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NATIONAL

PLASTINDIA 2026 TO BEGIN IN NEW DELHI, SHOWCASING GLOBAL INNOVATIONS IN PLASTICS -

• PLASTINDIA 2026, one of the world's largest and most influential plastics exhibitions, is set to begin on 5 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The six-day event will run until 10 February 2026 and is expected to bring together industry leaders, policymakers, innovators, and global exhibitors on a single platform. The exhibition is important as it highlights India's growing role in global manufacturing, sustainability, and innovation, especially in the plastics sector, which is a key contributor to the national economy.



Background: What is PLASTINDIA?

- PLASTINDIA is a globally recognised plastics exhibition that showcases the latest developments in plastics processing, machinery, raw materials, and sustainable solutions. The 2026 edition is being organised with the support of the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Over the years, PLASTINDIA has emerged as a key meeting point for global manufacturers, suppliers, and buyers, helping Indian industries connect with international markets and advanced technologies.

INDIA'S LOW PUBLIC HEALTH SPENDING -

• India's public health spending continues to fall critically short, as the Union government has failed to meet the spending targets set by the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017.



What is the Status of Public Health Spending in India?

- **Missed National Targets:** NHP 2017 target of raising public health spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2025 remains unfulfilled. The Union government's share, aimed at 40% of total public spending (1% of GDP), stands at a mere 0.29% of GDP (2025-26).
- Post-Covid-19, the Union government's health spending declined drastically from 0.37% (2020-21) to 0.29% (2025-26).
- **State vs. Centre Trend:** While states have increased their health spending from 0.67% (2017-18) to 1.1% of GDP (2025-26), the Centre has reduced its share, leading to a trend of financial hyper-centralisation.
- Also, the Union's share of health transfers to states for Centrally Sponsored Schemes has plummeted from 75.9% (2014-15) to 43% (2024-25), undermining state capacity to deliver healthcare.
- **Cess Misallocation:** Funds from the Health and Education Cess (HEC), intended to expand healthcare for the poor, are not supplementing but largely substituting the core health budget. In 2023-24, only one-fourth of HEC collection was allocated to health.
- **Global Disparity:** India's per capita public health spending is among the world's lowest, significantly less than neighbours like Bhutan (2.5 times more) and Sri Lanka (3 times more) in 2021, and far behind BRICS nations (14-15 times more) and Thailand/Malaysia (10 times more).

INDIA EXPLORES NEW KAILASH YATRA ROUTE VIA SHIPKI LA -

• India is in dialogue with China to explore the opening of an additional route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, including the possible use of the Shipki La Pass in Himachal Pradesh. The government informed Parliament that discussions with Beijing are ongoing, even as the pilgrimage has resumed through existing corridors.



Government Statement in Parliament

- Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs “Kirti Vardhan Singh” said New Delhi remains engaged with Beijing to facilitate improved access for Indian pilgrims. He underlined that it is the government’s consistent endeavour to enhance facilities and routes for the yatra, which holds deep spiritual significance for multiple faiths.

Existing Routes and 2025 Yatra Operations

- The Ministry of External Affairs successfully organised the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in 2025 between June and August through the two official routes—Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. The arrangements were carried out in coordination with the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim, along with the “Indo-Tibetan Border Police”. The yatra’s smooth conduct marked a return to normalcy after years of disruption.

NEW MHA GUIDELINES ON VANDE MATARAM: PROTOCOL, ORDER AND LEGAL STATUS -

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has issued new guidelines standardising the protocol for singing and playing India’s National Song Vande Mataram at official events, educational institutions, and ceremonial occasions.

**Key Guidelines**

- **Order of Playing:** When both are played at an event, Vande Mataram shall precede Jana Gana Mana.
- **Duration:** The government has prescribed a six-stanza official version of Vande Mataram with a total duration of 3 minutes and 10 seconds (190 seconds).
- **Mandatory Standing:** All citizens present are required to stand at attention whenever the National Song is sung or played in official settings.

Occasions of Official Playing:

- Flag unfurling ceremonies.
- Arrival/departure of President/Governors.
- Before/after Presidential/Governors’ addresses.

- National parades, investiture ceremonies (e.g., Padma Awards).

WHITE REVOLUTION 2.0: BOOSTING MILK PRODUCTION AND WOMEN-LED DAIRY COOPERATIVES -

- Union Minister for Home and Cooperation discussed White Revolution 2.0 in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

**About White Revolution 2.0**

- It is an initiative aimed at boosting milk production while promoting women’s empowerment and addressing malnutrition.

White Revolution 2.0 focuses on four priority areas:

- Women’s Empowerment
- Aims to empower women milk farmers by integrating them into formal economic systems.
- Strengthen women-led dairy institutions and Self-Help Group (SHG) linkages.
- Enhancing Local Milk Production
- The initiative aims to increase milk procurement by dairy cooperatives by 50 per cent over the next five years.
- Target to increase cooperative-led milk procurement from 660 lakh kg per day to 1,007 lakh kg per day.
- Strengthening Dairy Infrastructure
- Large-Scale Cooperative Development: White Revolution 2.0 includes setting up and strengthening around 1.20 lakh new and existing cooperative institutions, including
- Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCS)
- Multipurpose Dairy Cooperative Societies (M-DCS)
- Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (M-PACS)

ISRO SELECTS SOUTH POLAR SITE FOR CHANDRAYAAN-4 LANDER -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has identified a precise landing site on the Moon for its ambitious Chandrayaan-4 mission, even as the mission itself is scheduled for launch



around 2028. The announcement signals a critical early milestone for India's first lunar sample-return endeavour, approved by the Union government and described as the country's most complex lunar mission to date.

Focus on the Moon's South Polar Region

- ISRO has zeroed in on the Mons Mouton region near the Moon's south pole, an area of high scientific interest due to its terrain characteristics and proximity to permanently shadowed regions. Scientists evaluated four candidate sites within Mons Mouton—designated MM-1, MM-3, MM-4 and MM-5—using extensive remote sensing data. After detailed analysis, site MM-4 was selected as the most suitable location for the Chandrayaan-4 lander.

DELHI POLICE DRAWS THE LINE WITH OPERATION SHASTRA AGAINST DIGITAL FEAR -

- The Delhi Police has launched a major city-wide crackdown called Operation Shastra to tackle the growing misuse of social media platforms for intimidation and fear-mongering. Announced on February 7, 2026, the operation focuses on individuals who post photos with weapons, use abusive language, or project criminal dominance online. Police officials believe such online behaviour often fuels real-world law and order issues. The operation aims to restore public confidence and send a strong message that digital threats will face strict legal action.



Why Delhi Police Launched Operation Shastra

- According to the Delhi Police, social media is increasingly being used to signal criminal power and create psychological fear among the public.
- S K Jain, Joint Commissioner of Police (Southern Range), stated that the focus is on individuals attempting to establish dominance or intimidate rivals through online posts. Such content, though digital, often escalates into physical violence.
- Operation Shastra is designed as a preventive step to stop crimes before they happen.

SEVA TEERTH -

- The Prime Minister inaugurated 'Seva Teerth', an integrated administrative complex that houses the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), and Cabinet Secretariat.
- **Historical Significance:** This shift, ending nearly 8 decades of the PMO functioning from South Block (now part of Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum), occurred on the 95th anniversary of New Delhi's formal inauguration (13th February, 1931) as India's modern capital.
- **Philosophical Meaning:** The name derives from Sanskrit: "Seva" means "service" or selfless dedication, while "Teerth (Tirtha)" signifies a "sacred place" or "crossing point" enabling liberation from obstacles.
- The complex bears the inscription "Nagrik Devo Bhava" (citizen is akin to God).
- **Architectural Influences:** Designed by Dr Bimal Patel, the entrance portal features stone screenwork from Chalukyan temples (11th-13th centuries), while floral stone motifs derive from square-based geometric temple patterns.
- Metal-clad domes inspired by Buddha stupas serve as contemporary accent elements.
- It forms a key component of the Central Vista redevelopment project and is clad in white and red sandstone. The facility features modern open workspaces, the high-tech 'India House' for international summits, and 4-star green building standards.
- **First Official Acts:** In its first decision at Seva Teerth, the PM launched the PM RAHAT Scheme to provide assured hospitalization and treatment for road accident victims, ensuring no life is lost due to lack of immediate medical care.



UTTAR PRADESH PRESENTS ₹9.13 TRILLION BUDGET FOR 2026–27, OUTLAY UP 12.2% -

- The Government of Uttar Pradesh has presented a ₹9.13 trillion Budget for the financial year 2026–27, reflecting an increase of 12.2% over the previous year’s outlay. The Budget was tabled in the State Assembly by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna.
- The Budget focuses on fiscal discipline, infrastructure development, employment generation, and strengthening social sectors such as education, health, and agriculture.



Fiscal Management and Deficit Target

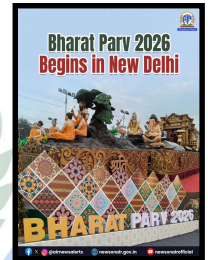
- The Finance Minister stated that the state government remains committed to prudent fiscal management and debt control.
- In line with the recommendations of the Sixteenth Finance Commission, the fiscal deficit limit for 2026–27 has been fixed at 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). This ceiling will remain applicable until 2030–31.
- Maintaining fiscal discipline is aimed at ensuring sustainable growth while managing borrowing levels effectively.

Sector-Wise Allocations

- Key allocations in the Budget include:
- Education: 12.4% of total outlay
- Health: 6% of total outlay
- Agriculture and allied services: 9% of total outlay
- The emphasis on education and agriculture highlights the government’s focus on human capital and rural development.

BHARAT PARV 2026, A SIX-DAY NATIONAL CULTURAL AND TOURISM FESTIVAL, WAS ORGANISED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM FROM 26TH–31ST JANUARY 2026 AT THE RED FORT, NEW DELHI, AS PART OF THE REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS -

- Organised annually since 2016, the festival serves as a major platform to showcase India’s cultural, artistic, culinary and spiritual heritage, reflecting the country’s unity in diversity.
- Bharat Parv 2026 commemorated 150 years of “Vande Mataram”, composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, while actively promoting the national initiatives like “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat” and “Dekho Apna Desh.”
- A key attraction was the display of 41 Republic Day tableaux from States, Union Territories and Central Ministries, allowing visitors to view the narratives of culture, development and innovation up close.
- The festival featured 48 folk and classical cultural performances by State troupes and cultural institutions, along with 22 performances by Armed Forces and paramilitary bands, adding a strong patriotic dimension.
- A pan-India food court with over 60 stalls showcased regional cuisines, millet-based dishes and tribal food traditions, emphasising culinary heritage, sustainability and local practices.



INTERNATIONAL

SPAIN BECOMES FIRST EUROPEAN COUNTRY TO BAN SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16 -

- Spain has announced a nationwide ban on social media access for children below 16 years of age, becoming the first country in Europe to take such a step and the second globally after Australia.



The decision was announced by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez during his address at the World Government Summit in Dubai. The ban is expected to come into force within a week. The move is important as it reflects growing global concern over child safety, mental health, and digital regulation in the age of social media.

Background: Rising Concerns Over Children and Social Media

- In recent years, the use of social media among children and teenagers has increased sharply. While digital platforms offer learning and communication opportunities, they have also raised serious concerns related to online addiction, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and data privacy.
- Governments across the world are increasingly debating how to protect children in the digital space. Spain's decision follows similar discussions in several countries and comes after Australia introduced a comparable ban in December 2025.

IN JANUARY 2026, THE US ANNOUNCED ITS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA), 5 YEARS AFTER JOINING IN 2021. THIS MOVE THREATENS TO WEAKEN GLOBAL CLIMATE EFFORTS AND IMPEDE THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOLAR ENERGY WORLDWID

What is the International Solar Alliance (ISA)?

- About:** It is an action-oriented collaborative platform and the first international intergovernmental

organisation headquartered in India (Gurugram, Haryana).

- It was launched jointly by India and France on the sidelines of COP21 (UNFCCC) in Paris in 2015, coinciding with the landmark Paris Agreement.
- The Assembly is the apex decision-making body, where each member country is represented.
- Membership:** Initially focused on countries lying between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Following a 2020 amendment to its Framework Agreement, membership was opened to all UN member states. It currently has over 100 signatory countries, with over 90 having ratified to become full members.
- Objective:** It aims to make solar power affordable and accessible in developing countries by facilitating finance, reducing investor risk, and accelerating adoption. It does not build solar plants itself.
- Core Strategy:** ISA is guided by its 'Towards 1000' strategy, which targets by 2030:
 - Mobilizing USD 1,000 billion in investments.
 - Delivering energy access to 1,000 million people using clean energy.
 - Installing 1,000 GW of solar energy capacity.
 - Mitigating 1,000 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.



INDIA JOINS TRUMP'S GAZA PEACE BOARD AS OBSERVER AMID GLOBAL DIPLOMACY PUSH -

- India participated as an observer in US President Donald Trump's inaugural Board of Peace meeting focused on Gaza reconstruction and stabilisation. Represented by Namgya C Khampa, Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington DC, India joined over 40 countries and the European Union at the event. While India did not become



a formal member of the board, its presence signals engagement with evolving diplomatic efforts related to the Gaza conflict and regional peace initiatives.

What Is Trump's Gaza Board of Peace?

- Donald Trump convened the Board of Peace to,
- Focus on Gaza reconstruction
- Mobilise an international stabilisation force
- Promote a structured peace framework
- The meeting was hosted at the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace and included leaders from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

India's Role as an Observer

- India opted to attend as an observer rather than a board member. Other observer nations included,
- Germany
- Italy
- Norway
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

INDIA ATTENDS BOARD OF PEACE MEET AS OBSERVER -

- India has reinforced its traditional stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict by participating as an 'observer' in the inaugural Board of Peace meeting in Washington D.C., while maintaining its commitment to a Two-State solution.



- **Board of Peace:** Established by the US as a potential rival to the United Nations, the Board includes 27 nations (e.g., Saudi Arabia, UAE, Argentina) and focuses on the redevelopment of the Gaza Strip with a USD 10 billion U.S. commitment.
- India attended the meeting, specifically identifying as an observer rather than a full member of the Board of Peace.
- **Alignment with Global Initiatives:** India's participation aligns with its support for the Gaza Peace Plan and UNSC Resolution 2803, reflecting a desire to remain engaged in West Asian stability.

- After an initial delay, India signed a joint statement with over 100 entities criticizing Israel's expansion of settlements in the West Bank, labeling them a violation of international law.
- **Two-State Solution:** India reiterated support for a "sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine based on 1967 borders," living side-by-side with Israel.
- **Diplomatic Balancing Act:** These moves highlight India's "de-hyphenated" yet principled approach to the India-Arab League relations and Israeli ties.

INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION MAY DATE BACK 8,000 YEARS -

- Fresh archaeological research suggests that the Indus Valley Civilisation could be far older than previously believed. New radiocarbon dating from the site of Bhirrana in northern India indicates that organised settlement in the region may date back nearly 8,000 years. If confirmed, this would place its origins well before the era of Egypt's earliest pharaohs, potentially reshaping long-held assumptions about the chronology of ancient civilisations.



New Evidence from Bhirrana

- Researchers examined pottery fragments and animal remains recovered from deep cultural layers at Bhirrana. Radiocarbon analysis suggests human occupation stretching back almost 9,000 years before present. The findings, published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, indicate that early agrarian communities may have developed in the region thousands of years before the mature urban phase of the Indus civilisation.
- The Indus Valley Civilisation, also known as the Harappan civilisation, is traditionally dated between 2600 and 1900 BC. The new evidence pushes its formative phase much earlier, suggesting gradual cultural evolution rather than a sudden urban emergence.



INDIA-US TRADE DEAL 2026 -

- The US has slashed the effective tariff on Indian goods to 18%, down from a staggering peak of 50% (which included punitive duties). The deal marks a strategic de-escalation of trade tensions and reaffirms India's role as a primary US ally and a critical counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific.



What are the Key Highlights of the India- US Trade Deal?

- Tariff Reduction:** The US has reduced the reciprocal tariff on Indian imports from 25% to 18%.
- Crucially, the additional 25% punitive tariff (which was imposed in August 2025 due to India's purchase of Russian oil) has been effectively removed, bringing the total effective tariff down from roughly 50% to 18%.

India's Commitments:

- Energy Shift:** In a major diplomatic concession, India has agreed to halt/significantly reduce the purchase of Russian crude oil.
- India will pivot its energy procurement to the US and potentially Venezuela.
- Market Access:** India is expected to reduce its tariffs and non-tariff barriers on US goods to "zero".
- The US expects a surge in agricultural exports (tree nuts, cotton, and soybean oil) to India's massive consumer market.
- "Buy American" Policy:** India has committed to a stronger "Buy American" stance for government and large-scale industrial procurements.
- India could buy as much as USD 500 billion worth of US energy, coal, technology, agricultural and other products.

PM MODI'S HISTORIC ISRAEL VISIT: FIRST INDIAN LEADER TO ADDRESS THE KNESSET PLENUM -

- Honorable Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is set to become the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Knesset plenum during his two-day Israel visit 2026 beginning February 25. This visit described as

the "historic" by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, marks a new milestone in India Israel relations. During the trip, Modi will hold high-level talks with Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog, further strengthening cooperation in security, innovation, and regional affairs.



- Narendra Modi to Address Knesset Plenum for the First Time**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will make history by becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Knesset plenum.
- The special parliamentary session is scheduled for 5:00 PM local time during his visit on February 25, 2026.
- This will be Modi's second visit to Israel, following his landmark 2017 trip that elevated bilateral ties to a strategic partnership.
- Addressing the Knesset symbolizes deepening diplomatic engagement and reflects the growing importance of India Israel relations on the global stage.

GOA HOSTS WORLD OCEAN SCIENCE CONGRESS 2026 -

- Goa is hosting the fourth edition of the World Ocean Science Congress 2026, bringing together scientists, policymakers, maritime industries and coastal communities at the National Institute of Oceanography in Panaji. The event runs until February 26 and focuses on ocean health, climate resilience and sustainable blue economy pathways. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that scientific temperament is deeply embedded in Goa's ecosystem and emphasised the state's maritime legacy.



Ocean Central to Economy and Livelihoods

- Addressing the gathering, Sawant underlined that nearly 75% of the Earth's surface is covered by water and about 25% of India's population lives in coastal regions. With a



coastline of 193 km, Goa's economy is closely tied to the sea through fisheries, tourism and maritime trade.

- He stressed that the ocean shapes climate systems, sustains livelihoods and demands responsible stewardship. Forums such as this congress aim to bridge science, policy and grassroots realities, ensuring research translates into practical solutions.

IRAN'S STRAIT OF HORMUZ SHUTDOWN: A DRILL OR A GLOBAL WARNING ? -

- Iran briefly shut down parts of the Strait of Hormuz during live-fire naval drills, instantly drawing global attention. Tehran described the restriction as a short safety measure, lasting only a few hours. However, the timing alongside escalating Iran-US tensions and renewed nuclear talks in Geneva amplified market anxieties. Even temporary disruptions in this narrow waterway can ripple through global oil flows, shipping costs, and energy prices. The episode underscored a critical reality: the world's energy arteries remain highly vulnerable to geopolitical tensions in West Asia.



What Exactly Did Iran Do? — Iran Military Drills Explained

- Iranian authorities temporarily restricted navigation,
- Conducted live surface firing exercises
- Launched missiles at designated targets
- Issued maritime safety advisories
- Shutdown lasted only several hours
- Iran framed the move as a routine safety precaution, yet its rarity intensified global scrutiny.

TARIQUE RAHMAN TAKES CHARGE! BNP CHIEF SWORN IN AS BANGLADESH'S NEW PRIME MINISTER -

- Tarique Rahman was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Bangladesh on February 17 2026, following a landslide victory in the 13th Parliamentary Elections. President

Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath of office at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad in Dhaka. The ceremony marked a departure from tradition, as it was held outside Bangabhaban to accommodate nearly 1,200 guests.



Tarique Rahman Sworn In as Bangladesh Prime Minister 2026

- Tarique Rahman officially became Bangladesh Prime Minister 2026 after taking oath at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad.
- The oath was administered by President Mohammed Shahabuddin in a ceremony attended by national and international dignitaries.
- This swearing-in ceremony was unique as it was conducted outside Bangabhaban, breaking traditional practice.
- The event symbolised a fresh political chapter in Bangladesh politics.
- Tarique Rahman's leadership begins at a critical time when the country faces economic pressure, institutional challenges and the need for political reconciliation.

INDIA-ISRAEL ELEVATE TIES TO 'SPECIAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP' DURING PM MODI'S 2026 VISIT -

India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership 2026: A New Era Begins

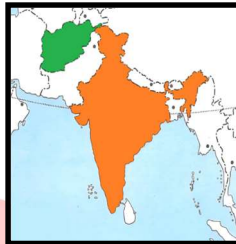
- The leaders recalled earlier landmark visits in 2017 and 2018, which is laid the foundation for modern India and Israel ties.
- Now, in 2026 both countries have formally upgraded their relationship to a Special Strategic Partnership.
- **This partnership focuses on peace, security and technological innovation.**
- Israel will bring cutting-edge innovation and startup strength and while India offers scale, talent and manufacturing power.



- The aim is to combine these strengths in areas like AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, biotechnology, defense platforms and space technology.
- The partnership also supports India's long-term development vision and Israel's innovation-driven economy.

OPERATION GHAZAB LIL-HAQ: PAKISTAN DECLARES 'OPEN WAR' AFTER STRIKES ON AFGHANISTAN - What Is Operation Ghazab lil-Haq?

- Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, which loosely translates to "Wrath for Justice," is a large-scale military campaign launched by Pakistan against alleged Afghan Taliban positions. According to Pakistan's information ministry, the operation was initiated after cross-border firing targeted multiple locations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Chitral, Khyber, Mohmand, Kurram, and Bajaur sectors.
- Pakistan's state broadcaster reported that the armed forces carried out coordinated airstrikes on what it described as key Taliban military installations in Kabul, Kandahar, and Paktia. An ammunition depot in Nangarhar province was also reportedly destroyed during the strikes.
- Officials stated that two Pakistani security personnel were killed in the clashes, while 133 Afghan Taliban operatives were claimed to have been neutralized. Independent verification of these figures remains pending.



What Triggered the Latest Pakistan-Afghanistan Conflict?

- The latest escalation follows days of cross-border hostilities,
- Pakistan earlier conducted air strikes inside Afghanistan.
- Islamabad claimed the targets were militant camps linked to recent suicide bombings on Pakistani soil.

- Afghan authorities said civilian homes and a religious school were hit, alleging women and children were killed.
- The Taliban announced a "large-scale" retaliatory operation late Thursday (26th February, 2026) night.

PAKISTAN–AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT: DURAND LINE DISPUTE, TTP & INDIA'S STRATEGIC CONCERNS -

- Pakistan and Afghanistan engaged in their fiercest clashes in years, escalating months of tension and border skirmishes into an open conflict.
- Background of the Pakistan–Afghanistan Conflict
- **Historical Tension:** Disputes date back decades, especially over the contested Durand Line, which Afghanistan has never formally recognized as an international border.
- **Post-2021 Shift:** After the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, relations with Pakistan initially improved but soon deteriorated.
- **Militant Sanctuary Allegations:** Pakistan accuses Kabul of sheltering leaders of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other insurgents launching attacks inside Pakistan.
- **Afghan-Accusations:** Afghan authorities deny these claims and instead accuse Pakistan of supporting anti-Taliban militant groups.
- **Recurring Border Clashes:** Frequent skirmishes, artillery exchanges, and air strikes occur along the frontier, often triggered by militant attacks.
- **Failed Ceasefires:** Several truces mediated by regional states have collapsed due to continued violence and mistrust.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CHANDRAYAAN-4: ISRO SELECTS MONS MOUTON NEAR LUNAR SOUTH POLE - About Selected Landing Site: Mons Mouton (MM-4)

- Mons Mouton (MM) lies in the lunar South Polar region, an area of high scientific interest due to potential water ice and ancient geological records.
- **Scientific Evaluation:** Four candidate sites MM-1, MM-3, MM-4 and MM-5 were analysed using Orbiter High Resolution Camera (OHRC) multi-view datasets for terrain safety and feasibility.
- **Safety Parameters:** MM-4 was chosen as it has a minimal hazards percentage around one km by one km area, an average slope of about 5 degrees, a mean elevation of 5,334 metres, and the highest number of safe landing grids.



About Chandrayaan-4 Mission

- Chandrayaan-4 is India's first lunar sample-return mission, aimed at achieving soft landing, collecting lunar samples, and returning them safely to Earth.
- **Expected Launch:** The mission is targeted for launch around 2028, subject to final readiness and approvals.
- **Key Components:** The mission comprises five modules:
 - Propulsion Module (PM)
 - Descender Module (DM)
 - Ascender Module (AM)
 - Transfer Module (TM) and
 - Re-entry Module (RM)
- **Key Mission Objectives:** The mission seeks to achieve safe soft landing and sample collection from the lunar surface.
- It also aims to demonstrate lunar lift-off, orbital docking, sample transfer, and safe re-entry to Earth.

INDIA JOINS PAX SILICA ALLIANCE WITH US -

- India formally entered the US-led Pax Silica strategic alliance after signing the Pax Silica Declaration in the

presence of Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg. The move marks a significant step in deepening bilateral cooperation in critical minerals, semiconductors and artificial intelligence (AI).

- US envoy Sergio Gor described India's entry as "strategic and essential", asserting that the coalition will shape the 21st century economic and technological order. The alliance, launched in December 2025, seeks to secure global AI and semiconductor supply chains and reduce dependence on non-aligned nations.

Focus on AI and Semiconductor Ecosystem

- The Pax Silica Declaration aims to create a secure, resilient and innovation-driven ecosystem spanning raw materials to advanced technological infrastructure. It recognises reliable supply chains as indispensable for mutual economic security.
- India's participation strengthens the coalition with its vast engineering talent and expanding semiconductor manufacturing ambitions. Ten semiconductor plants are reportedly in various stages of development in India, with the first commercial production expected soon.

NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON AI IMPACT -

- The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 concluded with 89 countries and international organizations including major powers like the United States and China signing the New Delhi Declaration rooted in the principle of "Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya," emphasizing equitable sharing of Artificial Intelligence (AI) benefits.
- The non-binding declaration is structured around seven 'Chakras' and represents the broadest multilateral consensus on AI to date.

What are the Key Highlights of the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact?

- **Democratizing AI Resources:** Affordable digital infrastructure and connectivity are essential to unlock AI's full potential.



- Guided by Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the declaration stresses equitable access to AI resources so all countries can develop and deploy AI for public benefit.
- It notes the Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI, a voluntary framework to expand access to foundational AI tools, support local innovation, and build resilient AI ecosystems while respecting national laws.
- **Economic Growth and Social Good:** The declaration promotes open and accessible AI solutions to improve scalability and adaptability.
- The declaration notes the Global AI Impact Commons as a voluntary initiative that provides a practical platform to promote the adoption, replication, and scaling of successful AI use cases across regions.
- **Secure and Trusted AI:** The declaration recognises development of the Trusted AI Commons, a voluntary platform offering shared tools, benchmarks, and best practices to support responsible and adaptable AI.
- **Science:** Removing barriers and expanding AI research infrastructure can accelerate scientific innovation through global collaboration.
- The declaration notes the International Network of AI for Science Institutions as a voluntary platform to connect researchers and pool AI capabilities.

A TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE WILL OCCUR ON 3RD MARCH 2026, VISIBLE ACROSS MOST OF INDIA, EASTERN ASIA, AUSTRALIA, THE PACIFIC OCEAN, AND THE AMERICAS -

- About: A lunar eclipse is a celestial event that occurs when the Sun, Earth, and Moon align in a straight line (syzygy) during a full Moon phase, and the Moon passes through Earth's shadow. Earth's shadow structure comprises:
- **Umbra:** The darker, inner cone where direct sunlight is completely blocked.
- **Penumbra:** The lighter, outer region where sunlight is only partially obstructed.



- Types of Lunar Eclipses:
- **Penumbral:** Moon passes only through the penumbra, causing a subtle dimming (often difficult to detect).
- **Partial:** Only a portion of the Moon enters the umbra, causing part of the lunar disk to darken.
- **Total:** The entire Moon enters the umbra, leading to the most dramatic effect.
- **Observational Features:** Visible from anywhere on Earth's night side where the Moon is above the horizon. Safe to observe with the naked eye, unlike solar eclipses.
- **Blood Moon Phenomenon:** During a total lunar eclipse, the Moon often appears reddish or coppery. This is due to Rayleigh scattering—Earth's atmosphere scatters shorter blue wavelengths while refracting (bending) longer red wavelengths toward the Moon, illuminating it indirectly with the light of all of Earth's simultaneous sunrises and sunsets.

AT THE AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026, THE BENGALURU-BASED STARTUP SARVAM AI RELEASED TWO LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS (LLMs) -

- The two models were trained on 35 billion and 105 billion parameters, respectively, and were less power- and compute-intensive than comparable models.



About Large Language Models (LLMs)

- Large language models (LLMs) are advanced AI systems designed to understand and generate human-like text.
- They learn from vast amounts of written data to predict what comes next in a sentence or to create coherent responses to questions.
- **Architecture and Training:** LLMs use deep learning with transformer architectures, like Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT), designed for processing sequential text data.
- They feature multiple neural network layers and an attention mechanism for context understanding.



ECONOMY & FINANCE

16TH FINANCE COMMISSION REPORT -

- The 16th Finance Commission (16th FC), chaired by Arvind Panagariya, has submitted its report for the award period 2026-31. The recommendations, tabled in Parliament alongside the Union Budget 2026-27, signal a significant shift from "entitlement-based" transfers to "compliance-driven" fiscal federalism.



Summary

- The 16th FC retains states' tax share at 41% and shifts fiscal transfers toward performance- and compliance-based criteria, including a new weight for contribution to GDP.
- It emphasises fiscal discipline by capping state deficits at 3% of GSDP, ending off-budget borrowings, rationalising subsidies, and warning against unchecked unconditional cash transfers.
- While strengthening efficiency and transparency, the recommendations raise concerns over shrinking untied funds, equity in horizontal devolution, and state fiscal autonomy, especially for southern and poorer states.

What are the Key Recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission (2026–31)?

- Tax Devolution:
- Vertical Devolution: This is the percentage of the Central Government's Divisible Pool of taxes that is given to the States.
- Under 16th FC, states' share in the divisible pool of central taxes was retained at 41%, unchanged from the 15th Finance Commission.
- The divisible pool excludes cesses, surcharges, and cost of collection from gross central tax revenue.
- Horizontal Devolution: This is the formula used to decide exactly how many rupees each state gets from that 41% pot.
- The 16th FC has introduced a major shift toward rewarding economic performance.

- Distribution among states is based on a revised devolution formula with weights for income distance (42.5%), population as per the 2011 Census (17.5%), demographic performance (10%), area (10%), forest & ecology (10%), and a new 10% weight for contribution to GDP, while excluding the tax and fiscal effort parameter used by the 15th FC.

WALMART BECOMES WORLD'S FIRST RETAIL COMPANY TO REACH USD 1 TRILLION MARKET VALUE -

- In a historic milestone for the global retail industry, Walmart Inc. became the world's first retail company to achieve a market capitalisation of USD 1 trillion in January 2026. This landmark achievement followed a strong and sustained rally in Walmart's share price over the past year. The development is significant as it highlights how traditional retail companies can leverage technology, scale, and innovation to compete with global technology giants in market value.



Background: Walmart's Global Presence

- Founded in 1962, Walmart is the world's largest retailer by revenue and operates thousands of stores across multiple countries. Over the years, the company has transformed itself from a brick-and-mortar retailer into a technology-driven, omnichannel giant, combining physical stores with e-commerce, data analytics, and advanced logistics.
- The achievement of a USD 1 trillion valuation places Walmart among a very small group of companies globally that have crossed this mark, reflecting strong investor confidence in its long-term business model.

UNION BUDGET 2026: LIST OF NEW AND EXISTING SCHEMES & INITIATIVES - Schemes Announced in Union Budget 2026-27

1. Manufacturing & Strategic Sectors



- The Budget places strong emphasis on scaling up manufacturing in seven strategic and frontier sectors to reduce import dependence and strengthen India's global competitiveness.
- Biopharma SHAKTI (₹10,000 crore over five years) aims to develop India as a global hub for biologics and biosimilars, supported by new and upgraded NIPER institutions and over 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites.
- Building on earlier progress, India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 focuses on semiconductor equipment, materials, full-stack Indian intellectual property, and skilled workforce development.



2. Textile, Khadi and Handicrafts

- An Integrated Textile Programme has been announced with five components, including the National Fibre Scheme, Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme, National Handloom and Handicraft Programme, Tex-Eco Initiative, and Samarth 2.0 for skilling.
- To promote scale and value addition, Mega Textile Parks will be set up in challenge mode.
- Complementing this, the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative focuses on strengthening khadi, handloom and handicrafts through training, quality improvement and global branding.

3. MSMEs and Enterprise Support

- Recognizing MSMEs as engines of employment, the Budget introduces a ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund to create future "Champion MSMEs".
- The Self-Reliant India Fund has been topped up by ₹2,000 crore to support micro enterprises.
- The Corporate Mitra Programme will create a cadre of trained para-professionals to help MSMEs meet compliance needs, especially in Tier-II and Tier-III towns.
- Major reforms have also been announced for the TReDS platform, including mandatory use by CPSEs, credit guarantee for invoice discounting, integration with GeM, and securitisation of receivables. Additionally, a Legacy Industrial Cluster Rejuvenation Scheme will revive 200 old clusters.

4. Infrastructure & Connectivity

- Public capital expenditure has been increased to ₹12.2 lakh crore, supported by new institutional mechanisms.
- An Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund will provide partial credit guarantees to reduce project risks.
- Key connectivity initiatives include new Dedicated Freight Corridors, expansion of National Waterways, a Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme, and incentives for seaplane manufacturing and operations.
- The Budget also proposes a ₹20,000 crore Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) Programme, development of City Economic Regions, and seven high-speed rail corridors linking major growth centres.

5. Services, Education and Skill Development

- A High-Powered Education-to-Employment and Enterprise Standing Committee will guide India's services-led growth strategy.
- The Budget announces expansion of Allied Health Professionals, training 1.5 lakh caregivers, and establishment of five Medical Value Tourism Hubs. The AYUSH sector will be strengthened through new institutes and upgraded labs.
- Other initiatives include AVGC content creator labs in schools and colleges, a new National Institute of Design in eastern India, University Townships, girls' hostels in STEM institutions, and upgraded national telescope infrastructure.

6. Tourism, Culture and Heritage

- Tourism is positioned as a major employment generator.
- The Budget proposes a National Institute of Hospitality, a Tourist Guide Skill Pilot Scheme, and a National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid.
- Eco-tourism trails, development of 15 archaeological sites, and a Buddhist Circuit Development Scheme for the North-East further strengthen cultural tourism.

7. Sports Development

- To leverage India's manufacturing potential, a Dedicated Sports Goods Manufacturing Initiative has been announced.
- In addition, the Khelo India Mission will transform the sports ecosystem over the next decade through talent



pathways, sports science, coaching and infrastructure.

8. Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Economy

- Major schemes include Fisheries Development in reservoirs and coastal areas, Animal Husbandry Entrepreneurship Support, and promotion of high-value crops such as coconut, cocoa, cashew and sandalwood.
- The Coconut Promotion Scheme targets productivity enhancement, while Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual AI-based advisory system, will support farmers with customised information.
- SHE-Marts will help rural women transition from livelihoods to enterprise ownership.

9. Social Justice, Health and Welfare

- The Budget introduces Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana for skill-based employment and Divyang Sahara Yojana for assistive devices.
- Mental healthcare receives a boost with NIMHANS-2, upgraded institutes, and expansion of emergency and trauma care centres.

INDIA REVISES BASE YEAR OF MERCHANDISE TRADE INDICES TO 2022-23 -

- Government of India has revised the base year of India’s merchandise trade indices from 2012-13 to 2022-23. The update, announced on 20 February 2026, aims to improve the relevance, reliability, and analytical usefulness of trade data for policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders. The revision has been undertaken by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S) in view of structural changes in the economy and evolving global trade patterns.



Why Was the Base Year of India’s Merchandise Trade Indices Revised?

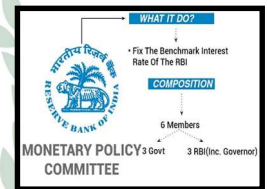
- The base year of India’s merchandise trade indices was revised to 2022-23 to reflect the current structure of India’s external trade.
- Since 2012-13, India’s economy has undergone major structural shifts, including changes in commodity

composition, export diversification, and new trade partnerships.

- The government stated that updating the base year ensures better alignment with contemporary macroeconomic indicators and global best practices.
- The revision was carried out based on recommendations of a committee chaired by Professor Nachiketa Chattopadhyay of the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC) -

- The Reserve Bank of India Monetary Policy Committee kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25% while revising growth and inflation projections upward for FY26.



Monetary Policy Decisions

- **Repo Rate Unchanged:** The MPC voted unanimously to keep the policy repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) at 5.25%.
- **Other Policy Rates:** The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate remains at 5.00%, while the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate remain at 5.50%.
- **Policy Stance:** By a 5:1 majority, the MPC retained a “Neutral” stance, signalling flexibility in future actions depending on evolving conditions.
- While the MPC retained neutrality, Prof. Ram Singh, member MPC, maintained his view that the stance should shift from neutral to accommodative.

Growth Outlook:

- **GDP Growth Upgrade (FY26):** Real GDP growth is projected at 7.4% for FY26, reflecting strong domestic momentum.
- GDP growth for Q1 and Q2 of FY27 has been revised upward to 6.9% and 7.0%, respectively.

GNPA OF BANKS FALLS: HISTORIC LOW IN INDIA -

- The Finance Ministry has informed that Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) of Scheduled Commercial



Banks (SCBs) declined to a historic low as of September 30, 2025, lower than the level seen in 2010–11.



Trends in Gross NPAs

- **Historic Decline:** The GNPA ratio of SCBs has fallen to 2.15%, representing the lowest level in over a decade.
- **Public Sector Banks:** PSBs reported a GNPA ratio of 2.50%, with a sharper decline since March 2018 compared to other bank groups.
- **Private Sector Banks:** Private banks recorded a lower GNPA ratio of 1.73%, indicating stronger asset quality.
- **Foreign Banks:** Foreign banks reported the lowest GNPA ratio at 0.80%
- **Decline in Fresh NPAs:** The slippage ratio, measuring fresh accretion of NPAs, has improved consistently over the last six years

UTTAR PRADESH PRESENTS ITS FIRST ECONOMIC SURVEY, LAYS OUT PATH TO \$1 TRILLION ECONOMY -

- Uttar Pradesh has created history by presenting its first-ever Economic Survey 2025-26, similar to the Union government's annual survey. Presented in the State Assembly by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna, the survey outlines a clear, data-backed plan to transform Uttar Pradesh into a \$1 trillion economy through investment-led growth, infrastructure expansion, and sector-wide reforms.



Uttar Pradesh Economic Survey 2025-26: A First for the State

- The Uttar Pradesh Economic Survey 2025-26 provides a comprehensive overview of the state's economy, finances, and development sectors.
- This marks the first time Uttar Pradesh has released such a detailed annual economic document.
- The survey highlights consistent economic growth, improved fiscal discipline, and rising investor confidence.

- It positions Uttar Pradesh as a fast-emerging economic powerhouse, supported by reforms in governance, digital systems, and law and order.
- The document also aligns state growth goals with the long-term vision of Developed Uttar Pradesh 2047, focusing on sustainability, employment, and inclusive development.

ORANGE ECONOMY IN UNION BUDGET 2026: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AS INDIA'S GROWTH ENGINE -

- Union Budget 2026 prioritised the Orange Economy through targeted support for digital content, design education, and heritage tourism, signalling its transition from a niche sector to a core growth pillar of India's economy.



About the Orange Economy

- **Origin and Symbolism:** The term Orange Economy was originally coined by Iván Duque Márquez (former President of Colombia) and Felipe Buitrago in their 2013 publication. The specific choice of the color orange is rooted in its historical association across many global traditions with culture, identity, and creativity.
- **Concept and Economic Scope:** This model refers to a broad range of interconnected activities where original ideas are transformed into cultural goods and services.
- The primary driver of value in this sector is Intellectual Property (IP) rights. Its scope is twofold:
- **Cultural Economy:** Focuses on heritage sites, visual arts, and traditional festivals.
- **Creative Industries:** Encompasses more commercial sectors such as fashion, architecture, digital advertising, and gaming.
- **Growth Model and Evolution:** The Orange Economy represents an idea-driven growth model that aligns closely with the Knowledge Economy and Experience Economy.



- In these frameworks, intangible assets—specifically creativity, storytelling, and intellectual property—are used to generate scalable economic value.
- While the Cultural Economy remains centered on heritage and arts, the broader Creative Economy extends value creation into design, digital media, and experience-based services.

INDIA-CHINA TRADE SURGES TO HISTORIC USD 155 BILLION AMID DIPLOMATIC RECALIBRATION -

- The world's two most populous nations and Asia's largest economies have reached a historic trade milestone in 2025, signaling a significant shift in their complex bilateral relationship. India and China recorded bilateral trade of USD 155.6 billion in 2025, marking the highest trade volume ever achieved between the two countries and demonstrating the powerful economic complementarities underlying their relationship despite years of geopolitical tensions and diplomatic strain.
- This record trade achievement arrives amid a broader normalization of India-China relations, catalyzed by high-level diplomatic engagement and reinforced by Chinese officials' characterization of the trajectory as entering a "new level of improvement." The trade surge, coupled with increased exchanges at diplomatic, economic, and institutional levels, suggests a deliberate shift toward managed engagement and pragmatic cooperation on issues of mutual economic benefit.



RBI MPC KEEPS REPO RATE UNCHANGED

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its February 2026 meeting, kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, following a 25 basis point cut in December 2025.
- The decision implies no immediate change in lending and deposit rates. EMIs on repo-linked loans (home, personal loans) are expected to remain stable.



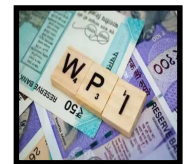
- What are the Key Announcements made by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)?
- **Monetary Policy Stance:** The committee chose to retain the "neutral" monetary policy stance. This indicates the RBI is not committed to a future rate hike or cut and will act based on incoming data.
- **GDP Growth Forecast:** The RBI raised its GDP growth projection for FY26 to 7.4% from the earlier estimate of 7.3%.
- **Retail Inflation for FY26:** The RBI marginally increased its retail inflation projection for FY26 to 2.1% from the earlier 2.0%.

Positive Domestic Conditions (Supporting the Pause)

- **Strong and Upwardly Growth:** The revised 7.4% growth forecast indicates strong momentum driven by robust consumption, projected to expand by about 7% in FY26. It is supported by budget stimuli (income tax cuts in FY26, GST rationalisation), past 125 bps rate cuts, and subdued inflation.
- The Economic Survey 2025–26 has forecast GDP to grow between 6.8-7.2% in the fiscal year 2026-27 on the back of strong domestic demand.
- **Benign and Controlled Inflation:** Headline inflation, at 1.33% in December 2025, remains comfortably below the RBI's 2–6% band. The underlying inflation is low and benign, with the near-term outlook near the target.
- **Recent Pro-Growth Stimuli:** The Union Budget 2026–27's pro-growth fiscal measures are expected to boost consumption. The RBI is pausing to assess their impact, as past monetary easing is still transmitting through the economy, reducing the need for immediate further action.

INDIA'S WPI INFLATION CLIMBS TO 1.81% IN JANUARY, HITS 10-MONTH HIGH

- India's WPI inflation (Wholesale Price Index inflation) rose to 1.81% in January 2026, marking a 10-month high. This is the third consecutive monthly rise in wholesale inflation. The increase was mainly driven by



higher prices of food articles, non-food items, and manufactured products. However, retail inflation measured by CPI remained moderate at 2.75%, creating an interesting divergence in inflation trends.

What Is WPI Inflation?

- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) measures price changes at the wholesale or producer level. It tracks prices of goods before they reach consumers.
- Major components of WPI,
 - A. Primary Articles
 - B. Fuel & Power
 - C. Manufactured Products
- WPI is released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Unlike CPI, it is not the primary inflation target for the Reserve Bank of India, but it reflects producer-level price pressures.

Why Did WPI Inflation Rise in January 2026?

- The rise to 1.81% (from 0.83% in December 2025) was mainly due to,
- Higher prices of manufactured basic metals
- Increase in textiles and food products
- Rise in non-food articles
- Food inflation turning positive
- The inflation rate last year in January 2025 was 2.51%, indicating that while inflation has risen recently, it remains lower compared to last year.

RELEASE DATES ANNOUNCED FOR INDIA'S NEW GDP, CPI, AND IIP SERIES -

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has announced a comprehensive revision of the base year for Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), and Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The new base year for GDP and IIP will be 2022-23, while for CPI it will be 2024. The updated series is scheduled for release on 12 February 2026 (CPI), 27 February 2026 (GDP), and May 2026 (IIP). The move aims to improve accuracy, relevance, and international comparability of India's official statistics.



What Is Base Year Revision and Why Is It Important?

- A base year is the reference year against which economic indicators are measured. Over time, economic structures change due to technological progress, new industries, and shifting consumption patterns. Therefore, periodic base year revision ensures,
 - D. Updated weightage of sectors
 - E. Inclusion of new data sources
 - F. Improved methodology
 - G. Better global comparability
- The new GDP base year revision 2026 reflects structural changes in India's economy since the last update.

New Base Years Announced

- MoSPI has proposed,
- GDP – Base Year 2022-23
- IIP – Base Year 2022-23
- CPI – Base Year 2024

The release schedule is as follows.

- CPI New Series – 12 February 2026
- GDP New Series – 27 February 2026
- IIP New Series – May 2026

INDIA'S AGRI EXPORTS TO US SET TO RISE AS 75% ITEMS GET ZERO TARIFF: SBI REPORT -

- India's agricultural exports to the United States are expected to witness a strong boost, with nearly 75% of export items now enjoying zero tariff access, according to a report by State Bank of India (SBI).
- The report highlights that India currently maintains a \$1.3 billion trade surplus in agricultural trade with the US. Agricultural products worth \$1.36 billion will now receive zero additional US duty access, improving price competitiveness and expanding market opportunities for Indian exporters.



Key Highlights of the SBI Report

- 75% of Indian agri exports to the US now face zero tariff
- Agricultural products worth \$1.035 billion assured zero reciprocal tariff



- Strengthens India's existing \$1.3 billion agricultural trade surplus
- Enhances competitiveness and export volumes

Major Beneficiary Sectors

1. Rice
 - US global rice imports: \$1.378 billion
 - Imports from India: \$341 million
 - India's share: 24.7%
 - The US already sources nearly one-fourth of its rice imports from India, making tariff benefits highly significant for Indian farmers.
2. Fishery Sector
 - US global imports (fish & aquatic invertebrates): \$18.84 billion
 - Imports from India: \$1.8 billion
 - India's share: 9.6%
 - The fishery sector, earlier affected by higher tariffs, is expected to gain from the reduced tariff structure (around 18%), improving export prospects.
3. Tea, Coffee & Spices
 - US global imports: \$14.02 billion
 - Imports from India: \$396 million
 - India's share: 2.8%
 - The new tariff framework is expected to support India's plantation economy and boost exports in this segment.

INDIA'S RETAIL INFLATION AT 2.75 PERCENT IN JANUARY 2026 UNDER NEW CPI SERIES (BASE 2024 = 100) -

- India's retail inflation stood at 2.75 percent in January 2026 under the new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series with base year 2024 = 100, as released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- This is the first inflation data released under the updated CPI framework, replacing the earlier 2012 base year.



Inflation Data – January 2026 (Provisional)

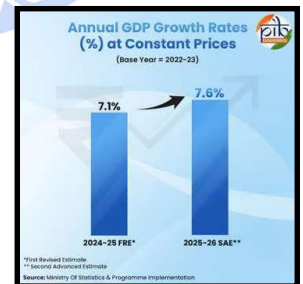
- All India CPI Inflation
- 2.75 percent

Rural and Urban Inflation

- Rural: 2.73 percent
- Urban: 2.77 percent
- Food Inflation (CFPI)
- Overall: 2.13 percent
- Rural: 1.96 percent
- Urban: 2.44 percent
- Housing Inflation
- Overall: 2.05 percent
- Rural: 2.39 percent
- Urban: 1.92 percent

INDIA GDP GROWTH REVISED TO 7.6%: SECOND ADVANCE ESTIMATES & FISCAL IMPACT -

- India's GDP growth for FY 2025–26 has been revised to 7.6% according to the Second Advance Estimates released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- The revision is based on a new GDP series with base year 2022–23.
- The change affects key fiscal ratios like Fiscal Deficit-to-GDP and Debt-to-GDP, which are crucial for policy planning and fiscal consolidation.



Key Highlights

- **Nominal GDP Revision:** India's nominal GDP (size of the economy) has been revised downward for the years 2023–24 to 2025–26 under the new GDP series.
- **Impact on Fiscal Indicators:** A lower GDP base negatively impacts key fiscal indicators that use GDP as the denominator.
- **Fiscal Deficit Implications:** Fiscal Deficit-to-GDP Ratio will increase even if the absolute fiscal deficit remains unchanged.
- **Debt-to-GDP Implications:** Debt-to-GDP Ratio will also rise due to the smaller GDP base.



IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2026: YOUTH VOICES ON MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION -

• International Mother Language Day 2026 will be observed on 21 February to promote linguistic and cultural diversity worldwide. Proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999 and later adopted by the UN General Assembly, the day highlights the importance of multilingual education and preservation of endangered languages. The 2026 theme, “Youth voices on multilingual education,” focuses on empowering young people to protect linguistic diversity. With nearly 40% of learners lacking education in their mother tongue, International Mother Language Day 2026 stresses inclusive education and cultural identity.

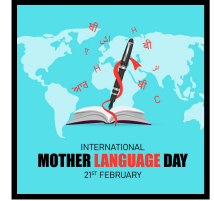
International Mother Language Day 2026: Theme and Focus

- The theme for International Mother Language Day 2026 is “Youth voices on multilingual education.”
- In recent years, migration, digital growth and globalization have reshaped the linguistic landscape.
- Young people are actively revitalizing endangered languages through digital platforms, cultural content, and advocacy.
- UNESCO multilingual education initiatives emphasise that learning in one’s mother tongue improves cognitive development, participation, and well-being.
- International Mother Language Day 2026 underlines that multilingualism is not just social reality but a fundamental human trait.

AS THE WORLD OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY ON 21ST FEBRUARY, UNESCO’S 7TH 'STATE OF THE EDUCATION REPORT FOR INDIA 2025', TITLED BHASHA MATTERS: MOTHER TONGUE AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION, REFRAMES LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AS A CORNERSTONE OF QUALITY LEARNING –

What is the UNESCO SoER 2025 Report for India?

- It is an annual flagship publication by the UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia, offering evidence-based analysis of key themes in India's education landscape while aligning with SDG 4 (quality education) and UNESCO's inclusive learning commitments.
- The report urgently calls for strengthening Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and provides a comprehensive roadmap to make inclusive education a national priority.



Core Focus

- **Access, Inclusion, and Equity:** Ensuring all learners, particularly tribal children, girls, and those with disabilities, can participate in school through languages they understand.
- **Contextual and Lifelong Learning:** Embedding local languages and cultural knowledge across all stages of education, from school to teacher training.
- **Appreciation of Linguistic Diversity:** Recognizing children's full linguistic repertoires as assets and promoting an understanding of India's diversity.
- **Skills for Sustainable Futures:** Using multilingual learning to build cognitive flexibility and stronger foundations for learning additional languages, including English.
- **Institutionalization:** Strengthening policies, teacher education, and digital ecosystems to support sustainable MTB-MLE.

Key Findings : Policy Alignment: Mother-tongue-based multilingual education is steadily moving from the margins to the centre of India’s education reforms. It is now increasingly recognized as critical to achieving the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and global commitments like the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032).



AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

WORLD'S LONGEST SNAKE RECORDED IN INDONESIA'S SULAWESI FORESTS -

• A giant female reticulated python discovered in the forests of Sulawesi, Indonesia, has officially been recognised as the longest measured snake in the world. The confirmation was made by the "Guinness Book of World Records", marking a rare and remarkable milestone in wildlife documentation.



Record-Breaking Measurement

• The snake, scientifically known as "Malayopython reticulatus", was measured at 7.22 metres (23 feet 8 inches). Nicknamed "Ibu Baron" or "The Baroness", the python's length is so extensive that it would span the entire width of a standard FIFA goalpost. Guinness officials noted that if measured under full muscular relaxation, the snake could potentially be nearly 10 per cent longer, though this was not attempted due to animal welfare concerns.

RANVIR SACHDEVA BECOMES YOUNGEST SPEAKER AT AI SUMMIT -

• Eight-year-old coder Ranvir Sachdeva emerged as a standout figure at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, becoming the youngest speaker to address the high-profile gathering at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Surrounded by global technology leaders and policymakers, Ranvir described himself as a technologist and presented his ideas on linking ancient Indian philosophies with modern Artificial Intelligence (AI).

• His keynote focused on India's approach to AI development and how it differs from other nations. He also shared his own use case of an Indian AI model and discussed efforts to promote AI literacy and contribute to economic growth.



Engagement with Global Tech Leaders

• Ranvir's presence at the summit led to interactions with some of the most influential figures in the technology sector. He met Google CEO Sundar Pichai and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman during the event.

• Previously, he interacted with Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff and International Telecommunication Union Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin at the AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva. In 2024, he also met United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, reflecting his growing international recognition.

'BOONG' PUTS INDIA ON THE MAP WITH FIRST-EVER BAFTA CHILDREN'S FILM AWARD -

• In a proud moment for Indian cinema Boong has created history at the BAFTA Awards 2026 by winning the Best Children's and Family Film category. The Manipuri-language debut feature became the first Indian film ever to win in this category at the prestigious British Academy Film Awards. Backed by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, Boong was the sole Indian nominee this year and brought global recognition to regional Indian storytelling.



Boong Wins Best Children's and Family Film at BAFTA Awards 2026

• Boong clinched the Best Children's and Family Film award at the 79th British Academy Film Awards held in London.

• Competing against international titles like Arco, Lilo & Stitch and Zootopia 2, Boong emerged as the winner, marking a historic first for India.

• The announcement was made by the official BAFTA platform, confirming India's breakthrough moment at one of the world's most prestigious film ceremonies.



TAKAICHI SECURES SUPERMAJORITY IN JAPAN SNAP ELECTION -

- Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party has recorded a sweeping victory in a snap general election, handing Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi a strong mandate and a rare supermajority in the powerful lower house of parliament. The result consolidates her authority just months after assuming office and reshapes Japan's immediate political trajectory.



Decisive Mandate for the Ruling Party

- According to projections by public broadcaster NHK, Prime Minister "Sanae Takaichi" led the Liberal Democratic Party to cross the 310-seat mark in the 465-member House of Representatives. This threshold grants a supermajority, enabling the government to override the upper house, where the LDP lacks a clear majority. The snap poll, called amid political uncertainty, was widely viewed as a high-risk move that ultimately paid off.

OPPOSITION MOVE TO REMOVE LOK SABHA SPEAKER -

- Opposition parties of the INDIA bloc are considering moving a resolution for the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, alleging partisan conduct amid repeated disruptions, suspensions of MPs.



Reason Behind the Proposed Resolution

- **Partisan Functioning:** Opposition leaders accused the Speaker of "acting in a partisan manner" and denying the Leader of Opposition, the opportunity to speak during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address.
- **MP Suspensions:** The move follows the suspension of eight Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha.
- **Allegations Against Women MPs:** The Opposition objected to "unsubstantiated" charges made against women Congress MPs.

About the Speaker of the Lok Sabha

- The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha, responsible for regulating its day-to-day functioning.
- The Speaker holds a constitutional office, functioning under the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.
- The Speaker's salary and allowances are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, and are not voted upon by Parliament.

MANIPUR SET FOR NEW GOVT, AS RULING PARTY ELECTS THIS LEADER FOR CM POST -

- After months of political uncertainty, Manipur is set for a new government. The BJP has elected Yumnam Khemchand Singh as the leader of its legislature party, paving the way for him to become the next Chief Minister. The decision comes just days before President's Rule in the state ends on February 13. Singh's elevation marks a crucial moment for Manipur, which has been under central rule following prolonged ethnic violence and the resignation of former CM N. Biren Singh.



Who Is New CM Of Manipur?

- Yumnam Khemchand Singh is a 62-year-old senior BJP leader and a two-time MLA from the Singjamei constituency.
- He began his political journey alongside N. Biren Singh in the early 2000s and later joined the BJP in 2013.
- Known as a disciplined party organizer and former taekwondo sportsman, he served as Speaker of the Manipur Assembly and later as a cabinet minister.
- Over time, he emerged as a key internal critic of the previous leadership, especially during the prolonged crisis in the state.



TARIQUE RAHMAN TAKE OATH AS BANGLADESH PM -

- Bangladesh is set for a significant political transition as Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairman Tarique Rahman prepares to take oath as Prime Minister following a decisive general election victory.



The swearing-in ceremony comes after the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2024 and marks Rahman's return to formal leadership after 17 years in exile. The February 12 parliamentary elections have reshaped the country's political landscape, delivering a clear mandate to the BNP and its allies.

BNP's Landslide Victory in General Elections

- The BNP secured more than 151 seats in the 300-member Jatiya Sangsad, while the BNP-led alliance won a commanding 212 seats, according to the Bangladesh Election Commission. The scale of the victory ensures a stable parliamentary majority for the incoming government.
- Jamaat-e-Islami, which contested independently after previously aligning with the BNP, emerged as the second-largest party with 77 seats. The Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, was barred from contesting the elections, significantly altering the competitive landscape.

NETHERLANDS GETS YOUNGEST-EVER PRIME MINISTER IN ROB JETTEN -

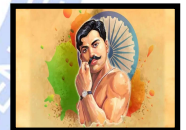
- Rob Jetten has officially become the youngest and first openly gay Prime Minister of the Netherlands. The 38 year old leader of the D66 party was sworn in just two hours ago at Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague. His appointment marks a major political shift after a tight election battle in October. Jetten narrowly defeated populist Geert Wilders and quickly moved to form a new government. The Netherlands now enters a fresh political phase under its youngest Prime Minister in history.
- **Rob Jetten Becomes Netherlands Prime Minister at 38**



- When Rob Jetten will assume office, he broke a long-standing record.
- Previously the youngest Prime Minister was Ruud Lubbers who took office in 1982 at age 43.
- Jetten at the age of 38 now holds that distinction.
- His appointment is also historic because he is the first openly gay Prime Minister of the Netherlands.
- Notably, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage in 2001 which is making Jetten's leadership symbolically significant for LGBTQ+ representation globally.

95TH MARTYRDOM DAY OF CHANDRA SHEKHAR AZAD: THE REVOLUTIONARY WHO CHOSE DEATH OVER SURRENDER -

- On 27 February 2025 India observed the 95th martyrdom day of Chandra Shekhar Azad, one of the most fearless revolutionaries of the Indian freedom struggle. Political leaders across parties paid tribute to his courage and sacrifice. Azad, who vowed never to be captured alive by the British, kept his promise till his last breath in 1931. His life remains a symbol of uncompromising patriotism and revolutionary spirit in India's struggle for independence.

**Who Was Chandra Shekhar Azad?**

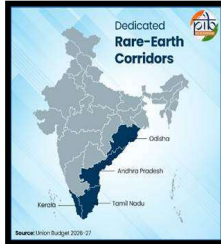
- Chandra Shekhar Azad was born as Chandrashekhar Tiwari on 23 July 1906 in Bhabra (now in Madhya Pradesh). He became one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders during India's independence movement.
- He earned the name "Azad" (meaning Free) at the age of 15 when arrested during the Non-Cooperation Movement. When presented before a magistrate, he declared,
- His name was "Azad."
- His father's name was "Swatantra."
- His address was "Jail."
- This bold act defined his identity for life.



PROGRAMMES, SCHEMES AND INITIATIVES

RARE EARTH CORRIDORS IN COASTAL INDIA -

- In the Union Budget 2026–27, the Union Government proposed the establishment of dedicated Rare Earth Corridors in the coastal States of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

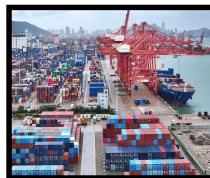


Rare Earths in India

- **Primary Source:** In India, Beach Sand Minerals (BSM) are the principal source of rare earth elements.
- **Monazite Presence:** BSM contains monazite, a phosphate mineral rich in rare earth elements such as neodymium and praseodymium, along with Uranium and Thorium, making it a strategic substance.
- **Strategic Importance:** Rare earths are classified as critical minerals due to their essential role in advanced technologies and national security.
- Monazite is regulated under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, due to the presence of radioactive elements.

WHY BHARAT CONTAINER SHIPPING LINE COULD CHANGE INDIA'S TRADE GAME -

- India has taken a major step to regain control over its container trade. The government has signed an agreement to establish the Bharat Container Shipping Line, a new national shipping entity aimed at strengthening India's logistics and maritime ecosystem. Announced alongside the Union Budget 2026-27, this initiative links shipping, ports, railways, and container manufacturing under one vision. With containerised cargo forming the backbone of India's foreign trade, the move is expected to boost self-reliance, cut logistics costs, and improve global competitiveness.



About Bharat Container Shipping Line (BCSL)

- Bharat Container Shipping Line is a new government-backed shipping company created to anchor India's container trade in Indian hands.
- It aims to reduce dependence on foreign shipping lines and ensure assured availability of containers for exporters and importers.
- The initiative is closely linked to India's port and rail infrastructure, enabling smoother cargo movement across the country.
- BCSL will support containerised cargo, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of India's international trade value, making it a strategic asset for trade resilience.

UNION BUDGET 2026–27 PUSH FOR CHEMICAL PARKS -

- The Union Budget 2026–27 announced India's first dedicated budgetary support for chemical park infrastructure, proposing a ₹600 crore, challenge-based scheme to help States establish three Chemical Parks.



What are Chemical Parks?

- **About:** Chemical Parks are planned industrial clusters designed specifically for chemical and petrochemical manufacturing, where multiple units operate together using shared infrastructure and common facilities.
- **Key Features:** The parks will follow a cluster-based, plug-and-play model, offering ready industrial land, common utilities, logistics support, and standard environmental compliance facilities such as waste treatment and safety systems.
- The initiative builds on successful cluster models such as Plastic Parks, Bulk Drug Parks, and Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Regions(PCPIRs), which have demonstrated the benefits of shared infrastructure, economies of scale, and faster project execution



- **Objective:** The initiative aims to strengthen domestic chemical manufacturing, reduce import dependence, improve supply-chain integration, and enhance India's global competitiveness in bulk and specialty chemicals.
- **India's Status:** India's chemical industry is a core pillar of manufacturing, supplying key inputs to agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textiles, automobiles and construction, contributing about 7% to GDP, ranking sixth globally and third in Asia.
- **Significance:** Backed by targeted policy support and measures to encourage technology adoption, innovation, and sustainability, this integrated approach is expected to deepen domestic manufacturing capabilities and enhance India's integration into global chemical value chains in the coming decade.

STARTUP INDIA 2.0? GOVT EXTENDS RECOGNITION TO 20 YEARS -

- India's startup ecosystem has received a major policy upgrade. In February 2026, the government expanded the Startup India definition to formally include deep technology startups, recognising their long research cycles and high capital needs. The move extends the recognition period from 10 to 20 years and offers tailored benefits to research-driven firms. This reform marks a shift from short-term scalability to long-term innovation, strengthening India's ambition to become a global technology and knowledge hub.



What Has Changed in the Startup Definition

- For the first time, the government has created a separate regulatory category for deep tech startups.
- While regular startups continue to enjoy recognition for 10 years with a turnover cap of ₹200 crore, deep tech firms will now be recognized for 20 years with a higher turnover ceiling of ₹300 crore.
- The revised framework acknowledges that deep tech companies require longer gestation periods, higher R&D

spending, and sustained innovation before commercial success.

NORTH & SOUTH BLOCKS TO BECOME 'YUGE YUGEN BHARAT' NATIONAL MUSEUM! -

- In a landmark decision, the Union Cabinet has approved the transition of North Block and South Block into part of the proposed 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum'. The move follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicating the new Prime Minister's Office, named Seva Teerth, to the nation on February 13, 2026. With this shift, Cabinet meetings will no longer be held in South Block, ending nearly 95 years of administrative use of the iconic colonial-era complex.



From Colonial Power Centres to Modern Governance Hubs

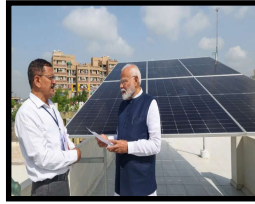
- Constructed during British rule, North Block and South Block have long served as the nerve centre of India's governance.
- Since Independence in 1947, the Prime Minister's Office functioned from South Block, and successive Cabinets under 16 Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi took crucial policy decisions within its chambers.
- The Cabinet described the final meeting in South Block as symbolic of India's transition from a colonial administrative legacy to a modern, service-oriented governance framework aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

2 YEARS OF PM SURYA GHAR SCHEME -

- The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana has completed two years since its launch, marking a significant phase in India's rooftop solar journey. Launched with an ambitious outlay of ₹75,021 crore, the scheme aims to cover at least one crore households by promoting residential rooftop solar installations. Under the scheme, beneficiaries receive up to 300 units of free



electricity per month and subsidies of up to ₹78,000 for a 3 kW solar system. On its second anniversary, the scheme shows impressive growth but also faces execution challenges.



What Is PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana?

- The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is a flagship initiative promoting rooftop solar energy for households.
- Key benefits include,
- Subsidy up to ₹78,000 for 3 kW systems
- Up to 300 units of free electricity monthly
- Reduced electricity bills
- Contribution to clean energy transition
- The scheme aligns with India's renewable energy goals and aims to decentralize power generation at the household level.

ADAMPUR AIRPORT RENAMED SRI GURU RAVIDAS MAHARAJ JI AIRPORT -

- Punjab's aviation map witnessed a symbolic and developmental shift on 2 February 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi renamed Adampur airport in Jalandhar after the revered saint Guru Ravidas, while also inaugurating a new civil terminal at Halwara airport in Ludhiana. The twin announcements combine cultural recognition with infrastructure development, strengthening regional air connectivity under the UDAN scheme and fulfilling long-standing public and political demands in the state.



Why Adampur Airport Was Renamed After Guru Ravidas

- The Adampur airport in Jalandhar has been renamed Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport, honouring the legacy of Guru Ravidas, a prominent social reformer and Bhakti movement saint.
- The decision fulfilled a long-pending demand raised by multiple political parties and social groups in Punjab.

- A resolution seeking this renaming was passed by the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 2020, and the demand was reiterated by the current state government.
- The move carries strong social and cultural significance, particularly for communities that deeply revere Guru Ravidas.

CENTRE TARGETS ₹27,500 CRORE AVIATION MONETISATION UNDER NMP 2.0 -

- The Centre has set a monetisation target of ₹27,500 crore for the civil aviation sector under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0 for the period FY26 to FY30. The renewed framework seeks to accelerate private participation in operational, revenue-generating airports and select aviation public sector entities, while retaining government ownership of core assets.
- The move provides fresh momentum to the next phase of airport leasing as the government expands infrastructure monetisation to support capital expenditure and fiscal consolidation.



Eleven Airports Identified for Leasing

- A total of eleven airports have been identified for monetisation during the five-year period. These include Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Amritsar, Indore, Raipur, Trichy, Calicut, Coimbatore, Ranchi, Jodhpur and Gaya.
- The proposal is currently under consideration by the Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPPAC). The airports will be offered to private players under structured concession agreements rather than outright sale.

PM MODI INAUGURATES FULL DELHI-MEERUT NAMO BHARAT CORRIDOR -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the remaining sections of the Nammo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), completing the 82-km Delhi-Meerut corridor. The newly opened stretches include the 5-km link between Sarai Kale Khan and New Ashok Nagar in



Delhi and the 21-km section between Meerut South and Modipuram in Uttar Pradesh. The RRTS has also been integrated with the Meerut Metro, marking a major milestone in high-speed regional connectivity.



- Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister described the corridor as a glimpse of connectivity in a developed India, combining metro systems for intra-city travel with Nammo Bharat trains for rapid inter-city movement.

Seamless Multi-Modal Integration

- The Sarai Kale Khan station has emerged as a major multi-modal transport hub. It connects Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, the Delhi Metro’s Pink Line, Veer Haqeeqat Rai ISBT and Ring Road. Similar integration has been ensured at Anand Vihar, Ghaziabad and Meerut, linking Indian Railways, Metro services and bus terminals.
- The Prime Minister noted that such integration would enable commuters to travel within cities or directly to Delhi, reducing the need for workers and students to reside in rented accommodation in the capital.

ARMY CHIEF GEN DWIVEDI FLAGS OFF BHARAT RANBHOOMI DARSHAN AT NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL -

Army Chief Flags In Bharat RanBhoomi Darshan Expedition

- Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), flagged in the expedition at the National War Memorial in the presence of senior civil and defence dignitaries.
- The expedition was led by the Regiment of Artillery and promoted the RanBhoomi Darshan initiative, which focuses on highlighting historically significant battlefields and border regions linked to India’s security narrative.
- The Army Chief praised the expedition for preserving military heritage and inspiring future generations to uphold the ideals of national service.

3,400 Km Route Across Strategic Border Areas

- The Bharat RanBhoomi Darshan Expedition was flagged off on February 3, 2026 from Dwarka, Gujarat. It covered nearly 3,400 kilometres across key locations including,

- A. Dwarka
- B. Bhuj
- C. Rann of Kutch
- D. Munabao
- E. Gadra
- F. Longewala
- G. Jaisalmer
- H. Bikaner
- I. Ambala
- J. New Delhi

PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU LAUNCHES 4 MAJOR WOMEN WELFARE SCHEMES IN DELHI -

- Honorable President Droupadi Murmu on March 2 2026, launched four women-centric welfare schemes of the Delhi Government at the “Sashakt Nari, Samriddh Delhi” programme in New Delhi. The initiatives focus on improving mobility, safety and financial support for women. Among the key highlights was the launch of the Pink National Common Mobility Card and a scheme providing two free LPG cylinders annually to ration card-holding families during Holi and Diwali.



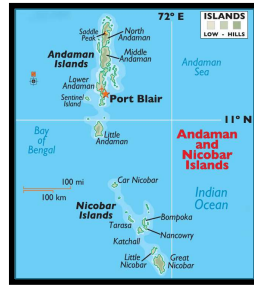
Pink National Common Mobility Card: A Major Step for Women’s Mobility

- Key Features of Pink National Common Mobility Card
- The Pink National Common Mobility Card aims to provide seamless and integrated access to public transport.
- It supports women’s free bus travel and improves connectivity across Delhi’s transport network.
- The card promotes cashless, digital ticketing across buses and other transit systems.
- It enhances safety and convenience for women commuters.
- President Droupadi Murmu stated that integrated transport access strengthens women’s independence and ensures safer movement in urban spaces.



CONCERNS OVER GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND PROJECT -

- With parts of the ₹92,000 crore Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project nearing approval, the Nicobar Tribal Council has alleged pressure from the district administration to surrender ancestral tribal land.
- The Council disputes the administration's claim that forest rights were settled under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 asserting that FRA processes were never initiated.



What is the Great Nicobar Island Project?

- **About:** Launched in 2021, GNIP is a mega infrastructure initiative to be implemented on Great Nicobar Island (GNI), located at the southern end of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The project requires diversion of forest land in Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay, and Nanjappa Bay, areas traditionally inhabited by the Nicobarese community before the 2004 tsunami.
- **Features:** Spearheaded by NITI Aayog, it includes a transshipment terminal at Galathea Bay, a greenfield airport, a greenfield township, and a tourism project with a gas-powered plant.
- It is being executed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) and is strategically located near the Malacca Strait, a key maritime route linking the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.
- **Strategic Importance:** Nicobar's strategic location near the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits enables India to monitor crucial sea routes vital for global trade and energy supply, aligning with the Act East Policy (2014) and the QUAD's Indo-Pacific strategy.
- The planned greenfield airport will enhance defense deployment, boosting India's capacity to track Chinese naval movements and reinforce regional security.

INDIA'S FIRST NATIONAL COW CULTURE MUSEUM IN MATHURA -

- India is set to establish its first National Cow Culture Museum in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. The project will be developed within the campus of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Veterinary Science University. Conceived as a blend of tradition and scientific awareness, the museum aims to highlight the cultural, agricultural and economic significance of cattle in Indian society. Authorities state that the initiative seeks to present a comprehensive understanding of cattle beyond religious symbolism.



Blending Tradition With Scientific Perspective

- Officials have indicated that the museum will showcase both the spiritual and practical importance of cows. It will explain cattle conservation, sustainable farming practices and the contribution of bovines to rural livelihoods. The project intends to demonstrate how cattle support agriculture through draught power and organic manure, and how dairy production sustains millions of households.
- The initiative also aims to educate visitors about the economic link between cattle-based activities and rural development, thereby presenting a balanced narrative rooted in culture and science.

BRAHMAPUTRA RAIL-ROAD TWIN TUNNEL GETS CABINET APPROVAL -

- The Union Cabinet has approved a major infrastructure project featuring India's first underwater rail-cum-road tunnel beneath the Brahmaputra river. The 33.7-kilometre greenfield corridor will connect Gohpur on NH-15 with Numaligarh on NH-715 in Assam at an estimated cost of ₹18,662 crore. Executed under the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode, the project aims to transform connectivity across the Northeast.



Project Design and Key Features

- The centrepiece is a 15.79-kilometre twin-tube tunnel under the Brahmaputra. One tube will accommodate rail provision, while the other will serve a four-lane access-controlled highway. The design also includes a 1.26-kilometre road cut-and-cover section and a 4-kilometre rail cut-and-cover stretch.
- Once completed, it will be India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel and only the second such structure globally. The corridor will significantly shorten travel between Gohpur and Numaligarh, which currently spans nearly 240 kilometres via the Kaliabhomora bridge route and takes around six hours.

NEW DRAGONFLY SPECIES DISCOVERED IN KERALA -

- Researchers have identified a new dragonfly species, *Lyriothemis keralensis*, in Kerala, extending its known range beyond northeast India and highlighting the State's rich biodiversity.



- **About:** Although present in Kerala since 2013, it was misidentified for over a decade as *Lyriothemis acigastra*, until detailed microscopic and museum specimen comparisons confirmed its distinct identity.
- **Features:** The species exhibits distinct sexual dimorphism, with males being bright blood-red with black markings and females yellow with black markings.
- **Seasonality:** It is seasonally visible during the Southwest Monsoon (late May to August) and persists as aquatic larvae during the rest of the year.
- **Concerns:** It thrives in human-modified irrigation landscapes such as pineapple and rubber plantations and shaded canals, with most populations occurring outside

protected areas, underscoring the need for biodiversity-sensitive land-use practices in plantation-dominated regions.

NGT GIVES NOD TO ₹81,000 CRORE GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT-WITH STRICT GREEN RULES! -

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has cleared the ₹81,000 crore Great Nicobar Project, stating it found no valid ground to interfere with the environmental clearance granted earlier. The decision was delivered on February 16, 2026, by a six-member bench headed by Justice Prakash Shrivastava. While acknowledging the strategic importance of the Great Nicobar Project, the tribunal imposed strict environmental safeguards to protect coral reefs, sandy beaches, wildlife, and tribal communities. The project will now proceed under stringent monitoring and compliance conditions.

**NGT Approval for Great Nicobar Project: What the Tribunal Said**

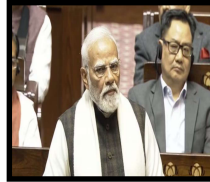
- The Great Nicobar Project received NGT approval after fresh pleas challenging its environmental and coastal clearances were dismissed.
- The tribunal upheld the Environmental Clearance (EC) granted in November 2022, noting that adequate safeguards were incorporated.
- The bench emphasised that national interest and strategic needs must be balanced with environmental protection.
- It directed that all conditions attached to the clearance are legally binding and must be strictly followed.
- This marks the second round of litigation, reinforcing the tribunal's view that the Great Nicobar Project holds significant geopolitical and economic importance.



REPORTS & INDICES

PM CARES, PMNRF AND NDF: WHY PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT IS BARRED

• According to recent media reports, Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) has informed the Lok Sabha Secretariat that Parliamentary questions regarding the PM CARES Fund, Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF) and National Defence Fund (NDF) are not admissible under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.



Why Parliamentary Questions on These Funds Are Now Inadmissible?

- This is based on specific parliamentary rules:
- **Rule 41(2)(viii):** A question must relate to a matter that is primarily the concern of the Government of India.
- **Rule 41(2)(xvii):** It must not raise matters under the control of bodies/persons not primarily responsible to the Government.

The PMO’s Stand:

- These funds are financed through voluntary public contributions.
- They do not receive money from the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI).
- Therefore, they are considered outside direct budgetary accountability to Parliament, leading to non-admissibility of parliamentary questions.

INDIA’S BANKS ACHIEVE RECORD LOW NPAS, SIGNALING FINANCIAL STABILITY

• India’s banking system has recorded one of its strongest recoveries in recent years. On February 9, 2026, Parliament was informed that gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of scheduled commercial banks declined to a historic low of 2.15% by the end of September 2025. This level is even lower than what was seen in 2010–11, marking a significant turnaround after years of stress caused by bad loans and corporate defaults.

What Are NPAs and Why They Matter

- Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) are loans where borrowers fail to repay principal or interest for over 90 days.
- High NPAs weaken banks by reducing profitability and restricting new lending.
- A fall in NPAs indicates better asset quality, stronger underwriting, and improved borrower discipline.
- The decline to 2.15% reflects a healthier banking system capable of supporting economic growth.



Break-up of NPAs Across Bank Categories

- As per RBI data for domestic operations up to September 30, 2025, public sector banks (PSBs) reported a gross NPA ratio of 2.50%, while private sector banks stood at 1.73%.
- Foreign banks operating in India recorded the lowest gross NPAs at just 0.8%.
- Notably, PSBs have shown a sharper improvement since March 2018, narrowing the gap with private banks.

THIS DISTRICT OF RAJASTHAN BECAME INDIA’S FIRST FULLY INSURED DISTRICT

• Alwar district in Rajasthan became the first district in the country to achieve 100% insurance coverage under the Centre’s ‘Insurance for All by 2047’ roadmap. The achievement reflects a strong focus on last-mile delivery, inclusion, and grassroots execution, marking a practical step toward the vision of a ‘Secure India-Insured India’.



What Is ‘Insurance for All by 2047’

- The Insurance for All by 2047 roadmap is a joint initiative of the Government of India and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, under the Ministry of Finance.



- The programme aims to achieve universal insurance coverage by the 100th year of India’s Independence, focusing on affordability, accessibility, and inclusion across life, health, and general insurance segments.

CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX 2025 -

- The Transparency International released the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2025 that evaluated 182 countries based on perceived public sector corruption, using a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- The report provides a comprehensive assessment of global corruption trends, their underlying drivers, societal impacts, and actionable recommendations.

What are the Key Findings of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2025?

- **Global Average Decline:** For the first time in more than a decade, the global CPI average has dropped to just 42 out of 100. The vast majority of countries (122 out of 182) score below 50, indicating serious corruption problems worldwide.
- **Shrinking High Performers:** The number of countries scoring above 80 has shrunk from 12 a decade ago to just 5 this year (Denmark, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, Norway).
- **Top and Bottom Performers:** Denmark (Score - 89) ranks highest for the 8th consecutive time, while Somalia and South Sudan (9) are at the bottom. Venezuela (10) and other conflict-affected or repressive regimes populate the lowest tiers. _
- **India’s Position:** In 2025, India ranked 91st on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) with a score of 39/100, improving slightly from its 96th rank in 2024.
- India (score 39, rank 91) outperforms most South Asian neighbors but lags behind Bhutan (71, 18), and China (43, 76).
- India is tied with the Maldives (39, 91). Others rank lower: Sri Lanka (35, 107), Nepal (34, 109), Pakistan (28, 136), Bangladesh (24, 150), with Afghanistan and Myanmar (16, 169).

DENMARK TOPS, AFGHANISTAN LAST! PEACE AND SECURITY INDEX 2025/26? -

- The Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26 has once again highlighted the global condition of women’s rights and safety. According to the latest report, nearly 676 million women were exposed to conflict in the past year a 74% rise since 2010. The index ranks 181 countries based on women’s inclusion, justice, and security. While Denmark retains the top position, Afghanistan ranks at the bottom in the Index List.

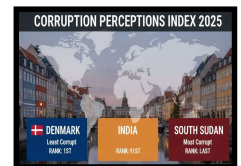


What is the Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26?

- The Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26 is published by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo.
- The WPS Index 2025 measures women’s well-being across three key dimensions inclusion (economic and political participation), justice (legal equality and discrimination) and security (freedom from violence and conflict).
- Each country is given a score between 0 and 1, where higher scores reflect better conditions for women.
- The index is important for policymakers and competitive exam aspirants because it gives a clear global comparison of women’s status and progress.
- **In the Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26, India ranks 131st with a score of 0.607.**

GLOBAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2025 SHOWS DECLINE IN AVERAGE SCORE -

- The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 released by Transparency International presents a worrying picture. The global average score has declined, and fewer countries now fall into the “very clean” category. In the Corruption Perceptions Index 2025, Denmark once again leads, while conflict-affected nations dominate the bottom ranks.



- **Corruption Perceptions Index 2025:** Global Trend Turns Negative
- The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 evaluated 182 countries based on perceived public sector corruption.
- **Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).**
- This year's findings indicate a global average score of 42, the lowest in more than a decade.
- Notably, 122 countries scored below 50, highlighting that corruption concerns remain widespread.
- Transparency International also observed that the number of countries scoring above 80 has sharply declined over the years.
- This signals governance challenges even in traditionally strong democracies.
- Least Corrupt Countries in Corruption Perceptions Index 2025
- According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2025, Denmark retained the top rank with a score of 89, extending its impressive streak. The top performers include,
- Denmark – 89 (Maintaining Its 8 Years Streak to Sit at Top)
- Finland – 88
- Singapore – 84
- New Zealand – 81
- Norway – 81
- In the Corruption Perceptions Index 2025, India ranked 91st globally, securing a CPI score of 39 out of 100. This marks a slight improvement compared to the previous year. While India remains below the global average of 42, the ranking suggests incremental progress in governance and transparency reforms.

- **India Rank:** 91
- **India Score:** 39
- **Scale:** 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)

RESPONSIBLE NATIONS INDEX 2026: COMPLETE RANKINGS AND ANALYSIS -

- The Responsible Nations Index 2026 has been released by the World Intellectual Foundation (WIF), marking a significant shift in how we evaluate global leadership. Published on January 19, 2026, this comprehensive index assesses 154 countries through the lens of responsibility, ethical governance, and collective good—rather than traditional metrics of economic output or military power.
- Singapore leads the Responsible Nations Index 2026, followed by Switzerland and Denmark, demonstrating that smaller nations with strong governance frameworks can outperform economic superpowers in global responsibility. This ranking comes at a critical time of rising geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, and increasing climate urgency.



What is the Responsible Nations Index?

- The Responsible Nations Index represents a paradigm shift in global country rankings. Unlike traditional indices that focus on GDP, military strength, or geopolitical influence, the WIF index evaluates nations based on their commitment to responsibility and the collective good of humanity.



DEFENCE

UNION BUDGET 2026: DEFENSE SPENDING RISES 15.3% TO ₹7.84 LAKH CRORE -

• The Union Budget 2026 has delivered one of the strongest signals yet of India's changing security priorities. Just a year after a major military confrontation with Pakistan, the government has raised defense spending by 15.3% to ₹7.84 lakh crore. Presented in Parliament, the Budget reflects lessons from recent conflict, growing geopolitical uncertainty, and the push for self-reliant defense manufacturing. With higher capital outlay, customs duty relief and procurement reforms, defense has emerged as a central pillar of India's strategic and economic planning.



Defense Budget at a Glance

- For FY 2026-27, the Ministry of Defense has been allocated ₹7.84 lakh crore, up from ₹6.81 lakh crore last year.
- This marks a 15.3% increase, one of the highest annual jumps in recent years.
- Of this, ₹3.65 lakh crore is for defence services revenue, ₹2.19 lakh crore for capital outlay, and ₹1.71 lakh crore for pensions.
- Capital expenditure alone rose by 21.8%, signalling a clear focus on modernisation, new platforms and equipment acquisition.

DEFENSE MINISTER RAJNATH SINGH INAUGURATES 13TH EDITION OF EXERCISE MILAN-2026 -

• India's maritime outreach reached a significant milestone as Defense Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 13th edition of Exercise MILAN-2026 at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The prestigious multilateral naval exercise witnessed participation from 74 nations, making it the largest and most inclusive edition in its history.



Addressing naval chiefs, defense delegates, and officials, Mr. Singh described MILAN-2026 as a reflection of the global maritime community's trust in India as a responsible and reliable maritime partner. The scale and diversity of participation highlight India's growing stature in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

What is Exercise MILAN?

- Exercise MILAN is a biennial multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy.
- It began in 1995 as a modest regional initiative aimed at enhancing cooperation among friendly navies in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Over the years, it has evolved into one of the world's prominent naval engagements, expanding from a handful of regional participants to dozens of nations from across the globe.
- The 2026 edition is being conducted under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command, headquartered in Visakhapatnam, which serves as India's strategic naval hub on the eastern seaboard.

BIHAR DECLARED NAXAL-FREE AFTER FINAL SURRENDER -

• Bihar has been officially declared free of Naxal activities following the surrender of the last armed Maoist, Suresh Koda, in Munger district. The development marks a significant milestone in the State's long struggle against Left Wing Extremism. Authorities confirmed that no armed Naxalite squad is currently active in any of the previously affected districts. The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Munger range, Rakesh Kumar, stated that all 23 districts once impacted by Naxalism are now free from organised armed presence.



End of Armed Maoist Presence

- The surrender of Suresh Koda symbolises the end of active armed Maoist operations in Bihar. According to the District Magistrate of Munger, Nikhil Dhanraj Nippanikar, the surrendered cadre will receive benefits



under the Central Government's surrender and rehabilitation policy.

- The policy provides financial assistance, vocational training and support for reintegration into mainstream society. Family members of the surrendered Maoist expressed relief, highlighting the human dimension of the transition from conflict to peace.

INS ARIDHAMAN TO BOOST INDIA'S SEA-BASED NUCLEAR DETERRENT -

- India is set to strengthen its sea-based nuclear deterrent with the commissioning of INS Aridhaman, the third indigenous Arihant-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). The submarine, designated S4, is expected to be inducted into the Indian Navy by April-May after completing final stages of sea trials.
- Once commissioned, it will mark a significant milestone in India's quest for credible and continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence.



Advanced Capabilities of INS Aridhaman

- Built under the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project at the Ship Building Centre in Visakhapatnam, INS Aridhaman displaces around 7,000 tonnes, making it larger than its predecessors INS Arihant and INS Arighaat, which are 6,000-tonne platforms.
- The submarine will be armed with 24 K-15 Sagarika submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) with a range of 750 km and eight longer-range K-4 SLBMs capable of striking targets up to 3,500 km away. Powered by an 83 MW pressurised water reactor, it features improved acoustic damping through anechoic tiles to reduce detectability.

NORTHEAST'S FIRST EMERGENCY LANDING FACILITY INAUGURATED IN ASSAM -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Northeast's first Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) at Moran in Assam's Dibrugarh district. The strategic

infrastructure, located on the Moran Bypass, marks a major boost to India's defence preparedness and disaster response capability in the region. The Prime Minister made a historic landing at the facility and witnessed a 40-minute aerial display by the Indian Air Force, showcasing fighter jets, transport aircraft and helicopters.



What is the Emergency Landing Facility?

- The Emergency Landing Facility is a specially designed highway airstrip constructed in coordination with the Indian Air Force. It enables the landing and take-off of military and select civil aircraft during emergencies. This is the first such facility in Northeast India, a region of high strategic importance due to its proximity to international borders. The ELF enhances rapid deployment capability and strengthens national security infrastructure in the region.

P-8I ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE -

- The Defence Procurement Board (DPB) has cleared the proposal to acquire six additional Boeing P-8I Poseidon from the US to bolster the Indian Navy's surveillance and combat capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **No Offsets Clause:** The deal is being pursued through an India-US Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) framework.
- The procurement is being processed under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020, which removed offset requirements for Inter-Governmental Agreements. As a result, this deal will not include technology transfer or co-production provisions.
- Unlike several acquisitions aligned with Make in India, this purchase prioritizes strategic and operational urgency over domestic industrial participation.
- **Boeing P-8I:** A multi-mission, long-range maritime patrol aircraft designed for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Anti-Surface Warfare, Intelligence, Surveillance



and Reconnaissance (ISR), Maritime Domain Awareness, and Search and Rescue operations.

- The Indian Navy currently operates 12 P-8I aircraft stationed at INS Rajali (INAS 312) and INS Hansa (INAS 316).
- **Other US Deals:** Defence engagements with the US also include procurements of M982A1 Excalibur projectiles, Javelin missiles, and sustainment support for MH-60R helicopters.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION COUNCIL CLEARS ₹3.25 LAKH CRORE DEAL FOR 114 DASSAULT RAFALE JETS -

- In a major boost to India's air power, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has granted initial approval for the procurement of 114 Rafale fighter aircraft.
- The proposed deal, estimated at ₹3.25 lakh crore, comes ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India from February 17. The acquisition is expected to further strengthen India-France defence ties.



Key Features of the Deal

- Procurement of 114 Rafale multirole fighter jets
- **Estimated cost:** ₹3.25 lakh crore
- Technology transfer from Dassault Aviation
- Planned production in India
- Indigenous weapon systems, radars, and ammunition integration
- The deal had earlier received approval from the Defence Acquisition Board. The final agreement will require clearance from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) before signing.

13TH INDIA-KYRGYZSTAN JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE KHANJAR-XIII SCHEDULED IN ASSAM -

- From February 4 to 17, 2026, the 13th edition of the joint military exercise KHANJAR will be conducted at Misamari. The exercise brings together elite Special

Forces of both countries to train for modern combat challenges such as counter-terrorism and urban warfare. This annual drill reflects the growing strategic partnership between India and Kyrgyzstan and highlights their shared commitment to regional and global security.



What Is Exercise KHANJAR

- Exercise KHANJAR is an annual joint Special Forces military exercise between India and Kyrgyzstan, started in 2011.
- The exercise aims to strengthen interoperability and mutual understanding between the armed forces of both nations.
- Over the years, it has evolved into a key platform for sharing best practices in special operations, particularly in counter-terrorism and high-risk combat environments.
- The venue alternates between the two countries, symbolising equality and trust in their defence partnership.

INDIA LAUNCHES PRAHAAR ANTI- TERROR POLICY FRAMEWORK -

- India has unveiled its first comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, titled "Prahaar", aimed at strengthening national security against evolving threats. Released by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the framework seeks to enhance prevention, coordination and response mechanisms across land, air and maritime domains. The policy comes amid rising concerns over cross-border terrorism, cyber warfare and the misuse of emerging technologies.
- Prahaar is positioned as an integrated legal, technological and community-driven strategy to counter both traditional and non-traditional security risks.



Addressing Persistent and Emerging Threats

- The policy identifies cross-border terrorism as a continuing challenge, particularly from networks operating across India's western frontiers. It notes the



increasing use of drones in regions such as Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir for arms and narcotics smuggling.

- Prahaar also flags cyber operations conducted by hostile states and criminal hacker groups targeting critical infrastructure. Key sectors identified as vulnerable include power grids, railways, aviation, ports, defence installations, space assets and atomic energy facilities. The document underlines that terrorism is not linked to any religion, ethnicity or nationality, but warns of sustained efforts by foreign-based extremist networks to incite violence.

EXERCISE MILAN 2026 -

- The Indian Navy has established a dedicated MILAN village in Visakhapatnam to facilitate cultural and social exchanges among delegates participating in 13th Exercise MILAN 2026 (15th to 25th February 2026).



- 13th Exercise MILAN 2026 features participation from over 70 countries, including first-timers like Germany, the Philippines, and the UAE.

Exercise MILAN

- **About:** MILAN is a biennial (once every two years) multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy. Launched in 1995 under the Andaman and Nicobar Command with participation from just four foreign navies—Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—it has since grown into one of the largest maritime engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Core Objectives:** Aims to foster mutual understanding, trust, and professional interaction among maritime partners to promote a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based maritime order.
- **Structural Phases:** Comprises two main phases: the Harbour Phase (seminars, subject-matter expert exchanges, etc.) and the Sea Phase (focusing on interoperability, HADR, anti-submarine warfare, and tactical manoeuvres).

- **Policy Alignment:** The exercise serves as a key platform for India's Act East Policy 2014, the MAHASAGAR vision, and its role as a preferred security partner in the Indo-Pacific.

INDIA-US JOINT SPECIAL FORCES EXERCISE 'VAJRA PRAHAR' BEGINS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH -

- The 16th edition of the India-US Joint Special Forces Exercise 'Vajra Prahar' is set to be conducted at the Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, in Himachal Pradesh from 24 February to 16 March 2026.



- The exercise will witness participation from the Indian Army and the United States Army, strengthening defence ties between the two nations.

Participating Contingents

- The Indian Army contingent comprises 45 personnel from Special Forces units.
- The United States will be represented by 12 personnel from the Green Berets.
- The previous edition of the exercise was held in November 2024 at the Orchard Combat Training Centre in Idaho, USA.

Aim of the Exercise

- The primary objective of Exercise Vajra Prahar is to:
- Enhance military cooperation
- Improve interoperability between Special Forces
- Strengthen joint operational capabilities
- Exchange expertise in special operations tactics
- The drill focuses particularly on conducting joint Special Forces operations in mountainous terrain.

INDIA-JAPAN JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' BEGINS IN UTTARAKHAND -

- The 7th edition of the India-Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' has commenced at the Foreign Training Node in Chaubattia, Uttarakhand. The



exercise will be conducted from 24 February to 9 March 2026.

- The annual drill is held between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), reinforcing defence cooperation between the two countries.

Participation and Contingents

- Each side has deployed a 120-member contingent for this edition.
- The JGSDF contingent is represented by troops from the 32nd Infantry Regiment.
- The Indian Army contingent is drawn from the Ladakh Scouts.
- The exercise is conducted alternately in India and Japan, reflecting the deepening strategic partnership between the two nations.

Aim of the Exercise

- The primary objective of Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' is to:
- Strengthen military collaboration
- Enhance interoperability
- Improve combined operational capabilities
- Conduct joint operations in semi-urban environments

INDIAN ARMY CONDUCTS SUCCESSFUL STRELA-10 VSHORADS TEST FIRING AT POKHRAN -

- The Air Defence Warriors of the Blazing Skies Brigade under the Indian Army's Konark Corps successfully carried out a high-intensity test firing of the Strela-10 Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) at the Pokhran Field Firing Range. The live exercise was conducted in Rajasthan's desert sector and demonstrated strong combat readiness and operational precision in countering low-altitude aerial threats.



Direct Hits on Simulated Targets

- The Strela-10 missile, launched from a BMP-based mobile platform, successfully achieved direct hits on simulated enemy aerial targets.

- With an effective engagement range of approximately 6 to 10 kilometres, the system is capable of neutralising:
- Low-flying aircraft
- Helicopters
- Modern aerial threats such as drones
- Officials said the drill validated firing standards, strengthened crew coordination, and tested engagement protocols under realistic battlefield conditions.

PRESIDENT MURMU FLIES 'PRACHAND' IN HISTORIC SORTIE IN INDIA'S INDIGENOUS COMBAT HELICOPTER -

- President Murmu LCH Prachand Sortie 2026: What Happened in Jaisalmer?

- The historic sortie took off from the Jaisalmer Air Force Station after a detailed briefing by the Indian Air Force.
- Before departure, President Murmu waved from the cockpit, symbolizing confidence and pride in India's air power.
- During the flight, she delivered a message from the cockpit, calling LCH Prachand a "powerful symbol of self-reliance."
- She extended greetings to soldiers guarding the nation and saluted their dedication near the sensitive India-Pakistan border region.
- **LCH Prachand:** India's First Indigenous Combat Helicopter
- The LCH Prachand is the India's first indigenously designed and developed combat helicopter. It has been built by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).



Key features of LCH Prachand include,

- Advanced avionics and stealth characteristics
- Night attack capability
- Air to air and air to ground missiles
- 20 mm turret gun and rockets
- High altitude operational capabilities



SPORTS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2026: CARLOS ALCARAZ DEFEATS NOVAK DJOKOVIC TO COMPLETE CAREER GRAND SLAM -

- On February 1, 2026. In a gripping men's singles final at the Australian Open 2026, Spain's Carlos Alcaraz defeated Serbian legend Novak Djokovic to achieved feat and completed the Grand Slam series.



At just 22 years of age, Alcaraz completed his career Grand Slam, becoming the youngest man in tennis history to do so. The match was more than a final it symbolized the passing of an era and the rise of a new one in global tennis.

The Final That Redefined Modern Tennis

- The Australian Open 2026 final lived up to its billing.
- Djokovic took the opening set 6-2, showcasing his trademark control and experience.
- However, Alcaraz responded with remarkable composure, taking the next three sets 6-2, 6-3, 7-5.
- His aggressive baseline play, physical endurance and tactical maturity stood out.
- The victory was not just about beating Djokovic, but about doing so on a stage where legends are tested. It reflected Alcaraz's evolution from prodigy to dominant champion.

INDIA CLINCH SAFF U-19 WOMEN'S TITLE WITH 4-0 WIN -

- India produced a dominant performance to defeat Bangladesh 4-0 in the final and lift the South Asian Football Federation Under-19 Women's Championship at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium in Nepal. The emphatic victory marked a strong comeback for the Young Tigresses, who avenged their earlier round-robin loss to Bangladesh in style.



Commanding Final Performance

- Captain "Julan Nongmaithem" set the tone by opening the scoring, giving India early control of the contest. Elizabeth Lakra and Pearl Fernandes added further goals to stretch the lead, while substitute Anwita Raghuraman completed the rout. India maintained attacking intensity and defensive discipline throughout the match, leaving Bangladesh with little room to respond.

Redemption After Group-Stage Defeat

- The final victory carried added significance as India had previously lost to Bangladesh during the round-robin stage of the tournament. In the title clash, however, India displayed improved tactical organisation, sharper finishing and greater composure, decisively reversing the earlier result and underlining their progress over the course of the competition.



IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

- Q1. Exercise KHANJAR is a bilateral military exercise conducted between India and which country ?
a) Malaysia b) Indonesia
c) Kyrgyzstan d) Malaysia
- Q2. Which ministry is the nodal ministry for implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) scheme ?
a) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
b) Ministry of Culture
c) Ministry of Minority Affairs
d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- Q3. Recently, the Union Budget clarified that the capital gains tax exemption will not apply to investors who purchase a particular gold-linked government security from the secondary market and hold it till maturity. This provision relates to which of the following gold-linked government instruments ?
a) Gold Monetisation Scheme
b) Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)
c) India Gold Coin Scheme
d) Sovereign Gold Bond
- Q4. The Zapotec civilization, that was recently seen in news, primarily flourished in which country ?
a) Mexico b) New Zealand
c) Indonesia d) Malaysia
- Q5. Recently, the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police conducted Exercise Agni Pariksha in which state ?
a) Assam b) Manipur
c) Nagaland d) Arunachal Pradesh
- Q6. Tehri Lake, that was recently seen in news, is located in which state ?
a) Himachal Pradesh b) Uttarakhand
c) Madhya Pradesh d) Odisha
- Q7. A new meat-eating dinosaur named Spinosaurus mirabilis was discovered in which desert ?
a) Gobi Desert b) Atacama Desert
c) Sahara Desert d) Kalahari Desert
- Q8. The Strait of Gibraltar, that was recently seen in news, separates which two continents ?
a) Europe and Africa b) Europe and Asia
c) Asia and Australia d) Africa and Asia
- Q9. The 'Lakshpati Didi' initiative is associated with which ministry ?
a) Ministry of Rural Development
b) Ministry of Agriculture
c) Ministry of Finance
d) Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Q10. Which one of the following best describes the fundamental operational difference between a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) and a Central Processing Unit (CPU) ?
a) GPUs are designed to handle fewer complex sequential tasks, whereas CPUs excel at repetitive, data-intensive computations.
b) GPUs utilize a parallel architecture to perform thousands of independent calculations simultaneously, unlike the sequential focus of CPUs.
c) CPUs rely on specialized Tensor cores for rendering, while GPUs use CUDA cores for general-purpose operating system management.
d) GPUs process data using a compute pipeline that converts geometric shapes into pixels, a task that CPUs cannot perform.
- Q11. The beta version of the Model Context Protocol (MCP) server for the eSankhyiki portal has been launched by which organization ?
a) NITI Aayog
b) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
c) National Statistics Office
d) Reserve Bank of India
- Q12. Which state government has launched the AI-based digital learning initiative 'Padhai with AI' ?
a) Punjab b) Haryana
c) Gujarat d) Himachal Pradesh
- Q13. According to recent data, which state was the largest wool producer in India in FY24 ?
a) Karnataka b) Rajasthan c) Telangana d) Odisha



- Q14. The Indian Air Force conducted a joint in-situ air exercise with which country in February 2026 ?
a) Vietnam b) Indonesia c) Thailand d) Malaysia
- Q15. Idukki Hydroelectric Project is located in which state ?
a) Kerala b) Andhra Pradesh
c) Karnataka d) Odisha
- Q16. Recently, the PMO informed the Lok Sabha Secretariat that questions related to PM CARES are not admissible under Lok Sabha rules. The PM CARES Fund was established in which year ?
a) 2018 b) 2019 c) 2020 d) 2021
- Q17. Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) was established under which ministry ?
a) Ministry of Science and Technology
b) Ministry of Earth Sciences
c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
d) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- Q18. Thwaites Glacier, that was recently seen in news, is located in which region ?
a) Antarctica b) Himalayas
c) Nigeria d) Greece
- Q19. What is the name of the fellowship programme launched to strengthen India–Netherlands cooperation in hydrogen technologies ?
a) Indo-Dutch Green Energy Mission
b) National Hydrogen Research Fellowship
c) Global Hydrogen Academic Exchange Scheme
d) India–Netherlands Hydrogen Fellowship Programme
- Q20. The Election Commission recently announced biennial elections for Rajya Sabha seats. How many members of the Rajya Sabha are nominated by the President of India ?
a) 10 b) 12 c) 15 d) 20
- Q21. Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, recently in the news due to tiger fatalities, is located in which state ?
a) Maharashtra b) Rajasthan
c) Chhattisgarh d) Madhya Pradesh
- Q22. Recently, the Union Home and Cooperation Minister launched India's first cooperative-based taxi service. What is the name of this initiative ?
a) National Taxi Mission
b) Bharat Taxi
c) Sahakar Cab Service
d) Cooperative Mobility Scheme
- Q23. SAKSHAM (Samrakshan Kshamatha Mahotsav) is an annual awareness campaign initiated by which ministry ?
a) Ministry of Power
b) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
c) Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
d) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Q24. Recently, the Finance Minister announced SHE-Mart, a platform to promote women entrepreneurship. Which of the following best describes the core objective of SHE-Mart ?
a) Providing short-term microcredit to women SHGs
b) Creating community-owned retail outlets for women entrepreneurs
c) Promoting women-only digital payment platforms
d) Offering tax exemptions to women-led MSMEs
- Q25. Recently, the Union Finance Minister proposed a multilingual AI-based tool that integrates AgriStack portals and ICAR's agricultural practices to enhance farm productivity and support better decision-making by farmers. What is the name of this tool ?
a) Agri-Saathi b) Kisan AI Mitra
c) Bharat-VISTAAR d) Digital Krishi Mission
- Q26. The Supreme Court recently directed the constitution of a tribunal for the Pennaiyar River water dispute. Which provision of the Constitution allows a state to file a suit in the Supreme Court for such inter-state disputes ?
a) Article 123 b) Article 131
c) Article 262 d) Article 356
- Q27. Which district has become the first in India to achieve 100% insurance coverage under "Insurance for All by 2047" ?
a) Satna, Madhya Pradesh
b) Sonapat, Haryana
c) Meerut, Madhya Pradesh
d) Alwar, Rajasthan



- Q28. NAMASTE scheme is a joint initiative of which two ministries ?
a) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Finance
b) Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Agriculture
c) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
d) Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture
- Q29. What is the name of the government scheme launched to provide quality generic medicines at affordable prices ?
a) Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana
b) Janani Suraksha Yojana
c) Bharat Pharmacies Mission
d) Swasthya Kendra Scheme
- Q30. The Lead Bank Scheme was introduced on the recommendations of which committee ?
a) Narasimham Committee
b) Nariman Committee
c) Rangarajan Committee
d) Urjit Patel Committee
- Q31. Rajaji National Park is located in which state ?
a) Uttarakhand b) Madhya Pradesh
c) Rajasthan d) Gujarat
- Q32. Which state government launched Sthree Suraksha Scheme to give monthly pension to unemployed women and transwomen ?
a) Kerala b) Karnataka
c) Tamil Nadu d) Maharashtra
- Q33. Futala Lake, that was recently seen in news, is located in which state ?
a) Gujarat b) Odisha
c) Karnataka d) Maharashtra
- Q34. What is the rank of India in Henley Passport Index 2026?
a) 65th b) 75th c) 85th d) 89th
- Q35. Which institution has become the first in India to announce the launch of a face transplant programme ?
a) All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi
b) Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh
c) Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Puducherry
d) Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai
- Q36. HbA1c test, that was recently seen in news, is commonly used in India for diagnosing which disease?
a) Type-2 diabetes b) Dengue
c) Tuberculosis d) Cholera
- Q37. Mons Mouton has been identified as a potential landing zone for which Indian mission ?
a) Chandrayaan-2 b) Chandrayaan-3
c) Chandrayaan-4 d) LUPEX Mission
- Q38. What is the primary objective of the Kimberley Process?
a) Eliminate trade in conflict diamonds
b) Regulate global trade practices under the United Nations framework
c) Promote sustainable mining standards across resource-rich countries
d) None of the Above
- Q39. Almatti Dam, that was recently seen in news, is located on which river ?
a) Godavari b) Krishna
c) Kaveri d) Narmada
- Q40. Which team won the 79th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy ?
a) Services b) Assam
c) Railways d) Kerala
- Q41. The SCALP missile (Storm Shadow) is jointly developed by France and which country ?
a) Germany b) Russia
c) China d) United Kingdom
- Q42. What is the name of the new platform announced for women entrepreneurs in the Union Budget 2026-27 ?
a) Udyogini Bazaar b) Mahila Haat Plus
c) SHE-Mart d) Sakhi Trade Hub
- Q43. What is the primary objective of the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative (MGGSI) announced in Union Budget 2026-27 ?
a) Expansion of MSME credit in urban areas
b) Promotion of digital startups in rural India



