Themes: The dialogue focused on ten national priority themes such as Fit Bharat, Start-up India, Youth in Democracy, Women-Led Development, Cultural Diplomacy, Innovation with Tradition, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Sustainable Agriculture, Green Viksit Bharat, and a Future-Ready Workforce.

Empowerment: VBYLD 2026 empowers youth to actively shape India's journey toward Viksit Bharat@2047 by providing a national platform for their ideas.

About Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS):

Union Minister – Mansukh Mandaviya (Constituency-Porbandar, Gujarat)

Minister of State (MoS) – Raksha Khadse (Constituency- Raver, Maharashtra)

Indian Army Day 2026 – January 15

Indian Army (IA) **Day** also known as **Bhartiya Sena Diwas** is celebrated annually across India on **15th January** to honour the courage, discipline and sacrifice of Indian Army (IA) personnel.

- 15 January 2026 marks the **78th IA Day**.

Background:

Historical Significance: The day marks the appointment of General (later Field Marshal) **K.M. Cariappa** as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the Indian Army in 1949, succeeding General Sir Francis Robert Roy Bucher, the last British C-in-C of independent India.

Formation: Although the IA was established in 1895, its first Indian Chief was appointed only in 1949.

2026 Events:

Event: On 15th January 2026, the IA celebrated its 78th Army Day with a grand parade held at Mahal Road in **Jaipur, Rajasthan**, making it the fourth time, the event was held outside New Delhi (Delhi) and the first time outside a military cantonment.

- The Army Day Parade was hosted for the first time by the South Western Command, also known as the Sapta Shakti Command.

Gallantry: Sena Medals (Posthumous) were awarded to the Next of Kin of five soldiers for acts of bravery.

March Past: The parade featured over 30 contingents, including seven major marching units such as the MADRAS Regiment, RAJPUT Regiment, Regiment of Artillery, Mixed Scouts, and National Cadet Corps (NCC) Girls Contingent.

International: The **Nepal** Army Band participated, underscoring strong India–Nepal defence

cooperation.

Bhairav Battalion: The newly raised Bhairav Battalion made its first public appearance as an agile combat force designed for rapid response, drone-enabled warfare, and multi-domain operations.

Parakram Diwas 2026 – January 23

Parakram Diwas, also known as the Day of Valour, is observed annually across India on 23 January to commemorate the birth anniversary of Indian freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose, popularly known as Netaji.

- 23 January 2026 marks the **129th** birth anniversary of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Background:

Declaration: In **2021**, the Government of India (GoI) designated 23 January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as Parakram Diwas to honour his contributions to the Indian independence movement.

First Observance: The first Parakram Diwas was celebrated on **23 January 2021**.

Event 2026:

Overview: On January 23, 2026, the **Ministry of Culture**, is organizing Parakram Diwas–2026 from January 23 to 25, 2026, at Sri Vijaya Puram, Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands, to commemorate the 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Chief Guest: Admiral **D.K. Joshi** (Retd.), Lieutenant Governor (**LG**) of A&N Islands.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026:

On 23rd January 2026, the Ministry of Home Affairs, (MHA), announced the recipients of the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026** in recognition of outstanding contributions in the field of **Disaster Management**.

Awardees:

- **Institutional Category:** Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA)
- **Individual Category:** Lieutenant Colonel Seeta Ashok Shelke, Indian Army (IA).

National Girl Child Day 2026 – January 24

National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is observed annually across India on **24th January** to raise awareness about the rights, education, health, safety and empowerment of the girl child and to address challenges such as gender discrimination, child marriage and female foeticide.

- 24th January 2026 marks the observance of **19th** NGCD.

Background:

Establishment: NGCD was established in **2008** by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).

First Observance: NGCD was observed for the first time on **24 January 2008**.

Initiatives and Achievements:

Mission Shakti: Launched in 2022, Mission Shakti is an integrated umbrella scheme (2021–26) of the MoWCD, that advances women’s safety, security, and empowerment through the Sambal and Samarthya sub-schemes, received Rs.3,150 crore in the Union Budget 2025–26.

Samagra Shiksha: It is an integrated school education scheme covering the entire spectrum from pre-school to Class XII, launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Education(MoE) to treat school education as a continuum.

National Voters’ Day 2026 – January 25

National Voters’ Day (NVD) is observed annually across India on 25 January to commemorate the establishment of the Election Commission of India(**ECI**) in **1950** and to promote the importance of voting, electoral participation, and voter registration, especially among youth.

- 25 January 2026 marks the **16th NVD** and commemorates **76** years of service of the **ECI**.
- 2026 Theme: “**My India, My Vote**” with a tagline of ‘**Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy**’.

Background:

Approval : The observance of NVD was approved in **2011** during a Cabinet meeting chaired by **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, the then Prime Minister(PM) of India.

Inception: The first NVD was observed in **2011** to commemorate the foundation day of the **ECI**, a permanent constitutional body established on **25 January 1950** under , under **Article 324** of the Indian Constitution.

16th National Voters’ Day Celebrations (NVD-2026):

Event: On January 26, 2026, the ECI celebrated the 16th National Voters’ Day (NVD-2026) in New Delhi, Delhi.

Chief Guest: The event was graced by **President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu**, as the Chief Guest, with Union Minister of State(MoS)(Independent Charge, IC)**Arjun Ram Meghwal**, Ministry of Law and Justice (MoL&J), as the Guest of Honour, and was led by Chief Election Commissioner(CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners(ECs) Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Dr. Vivek Joshi.

Best Electoral Practices Awards 2025: During the event, President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **Best Electoral Practices Awards 2025** across multiple categories.

Release of Publications: On the occasion of NVD-2026, two publications “**2025: A Year of Initiatives and Innovations**” and “**Chunav Ka Parv, Bihar Ka Garv,**” highlighting the successful conduct of the General Elections in Bihar were released.

Exhibition on Electoral Processes: A special exhibition was organised showcasing electoral roll preparation, conduct of elections, key voter-centric initiatives of the **ECI**.

National Tourism Day 2026 – January 25

National Tourism Day is observed annually across India on **January 25** to highlight the role of tourism in India’s economy and promotes the preservation of cultural heritage and the country’s diverse tourist destinations.

Background:

Initiation: The Tourist Traffic Committee, established in 1948, started the observance of National Tourism Day to promote tourism across India.

Origin : On **January 25, 1949**, the Government of India (GoI) declared this day as National Tourism Day, coinciding with the formation of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT).

Significance: The day underscores the role of tourism in driving India's economic growth, a vision officially recognized in 1982 to further boost tourism development.

Related Observance: The United Nations (UN) observes **World Tourism Day** every year on **September 27** to commemorate the adoption of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Statutes in 1970.

About Ministry of Tourism (MoT):

Union Minister – Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Constituency – Jodhpur, Rajasthan)

Minister of State (MoS) – Suresh Gopi (Constituency – Thrissur, Kerala)

Shaheed Divas or Martyrs' Day 2026 – January 30

Martyrs' Day, also known as Sarvodaya Day or Shaheed Diwas, is observed across India on **January 30** to honour national martyrs and commemorate the **death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**, the 'Father of the Nation'.

- January 30, 2026 marks the **78th** death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Background:

Assassination: Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948, by Nathuram Godse at Birla House (now Gandhi Smriti) in New Delhi, Delhi.

Declaration: Martyrs' Day was officially declared in **1949** to honour his legacy and the sacrifices of other freedom fighters.

Other Martyrs' Days in India: Martyrs' Days also observed on **March 23**, **May 19**, and **November 19**, each commemorating distinct sacrifices and contributions to the nation.

About Mahatma Gandhi:

Birth: Mahatma Gandhi was born as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Gujarat.

Role in Freedom Struggle: He was a lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political leader who played a significant role in India's freedom movement.

Key Movements Led: He played a pivotal role in major movements such as the Khilafat Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement, and the Champaran Satyagraha.