

CLAT 2027 · GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs, Month by Month

The whole current-affairs year in one place. Every story of every month, each with a short note on what the news is and why it was in the news — nothing left as a bare title.

News of December 2025 – August 2026

420 TOPICS

across **9 news months**
every one with its own note · **128** marked to learn first

How to use this

About a quarter of the CLAT paper is current affairs, and it is set as passages: a news story of roughly 450 words carrying five or six questions on the story and the static background behind it. This compilation lists every one of the 420 stories from those 9 months that CLAT could set a passage on, and gives each one a short note — what the news is, and why it was in the news.

Every topic, a real entry

420 entries

Subject tag, story title, and about fifty words of news. No topic is reduced to a title in a list, because a title you cannot place is not revision — it is a reminder that you have a gap.

Marked to learn first

128 marked

The entries most likely to carry a passage of their own wear a **MUST-KNOW** mark and an orange rule. Take these first on a short run; the rest still have everything they need when you come back.

HOW TO WORK THROUGH IT

- 1 One month at a time.** Nine months is a term's worth of revision, not an evening's. Take one month, read it through, and come back to it a week later.
- 2 Newest first.** The months run downward from August 2026 to December 2025. The recent months are the ones you are still weakest on, so they come first.
- 3 Use the marks to pace yourself, not to skip.** On a short run, read the marked entries. On a full pass, read the month straight through — the unmarked stories are the ones that turn up as a single question inside someone else's passage.
- 4 Go static from every entry.** For each story, ask what CLAT would attach to it — the Article, the institution, the treaty, the first-ever. That pairing is how the section is actually set.

What this covers. News from **1 December 2025 to 31 August 2026**, the window a CLAT 2027 aspirant has to hold. A story sits in the month it ran through the news cycle, which is not always the month of the event itself — where the date matters, the note gives it. Months after August 2026 continue in CLAT Gurukul's daily current-affairs brief and monthly round-ups.

THE NINE MONTHS AT A GLANCE

NEWS MONTH	ENTRIES	MARKED MUST-KNOW	HEAVIEST SUBJECTS
August 2026	59	18	Law & Judiciary · International Relations
July 2026	46	9	International Relations · Geography
June 2026	34	9	Economy · History & Culture
May 2026	35	10	Law & Judiciary · International Relations
April 2026	31	8	Environment · Science & Tech
March 2026	71	25	International Relations · Law & Judiciary
February 2026	44	14	Polity · International Relations
January 2026	46	15	Law & Judiciary · Summits & Treaties
December 2025	54	20	Reports & Indices · Law & Judiciary
Total	420	128	

Every entry in the 'Entries' column carries its own note. The must-know count is not a shorter list — it is the same entries, marked so you know which to take first.

August 2026

Law & Judiciary 11 · International Relations 8 · Economy 6 · Environment 6

59
ENTRIES

All 59 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **18** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW**

Parliamentary privilege: notices against the PM and LoP

Two privilege fights bracketed 2026. On 21 April Congress's K.C. Venugopal moved a breach-of-privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 18 April televised address; BJP MPs complained against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over remarks on Home Minister Amit Shah, and the Lok Sabha Secretariat sought his reply on 14 August. Privileges rest on Articles 105 and 194.

POLITY

Kerala to be renamed 'Keralam'

Parliament passed the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 — Lok Sabha on 11 August, Rajya Sabha on 12 August — and the Home Ministry brought the Act into force on 25 August 2026, so the State is now officially Keralam. The renaming followed the full Article 3 route: state resolution, Cabinet approval, Presidential reference to the Assembly, and a simple-majority law.

POLITY

Gorkha statehood demand: MHA committee

The Union Home Ministry set up a high-level committee to frame a 'permanent political solution' to the Gorkha issue, after Gorkha leaders met Home Minister Amit Shah and West Bengal government representatives in Siliguri. The Darjeeling hills' demand for a separate identity dates from the early twentieth century. Only Parliament, under Article 3, can actually create a State.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Removal proceedings against Justice Yashwant Varma

Burnt currency at Justice Yashwant Varma's Delhi residence in March 2025 led to removal proceedings. Speaker Om Birla admitted the notice on 12 August 2025 and constituted a committee under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. Varma resigned on 9 April 2026; the committee reported on 18 May and the Lok Sabha received it on 12 August 2026, all charges proved.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Supreme Court strength raised from 34 to 38

An Ordinance of 16 May 2026 raised the Supreme Court's sanctioned strength from 34 to 38 — the Chief Justice plus 37 judges — and Parliament replaced it with

the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 2026, passed as a Money Bill in August. It is the first expansion since 2019 and was aimed at a backlog exceeding 92,000 cases.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Gender justice: landmark rulings and gender-sensitive courts

On 18 February 2026 the Supreme Court set aside an Allahabad High Court order holding that grabbing a minor's breasts was not attempted rape, and ordered a panel on judicial sensitivity. On 14 July it directed that the National Judicial Academy committee's report, a glossary of language for judgments, be uploaded on every High Court website.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Dignity in death: hanging upheld and the right to die

On 18 August 2026 a Supreme Court bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta dismissed Rishi Malhotra v. Union of India, a 2017 petition seeking a less painful method of execution than hanging. The Court declined to refer the 1983 three-judge ruling in Deena to a larger bench, noting India has seen no botched execution.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Consumer protection: misleading and surrogate advertising

In August 2026 the Maharashtra FDA issued show-cause notices to Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn and Tiger Shroff over a 'Vimal Elaichi' advertisement it treats as surrogate promotion of a pan masala the State prohibited on 13 July. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 makes the advertiser, the publisher and the celebrity endorser liable, with a due-diligence defence in section 21(5).

LAW & JUDICIARY

Insolvency law basics: CoC, haircuts, moratorium, homebuyers

Two 2026 orders put Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code basics back in the news: the NCLAT held that the section 14 moratorium does not bar ED attachment of proceeds of crime under the PMLA; and the NCLT approved, then

on 1 September stayed, a plan paying Rs 6.25 crore against Subhash Chandra's admitted claims of Rs 22,006.57 crore.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Bar Council of India's powers (NALSAR enrolment order)

On 13 August 2026 the Bar Council of India told every State Bar Council not to enrol NALSAR Hyderabad's 2026 graduating batch, after students campaigned against inviting Chief Justice Surya Kant as convocation chief guest. It modified the circular within hours and closed proceedings on 14 August, when the Supreme Court issued notice and barred punitive action against law-university students.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Doxxing: a gap in Indian law

After a Jantar Mantar protest in New Delhi against examination paper leaks, from 20 June to 25 July 2026, a coordinated online campaign published the photographs, phone numbers and home addresses of young women who had taken part, some of them minors. India has no offence called doxxing, so victims fall back on scattered BNS 2023 and IT Act provisions.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Precautionary principle: development vs safety

Data placed before the Rajya Sabha in August 2026 showed complaints about national highway quality rising from 7,030 in 2024-25 to 11,340 in 2025-26, and on 6 July 2026 a landslide took out part of a retaining wall on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway's Rs 6,695-crore Missing Link. Both revived the precautionary principle, statutory since section 20 of the NGT Act, 2010.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Entry into the subordinate judiciary: minimum practice rule

On 21 August 2026 the Supreme Court, by 2:1, cut the practice at the Bar required to sit for Civil Judge (Junior Division) recruitment from three years to one, effective for advertisements issued from 1 April 2027; until 31 March 2027 no practice is needed. CJI Surya Kant and Justice A.G. Masih formed the majority; Justice K. Vinod Chandran dissented.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Road-safety law: Good Samaritans and third-party insurance

After the Supreme Court held on 19 June 2026 that the right to walk on safe footpaths is a fundamental right, Andhra Pradesh on 7 August became the first State to

notify a pedestrian safety and universal accessibility policy. On 4 August another Bench, finding 16.54 crore of India's 30.48 crore vehicles uninsured, ordered a no-insurance-no-fuel pilot.

INTL RELATIONS

MUST-KNOW

Selection of the next UN Secretary-General

The UN Security Council began secret straw polls to pick a successor to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, whose second five-year term ends on 31 December 2026. Rebeca Grynspan of Costa Rica led the first poll on 30 July and Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett of Guyana the second on 21 August. Under Article 97 the Council only recommends; the General Assembly appoints.

INTL RELATIONS

MUST-KNOW

Chagos Archipelago: UK-Mauritius sovereignty deal

Britain and Mauritius signed a treaty on 22 May 2025 transferring sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, with Diego Garcia leased back for 99 years at about £101 million a year. It followed the ICJ's 2019 advisory opinion on decolonisation. The treaty is not yet in force: the implementing Bill fell when Parliament was prorogued on 29 April 2026.

INTL RELATIONS

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative gains members

Spain acceded to India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative on 21 January 2026, its Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares handing the Declaration of Accession to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, in the year the two countries mark 70 years of ties. South Korea joined in April and Norway in May. Narendra Modi proposed the IPOI at the 2019 East Asia Summit.

INTL RELATIONS

India's UNSC 2028-29 non-permanent seat bid

On 13 July 2026 External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar launched India's candidature at UN Headquarters for a non-permanent Security Council seat for 2028-29, under the slogan SHANTI — Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity. India has held the seat eight times, last in 2021-22. The General Assembly votes in June 2027; Tajikistan is the rival for the Asian seat.

INTL RELATIONS

UN CERD concerns on minorities in India

On 25 August 2026 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination published its concluding observations on India, after examining its periodic reports in Geneva on 11-12 August — India's first review under the 1965 Convention since 2007. The

Committee flagged caste discrimination, hate speech and the citizens' register; India's Ministry of External Affairs rejected the references on 26 August.

INTL RELATIONS

Arctic Council and India's polar diplomacy

On 30 July 2026 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Shashi Tharoor, tabled a report on India's role in the Arctic and Antarctic. It asked the government to appoint a Polar Ambassador, create an MEA polar desk, acquire polar research vessels and build a new Maitri station. India has been an Arctic Council observer state since 2013.

INTL RELATIONS

US immigration curbs: H-1B fee and the Trump Gold Card

On 25 August 2026 the US Department of Homeland Security proposed a \$103,265 fee on every cap-subject H-1B petition, after a federal court struck down the earlier \$100,000 payment in June. Indians hold about 71 per cent of approved H-1B petitions. A separate 'Trump Gold Card', open since December 2025, offers a green card for a \$1 million gift.

INTL RELATIONS

Global food-safety frameworks

Food-safety enforcement in India in mid-2026 put global food-safety governance in focus. Four frameworks anchor the system: the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius, whose voluntary standards the WTO treats as the benchmark; the WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement of 1995; the International Plant Protection Convention; and FAOLEX. The 49th Codex Commission met in Geneva in July 2026 and cleared India's cashew-kernel proposal.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW**

SCO 2026: Bishkek Declaration and PM's Uzbekistan visit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a state visit to Tashkent on 29-30 August 2026, where India and Uzbekistan raised ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and signed 11 agreements. He then attended the 26th SCO summit at Bishkek on 31 August-1 September, which adopted the Bishkek Declaration and 27 other documents and handed the chairmanship to Pakistan.

SUMMITS

UNCCD COP17, Ulaanbaatar

The 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification met at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 28 August 2026 under the theme

'Restoring Land. Restoring Hope.' It launched a US\$1.2 billion Rangelands Flagship Initiative and the first global drought-finance instrument, and kept drought on the agenda for COP18, expected in Egypt in 2028.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW**

Energy security: Strategic Petroleum Reserves and lessons from the 1970s oil crises

The 2026 West Asia crisis — the US-Israel war on Iran, attacks on Red Sea shipping and a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz — tested India's energy defences. Its Strategic Petroleum Reserves held 3.37 million tonnes of a 5.33-million-tonne capacity, about two-thirds full. In July the Cabinet approved the Rs 84,084-crore Samudra Manthan offshore exploration scheme.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW**

UPI as digital infrastructure diplomacy

Parliament in August 2026 rewrote section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, letting the Centre notify which payment modes stay charge-free and opening the door to a merchant fee on large UPI payments; the Finance Ministry said person-to-person transfers remain free. The row drew attention to India's export of UPI through Project Nexus and NIPL.

ECONOMY

RBI's new cheques and notes: e-cheques, continuous clearing, polymer notes

Cheque clearing moved to continuous clearing inside the Cheque Truncation System on 4 October 2025, with a three-hour confirmation window from 3 January 2026. Payments Vision 2028, released in March 2026, proposes digitally signed e-cheques, and on 5 August 2026 Governor Sanjay Malhotra said polymer Rs 10 and Rs 20 notes would be piloted from FY28.

ECONOMY

Ethanol blending: E20 achieved, E25 delayed

India reached 20 per cent average ethanol blending in petrol in Ethanol Supply Year 2025-26, five years ahead of the original 2030 target, and E20 is now the standard petrol sold nationwide. Motorists complaining of a 3-5 per cent mileage drop produced a backlash, and in July-August 2026 the government signalled that the move to E25 would be spaced out.

ECONOMY

FAST-DS: one-time foreign asset disclosure window

The Foreign Assets of Small Taxpayers — Disclosure Scheme, enacted in Chapter IV of the Finance Act, 2026, opened on 16 August 2026 and closes on 31 December 2026. It lets ordinary taxpayers declare modest

undisclosed foreign assets or income on payment of tax or a flat fee, gaining immunity from penalty and prosecution under the Black Money Act, 2015.

ECONOMY

Crypto regulation: CARF reporting and stablecoins

On 24 July 2026 the CBDT released a guidance note on the reporting duties of crypto exchanges under section 509 of the Income-tax Act, 2025 and Rules 241-244, which implement the OECD's Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework; India aims to begin exchanging crypto account information from 2027. Crypto itself stays unregulated, and the RBI has again urged a policy leaning towards prohibition.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Western Ghats eco-sensitive area: Gadgil vs Kasturirangan**

On 27 July 2026 the Environment Ministry issued its seventh draft notification proposing 56,825.7 sq km across six States as a Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area, after the sixth draft lapsed. It follows the 2013 Kasturirangan report rather than the stricter 2011 Gadgil report. Mining, quarrying and red-category industry are banned; farming is untouched. Karnataka, Kerala and Goa still resist.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban mining and the circular economy

Urban mining means recovering metals from city waste — e-waste, spent batteries and end-of-life vehicles. India, which imports most of its lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earths, is pitching it as a quick source of critical minerals: the Cabinet approved a Rs 1,500 crore recycling incentive scheme under the National Critical Mineral Mission in September 2025. Informal recyclers handle most waste.

ENVIRONMENT

Elephants: DNA-based all-India count

India's first DNA-based elephant count, the Synchronous All India Population Estimation of Elephants 2021-25 by the Wildlife Institute of India, put the wild population at 22,446, over half in the Western Ghats and Karnataka the top State. The figures were restated on World Elephant Day, 12 August 2026; five days later the Supreme Court ordered a survey of elephant corridors.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate-resilient cities and urban flooding

Delhi, Guwahati and Bengaluru flood every monsoon, and a September 2026 UPSC Essentials feature argued

that this is a failure of planning, not merely of drainage. The Economic Survey 2026 treats cities as critical economic infrastructure that will carry 70-75 per cent of GDP by 2030. The remedy offered is 'living with water' design, as at Rotterdam's Benthemplein water square.

ENVIRONMENT

Small River Rejuvenation Framework and national waterways

A draft Small River Rejuvenation Framework unveiled under the National Mission for Clean Ganga turns river-cleaning towards small rivers — 50 to 150 km streams that many cities have reduced to sewage drains, such as Delhi's Sahibi, Mumbai's Mithi, Hyderabad's Musi and Chennai's Cooum. It relies on nature-based solutions rather than engineering. India has 111 declared national waterways, only 32 operational.

ENVIRONMENT

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026

The United Nations has designated 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, led by the FAO, and India marked Desertification and Drought Day in New Delhi on 17 June. The year raises a governance question, because schools, ration shops and health centres are built around fixed addresses while Raikas, Gujjar-Bakarwals, Gaddis and Changpas move with the seasons.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****Artemis II and India's role in NASA's Moon plans**

NASA's Artemis II carried four astronauts on a free-return flyby of the Moon after launching on 1 April 2026 — the first crewed lunar voyage since Apollo 17 in 1972 — and splashed down in the Pacific on 11 April. At the India-US Civil Space Joint Working Group in Bengaluru on 5-6 August, NASA invited ISRO to join its Moon Base programme.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****RDI Fund of Rs 1 lakh crore under ANRF**

The Rs 1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation Scheme, approved by the Cabinet on 1 July 2025, lends collateral-free money to private deep-tech companies through a Special Purpose Fund under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation. In August 2026 an Indian Express investigation reported that most first-round money went to companies linked to members of the committee that selected them.

SCIENCE & TECH

Strongest solar storm in two decades and Aditya-L1

On 18-19 January 2026 an X1.9 solar flare hurled a fast coronal mass ejection at Earth, setting off a solar radiation storm rated S4 on NOAA's five-point scale — the strongest since March 1991 and the third-strongest ever measured. Auroras were seen as far south as Spain and Arizona, and forecasters warned of risks to satellites, power grids and high-latitude flights.

SCIENCE & TECH

Eclipses of 2026: total solar eclipse of 12 August and the blood moon

A total solar eclipse on 12 August 2026 swept from northern Siberia across Greenland, Iceland and northern Spain — the first to cross mainland Europe since 11 August 1999 — and was not visible anywhere in India. Earlier, on 3 March 2026, a total lunar eclipse turned the Moon copper-red, its closing phase visible from most of India around moonrise.

DEFENCE

Aerospace indigenisation: C295, Aravalli engine and DRDO tech transfer

The first C295 aircraft assembled in India, at Tata Advanced Systems' Vadodara line, flew on 10 June 2026 and was due for delivery to the Air Force in September. On 25 August 2026 Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved transferring DRDO's conventional missile technology to industry, keeping Agni and K-series out; next day HAL and Safran signed the 'Aravalli' helicopter-engine contract.

DEFENCE

Mecca Joint Defence Agreement: Saudi-Turkey-Pakistan pact

On 7 August 2026 Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, treating an armed attack on any one of the three as an attack on all. It extends to Turkey the Saudi-Pakistan defence agreement of 17 September 2025. The text has not been published.

SOCIETY **MUST-KNOW****VB-G RAM G Act replaces MGNREGA**

The Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 came into force on 1 July 2026, repealing MGNREGA and raising the wage-employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days a year. It turns a demand-driven programme in which the Centre bore the whole unskilled wage bill into a Centrally Sponsored Scheme shared 60:40 with the States.

SOCIETY **MUST-KNOW****Food safety: FSS Act, FSSAI and its gaps**

Maharashtra's FDA, under Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe, suspended 199 licences between 25 May and 31 August 2026, putting food safety back in the news. FSSAI's revised licensing slabs took effect on 1 April 2026 — registration up to Rs 1.5 crore turnover, State licence up to Rs 50 crore — and WHO raised its global estimate to 866 million foodborne illnesses a year.

SOCIETY

Ebola outbreak declared a PHEIC

On 15 May 2026 the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda declared an Ebola outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo virus, and on 17 May the WHO Director-General determined it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern — the ninth since 2005. Existing vaccines target the Zaire strain, and deaths in eastern Congo passed 1,700 by early August.

SOCIETY

PM-KISAN extended to 2030-31

On 31 July 2026 the Union Cabinet approved continuing PM-KISAN for five more years, from 2026-27 to 2030-31, with an outlay of Rs 3.15 lakh crore. Launched in February 2019, the scheme pays every eligible landholding farmer family Rs 6,000 a year in three instalments. It is a Central Sector scheme, funded entirely by the Union government.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****UNESCO World Heritage: Sarnath becomes India's 45th site**

On 25 July 2026, at the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Busan, the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath near Varanasi was inscribed on the World Heritage List, becoming India's 45th property and Uttar Pradesh's fourth. The session added 25 properties in all; India's 44th, the Maratha Military Landscapes, had been inscribed in 2025.

HISTORY

Southward spread of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism

A September 2026 Express Edge essay by Devdutt Pattanaik traced how Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanical religion moved from north India into the Deccan and the far south, and the evidence for it: Ashoka's minor rock edicts at Maski, Brahmagiri and Yerragudi; the Krishna-valley stupas at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and Bhattiprolu; and Tamil-Brahmi cave inscriptions recording gifts to Jain ascetics.

HISTORY

Mangarh Dham and the 1913 Bhil massacre

On 3 August 2026 Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told the Lok Sabha that Mangarh Dham in Banswara, Rajasthan, does not qualify as a Monument of National Importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and that no proposal is pending. British and princely-state troops killed hundreds of Bhil tribals there on 17 November 1913.

GEOGRAPHY

South China Sea: Scarborough Shoal and the Paracels

In August 2026 China tightened its hold on two disputed South China Sea features. On 1 August it issued management measures for the Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve over Scarborough Shoal, which the Philippines also claims. Satellite imagery then showed the first phase of a large artificial island complete at Antelope Reef in the Paracels, with a runway under construction.

GEOGRAPHY

Ceuta and Melilla: EU's land border with Africa

From 30 July 2026 tens of thousands of people crossed from Morocco into Ceuta, Spain's autonomous city on the North African coast, whose own population is about 84,000; more than 48,000 were returned within 48 hours. Over a hundred are reported to have died. Ceuta and Melilla are the European Union's only land borders with Africa.

GEOGRAPHY

Kuril Islands row: Iturup

On 13 August 2026 President Vladimir Putin made his first visit to the Kuril Islands, touring Iturup, the largest of the four islands Japan claims as its Northern Territories. Tokyo summoned the Russian ambassador; Russia summoned the Japanese ambassador on 18 August. The Soviet Union took the islands in 1945, and the two countries have never signed a peace treaty.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****Environmental Performance Index 2026**

The 2026 Environmental Performance Index, the biennial Yale-Columbia scorecard, ranked 177 countries on 47 indicators. Estonia topped it with 74.79; India came 176th with 22.46, ahead only of Laos, held back by air quality, biodiversity loss and waste management. India was last of 180 in 2022, when the Environment Ministry rejected the index, and 176th of 180 in 2024.

REPORTS & INDICES

NITI Aayog reports on school education and skilling

Two NITI Aayog reports in 2026 traced the education-to-work pipeline. 'School Education System in India' (May 2026) found enrolment down about 8 per cent over the decade to 2024-25, with the government-school share just under half. 'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', released on 23 August 2026, found 8.7 crore Indians aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training.

AWARDS

Fields Medal 2026

The 2026 Fields Medals, mathematics' best-known prize, given every four years by the International Mathematical Union to mathematicians under 40, went to Yu Deng, John Pardon, Jacob Tsimmerman and Hong Wang at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Philadelphia on 23 July 2026. Hong Wang became only the third woman laureate, after Maryam Mirzakhani (2014) and Maryna Viazovska (2022).

AWARDS

Independence Day gallantry awards

On 14 August 2026, the eve of the 80th Independence Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved 78 gallantry awards for the Defence Forces and Central Armed Police Forces, 13 of them posthumous. The list was headed by nine Kirti Chakras, seven of them posthumous, and 19 Shaurya Chakras; no Ashoka Chakra, the senior-most peacetime gallantry award, was conferred.

SPORTS **MUST-KNOW****Commonwealth Games 2026, Glasgow**

The XXIII Commonwealth Games were held at Glasgow from 23 July to 2 August 2026, a deliberately small ten-sport Games that Scotland took on after Victoria, Australia withdrew. India finished fourth with 39 medals — 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze — helped by Gulveer Singh's 10,000 m silver and Tejaswin Shankar's decathlon bronze. Ahmedabad hosts the centenary Games in 2030.

SPORTS

Chess 2026: Praggnanandhaa's wins and Carlsen's titles

2026 was R Praggnanandhaa's year: he became the first Indian to win Norway Chess in June and took the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz on 7 August. Magnus Carlsen beat Fabiano Caruana in February for the Freestyle world title, a format FIDE had run before. In July, after Arkady Dvorkovich suspended his own powers, Viswanathan Anand became FIDE's interim president.

DAYS & EVENTS

80th Independence Day: 'Sapta Dhara'

From the Red Fort on 15 August 2026, the 80th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set out 'Sapta Dhara' — seven streams of development for

the next five to seven years: manufacturing; farming and food processing; technology and innovation; infrastructure; defence; the green and blue economy; and soft power. He also announced AI training for one crore youth.

July 2026

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ENTRIES

All 46 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **9** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY

Inter-state river water disputes (Mahanadi, Cauvery, Narmada, Yamuna)

Haryana and Rajasthan signed a memorandum on 29 June 2026 to operationalise the long-delayed 1994 Upper Yamuna River Board agreement, Haryana supplying 580 million cubic metres through three underground pipelines each July to October. On 7 July the chief ministers of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan settled outstanding dues under the 1979 Narmada tribunal award.

POLITY

Pressure groups and the NEET protests

Nationwide student protests over an alleged NEET paper leak, including a Sansad Chalo march on 20 June whose policing was questioned, forced a response: on 23 July 2026 the Prime Minister announced fast-track courts for such cases. The episode drew attention to pressure groups, which unlike political parties seek to influence power rather than hold it.

POLITY

Fire safety and urban governance

A fire at the Flourish Stay bed-and-breakfast in Delhi's Malviya Nagar killed at least 21 people in June 2026, one of a run of blazes in hospitals, hotels and coaching hubs. Fire services sit in the State List and, through Article 243W, with urban local bodies, so the National Building Code 2016 binds nobody until a State adopts it.

LAW & JUDICIARY

MUST-KNOW**Right to be forgotten: Delhi HC on de-indexing personal data**

The Delhi High Court ordered personal details to be de-indexed and masked online, treating the right to be forgotten as part of the informational privacy that Puttaswamy (2017) read into Article 21. India has no statutory version of the right; Europe built one from the Court of Justice's Google Spain ruling and Article 17 of the GDPR.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Retrospective environmental clearance and the SC

In *Vanashakti v Union of India*, decided on 29 July 2026, the Supreme Court quashed the Centre's Office Memorandum on retrospective environmental clearance as an administrative instruction contrary to the 2006 EIA notification, while upholding the 2017 notification as valid, time-bound delegated legislation under section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

LAW & JUDICIARY

APAAR ID: parents may refuse Aadhaar-based consent

The Supreme Court asked the Central Board of Secondary Education to apply nationwide an Orissa High Court direction that parents be allowed to refuse consent to sharing their children's Aadhaar details for an APAAR ID, or to opt out entirely. APAAR is a 12-digit lifelong student identifier created under the National Education Policy 2020.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Tighter FCRA regime for NGOs

Home Minister Amit Shah launched the FCRA 2.0 portal on 30 June 2026, a fully digital platform for applications, renewals and annual returns. Revamped rules mean registration is no longer a general permission: an NGO must name specific activities from prescribed schedules and the States where foreign money will be spent, and show 75 per cent utilisation.

INTL RELATIONS

MUST-KNOW**India-UK FTA (CETA) comes into force**

The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement came into force on 15 July 2026 after four years of negotiation, India's first comprehensive trade deal with a developed economy. India cut tariffs on about 90 per cent of products and Britain removed them on 99 per cent of Indian exports; duty on British cars drops from 110 to 30 per cent.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance: Chenab-Beas link tunnel**

Having placed the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, India planned an 8.7-km tunnel to divert water from the Chandra, a headstream of the Chenab, into the Beas. The 1960 treaty had left the western rivers largely to Pakistan; work also continues on the Pakal Dul, Ratle and Kiru hydro projects on those rivers.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Japan: 16th Annual Summit and strategic dialogue

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi visited India from 1 to 3 July 2026 for the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit, a mechanism running since 2006. The two sides issued a Joint Declaration on Economic Security covering semiconductors, critical minerals and clean energy, and agreed to mark 2027, the 75th year of relations, as the Year of Shared Horizons.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Australia summit: civil nuclear deal operationalised, PACTS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Melbourne from 8 to 10 July 2026 for the third Australia-India Annual Summit. The two sides finalised the administrative arrangement that operationalises their 2014 civil nuclear agreement, allowing Australian uranium to be supplied to India, and launched PACTS, a partnership on cyber, critical technologies and supply chains.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Indonesia: PM's visit and defence pacts

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a state visit to Indonesia from 6 to 8 July 2026, becoming the first Indian prime minister to address its Parliament, and received the Bintang Adipurna from President Prabowo Subianto. The two sides agreed on BrahMos and Astra Mk1 supplies, joint development of Sabang port, and restoration of the Prambanan temple complex.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Seychelles: special package, patrol vessel and CDRI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a state visit to Seychelles from 27 to 29 June 2026 as Guest of Honour at its National Day golden jubilee, fifty years after diplomatic ties began in 1976. India gifted a fast patrol vessel and signed an extradition treaty and a UPI agreement; Seychelles joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

INTL RELATIONS

India-New Zealand: PM's visit and strategic partnership

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited New Zealand on 10 and 11 July 2026, the first Indian prime minister to do so in forty years, and the two countries raised their ties to a Strategic Partnership. They agreed to double trade to NZ\$7 billion by 2030, building on a free trade agreement signed in April.

INTL RELATIONS

Nuclear diplomacy: NSG and the India-US 123 Agreement

India's operationalising of its 2014 civil nuclear agreement with Australia in July 2026 returned attention to how India trades in nuclear material at all. India is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which was formed after its 1974 test, but a waiver in 2008 and the India-United States 123 Agreement of that year opened civil nuclear commerce.

SUMMITS

Europe's historic role as a venue for peace diplomacy

The United States and Iran signed a fourteen-clause memorandum in June 2026 opening sixty days of talks; President Donald Trump signed it at the Palace of Versailles, and Geneva had hosted the earlier February negotiations. The choice of venues underlined Europe's long role as neutral ground, running back to the Congress of Vienna of 1814-15.

ECONOMY

US Section 301 tariffs and India's ban on forced-labour imports

The United States Trade Representative announced tariffs of 10 to 12.5 per cent on 60 economies on 23 July 2026, faulting their steps against goods made with forced labour. India sat in the lower 10 per cent band alongside Britain, Canada, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Mexico. India's DGFT had already, on 13 July, barred such imports outright.

ECONOMY

Building a deeper manufacturing economy

Government approvals for a Dixon-Vivo joint venture and for Chinese power-equipment firms in Indian tenders reopened the manufacturing debate. China's manufacturing value added stood at \$4.82 trillion in 2025 against India's \$532.92 billion, 27.4 per cent of the world total against three. India's real edge lies in automobiles, pharmaceuticals and textiles rather than in copying China.

ECONOMY

Rural non-farm employment: prosperity or distress

Situation Assessment Survey data showed rural households earning less from crops and more from wages: average real monthly crop income fell from Rs 3,081 to Rs 2,760 between 2012-13 and 2018-19, while wage income rose from Rs 2,071 to Rs 2,953. Non-farm work peaked at 42.2 per cent of rural employment in 2018-19, then slipped.

ECONOMY

IRDAI to monitor dark patterns in insurance

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India moved to police dark patterns on digital insurance marketplaces: hidden design that pressures users into sharing data or buying cover, makes cancellation difficult, or demands personal details before showing products. It has partnered the Institute of Public Auditors of India to monitor the industry over nine months.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Flash floods: causes beyond extreme rain**

A study by IIT Gandhinagar found that only about a quarter of India's flash floods trace directly to extreme rainfall; soil moisture, basin shape and terrain decide the rest. Jal Shakti data show flash-flood events rising from 132 to 184 between 2020 and 2022, as warmer air holds roughly seven per cent more moisture per degree.

ENVIRONMENT

Forest and environmental clearances: Hasdeo Arand coal mining

The Environment Ministry granted environmental clearance for mining in the Kente extension coal block inside Chhattisgarh's Hasdeo-Arand forest, projected to yield nine million tonnes of coal a year. It is the third coalfield cleared in a tract once marked a no-go zone, home to about 640 plant species, nine Schedule-I animals and 40 to 50 elephants.

ENVIRONMENT

Tiger conservation: Sariska roadmap, NTCA and reserves

The Centre marked eighteen years of tiger reintroduction at Sariska, in Rajasthan's Aravallis, by releasing a management roadmap and a study of lessons from twelve reintroductions. India's tigers rose from 1,411 in 2006 to 3,682 in 2022 across 58 reserves, yet twelve reserves hold fewer than three tigers and Kawal, Kamlang and Dampa none.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****Vikram-1: India's first private orbital rocket (Skyroot)**

Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 lifted off from Sriharikota on 18 July 2026 and placed technology-demonstration satellites in low Earth orbit, India's first orbital launch by a privately built rocket. The Hyderabad firm's vehicle can carry 350 kg to low orbit, and the flight made India the third country, after the United States and China, with private launch capability.

SCIENCE & TECH

UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI: first report

The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI published its preliminary report, the first scientific assessment of artificial intelligence commissioned by the United Nations. Co-chaired by Yoshua Bengio and Maria Ressa, the 40-member panel warned that AI capability is outpacing scientific understanding, public oversight and global governance, singling out frontier models and autonomous agents.

DEFENCE

Air and missile defence shield: BMD, Kusha LR-SAM, Akash-NG, IADWS

The Defence Research and Development Organisation conducted the first flight test of the Kusha long-range surface-to-air missile on 23 July 2026 at APJ Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha, a system built to engage aircraft, missiles and drones beyond 200 km. With the Integrated Air Defence Weapon System it builds towards Mission Sudarshan Chakra's nationwide shield.

DEFENCE

Navy's commissionings: Project 17A stealth frigates

The Navy commissioned its sixth Project 17A stealth frigate, INS Mahendragiri, at Visakhapatnam; designed by the Navy's own Warship Design Bureau and built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders in Mumbai, it carries indigenous surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles. On 22 July INS Malvan, the second Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft, was commissioned at Karwar.

DEFENCE

Army's first Integrated Battle Groups

The Army moved to raise its first Integrated Battle Groups, self-contained brigade-sized formations of over 5,000 troops carved out of the Panagarh-based XVII Corps, the mountain strike corps facing China. Each

combines infantry, artillery, engineers and a field hospital for rapid deployment. The wider reorganisation also created Bhairav battalions and Rudra brigades.

SOCIETY **MUST-KNOW**

‘Missing women’ and NFHS-6’s omission of sex-ratio data

The sixth National Family Health Survey left out sex-ratio indicators, and demographers objected that without them the ‘missing women’ question cannot be tracked. The 2011 Census had put the child sex ratio at 919 girls per thousand boys. Research links son preference to patrilineal residence and to how much schooling mothers have had.

SOCIETY

Women’s digital agency: NFHS-6 internet data

The sixth National Family Health Survey found 64.3 per cent of Indian women using the internet in 2023-24, nearly double the 33.3 per cent of 2019-21. Men remain ahead at 80.5 per cent, and rural women trail urban ones, 58.6 against 77.3. Owning a phone, not sharing one, changes what access is worth.

SOCIETY

Seafarers’ welfare amid Strait of Hormuz attacks

Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched the Seafarer-First initiative to protect Indian crews after attacks on merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. It orders real-time monitoring of vessels carrying Indian seafarers, a dedicated liaison officer for every affected seafarer, and a whole-of-government response on their safety and welfare.

HISTORY

Natyashastra vs Aristotle: Greek influence on Indian theatre

A Devdutt essay revisited whether Greek contact shaped Indian theatre after Alexander’s fourth-century BCE campaigns and the Indo-Greek kingdoms of Bactria and Gandhara. The Sanskrit stage curtain, yavanika, derives from yavana, the Indian word for Greeks. But the goals diverged: Aristotle’s catharsis against the Natyashastra’s rasa, savoured rather than purged.

GEOGRAPHY

Gaza crossings: Rafah and the Yellow Line

The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt reopened on 2 February 2026 under the twenty-point ceasefire plan, having been shut since May 2024. It carries people, not goods: about fifty returning to Gaza each day

and fifty medical patients leaving with two companions each, vetted by Israel and supervised by a European Union mission.

GEOGRAPHY

Shrinking Caspian Sea

A June 2026 study found that the Caspian Sea, the world’s largest inland water body, has lost about 5.5 per cent of its surface area since the mid-1990s, some 630 cubic kilometres of water. Dams and irrigation on the Volga, which supplies nearly 80 per cent of its inflow, and rising evaporation are the twin causes.

GEOGRAPHY

Black Sea: Snake Island and littoral states

The Black Sea stayed in the news through the Russia-Ukraine war, and Snake Island, the small Ukrainian outcrop off the Danube delta that Russian forces seized in 2022 and then abandoned, kept recurring. The sea drains to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles, straits that Turkey controls.

GEOGRAPHY

India’s land borders with neighbours

India’s land frontiers keep returning as an exam subject because the map is complicated: roughly 15,107 km of border shared with seven neighbours, the longest stretch, about 4,097 km, with Bangladesh. The Siliguri Corridor in West Bengal, the ‘Chicken’s Neck’ barely twenty kilometres across at its narrowest, is the only land link to the North-East.

GEOGRAPHY

Indira Point and Galathea Bay (Great Nicobar)

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways proposed protection and development works at Indira Point and its lighthouse. India’s southernmost tip, on Great Nicobar Island, lies just south of Galathea Bay, where a transshipment port is planned. Called Pygmalion Point until 1985, it was renamed after Indira Gandhi’s death; the lighthouse dates from 1972.

REPORTS & INDICES

NITI Investment Friendliness Index 2026

NITI Aayog released its Investment Friendliness Index 2026, ranking all 28 states and eight union territories on what makes a place attractive to investors. Gujarat topped it, followed by Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Odisha. The index runs on eight pillars and 84 indicators, weighting infrastructure highest at 25 per cent alongside an investor survey.

AWARDS **MUST-KNOW****72nd National Film Awards**

The 72nd National Film Awards were announced in New Delhi on 18 July 2026. Article 370 won Best Feature Film and brought Yami Gautam the Best Actress award; Kartik Aaryan, for Chandu Champion, and Mammooty, for Bramayugam, shared Best Actor. Rajkumar Periasamy was named Best Director for Amaran, and Kalki 2898 AD won for wholesome entertainment.

AWARDS

Change of Prime Minister in the UK

Keir Starmer resigned as British Prime Minister and Labour leader, and Andy Burnham took office on 20 July 2026. Burnham had been Mayor of Greater Manchester since 2017, earning the nickname 'King of the North' for resisting the centre during a 2020 lockdown standoff. Bihar-born Kanishka Narayan stayed on as Minister of State for AI.

AWARDS

Teejan Bai, Pandavani singer, passes away

Teejan Bai, the singer who carried Pandavani, the Chhattisgarhi solo narration of the Mahabharata performed with a tambura, from village courtyards to world stages, died in Raipur on 5 July 2026 after a long illness. She was 69, and the only person from Chhattisgarh to receive the Padma Vibhushan, awarded in 2019.

SPORTS **MUST-KNOW****FIFA World Cup 2026: Spain are champions**

Spain beat Argentina 1-0 at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey to win the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the first contested by 48 teams and co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Ferran Torres scored at the start of the second half of extra time; Argentina managed no shot at all in regulation time.

SPORTS

Women's cricket: WPL 2026 and Women's T20 World Cup

Australia won a seventh Women's T20 World Cup, beating England by seven wickets in the final: England made 150 for four and Australia 153 for three in 17.1 overs, Beth Mooney scoring 64. The International Cricket Council had raised the prize pool to \$8.76 million, the highest ever for the tournament.

SPORTS

Grand Slam tennis 2026

Wimbledon 2026 went to Jannik Sinner, who beat Alexander Zverev in the men's final on 12 July, and to Linda Nosková, who beat Karolína Muchová. Earlier in the year Elena Rybakina and Carlos Alcaraz had won the Australian Open, Alcaraz completing a career Grand Slam, and Mirra Andrejeva and Zverev the French Open.

SPORTS

PV Sindhu wins the Japan Open

P V Sindhu won the Japan Open in 2026, beating the local favourite and three-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi 21-17, 21-17 to become the first Indian to take the title. The Super 750 tournament ended a drought of more than two years for the 31-year-old, whose previous title was the 2024 Syed Modi International.

APPOINTMENTS **MUST-KNOW****New military leadership: CDS, Army chief and Navy chief**

India changed all three of its top military appointments in mid-2026. General N S Raja Subramani became Chief of Defence Staff and Admiral Krishna Swaminathan the Navy chief, both named on 9 May. General Dhiraj Seth took charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff on 30 June, setting out a 'VIJAY' roadmap of five priorities.

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ENTRIES

All 34 stories of the month, grouped by subject. 9 are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****Tenth Schedule and the anti-defection law**

Defection stayed in the news as Speakers sat on disqualification petitions and defecting legislators reached for the 'merger' exception to escape penalty. The Tenth Schedule, inserted by the 52nd Amendment in 1985 and tightened by the 91st in 2003, governs the question; Kihoto Hollohan (1992) upheld it and made the Speaker's decision open to judicial review.

POLITY

Emergency provisions and President's Rule

NCERT placed the 1975-77 Emergency in a Class 9 Social Science textbook for the first time, framing it as a challenge Indian democracy endured and survived. That drew attention back to Part XVIII of the Constitution, Articles 352 to 360, covering national, State and financial emergencies and drawn partly from Germany's Weimar Constitution.

POLITY

Election symbols and party recognition

A group calling itself the Cockroach Janta Party protested at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on 6 June 2026 and spoke of seeking registration, prompting explainers on symbols. The Election Commission allots them under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968; unrecognised parties draw from a free-symbols list of 184, published on 23 May 2025.

POLITY

Rajya Sabha nomination rejected over incomplete affidavit

A Returning Officer rejected Meenakshi Natarajan's Rajya Sabha nomination on 9 June 2026, recording that she had filed an incomplete affidavit in Form 26 and concealed material facts about a court case. Form 26, required at the scrutiny of nominations under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, must disclose criminal cases, assets, liabilities and PAN details.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Citizenship law: CAA, OCI and the 2026 Rules**

The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules 2026 moved Overseas Citizen of India registration to electronic cards and fully online applications, and barred minors holding Indian passports from also holding a foreign one. The Citizenship Amendment Act and the harder question of what document actually proves citizenship stayed contested. Article 11 leaves citizenship entirely to Parliament.

LAW & JUDICIARY

SC: safe footpaths are a fundamental right

The Supreme Court held on 19 June 2026 that walking on secured, demarcated footpaths is a fundamental right, integral to the freedom of movement under Article 19(1)(d) read with Article 21. It urged a law recognising the duty of municipal authorities to build and maintain pedestrian infrastructure, with remedies independent of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

INTL RELATIONS

India's new European partnerships: Nordic summit, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, Italy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's May 2026 tour of the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy took in the third India-Nordic Summit at Oslo on 19 May. India signed new strategic partnerships with the Netherlands and Sweden, elevated Italy to a Special Strategic Partnership, and launched a Green Strategic Partnership with Norway. Tata Electronics tied up with ASML for the Dholera fab.

INTL RELATIONS

UN Commission of Inquiry on Gaza and the Genocide Convention

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel reported on 23 June 2026 that Israel had deliberately targeted Palestinian children in Gaza, documenting a pattern of acts establishing genocidal intent. The commission is chaired by S Muralidhar, who retired in 2023 as Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Nepal mutual legal assistance treaty

India and Nepal completed the internal processes for their Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement in Criminal Matters to enter into force, giving investigators and courts a framework against cross-border crime. Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal, making the first such visit since Prime Minister Balendra Shah took office in March 2026, also launched a person-to-person link between UPI and Nepal's NPI.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW****India's BRICS chairship 2026**

India held the BRICS chairship through 2026 and hosted the grouping's 18th summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on 12 and 13 September, where the eleven members adopted the New Delhi Declaration. The chairship theme was 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability'; India had hosted the BRICS foreign ministers in May.

SUMMITS

G7 Evian summit and PM's France visit

France hosted the 2026 G7 summit at Evian and invited India as an outreach participant; Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended on 16 and 17 June, in a trip that also took in Nice and Paris. India and France adopted an Innovation Roadmap 2030, opened an economic security dialogue and set up a joint working group on artificial-intelligence governance.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****RBI's record surplus transfer of Rs 2.87 lakh crore**

The Reserve Bank transferred a record Rs 2.87 lakh crore of surplus to the Centre for 2025-26. Most of it came from profits on selling foreign exchange as the rupee weakened and foreign portfolio investors pulled money out. The contingency risk buffer stayed at 6.5 per cent under the revised Economic Capital Framework.

ECONOMY

India's road network: growth, financing and barrier-less tolling

The Supreme Court's footpath ruling put the spotlight on India's road network, the world's second largest, which carries 64 per cent of freight and 90 per cent of passenger traffic. It grew in three phases: Indian Roads Congress blueprints from 1943, the National Highways Development Project from 1998, and Bharatmala with PM GatiShakti since 2017.

ECONOMY

Rare-earth magnets and rare-earth corridors

India moved to break its dependence on imported magnets. The Heavy Industries Ministry extended global tender timelines under its scheme for sintered rare-earth permanent magnets, which supports 6,000 tonnes a year of integrated capacity split among five bidders, with Rs 6,450 crore of sales-linked incentives over five years and a Rs 750 crore capital subsidy.

ECONOMY

Balance of payments surplus and record remittances

India recorded a balance of payments surplus of about \$7.22 billion in the January-March 2026 quarter, despite capital outflows from financial markets and subdued net foreign direct investment. Remittances carried it: Indians working abroad sent home \$31.07 billion in the first quarter of 2026, a 34 per cent rise and the most in thirteen years.

ECONOMY

Monsoon as the economy's lifeline

With the India Meteorological Department forecasting a below-normal 2026 monsoon, the season's hold over the economy returned to view. A good monsoon lifts farm output, rural incomes and then consumer spending across the country; a deficient or uneven one brings drought or floods, failed harvests and lost income. Western disturbances carry the winter rabi crop.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Great Nicobar project: NGT clearance and coral translocation**

A six-member National Green Tribunal bench declined in February 2026 to interfere with the environmental clearance for the Rs 81,000-crore Great Nicobar project, finding adequate safeguards and strategic value. The Zoological Survey of India then moved to relocate more than 16,000 coral colonies from Galathea Bay, the transshipment-port site, though experts called whole-colony translocation near impossible.

ENVIRONMENT

Bonn Challenge: India's land-restoration progress

India's second progress report on the Bonn Challenge, released by the Environment Ministry and the International Union for Conservation of Nature on 17 June 2026, said the country restored 21.7 million hectares of degraded and deforested land between 2011 and 2020. India's 2030 target, raised from 13 million hectares in 2019, now stands at 26 million.

SCIENCE & TECH

E85 fuel, flex-fuel cars and ethanol blending

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched E85 fuel, a blend of about 85 per cent ethanol, at a Delhi retail outlet on 5 June 2026, and Maruti Suzuki released a flex-fuel WagonR billed as India's first mass-market flex-fuel car. Ethanol blending in petrol had already reached 20 per cent in 2025-26, five years ahead of target.

SCIENCE & TECH

Chandrayaan-3 finds Shiv Shakti soil resembles a lunar meteorite

A Physical Research Laboratory study of data from the Alpha Particle X-ray Spectrometer aboard Chandrayaan-3's Pragyaan rover found that the iron- and magnesium-rich, aluminium-poor soil at Shiv Shakti Point matches the lunar meteorite ALHA 81005, recovered from Antarctica's Allan Hills in 1982. The finding points to material drawn from deeper lunar layers.

SOCIETY

NEET-linked student suicides and mental health

A run of suicides by students preparing for NEET prompted an ethics case study asking where responsibility lies. It argued that a young person's worth cannot be reduced to a rank, invoking Kant's view in The Metaphysics of Morals that human dignity is intrinsic, and placed duties on families, coaching institutions and a society that glorifies achievement while ignoring failure.

SOCIETY

Drug bans: nimesulide and fixed-dose combinations

A gazette notification of 29 December 2025 prohibited the manufacture, sale and distribution of oral nimesulide above 100 mg in immediate-release form, issued under section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. The Indian Council of Medical Research had recommended the step over liver toxicity, and the Drugs Technical Advisory Board accepted it in April 2025.

SOCIETY

Brain-eating amoeba infections in Kerala

Kerala reported 133 cases of amoebic meningoencephalitis and 33 deaths in the first five months of 2026, a startling jump for an infection India had recorded barely two dozen times until 2023. Most were granulomatous amoebic encephalitis, caused by *Acanthamoeba* in contaminated water, rather than the *Naegleria fowleri* behind primary amoebic meningoencephalitis.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****GI tags of 2025-26: Tamil Nadu's five, Jodhpuri Mojari and more**

Geographical Indication tags kept arriving through 2025-26. Tamil Nadu added five — Woraiyur cotton sari, Kavindapadi jaggery powder, Namakkal soapstone cookware, Thooyamalli rice and Ambasamudram wooden toys — taking its tally to 74. Rajasthan's Jodhpuri Mojari, embroidered leather footwear made by the Jinagar community, and several Bengal sweets and crafts also won recognition.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****Harappan heritage in the news: Rakhigarhi, Dancing Girl, 15 Budget sites**

Harappan sites drew money and attention. Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district was allotted Rs 500 crore, and the Archaeological Survey handed skeletal remains from eight burials at its Mound 7 to the Anthropological Survey of India for study. The Budget picked fifteen archaeological sites for development, and NCERT restored the Dancing Girl's image to a Class 9 textbook.

HISTORY

UNESCO Memory of the World: Gita, Natyashastra and Xuanzang's records

India and China reached advanced discussions on jointly nominating The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions, the account of the seventh-century Chinese monk Xuanzang, who travelled India from 629 to 645 CE and studied about five years at Nalanda. The Bhagavad Gita and the Natyashastra already sit on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

HISTORY

Indic influence in South-East Asia and the Prambanan conservation project

Archaeological landscapes across South-East Asia show Indian ideas travelling by trade, pilgrimage and court patronage between 500 and 1500 CE. Angkor Wat was built for Vishnu by Suryavarman II, the Bayon under

Jayavarman VII; the Sailendras raised Borobudur and the Sanjaya dynasty Prambanan, which the Archaeological Survey of India will help conserve.

HISTORY

How British rule reshaped Indian education

Social-media claims that pre-colonial India ran a universal school system drew a corrective. Village schools, temple schools, gurukuls, makhtabs and madrasas did exist, and British surveyors such as William Adam and Thomas Munro recorded them, but access followed caste, occupation, gender and patronage. Dharampal's *The Beautiful Tree* (1983), which argued otherwise, was judged exaggerated.

GEOGRAPHY **MUST-KNOW****Monsoon 2026: below-normal forecast and its drivers**

The India Meteorological Department forecast a below-normal south-west monsoon for 2026 in late May, and the Reserve Bank warned of what that would cost the economy. The Long Period Average benchmark is about 87 cm, drawn from 1971-2020 rainfall. El Nino, the shifting Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone, Madden-Julian Oscillation pulses and the Indian Ocean Dipole drive the season.

GEOGRAPHY

Himalayan border passes and trade: Lipulekh, Shipki La

The Lipulekh pass, at about 17,000 feet on the trijunction of India, Nepal and Tibet, is set to reopen for border trade with China after years of closure caused first by the pandemic and then by the border stand-off. Nepal disputes the area, claiming Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli.

GEOGRAPHY

Kalpasar project and the Dutch Afsluitdijk

Gujarat, hit by close to thirty droughts since 1900, is planning the Kalpasar project: a 60-km dam across the Gulf of Khambhat impounding a 7,800 million-cubic-metre freshwater reservoir fed by the Sabarmati, Mahi, Dhadhar and Narmada. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Dutch Afsluitdijk, and the two countries signed a Letter of Intent on technical cooperation.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****SIPRI Yearbook 2026: India's military spending and nuclear arsenal**

The SIPRI Yearbook 2026 put India's 2025 military spending at \$92.1 billion, the world's fifth largest and 8.9 per cent above 2024. India was also the second-

biggest arms importer of 2021-25, taking 8.2 per cent of the global total. As of January 2026 it held roughly 190 nuclear warheads against Pakistan's 170.

DAYS & EVENTS

2026: International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

The United Nations named 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, following a General Assembly resolution moved by Mongolia and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Desertification and Drought Day on 17 June 2026, hosted by Kenya, took the same cue with the theme 'Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore.'

APPOINTMENTS

NITI Aayog reconstituted

The government notified a reconstituted NITI Aayog on 24 April 2026. Ashok Kumar Lahiri, a former Chief Economic Adviser, replaced Suman Bery as Vice Chairperson and took office on 8 May. Five full-time members were named alongside him: Rajiv Gauba, K V Raju, Gobardhan Das, M Srinivas and Abhay Karandikar.

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ENTRIES

All 35 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **10** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY

Right to vote: India vs the US

The Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in India, and a proposed Save America Act in the United States requiring proof of citizenship to register, set off parallel arguments about who may vote. India's Constitution granted universal adult suffrage at the outset; the American Constitution instead bars discrimination on listed grounds without conferring the right itself.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****NEET paper leak and the Public Examinations (Unfair Means) law**

A leak of the NEET question paper set off nationwide protests, a task force under Nandan Nilekani to overhaul the National Testing Agency, and a new law. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Act, 2026, in force from 31 July, raises jail terms for unfair means from three-to-five years to five-to-ten and mandates fast-track courts.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Reproductive autonomy and Article 21**

The Supreme Court allowed a minor to end a pregnancy beyond the statutory limit, and the Karnataka High Court applied a best-interests test to a plea for a hysterectomy on a woman with an intellectual disability. Both rulings treated reproductive autonomy and bodily integrity as part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Online gaming law, 2026 Rules and retrospective GST**

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 banned real-money online games outright, closing apps such as Dream11 and Mobile Premier League; Rules that took effect on 1 May 2026 created the Online Gaming Authority of India under MeitY. The Supreme Court then upheld a 28 per cent GST levied retrospectively, reviving demands near Rs 2.5 lakh crore.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Release of convicts: remission, parole and furlough

On 26 May 2026 Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, serving twenty years for raping two disciples, left Rohtak's Sunaria jail on thirty days' parole, his sixteenth release since conviction in 2017. Parole suspends a sentence and is no right; furlough counts as remission and is. The Delhi High Court separately faulted a Sentencing Review Board.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Courts and disputed religious sites (Thiruparankundram, Bhojshala)

The Madhya Pradesh High Court held that the disputed eleventh-century Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex at Dhar was in character a temple of Vagdevi Saraswati, linked to Raja Bhoj of the Parmar dynasty; the deity's idol has sat in the British Museum since 1909. In December 2025 the Madras High Court ordered the Karthigai Deepam lamp lit at Thiruparankundram.

LAW & JUDICIARY

SC stray-dog judgment and the NALSAR campus exception

On 19 May 2026 the Supreme Court ruled on stray dogs, stressing public safety and permitting the euthanasia of rabid animals. On NALSAR University's intervention it carved out an exception letting educational institutions run controlled campus dog-housing, with NALSAR's Animal Law Centre made liable in tort for any bite inside its Hyderabad campus.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****India-UAE strategic defence framework and energy security deals**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the United Arab Emirates on 15 May 2026 and met President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. They signed a framework for a strategic defence partnership, agreed that Abu Dhabi's ADNOC would raise its holding in India's strategic petroleum reserves to 30 million barrels, and settled LPG supply and a Vadinar ship-repair cluster.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Vietnam Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

India and Vietnam raised their relationship to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of President To Lam, setting a trade goal of \$25 billion by 2030 and widening defence procurement. Vietnam made India a Strategic Partner in 2007, India's first inside ASEAN, and a Comprehensive Strategic Partner in 2016.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Cyprus Strategic Partnership

President Nikos Christodoulides of Cyprus made a state visit to India from 20 to 23 May 2026. The two countries raised ties to a Strategic Partnership, unveiled a five-year defence roadmap for 2026-2031, agreed a cyber-security dialogue and signed six pacts. Cyprus, an EU member lying geographically in Asia, is a node on the IMEC corridor.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, announced at the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023, would carry Indian trade to Europe through West Asia by ship and rail. India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France, Germany, Italy, the European Union and the United States signed the founding memorandum; Cyprus expects a Mediterranean role in it.

INTL RELATIONS

Abraham Accords expansion push

On 25 May 2026 US President Donald Trump called on Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and Jordan to sign the Abraham Accords and normalise relations with Israel. The accords, introduced in 2020 during his first term and named after the patriarch Abraham, have largely bypassed the question of Palestinian statehood.

SUMMITS

Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, New Delhi

The foreign ministers of the Quad, meaning India, the United States, Australia and Japan, met at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on 26 May 2026. They launched an Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Cooperation Initiative, widened maritime domain awareness, began a Ports of the Future Partnership starting with Fiji, and agreed a Critical Minerals Framework.

SUMMITS

Third India-Nordic Summit, Oslo

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the third India-Nordic Summit in Oslo on 19 May 2026, hosted by Norway's Jonas Gahr Store, the first Indian premier in Norway since Indira Gandhi in 1983. The first two summits were at Stockholm in 2018 and Copenhagen in 2022; Finland will host the fourth.

SUMMITS

India chairs the Kimberley Process 2026

India took the chair of the Kimberley Process for 2026 and hosted its intersessional meeting in Mumbai from 11 to 14 May. India's chairship runs on three Cs: credibility, compliance and consumer confidence. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, launched in 2003, keeps conflict diamonds out of the legitimate rough-diamond trade.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****RBI Monetary Policy Committee: repo held at 5.25%**

The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee left the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent through 2026 and kept a neutral stance, judging that the oil shock from the war in West Asia had raised the risk of stagflation, meaning high inflation alongside slow growth. The repo rate is what the RBI charges banks for short-term funds.

ECONOMY

Compensation and safeguards for digital-fraud victims

The Reserve Bank revised its compensation rules so that a victim of a digital payment fraud of up to Rs 50,000 who complains within five days recovers 85 per cent of

the loss or Rs 25,000, whichever is less, once in a lifetime, from 1 January 2027. It is also examining an emergency kill switch inside banking apps.

ENVIRONMENT

Hoolock gibbons: India's only apes

A western hoolock gibbon was recorded crossing an artificial canopy bridge over a railway line in Assam's Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, the first such observation anywhere. The sanctuary's first bridge, built in 2015, went unused because its rigid iron frame did not suit brachiation. Hoolock gibbons are India's only apes, and the western species is Endangered.

ENVIRONMENT

Extreme heat: disaster status and food security

A joint Food and Agriculture Organization and World Meteorological Organization report found extreme heat events rising sharply in frequency, intensity and duration over half a century, damaging crops, livestock, fisheries and forests. In India a heatwave is still not a notified disaster; the Sixteenth Finance Commission recommended adding heatwaves and lightning to that list.

ENVIRONMENT

AMOC slowdown and India's monsoon

New research suggests the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, the Atlantic arm of the global ocean conveyor, could slow by as much as 59 per cent by 2100 as meltwater from Greenland and the Arctic freshens the sea. A weaker circulation would make El Nino more erratic and pull the tropical rain belt south, destabilising India's monsoon.

ENVIRONMENT

Saranda sal forest: SC order to notify a sanctuary

Jharkhand filed a review petition against the Supreme Court's repeated direction that it notify the Saranda elephant forests of West Singhbhum as a wildlife sanctuary. Saranda, meaning seven hundred hills, covers about 856 square kilometres of dense sal. The court has rebuked the state for contempt and for taking it for a ride.

ENVIRONMENT

Women in environmental movements

All six winners of the 2026 Goldman Environmental Prize, often called the Green Nobel, were women: Iroro Tanshi of Nigeria, Borim Kim of Korea, Sarah Finch of Britain, Alannah Acaq Hurley of the United States,

Yuvelis Morales Blanco of Colombia and Theonila Roka Matbob of Papua New Guinea. Finch's case reached the UK Supreme Court.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 and the first chip plants**

The Union Cabinet approved two more semiconductor plants on 5 May 2026, one of them possibly India's first display fabrication unit, taking approvals under the India Semiconductor Mission to twelve. On 15 July it cleared a far larger Mission 2.0 worth Rs 1.27 lakh crore, shifting attention from fabs to equipment, materials and advanced packaging.

SCIENCE & TECH

Data centres in space: Project Suncatcher and The Pathfinder

The space-tech startup Pixxel announced on 4 May 2026 a partnership with the model-maker Sarvam AI to build The Pathfinder, India's first orbital data-centre satellite: 200 kilograms, carrying graphics processors for training and inference, and due in orbit by the end of 2026. Google's Project Suncatcher likewise proposes solar-powered satellite constellations doing computing.

DEFENCE

Strike missiles and hypersonics: Agni-5 MIRV, LR-AShM, Pralay, scramjet, SFDR

At the 77th Republic Day parade DRDO showed its Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile for the first time: a two-stage, solid-fuelled, quasi-ballistic weapon that starts at Mach 10 and ranges about 1,500 kilometres. DRDO has also flight-tested Agni-5 with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles and run a scramjet combustor for 1,200 seconds.

DEFENCE

BSF jurisdiction and Centre-state friction

The Border Security Force, raised under an Act of September 1968, may use its powers only inside a belt the Centre notifies under Section 139(1). An order of October 2021 widened that belt from fifteen to fifty kilometres in Punjab, West Bengal and Assam, angering those states. The force cannot investigate or prosecute.

SOCIETY

Early childhood development and human capital

The Annual Status of Education Report has found for two decades that more than half of India's Class 5 children cannot read a Class 2 text. A June 2026 essay argued the fault begins earlier, because children reach

school already behind; schemes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan and Saksham Anganwadi target those first six years.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****Jyotirao Phule bicentenary**

Bicentenary tributes revisited Jyotirao Phule's attack on caste and his insistence that women and lower castes be taught. Born in 1827, he and his wife Savitribai opened a school for girls at Bhidewada in Pune in 1848; he founded the Satyashodhak Samaj, the Truth-Seekers' Society, in 1873 and was called Mahatma from 1888.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****Return of India's antiquities: Chola plates, Chola idols, Piprahwa relics**

The Netherlands returned the eleventh-century Anaimangalam, or Leiden, Chola copper plates during the Prime Minister's May 2026 visit, closing a pursuit begun in 2012. In July 2026 Australia agreed to send back three Tamil Nadu temple objects held by two galleries: a Nandi, a six-headed Kartikeya and a Bhadrakali trident.

HISTORY

India-Persia cultural exchange through history

India and Persia have exchanged people and ideas since ancient Iranian farmers moved east about ten thousand years ago. Sanskrit and Avestan share roots and gods such as Mitra and Mithra; Gandhara and Sindh became Achaemenid satrapies named in the Behistun inscription; Persian became the Mughal court language; and Nader Shah sacked Delhi in 1739.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****World Press Freedom Index 2026 (RSF)**

Reporters Without Borders placed India 157th of 180 countries in its 2026 World Press Freedom Index, down from 151st, with a score of 31.96 and a place in the very

serious band. The global average was the lowest in the index's twenty-five years; Norway led for a tenth year and Eritrea came last.

REPORTS & INDICES

NCRB Crime in India 2024

The National Crime Records Bureau released Crime in India 2024 on 6 May 2026. It counted 58.85 lakh cases, about six per cent fewer than the 62.41 lakh of 2023, with the rate per lakh people falling from 448.3 to 418.9. Cybercrime rose about eighteen per cent, and Telangana led on crime against women.

REPORTS & INDICES

SRS Statistical Report 2024

The Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2024, from the Registrar General of India, put the total fertility rate at 1.9, below replacement, and infant mortality at 24 per thousand live births. The crude birth rate was 18.3, highest in Bihar and lowest in Kerala, and the sex ratio at birth rose to 918.

AWARDS **MUST-KNOW****International Booker Prize 2025 and 2026**

Banu Mushtaq's Heart Lamp, a Kannada short-story collection translated by Deepa Bhashti, won the International Booker Prize in 2025, the first Kannada work to do so. The 2026 prize went to Taiwan Travelogue by Yang Shuang-zi, translated from Mandarin by Lin King. The award splits fifty thousand pounds between author and translator.

AWARDS

FAO Agricola Medal to PM Modi

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations conferred its Agricola Medal for 2026 on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing his leadership on food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development in India and abroad. The medal is given by the FAO Director-General to leaders who advance the agency's mandate of ending hunger.

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31
ENTRIES

All 31 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **8** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****The failed 131st Amendment Bill: Lok Sabha of 850 and delimitation**

On 16 April 2026 the Lok Sabha took up three linked bills: the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, the Delimitation Bill and the Union Territories Laws

(Amendment) Bill. The 131st Bill, which would have raised Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850 and advanced women's reservation, missed the two-thirds majority Article 368 requires, and the others were dropped.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****Women's reservation: the 106th Amendment and women in Parliament**

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, passed in 2023 as the 106th Amendment, reserves a third of Lok Sabha and state assembly seats for women, but only after a fresh census and delimitation. The 131st Amendment Bill, defeated on 16 April 2026, had tried to delink those stages. India then ranked 147th of about 190 countries.

POLITY

Language provisions: Santali Constitution, Khasi and Garo

The Meghalaya cabinet on 16 April 2026 made Khasi and Garo, the languages of the state's two largest tribes, official languages alongside English; both remain outside the Eighth Schedule. Earlier, President Droupadi Murmu released the Constitution of India in Santali, written in Ol Chiki, a language the 92nd Amendment added to that Schedule in 2003.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Anticipatory bail (Pawan Khera case)

The Supreme Court refused to extend the transit anticipatory bail the Telangana High Court had granted Congress leader Pawan Khera over an FIR filed by Riniki Bhuyan Sharma after a press conference. Anticipatory bail, now Section 482 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, can be granted only by a Sessions Court or a High Court.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Judges' recusal and the rule against bias

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma of the Delhi High Court refused to recuse herself from a criminal revision petition arising out of the Delhi excise policy case, defending judicial independence at length. India has no formal recusal rules, so each judge decides alone; Ranjit Thakur versus Union of India (1987) set the reasonable-apprehension-of-bias test.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025 in action: UMEED portal

The UMEED portal, for Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development, was built under the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 to hold a geo-tagged central register of waqf property. By the registration deadline only about 2.16 lakh of roughly eight lakh properties were on it; West Bengal had completed 716 of its 80,480.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****UAE quits OPEC and OPEC+**

The United Arab Emirates quit OPEC and the wider OPEC+ group with effect from 1 May 2026, a setback for the cartel and its leader Saudi Arabia amid the war in West Asia. The UAE had joined in 1967; OPEC was founded at Baghdad in September 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

INTL RELATIONS

South Korea: President Lee's state visit

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung made a state visit to India from 19 to 21 April 2026. The two sides signed four memoranda covering sports, cultural and creative industries, small enterprises and an Industrial Cooperation Committee, and set a \$50 billion trade target for 2030, up from \$27 billion. Korea joined the International Solar Alliance.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW****WTO 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14), Yaounde**

The World Trade Organization's 14th Ministerial Conference, held in Yaounde, Cameroon, closed without a ministerial declaration. Members could not agree to extend the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, could not settle investment facilitation, and could not fix a reform package. They did adopt decisions to help small economies integrate into global trade.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW****Law of armed conflict: environment as a casualty of war and ecocide**

The two-week pause in the Iran war announced by Washington and Tehran in April 2026 drew attention to the fighting's environmental cost, including strikes on Tehran oil facilities. Campaigners want ecocide recognised as an international crime, building on the ENMOD Convention of 1976, the 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute.

ECONOMY

Informal sector: ASUSE 2025 findings

The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises 2025, run by the Statistics Ministry, mapped India's non-farm informal economy of small manufacturers, traders and service providers. Establishments, gross value added and employment all rose, with trade and services supplying about 80 per cent of the sector's value added, but the added work was mostly self-employment and family labour.

ECONOMY

Sijimali bauxite mining protests

Clashes between tribal villagers and police near Kshipur in Odisha's Rayagada district on 7 April 2026 injured at least 40 police personnel and 25 villagers. The villagers were resisting a three-kilometre approach road to the Sijimali bauxite mine, which holds an estimated 311 million tonnes and was auctioned to Vedanta in 2023.

ECONOMY

Venezuelan crude imports resume

India was on course to take 10-12 million barrels of Venezuelan crude in a single month, its largest intake in more than six years, according to the analytics firm Kpler. Imports had stopped within months of the United States sanctioning Caracas in 2019, when Venezuela was India's fifth-largest supplier of oil.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Disappearing lakes and the public trust doctrine**

A Comptroller and Auditor General audit of lake conservation, covering the period up to March 2022, found 518 of 697 lakes in Jammu and Kashmir gone or shrunk since 1967, with 315 vanished entirely. In Swachh Association versus State of Maharashtra (2025) the Supreme Court extended the public trust doctrine to man-made lakes and reservoirs.

ENVIRONMENT

New waste rules 2026: solid waste and tar balls

The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, notified in January, came into force on 1 April 2026 and replaced the 2016 rules, requiring four-way segregation at source, charging higher landfill fees and pushing refuse-derived fuel. Separately the Centre proposed India's first Tar-balls Management Rules, making oil facility owners pay under the polluter-pays principle.

ENVIRONMENT

Vultures: Himalayan Griffon deaths

Forest officials found 25 dead Himalayan Griffon vultures near a village on the edge of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh. They suspected secondary poisoning: pesticide-laced rice left out for stray dogs, on whose carcasses the birds then fed. The species, *Gyps himalayensis*, is listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN.

ENVIRONMENT

Curb on new HFC plants (Kigali Amendment)

The government told central and state authorities to grant no environmental clearance for new or expanded

hydrofluorocarbon production after 31 December 2027. HFCs replaced ozone-depleting CFCs but warm the atmosphere far more strongly. India ratified in 2021 the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, agreed at Kigali in Rwanda in 2016, and must phase them down.

SCIENCE & TECH

Indigenous Cell Broadcast alerts linked to SACHET

India switched on its indigenous cell-broadcast messaging system on 2 May 2026 as an instant disaster-alert service for citizens. The National Disaster Management Authority operationalised SACHET, the Integrated Alert System built by the Centre for Development of Telematics. Cell broadcast sends one message from a tower to every phone on it, unlike one-to-one SMS.

SCIENCE & TECH

Kavach on the Delhi-Mumbai route

The Ministry of Railways commissioned Kavach, the indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection system, on the Vadodara-Nagda section of the Delhi-Mumbai route. Kavach applies the brakes itself if a loco pilot passes a signal at danger or over-speeds, and detects trains approaching on the same track. It meets Safety Integrity Level 4, the highest grade.

SCIENCE & TECH

Sovereign cloud for critical sectors

The government is weighing a rule that companies in critical sectors such as energy, telecom and banking must use Indian-made sovereign cloud systems. The trigger was Microsoft abruptly cutting the refiner Nayara Energy off from its IT services the previous year, showing that a foreign provider can lock a company out of its own data.

SCIENCE & TECH

Multi-Lane Free Flow (barrier-free) tolling

Delhi-NCR got its first barrier-less Multi-Lane Free Flow toll plaza, and India its second, at Mundka-Bakkarwala on Urban Extension Road II on 11 May 2026. Gantry-mounted radio-frequency readers and number-plate cameras charge vehicles passing at 80-100 kmph. The Economic Survey 2025-26 projects the system across four-lane-plus highways by March 2029.

SOCIETY

Water crisis through a gender lens

Women aged 15 and above collect the water in about 71 per cent of rural Indian households, an unpaid burden growing as per-capita availability nears the 1,000-cubic-metre scarcity mark. In one drought-hit Maharashtra

hamlet men take extra wives, locally called water wives, to fetch it. NITI Aayog counts about 600 million Indians water-stressed.

REPORTS & INDICES

IRENA: India third in renewable capacity

India now ranks third in the world for installed renewable-energy capacity, overtaking Brazil, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency's Renewable Energy Statistics 2026. The report records 2025 as the biggest year yet for renewables globally, adding 692 gigawatts and expanding the stock by 15.5 per cent, with solar supplying nearly three-quarters of the addition.

REPORTS & INDICES

Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0

The Panchayati Raj Ministry released the second edition of the Panchayat Advancement Index, scoring 2,59,867 gram panchayats on 150 indicators across nine sustainable-development themes for 2023-24. Not one reached the top Achiever band. Of the 3,635 panchayats rated Front Runner, 943 were in Tripura, which was followed by Kerala and then by Odisha.

AWARDS **MUST-KNOW****New leaders in India's neighbourhood: Nepal and Myanmar**

Balendra Shah, the 35-year-old rapper who had been mayor of Kathmandu since 2022, was sworn in as Nepal's 47th Prime Minister, its youngest and its first Madhesi one, after defeating former premier K P Oli. In Myanmar, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, army chief since 2011, was elected President by parliament on 3 April 2026.

AWARDS

Asha Bhosle dies

The playback singer Asha Bhosle died in Mumbai on 12 April 2026, aged 92. She had received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Indian cinema's highest honour, in 2001 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2008, and had won National Film Awards for her singing in the films Umrao Jaan and Ijaazat, among others.

AWARDS

Bihar gets a new Chief Minister: Samrat Choudhary

Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as Chief Minister of Bihar, the first time the BJP has led a government in the state. Nitish Kumar, who has moved to the Rajya Sabha, gave up the post on 14 April 2026, dissolving a cabinet in which Choudhary was deputy chief minister holding Home.

AWARDS

Peter Magyar wins Hungary election

Peter Magyar's Tisza party won Hungary's parliamentary election, taking 138 of 199 seats on the preliminary count, a two-thirds majority that allows it to amend the constitution, and ending sixteen years of Viktor Orban. Turnout was close to 80 per cent, the highest in the country's thirty-six years of post-communist politics.

SPORTS

Thomas and Uber Cup 2026

The 34th Thomas Cup and 31st Uber Cup, badminton's men's and women's team world championships, were played at Horsens in Denmark, the finals on 3 May 2026. India, champion in 2022, lost the Thomas Cup semi-final to France. China then beat France for a second straight men's title; Korea took the Uber Cup.

SPORTS

Operation Upstream: WADA and CBI against doping supply

The World Anti-Doping Agency agreed to work with the Central Bureau of Investigation on Operation Upstream, a joint plan aimed at the suppliers of banned substances and at the coaches and physiotherapists behind doped athletes, not only the athletes themselves. India had the most offenders on WADA's 2024 list of suspended athletes.

DAYS & EVENTS **MUST-KNOW****Jotirao Phule birth bicentenary**

The bicentenary year of the social reformer Jotirao Phule, born on 11 April 1827, opened on 11 April 2026. Phule and his wife Savitribai ran what is counted as India's first girls' school, at Bhidewada in Pune, from 1848, and he founded the Satyashodhak Samaj, Seekers of Truth, in 1873.

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71
ENTRIES

All 71 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **25** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW**

Census 2027: first digital, caste-inclusive census

Census 2027 opened on 1 April 2026, when the first batch of states and union territories began a self-enumeration window; field houselisting there started on 16 April 2026. Population enumeration follows in February 2027. This is India's first digital census and will carry the first full caste count since 1931. Census falls under Union List Entry 69.

POLITY

CAPF (General Administration) Bill 2026 vs an SC direction

The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill 2026 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 25 March 2026 and passed by Parliament on 2 April. It reserves all Director General posts, 67% of Additional DG posts and 50% of Inspector General posts in five CAPFs for IPS officers on deputation, cutting against a 2025 Supreme Court direction.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

SC on reservation: creamy layer test and open-category merit

On 11 March 2026, in Union of India v Rohith Nathan, the Supreme Court held that salary income alone cannot decide OBC creamy-layer status: the parents' post and social standing must be weighed too. An earlier 2026 ruling, Airports Authority of India v Sham Krishna, held that a reserved-category candidate scoring above the general cut-off qualifies against an open seat.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

SC status after conversion to Christianity

On 24 March 2026, in Chinthada Anand v State of Andhra Pradesh, the Supreme Court held that a Scheduled Caste person who converts to Christianity loses SC status and cannot invoke the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950, issued under Article 341, confines SC status to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Regulating social media: deepfakes, blocking orders and under-16 limits

India tightened platform duties through 2026: intermediaries must pull flagged deepfakes down within three hours and label AI-generated content. The Centre briefly blocked Telegram under Section 69A of the IT Act during the NEET re-exam, and the Delhi High Court upheld the block. Australia became the first country to enforce a social-media age floor; Karnataka barred under-16s.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Maternity benefit for adoptive mothers: age cap struck down

On 17 March 2026, in Hamsaanandini Nanduri v Union of India, the Supreme Court struck down Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security 2020, which gave adoptive mothers maternity benefit only if the adopted child was under three months old. Adoptive and commissioning mothers now get twelve weeks from the date the child is handed over.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act 2026

Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill on 24-25 March 2026 and President Droupadi Murmu assented on 30 March. The Act replaces self-identification of gender with certification by a district magistrate on a medical board's recommendation, and stiffens penalties; it commences on a date the Centre notifies. It clashes with NALSA v Union of India (2014).

LAW & JUDICIARY

Ordinances and re-promulgation

Article 123 lets the President promulgate an ordinance when Parliament is not in session; Article 213 gives Governors the same power. In D.C. Wadhwa v State of Bihar (1986), and again in Krishna Kumar Singh (2017), the Supreme Court held that re-promulgating an ordinance rather than placing it before the legislature is a fraud on the Constitution.

LAW & JUDICIARY

Genocide Convention and The Gambia v Myanmar at the ICJ

The International Court of Justice heard the merits of The Gambia v Myanmar from 12 to 29 January 2026, the case alleging that Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya breached the 1948 Genocide Convention. The Gambia filed it in 2019 on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation; the Convention lets any state party sue even without a direct link.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****US-Israel war on Iran, Strait of Hormuz and the US-Iran MoU**

The US and Israel began striking Iran on 28 February 2026 after Oman-mediated talks collapsed; Iran retaliated against Israel, US bases and Gulf states and closed the Strait of Hormuz. A US-Iran memorandum of understanding signed on 17 June 2026 was meant to end the war and the blockade, but it broke down within weeks and fighting continued into September.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****India-US interim trade framework and US tariff tools**

India and the United States announced a framework for an interim trade agreement on 6 February 2026. US tariffs on Indian goods fall from 50% to 18%; India cuts tariffs on American industrial and many farm goods and signals intent to buy \$500 billion of US goods over five years. Talks on a full bilateral trade agreement continue.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership

India and Israel elevated their relationship to a Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation and Prosperity during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel on 25-26 February 2026. The visit produced 27 outcomes, among them protocols on labour mobility giving Indian workers a quota of up to 50,000 places in Israel over five years.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Canada reset: trade goal, CEPA talks and uranium

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney visited India from 27 February to 2 March 2026, normalising ties strained since 2023. The two sides signed eight agreements, relaunched Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement talks and set a \$50 billion bilateral trade goal for 2030. Cameco agreed to supply India about 22 million pounds of uranium from 2027 to 2035.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Finland strategic partnership

Finland's President Alexander Stubb made a state visit to India from 4 to 7 March 2026, during which the two countries elevated ties to a Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation and Sustainability. They set up a joint task force on 6G and a joint working group on digitalisation, opened an India-Finland startup corridor, and agreed to double bilateral trade by 2030.

INTL RELATIONS

BRICS institutions and positions: BCIC and opposition to CBAM

India formally joined the UNIDO-run BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies on 2 February 2026, with the National Productivity Council designated its India centre to help manufacturers and MSMEs adopt Industry 4.0. Under India's 2026 BRICS chairship the grouping also opposed the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, in its definitive phase since January 2026, as discriminatory and protectionist.

INTL RELATIONS

India in UN peacekeeping: UNMISS

India is the largest troop contributor to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, with 1,779 personnel deployed as of January 2026. The Security Council set UNMISS up in July 2011, the month South Sudan became independent on 9 July. India is also the second-largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping overall.

INTL RELATIONS

International Energy Agency: membership

Colombia became the International Energy Agency's 33rd member country at the IEA Ministerial in February 2026. India has been an association country since 2017 and is in the final phase of its bid for full membership, which is complicated because IEA membership requires OECD membership. The agency was created in 1974 and is headquartered in Paris.

INTL RELATIONS

Pakistan-Afghanistan border conflict and the Durand Line

Pakistan's air force struck Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost in Afghanistan on 21-22 February 2026, targeting Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State-Khorasan camps; Taliban forces hit back at Pakistani border posts on 26 February. Pakistan blames Kabul for sheltering the TTP. The frontier itself, the Durand Line drawn in 1893, has never been accepted by Afghanistan.

INTL RELATIONS

India's West Asian ports: Chabahar and Duqm

India's two footholds in West Asia came under strain. The US waiver shielding India's Chabahar port project in south-eastern Iran from sanctions lapsed on 26 April 2026, after being revoked in September 2025 and briefly extended; India has since pulled staff out. Duqm in Oman remains available to the Indian Navy for repair and logistics.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW****Law of the sea: UNCLOS, High Seas Treaty and transit passage**

The High Seas or BBNJ Treaty entered into force on 17 January 2026, the third implementing agreement under UNCLOS and the first global framework for conserving marine life beyond national jurisdiction. The Hormuz crisis revived the other half of the law of the sea: whether a coastal state may charge for, or block, transit passage through an international strait.

SUMMITS

ASEAN admits Timor-Leste as 11th member

Timor-Leste became the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' eleventh member on 26 October 2025, signing the declaration of admission at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur. It is the bloc's first enlargement since Cambodia joined in 1999; Timor-Leste had applied in 2011. ASEAN was founded by the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 and is headquartered in Jakarta.

SUMMITS

CMS COP15 on migratory species, Brazil

The fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species met at Campo Grande in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, from 23 to 29 March 2026 under the theme Connecting Nature to sustain life. Parties agreed a new marine flyway framework and stronger protection for seabirds, raptors and shorebirds. India hosted COP13 at Gandhinagar in 2020.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****West Asia war and India's '3F' challenge: fuel, fertiliser, foreign exchange**

Closing the Strait of Hormuz from late February 2026 hit India on three fronts the Finance Minister called fuel, fertiliser and foreign exchange. India imports about 90% of its crude, roughly 40% of it through Hormuz; the Indian basket rose to about \$115 in April 2026, Qatari LNG for urea grew scarce and the rupee slid towards 95.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****Rebasing India's data: new GDP, IIP and CPI series**

MoSPI rebased India's core statistics. GDP and the index of industrial production moved to base year 2022-23 from 2011-12, using double deflation, supply-use tables and sources such as GST and PLFS; CPI shifted to base 2024 from 2012, with a 358-item basket and rural house rent counted for the first time.

ECONOMY

RBI bars banks from offshore rupee non-deliverable derivatives

With the rupee past 95 to the dollar, the Reserve Bank on 1 April 2026 barred authorised dealer banks from offering rupee non-deliverable derivative contracts to resident and non-resident clients. Such contracts are cash-settled in dollars in offshore hubs like Singapore and Dubai, and had become a channel through which speculative pressure reached the onshore market.

ECONOMY

BHAVYA: 100 plug-and-play industrial parks

The Union Cabinet approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana, BHAVYA, on 18 March 2026, with an outlay of Rs 33,660 crore to build 100 plug-and-play industrial parks between 2026-27 and 2031-32. Parks of 100 to 1,000 acres will get up to Rs 1 crore an acre, and the scheme promises 34,000 acres of investment-ready land.

ECONOMY

National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 on 23 February 2026. Announced in the 2025-26 Budget, the Asset Monetisation Plan for 2025-30 aims to raise Rs 10 lakh crore by leasing the revenue rights of public assets to private operators without transferring ownership, and to plough the proceeds into new infrastructure.

ECONOMY

8th Central Pay Commission

The 8th Central Pay Commission, which will recommend revised pay, allowances and pensions for central government employees, was constituted by a notification of 3 November 2025 and is chaired by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. It must report within eighteen months. Pay commissions are executive bodies set up roughly every ten years, not constitutional ones.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****India's climate targets: NDC 3.0 and 300 GW clean power**

The Union Cabinet approved India's 2035 climate targets, NDC 3.0, on 25 March 2026 and communicated them to the UNFCCC on 24 April: a 47% cut in the emissions intensity of GDP from 2005 levels and 60% non-fossil power capacity. India's non-fossil capacity crossed 300 GW on 31 July 2026, against a 500 GW goal for 2030.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Project Cheetah: new batches and numbers**

Nine cheetahs from Botswana, six females and three males, reached Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on 28 February 2026, the third foreign batch after Namibia in September 2022 and South Africa in February 2023. The arrivals took India's cheetah population to 48. Project Cheetah began at Kuno in September 2022; the Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Great Indian Bustard: first Gujarat chick and the climate-rights ruling**

A Great Indian Bustard chick hatched at Naliya in Kutch on 26 March 2026, Gujarat's first in a decade; the Environment Ministry announced it two days later. A fertilised egg was driven about 770 km from Jaisalmer district under the first inter-state jumpstart programme, since only three females survive in Kutch. The bird is IUCN Critically Endangered.

ENVIRONMENT

Nagoya Protocol: India's first national report

India submitted its first national report on implementing the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat on 27 February 2026. Covering November 2017 to December 2025, it records 12,830 access and benefit-sharing approvals and 3,556 internationally recognised certificates of compliance, about 60% of the global total. The National Biodiversity Authority realised Rs 216.31 crore.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****India's three-stage nuclear programme: PFBR criticality and thorium**

The 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, built by BHAVINI, attained first criticality on 6 April 2026. That takes India into stage two of Homi Bhabha's three-stage nuclear programme, designed around scarce uranium and

abundant thorium: stage one uses pressurised heavy water reactors, stage two fast breeders, stage three thorium.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****India's first hydrogen train and hydrogen transport**

India's first hydrogen fuel-cell train, built by the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai, was flagged off on 17 July 2026 over the 89-km Jind-Sonapat section in Haryana. The country's first indigenous hydrogen fuel-cell passenger vessel had already entered service at Namo Ghat, Varanasi, in December 2025. Both draw on the National Green Hydrogen Mission approved in 2023.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****NavIC clock failures and GNSS jamming and spoofing**

Another atomic clock failure aboard an IRNSS satellite left NavIC, ISRO's regional navigation system, with only a few fully functioning spacecraft. The setback coincided with rising global interference with satellite navigation: jamming drowns the signal with noise, while spoofing feeds a receiver a false position or time. Other systems include GPS, GLONASS, Galileo and BeiDou.

SCIENCE & TECH

LIGO-India stalled at Hingoli

LIGO-India, the gravitational-wave observatory the Cabinet approved in April 2023 at about Rs 2,600 crore for Aundha in Hingoli district, Maharashtra, is behind schedule: the roughly Rs 1,600-crore main construction tender floated in April 2025 is still unawarded. The Department of Atomic Energy insists the 2030 completion date will be met.

DEFENCE **MUST-KNOW****INS Aridhaman: India's third SSBN and the nuclear triad**

INS Aridhaman, India's third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, was inducted on 3 April 2026. Displacing about 7,000 tonnes and carrying eight launch tubes for K-15 and K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missiles, it follows INS Arihant (2016) and INS Arighaat (2024) and strengthens the sea leg of India's nuclear triad of land, air and sea delivery.

DEFENCE **MUST-KNOW****India's arms trade: imports (SIPRI) and record exports (BrahMos, ASTRA)**

SIPRI's data keep India among the world's largest arms importers, but exports are climbing. BrahMos, the India-Russia cruise missile named after the Brahmaputra and Moskva, added Vietnam in May 2026

and Indonesia in July 2026, two batteries worth \$200 million, after the Philippines. DRDO's ASTRA Mk 1 air-to-air missile made its first export sale, also to Indonesia.

DEFENCE **MUST-KNOW**

PRAHAAR: India's first national counter-terror policy

The Home Ministry released PRAHAAR, India's first National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy, on 23 February 2026. It rests on seven pillars: prevention, swift and proportionate response, aggregating capacities across government, rule-of-law and human-rights compliance, attenuating the conditions that breed radicalisation, international cooperation, and recovery and resilience. India's principal anti-terror statute remains the UAPA, 1967.

DEFENCE

Iran war: the military dimension at sea and in the air

On 4 March 2026 the US submarine USS Charlotte torpedoed and sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena about 19 nautical miles off Galle, Sri Lanka, killing more than eighty. The ship was sailing home from India's MILAN 2026 exercise at Visakhapatnam. It was the first time since the Second World War that a US submarine sank a warship with torpedoes.

DEFENCE

Military exercises 2026

Exercise MILAN 2026, the Navy's thirteenth multilateral edition, ran at Visakhapatnam from 15 to 25 February 2026 alongside the International Fleet Review and the IONS Conclave of Chiefs, closing aboard INS Vikrant. Other 2026 drills included KHANJAR with Kyrgyzstan at Misamari in Assam, MAITREE with Thailand, and the air force's Vayu Shakti firepower demonstration at Pokhran.

DEFENCE

Defence procurement: DAC, Javelin deal and MQ-9B lease

India's US-facing procurement moved in August 2026. The Army signed a Rs 292-crore Foreign Military Sales letter for Javelin fire-and-forget anti-tank missiles. On 17 August the Defence Ministry signed a Rs 1,943-crore contract leasing two more MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones from General Atomics for thirty months, taking the Navy's leased fleet to four aircraft.

DEFENCE

Operation Sagar Bandhu: aid to Sri Lanka

India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu after Cyclone Ditwah brought floods and landslides to Sri Lanka in late November 2025. INS Vikrant and INS Udaigiri carried relief to Colombo, air force transports flew in tents, food and medicines, and NDRF urban search-and-rescue teams and army engineers with Bailey bridges followed, under India's Neighbourhood First policy.

SOCIETY

Jal Jeevan Mission extended to 2028

The Union Cabinet extended the Jal Jeevan Mission to December 2028 and raised its outlay to Rs 8.69 lakh crore, restructuring it as JJM 2.0 around service delivery rather than tap connections. Every village gets a unique Sujal Gaon ID under a Sujalam Bharat framework, and fund releases now depend on state MoUs and fifteen days' continuous supply.

SOCIETY

Nationwide HPV vaccination campaign

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched India's first nationwide HPV vaccination programme at Ajmer, Rajasthan, on 28 February 2026. A free single dose of the quadrivalent Gardasil-4 vaccine is offered to about 1.15 crore girls aged 14 at government facilities in a three-month mission-mode drive, to prevent cervical cancer. Vaccination is voluntary and needs parental consent.

SOCIETY

Unpaid housework and care work

The Time Use Survey 2024, conducted by MoSPI through that year and released in February 2025, found women spending 289 minutes a day on unpaid domestic services against 88 minutes for men, and 137 minutes on unpaid caregiving against 75. Courts have begun to value such work, notably in motor-accident compensation for homemakers.

SOCIETY

WHO's first guidance on GLP-1 obesity drugs

The World Health Organization issued its first global guideline on treating obesity in adults with GLP-1 medicines such as semaglutide, liraglutide and tirzepatide on 1 December 2025. It conditionally recommends long-term, continuous use alongside intensive behavioural therapy, while flagging cost, thin long-term evidence and unequal access. About a billion people live with obesity.

HISTORY

ASI excavations at eight Tamil Nadu sites

The Archaeological Survey of India cleared excavation at eight Tamil Nadu sites on 13 March 2026: Keeladi in Sivaganga, Pattinamarudhur in Thoothukudi, Karivalamvanthanallur in Tenkasi, Manikollai in Cuddalore, Adichanur in Villupuram, Vellalore in Coimbatore, Telunganur-Mangadu in Salem, and Nagapattinam. Keeladi's earlier finds pointed to an urban settlement dating to about 580 BCE.

HISTORY

Dadabhai Naoroji's 200th birth anniversary

Dadabhai Naoroji, born in Bombay on 4 September 1825, was commemorated on his 200th birth anniversary in September 2025, with events continuing into 2026. He set out the drain theory in *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), thrice presided over the Congress, and in 1892 became the first Indian elected to the British House of Commons.

HISTORY

C. Sankaran Nair and the Jallianwala Bagh aftermath

C. Sankaran Nair resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council in July 1919 in protest at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. His 1922 book *Gandhi and Anarchy* blamed Punjab's Lieutenant-Governor Michael O'Dwyer for the repression; O'Dwyer sued him for libel in London in 1924 and won, and Nair paid the damages rather than apologise. He had presided over the Congress in 1897.

HISTORY

Rani Abbakka's 500th anniversary

Rani Abbakka Chowta, the sixteenth-century Jain queen of Ullal in what is now Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka, was commemorated on her 500th birth anniversary in 2025. She repelled repeated Portuguese attempts to take her coastal kingdom, killing their general Peixoto in one counter-attack, and is remembered as Abhaya Rani, the fearless queen.

HISTORY

Centenary of Pather Dabi

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Pather Dabi*, about a secret society working to free India from British rule, appeared in book form on 31 August 1926 and sold 5,000 copies in a week. The government banned it on 4 January 1927 for sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code; the ban was lifted in 1939.

GEOGRAPHY **MUST-KNOW****Strait of Hormuz and India's maritime chokepoints**

Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz after the US-Israel strikes of 28 February 2026, confirming the closure on 2 March. The strait, linking the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman, carries 20-25% of the world's oil and about 40% of India's crude. The shutdown exposed India's dependence on a few chokepoints: Hormuz, Malacca, Bab el-Mandeb, Suez and Panama.

GEOGRAPHY **MUST-KNOW****West Asia war map: Iran's energy and nuclear sites**

Strikes in the Iran war hit energy and nuclear sites around the Gulf that matter to India. The IAEA confirmed the bombing of entrances to the underground enrichment plant at Natanz. Israel struck South Pars, the world's largest gas field, shared with Qatar; Iranian missiles hit Ras Laffan, Qatar's LNG hub and India's main source; Kharg Island was heavily bombed.

GEOGRAPHY

Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea: Houthi strikes

Bab el-Mandeb, the strait between Yemen and the Horn of Africa that links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, carries much of India's trade with Europe. The Houthis declared a Red Sea blockade on Saudi Arabia and in late July 2026 struck Aramco facilities at Jizan and Yanbu with missiles and drones, shutting the Jizan refinery.

GEOGRAPHY

Diego Garcia and the Chagos dispute

Iran fired at least two Khorramshahr-4 ballistic missiles at the United States-United Kingdom base on Diego Garcia on 20 March 2026; one failed in flight and a US warship's SM-3 interceptor destroyed the other. Britain and Mauritius signed a treaty on 22 May 2025 giving Mauritius sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, but it remains unratified.

GEOGRAPHY

Thailand-Cambodia border clash and Preah Vihear

Thai and Cambodian forces fought along their border in May, July and December 2025, killing more than a hundred people and displacing hundreds of thousands. UNESCO later counted 562 damaged areas at the Preah Vihear temple, which the International Court of Justice held in 1962 to lie in Cambodian territory, confirming its vicinity in 2013.

REPORTS & INDICES

WMO climate reports: State of Global Climate 2025 and Asia 2025

The WMO released its State of the Global Climate 2025 on 23 March 2026, for the first time tracking Earth's energy imbalance as a headline indicator; it hit a record in 2025, with about 90% of the excess heat going into the oceans. Its State of the Climate in Asia 2025 found record ocean heat content and vast marine heatwaves.

REPORTS & INDICES

World Obesity Atlas 2026

The World Obesity Federation released the World Obesity Atlas 2026 on World Obesity Day, 4 March 2026. It found India second only to China for children living with a high body mass index, about 41 million in 2025, of whom some 14 million were obese, ahead of the United States. It projects sharp rises in related illnesses by 2040.

AWARDS **MUST-KNOW****Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei killed**

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed on 28 February 2026 in the opening US-Israel strikes of the war; Tehran confirmed his death on 1 March. The Assembly of Experts named his son Mojtaba Khamenei the third Supreme Leader on 8-9 March 2026. The office rests on velayat-e faqih, guardianship of the jurist.

AWARDS

Ramon Magsaysay Award 2025: Educate Girls

Educate Girls, founded in 2007 by Safeena Husain and working through community volunteers to bring out-of-school girls in rural India back to the classroom, became the first Indian organisation to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award, in 2025. The prize, often called Asia's Nobel, was established in 1957 and named after a Philippine president.

AWARDS

Oscars and BAFTA 2026, including India's first BAFTA for Boong

Paul Thomas Anderson's One Battle After Another won six awards at the 98th Academy Awards on 15 March 2026, including Best Picture, Best Director and the first-ever Oscar for casting, a newly created category. At the BAFTAs, the Manipuri film Boong, directed by Lakshmipriya Devi, won Best Children's and Family Film, a first for India.

AWARDS

Arundhati Roy's memoir wins awards

Arundhati Roy's memoir Mother Mary Comes to Me, about her difficult relationship with her mother, the educationist Mary Roy, won the Mathrubhumi Book of the Year award and, on 26 March 2026, the American National Book Critics Circle Award for autobiography. Roy had won the Booker Prize in 1997 for The God of Small Things.

AWARDS

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025 and Jnanpith laureate Vinod Kumar Shukla

The Sahitya Akademi announced its 2025 awards on 16 March 2026 for 24 writers in 24 languages, among them Navtej Sarna for the English novel Crimson Spring and Mamta Kalia for the Hindi memoir Jeete Jee Allahabad. Vinod Kumar Shukla, the 59th Jnanpith laureate and first from Chhattisgarh, died in Raipur on 23 December 2025, aged 88.

AWARDS

2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry: metal-organic frameworks

The 2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry went to Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson and Omar Yaghi for developing metal-organic frameworks, crystalline materials in which metal ions are linked by organic molecules to leave vast internal cavities. Those pores let the materials harvest water from desert air, capture carbon dioxide and store gases such as hydrogen.

AWARDS

C. Rajagopalachari statue at Rashtrapati Bhavan

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled a bust of C. Rajagopalachari at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 23 February 2026, on the Grand Open Staircase opposite Mahatma Gandhi's statue, replacing a bust of the British architect Edwin Lutyens. Rajaji was independent India's first and only Indian Governor-General, and among the first Bharat Ratna recipients in 1954.

SPORTS **MUST-KNOW****India wins the T20 World Cup 2026**

India beat New Zealand by 96 runs in the T20 World Cup final at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad, on 8 March 2026, posting 255 for five and dismissing New Zealand for 159. It was India's third T20 World Cup title, and India became the first side to defend the trophy and the first host nation to win it.

SPORTS **MUST-KNOW****IOC's SRY gene screening for the female category**

On 26 March 2026 the International Olympic Committee approved a policy requiring a one-time SRY gene test for entry to the female category from the Los Angeles 2028 Games. Athletes who screen SRY-positive, which includes transgender women and most XY-DSD athletes, are ineligible for female events but may compete in the male or open categories.

DAYS & EVENTS

Kakori Train Action centenary

Members of the Hindustan Republican Association led by Ram Prasad Bismil stopped a train at Kakori near Lucknow on 9 August 1925 and seized a government treasury consignment; the centenary fell in 2025. Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan were among those hanged in December 1927. The government now calls the episode the Kakori Train Action rather than a conspiracy.

DAYS & EVENTS

State formation days: Himachal Pradesh and Odisha

Himachal Pradesh, until then a union territory, became a full state on 25 January 1971 under the State of Himachal Pradesh Act 1970, and marks the day as Statehood Day. Odisha was separated from the Bihar and Orissa Province on 1 April 1936 as the first province carved out on a linguistic basis; that day is observed as Utkal Divas.

DAYS & EVENTS

World TB Day and TB Mukht Bharat

World TB Day falls on 24 March, marking Robert Koch's 1882 announcement that he had identified the tuberculosis bacillus. India's TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan, running since December 2024, has screened over 20 crore vulnerable people and found 32.65 lakh patients, nearly 10.9 lakh of them without symptoms, helped by AI-enabled handheld X-ray machines.

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ENTRIES

All 44 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **14** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****16th Finance Commission report (2026-31)**

The Sixteenth Finance Commission's report for 2026-31 was tabled on 1 February 2026. It kept the states' share of central taxes at 41 per cent but reworked the formula dividing it: a new contribution-to-GDP criterion carries 10 per cent, tax effort was dropped, and population weight rose to 17.5 per cent. Article 280 requires a commission every five years.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****Vande Mataram: protocol and new penal protection**

The Home Ministry issued India's first protocol for Vande Mataram in February 2026: all six stanzas, three minutes ten seconds, the audience standing, and sung before Jana Gana Mana when both are played. Parliament later passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026, extending to the national song penal protection the 1971 Act gave only the anthem.

POLITY

Money Bills and the Budget's constitutional articles

The Union Budget 2026-27 put the Constitution's budget articles back in focus. Article 112 requires the annual financial statement to be laid before Parliament

and Article 113 governs demands for grants, while Article 110 defines a Money Bill, which only the Lok Sabha may introduce; under Article 109 the Rajya Sabha must return one within fourteen days.

POLITY

Removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker

On 10 February 2026 opposition MPs, led by Congress chief whip K Suresh and signed by 108 members, gave notice under Article 94(c) of a resolution to remove Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, accusing him of partisan conduct. The House debated and rejected it in March. Article 96 bars the Speaker from presiding while such a resolution is considered.

POLITY

Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority

India, Nagaland and the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation signed a tripartite agreement in New Delhi on 5 February 2026 creating the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority for the six eastern districts of Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator. Forty-six subjects are devolved to it. The pact leaves Article 371A, Nagaland's special constitutional provision, untouched.

POLITY

ECI and State Election Commissions meet

The Election Commission of India hosted a National Round Table Conference of State Election Commissioners at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on 24 February 2026 - the first such meeting since 1999. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar chaired it, with State Election Commissioners and Chief Electoral Officers from all states and Union Territories attending, to align electoral processes and logistics.

POLITY

PM CARES Fund and questions in Parliament

The Prime Minister's Office told the Lok Sabha Secretariat that questions on the PM CARES Fund, the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund and the National Defence Fund are inadmissible, citing Rule 41(2), which bars questions on bodies not primarily responsible to the Government of India. The final call on admissibility rests with the Speaker; PM CARES dates from March 2020.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Split verdict on prior approval under s.17A, Prevention of Corruption Act**

On 14 January 2026 two Supreme Court judges split on the constitutional validity of Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, which requires prior government approval before investigating a public servant's official decisions. Justice B V Nagarathna struck it down under Article 14; Justice K V Viswanathan upheld it subject to Lokpal sanction. A larger bench will decide.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****Gaza: Trump's 20-point plan and the Board of Peace**

President Donald Trump's twenty-point Gaza plan created a Board of Peace to oversee the territory's reconstruction, with membership running three years or a permanent seat for one billion dollars. Its first meeting, in Washington on 19 February 2026, drew twenty-seven members including Pakistan. India declined membership and attended only as an observer, represented by charge d'affaires Namgya Khampa.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****Bangladesh election: BNP returns under Tarique Rahman**

Bangladesh voted on 12 February 2026 in its first general election since the uprising that ended Sheikh Hasina's rule in 2024. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Tarique Rahman, won 209 seats in the

300-member Jatiya Sangsad, with Jamaat-e-Islami the main opposition on 68. Rahman was sworn in as Prime Minister on 17 February.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****India-France Special Global Strategic Partnership**

President Emmanuel Macron visited India from 17 to 19 February 2026, his fourth trip as President. India and France raised their relationship to a Special Global Strategic Partnership and declared 2026 the India-France Year of Innovation, and agreed on a Tata-Airbus final assembly line for H125 helicopters. The two countries have been strategic partners since 1998.

INTL RELATIONS

Pax Silica: US-led tech and critical-minerals supply-chain pact

Pax Silica is a United States-led coalition to secure the 'silicon stack' (critical minerals, semiconductor fabrication, AI models and infrastructure) and reduce dependence on China. Launched in December 2025 without India, it drew India in when the two countries signed the Pax Silica Declaration on 20 February 2026 at the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Brazil: Lula's state visit

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva made a state visit to India from 18 to 22 February 2026, attending the AI Impact Summit and holding bilateral talks on 21 February. The two sides signed agreements on critical minerals and launched an India-Brazil Digital Partnership for the Future, and set out priorities spanning defence, food security, energy and digital technology.

INTL RELATIONS

India-Malaysia: PM's visit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Malaysia on 7 and 8 February 2026 at Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's invitation, his third trip there since 2015. The two countries signed eleven agreements, including one between the CBI and Malaysia's Anti-Corruption Commission, and deepened the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreed in 2024. They also exercise together as Harimau Shakti and Samudra Laksamana.

INTL RELATIONS

Arab League and India-Arab ties

India hosted the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi in late January 2026, a decade after the first in Bahrain. It gathered the 22 members of the Cairo-based League of Arab States, founded in 1945,

and adopted the Delhi Declaration, which backs a sovereign Palestinian state on 1967 borders and cooperation in energy, trade and digital technology.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW**

India AI Impact Summit 2026 and the New Delhi Declaration

New Delhi hosted the India AI Impact Summit from 16 to 20 February 2026, the fourth in the series after Bletchley Park, Seoul and Paris, and the first held in the Global South. It closed with the New Delhi Declaration, signed by 88 countries and organisations including the United States and China, under the theme 'Sarvajana hitaya, sarvajana sukhaya'.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW**

New START expires: end of US-Russia nuclear arms control

New START, the last nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia, expired on 5 February 2026, leaving no treaty limit on the world's two largest arsenals. Signed in Prague in 2010, it had capped each side at 1,550 deployed strategic warheads on 700 delivery vehicles, and followed START-I of 1991 and the Moscow Treaty, or SORT.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW**

Union Budget 2026-27: fiscal numbers and key announcements

The Union Budget for 2026-27, presented on 1 February 2026, targets a fiscal deficit of 4.3 per cent of GDP and capital spending of Rs 12.2 lakh crore, with gross borrowing of Rs 17.2 lakh crore and debt at 55.6 per cent of GDP. It announced Biopharma SHAKTI, India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 and twenty new national waterways.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW**

16th Finance Commission and states' share of taxes

The Sixteenth Finance Commission, chaired by the economist Arvind Panagariya, recommended that states continue to receive 41 per cent of the divisible pool of central taxes for the five years from 2026-27. Its report was tabled in Parliament on 1 February 2026. Article 280 obliges the President to constitute such a commission every five years.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW**

Economic Survey 2025-26

The Economic Survey 2025-26 was tabled in Parliament on 30 January 2026. It projected growth of 6.8 to 7.2 per cent for 2026-27, put India's potential growth at about 7 per cent, recorded CPI inflation at 1.7 per cent,

and warned that the number of revenue-surplus states had fallen from nineteen to eleven. The Chief Economic Adviser prepares it.

ECONOMY

Urban Challenge Fund

The Union Cabinet approved the Urban Challenge Fund on 14 February 2026, committing Rs 1 lakh crore of central assistance. It will meet 25 per cent of a project's cost, provided the city raises at least half from the market, and is expected to draw total urban investment of Rs 4 lakh crore. The Budget 2025-26 had announced it.

ECONOMY

Bharat Taxi: cooperative ride-hailing

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched Bharat Taxi, India's first cooperative ride-hailing platform, in New Delhi on 5 February 2026. Run by Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited with the National Cooperative Development Corporation and support from Amul and NABARD, it charges drivers no commission and makes them owners rather than gig workers.

ECONOMY

Human capital as the anchor of growth

Budget 2026-27 and the fifth National Conference of Chief Secretaries, held in Delhi on 27 and 28 December 2025 under the theme 'Human Capital for Viksit Bharat', framed growth around people: early childhood education, schooling, skilling, higher education and sport. The Budget also flagged low female labour-force participation, measured by the Periodic Labour Force Survey of the National Statistical Office.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW**

Carbon pricing: India's carbon market and EU's CBAM

The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive phase on 1 January 2026, though importers will not buy or surrender CBAM certificates for their 2026 imports until February 2027; iron and steel make up roughly 90 per cent of India's CBAM-exposed exports. India is separately building a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, notified under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

ENVIRONMENT

Measuring forests: ISFR, Van Adhiniyam 2023 and halted alerts

How India measures its forests was questioned. The Forest Survey of India's AI-based Anavaran system, which had sent states fortnightly deforestation alerts since January 2024, stopped being updated after

November 2025 and was paused for review. The India State of Forest Report and the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam 2023, which renamed the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, frame the debate.

ENVIRONMENT

Aravallis: definition and mining

On 20 November 2025 a Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice B R Gavai adopted a uniform definition of an Aravalli hill: any landform in the Aravalli districts rising 100 metres or more above local relief. It refused a blanket mining ban but barred new leases until the environment ministry finalises a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining.

ENVIRONMENT

Meghalaya rat-hole mine tragedy

A blast on 5 February 2026 at an illegally operated rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district killed miners working narrow pits cut into the hillside. The toll reached 25 by 6 February and about 30 by 11 February. Rat-hole mining has been banned since 2014 yet continues across Meghalaya's coal belt and Dima Hasao.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****India AI Impact Summit 2026: MANAV vision and public AI tools**

At the India AI Impact Summit in February 2026 the Prime Minister set out MANAV (moral and ethical systems, accountable governance, national sovereignty, accessible and inclusive, valid and legitimate) as India's framework for human-centric AI, and proposed a global trusted data framework and a 'glass box' approach to safety. Government tools shown included Bharat-VISTAAR, BharatGen, BHASHINI and Adi Vaani.

SCIENCE & TECH

New telescopes in Ladakh: NLST at Merak and NLOT at Hanle

The Union Budget 2026-27 sanctioned two large telescopes in Ladakh. The National Large Solar Telescope, a 2-metre instrument at Merak near Pangong Tso, will observe in visible and near-infrared light and become India's third ground-based solar observatory after Kodaikanal and Udaipur. The 13.7-metre National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope, with a segmented mirror, is planned at Hanle.

SCIENCE & TECH

Sodium-ion batteries and India's lithium dependence

Sodium-ion batteries are being pushed as a way to cut India's dependence on lithium, whose supply chains are

dominated by China and the Lithium Triangle of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. Sodium is cheaper, safer and performs better in cold weather. Related policies include the National Critical Mineral Mission, the production-linked incentive for advanced chemistry cells, and KABIL.

DEFENCE

India commands CTF 154; Bahrain-based naval coalitions

On 11 February 2026 the Indian Navy took command of Combined Task Force 154 at Combined Maritime Forces headquarters in Manama, Bahrain, the first time it has led a CMF task force. Commodore Milind Mokashi took over from Italy's Commodore Andrea Bielli. CTF 154, set up in 2023, handles training and capacity-building for member navies.

SOCIETY

Tobacco control and the 40% GST

From 1 February 2026 cigarettes, pan masala and tobacco moved to the 40 per cent GST slab as the compensation cess was abolished, with additional excise duty layered on top; bidis are taxed at 18 per cent. The WHO benchmark is tax at 75 per cent of retail price. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control dates from 2003.

SOCIETY

Nipah virus and bats as reservoirs

India confirmed two Nipah virus cases in late January 2026, prompting Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Nepal to step up airport screening. Nipah is a bat-borne paramyxovirus with no specific antiviral; Pteropus fruit bats are its natural reservoir and the jump to humans is called spillover. It first appeared in Malaysia in 1998 and in Kerala from 2018.

SOCIETY

International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026

The UN General Assembly adopted a United States-led resolution on 2 May 2024 declaring 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer, with the FAO asked to lead it. In India women's share of the farm workforce keeps rising as men migrate to towns, yet most work unpaid on land they do not own.

SOCIETY

Vibrant Villages Programme-II

Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme in a village in Assam's Cachar district on the India-Bangladesh border. With an outlay of Rs 6,839 crore to 2028-29, it covers

1,954 villages across seventeen states and union territories. Phase I began at Kibithoo, Arunachal Pradesh, in April 2023 with 662 villages.

HISTORY

Thirukkural and its lasting relevance

Thiruvalluvar Day on 16 January 2026 drew fresh attention to the Thirukkural, the Tamil ethical classic the Prime Minister urged people to read. Its 1,330 couplets, arranged in 133 chapters, fall into three books: Aram on virtue, Porul on wealth and statecraft, and Inbam on love. G U Pope translated it into English.

HISTORY

Protecting monuments: AMASR Act and Article 49

Concern over encroachment and construction near the Naneghat caves at Junnar in Pune district, whose first-century-BCE Brahmi inscriptions in Prakrit record the Satavahana queen Naganika, put monument protection back in focus. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 governs such sites, and Article 49, a Directive Principle, obliges the state to protect them.

GEOGRAPHY

Strategic tunnels: Shyok, Zojila and the Brahmaputra tunnel

The Cabinet cleared India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel in February 2026: a 15.79-kilometre twin-tube crossing under the Brahmaputra linking Gohpur and Numaligarh in Assam, costing Rs 18,662 crore. Rajnath Singh had opened the 920-metre Shyok tunnel on the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road in December 2025; the Zojila tunnel achieved breakthrough in June 2026.

GEOGRAPHY

Tsunami preparedness: Tsunami Ready villages

India is the first country in the Indian Ocean region to win UNESCO-IOC 'Tsunami Ready' recognition, with Odisha the first state and dozens of its villages certified. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, based in Hyderabad, runs the programme and is building a Rs 300-crore Regional Service Centre at Vijaynagar on Swaraj Dweep in the Andamans.

GEOGRAPHY

Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance: Tulbul project revived

After India held the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance in April 2025, following the Pahalgam attack, it moved to revive the Tulbul navigation project, a barrage at the outlet of Wular Lake on the Jhelum abandoned in 1987 after Pakistani objections. NHPC was asked for a pre-feasibility study. The 1960 treaty was brokered by the World Bank.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International)**

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 ranked 182 countries on perceived public-sector corruption. Denmark topped the table with a score of 89, while India improved to 91st place with a score of 39, up from 96th and 38 a year earlier. Transparency International is a Berlin-based body founded in 1993.

AWARDS

Narges Mohammadi given more prison time

A Revolutionary Court in Mashhad sentenced Narges Mohammadi, the 2023 Nobel Peace laureate, to more than seven further years in prison on 7 February 2026: six years for gathering and collusion and eighteen months for propaganda, plus a two-year travel ban and two years' internal exile to Khosf. She had just ended a week-long hunger strike.

SPORTS

India wins a record sixth U-19 Cricket World Cup

India beat England by 100 runs at Harare Sports Club on 6 February 2026 to win a record sixth Under-19 Cricket World Cup. Vaibhav Suryavanshi struck 175 from 80 balls, the highest score in any U-19 World Cup final, as India made 411 for nine; captain Ayush Mhatre added 53. England were bowled out for 311.

DAYS & EVENTS

World Wetlands Day and the Ramsar Convention

World Wetlands Day is observed every year on 2 February, the day the Convention on Wetlands was adopted at Ramsar in Iran in 1971. The 2026 theme was 'Wetlands and traditional knowledge: celebrating cultural heritage'. India had 101 Ramsar-listed wetlands as of August 2026, with Tamil Nadu holding the most at twenty.

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ENTRIES

All 46 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **15** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY

President's address and the Budget session

The Budget session of Parliament opened on 28 January 2026 with President Droupadi Murmu's address to both Houses assembled together; Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget on 1 February. Article 87 requires such a special address at the start of the first session of each year and after every general election; it is not a joint sitting under Article 108.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

'Digital arrest' frauds and cyber-fraud remedies

Fraudsters posing as police or CBI officers hold victims on video calls under a fake 'digital arrest' and extort money; no such procedure exists in Indian law. The Supreme Court ordered a CBI probe, and the Home Ministry's SOP lets victims recover frauds below Rs 50,000 without a court order, with banks lifting holds within 90 days.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Separation of powers and the tribunals debate

On 19 November 2025 the Supreme Court struck down parts of the Tribunals Reforms Act 2021 for giving the executive excessive control over tribunal appointments and service conditions. Parliament responded in August 2026 by passing the Tribunals Reforms Bill, which repeals the 2021 Act and sets up a National Tribunals Commission to handle selections, performance review and conduct inquiries.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

SC: menstrual hygiene is part of the right to life

The Supreme Court held that menstrual health and hygiene form part of the right to life under Article 21, and kept the petition open as a continuing mandamus to monitor free sanitary napkins and separate functional toilets for girls in government schools. Article 21A, added by the 86th Amendment in 2002, guarantees free education to children aged six to fourteen.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW**

Delhi riots bail: SC reads 'terrorist act' under UAPA broadly

On 5 January 2026 the Supreme Court refused bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots

larger-conspiracy case, holding that they had conceptualised and directed the conspiracy, while granting bail on strict conditions to five co-accused including Gulfisha Fatima. The court read 'any other means' in section 15 of the UAPA, enacted in 1967, broadly.

LAW & JUDICIARY

UGC equity regulations 2026 stayed by the SC

On 29 January 2026 a Supreme Court bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi stayed the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2026, notified on 13 January, calling them prima facie vague. Petitioners argued that defining caste discrimination to cover only SC, ST and OBC students excluded the general category. The 2012 guidelines continue.

LAW & JUDICIARY

National Sports Governance Act 2025 partly in force

Select provisions of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 came into force on 1 January 2026, covering recognition of national sports bodies, the National Sports Board and a National Sports Tribunal for sporting disputes. A federation executive committee is capped at fifteen members, of whom at least four must be women and two sportspersons of outstanding merit.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW**

US strikes Venezuela and captures Maduro: Monroe Doctrine revived

On 3 January 2026 United States forces struck Venezuela and seized President Nicolas Maduro in a special-forces operation named Absolute Resolve. Commentators cast it as a revival of the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed by President James Monroe in 1823 against European interference in the Americas, and nicknamed it the 'Donroe Doctrine'. Venezuela's economy rests on heavy crude oil.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW**

16th India-EU Summit 2026: FTA concluded, mobility and strategic agenda

At the 16th India-EU Summit on 27 January 2026 the two sides concluded their free trade agreement and agreed 13 deliverables, including a mobility framework with a European Legal Gateway Office in India and a

Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda for 2026-2030 built on five pillars. Antonio Costa and Ursula von der Leyen were Republic Day chief guests; CBAM remains an irritant.

INTL RELATIONS

German Chancellor Merz's India visit

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited India on 12 and 13 January 2026, his first trip to the Indo-Pacific as head of government, holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gandhinagar. Nineteen memoranda were exchanged, spanning defence-industrial cooperation, semiconductors, green ammonia and higher education, in the twenty-fifth year of the strategic partnership the two countries formed in 2000.

INTL RELATIONS

NATO: membership and collective defence

NATO came under strain in January 2026 when United States demands for Greenland, a territory of the member state Denmark, tested alliance solidarity; Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney reaffirmed Article 5 at Davos on 20 January. Article 5 treats an armed attack on one member as an attack on all, and has been invoked only once, after 9/11.

SUMMITS **MUST-KNOW****Water treaties under strain: Ganga (Farakka) renewal and Indus Waters Treaty**

The 1996 India-Bangladesh Ganga Water Treaty, which governs the sharing of Ganga waters at the Farakka Barrage in Murshidabad, West Bengal, runs for thirty years and expires in December 2026; Bihar opposes renewal on the present terms. Separately, India has held the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank, in abeyance since April 2025.

SUMMITS

28th CSPOC in New Delhi

India hosted the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth in New Delhi from 14 to 16 January 2026, chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan. Sixty-one presiding officers from 42 countries attended, and Birla handed the chair to UK Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle.

SUMMITS

IICDEM 2026: election-management conference

The Election Commission of India hosted the India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from 21

to 23 January 2026, drawing heads of election management bodies from 42 countries. It closed with the Delhi Declaration 2026, read out by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, committing them to five pillars beginning with purity of electoral rolls.

SUMMITS

2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting

India hosted the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on 31 January 2026, co-chairing it with the United Arab Emirates, with the Arab League Secretary-General and ministers from the 22 member states taking part. They adopted a Delhi Declaration and set a target of doubling trade to \$500 billion by 2030. The first meeting was held in Bahrain in 2016.

SUMMITS

EU-Mercosur FTA signed

The European Union and Mercosur signed their partnership and trade agreement in Asuncion, Paraguay, on 17 January 2026, closing talks that began in 1999. The deal removes tariffs on more than 90 per cent of trade, with some cuts phased over ten to fifteen years, and still needs European Parliament consent and ratification by the Mercosur states before it applies.

SUMMITS

India's role against marine pollution

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned ICGS Samudra Pratap at Goa on 5 January 2026 — the first pollution-control vessel indigenously designed for India, built by Goa Shipyard Limited and, at 114.5 metres, the largest ship in the Indian Coast Guard. It carries skimmers, booms and side-sweeping arms. India's marine-pollution obligations flow from UNCLOS, adopted in 1982, and MARPOL 1973.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and other EU trade barriers**

The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive phase on 1 January 2026, so importers must now buy certificates covering the carbon embedded in goods such as steel, aluminium and cement. Indian steel and aluminium exports are the most exposed, and the Centre plans to absorb most MSME compliance costs. The EU Deforestation Regulation follows in December 2026.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****India-EU Free Trade Agreement**

India and the European Union concluded negotiations on their free trade agreement in January 2026, after talks that began in 2007, covering roughly two billion

people and about a quarter of world GDP. Tariffs on European cars fall from 110 to 10 per cent within a 2.5 lakh-unit quota, and farm products are excluded. Legal scrubbing and ratification remain.

ECONOMY

Bulgaria joins the eurozone

Bulgaria adopted the euro on 1 January 2026, becoming the twenty-first member of the euro area nineteen years after it joined the European Union in 2007. The lev was converted at the fixed rate of 1.95583 to the euro, and both currencies circulated through January. The European Central Bank, which issues the euro, is headquartered in Frankfurt.

ECONOMY

New duty regime for tobacco and pan masala

From 1 February 2026 pan masala, cigarettes and other tobacco products attract GST at 40 per cent and biris at 18 per cent, with a Health and National Security Cess on pan masala and an additional excise duty on tobacco charged on top. The new regime replaces the GST compensation cess. GST itself came through the 101st Constitutional Amendment of 2016.

ECONOMY

OPEC+ keeps output unchanged

Eight OPEC+ producers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman — met online on 4 January 2026 and reaffirmed their pause on output increases through the first quarter, citing seasonal demand. OPEC was founded at Baghdad in 1960 and is headquartered in Vienna; the wider OPEC+ grouping dates from 2016.

ECONOMY

India becomes the world's largest rice producer

India has overtaken China as the world's largest rice producer, with output of 150.18 million tonnes in 2024-25 against China's 145.28 million tonnes, roughly 28 per cent of world production. Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced the milestone in early January 2026. India has also been the world's largest rice exporter since 2012.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****India's Ramsar sites climb from 96 to 101**

India's Ramsar tally climbed steadily through 2026. Siliserh Lake in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh's first site, Kopra Jalashay, took it to 96 in January; Patna Bird Sanctuary in Etah and Chhari-Dhand in Kutch made 98

in February; Surha Tal in Ballia became the 100th on 5 June; and Glaw Lake, Arunachal Pradesh's first, the 101st in August.

ENVIRONMENT

Gangetic dolphin: second range-wide survey

The Environment Ministry launched the second rangewide estimation of riverine and estuarine dolphins under Project Dolphin, flagged off from Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh in January 2026 and coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. The first survey, in 2021-23, counted 6,327 river dolphins. The Gangetic dolphin has been India's National Aquatic Animal since 2009.

ENVIRONMENT

Kaziranga: elevated corridor and wildlife passage

The Cabinet cleared a Rs 6,957-crore four-laning of NH-715 in Assam that includes a 34.5 km elevated corridor through Kaziranga, letting elephants, rhinos and tigers move freely between the floodplain and the Karbi Anglong hills when the park floods. A complaint over alleged illegal construction in the corridor went to the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Contaminated drinking water and groundwater

Sewage-contaminated piped water in Bhagirathpura, Indore, killed at least ten people by 2 January 2026 and sent more than 270 to hospital; a public toilet built over a drinking-water main is the suspected source. The Madhya Pradesh High Court set up a commission of inquiry under a retired judge. Water is a State List subject under Entry 17.

SCIENCE & TECH **MUST-KNOW****ISRO's launch record: LVM3's heaviest payload, PSLV-C62 failure, GISAT-1A**

On 13 January 2026 the four-stage PSLV-C62, carrying EOS-N1 and fifteen other payloads, failed — the second successive PSLV failure. Separately LVM3 launched AST SpaceMobile's BlueBird Block-2, about 6,100 kg and the heaviest payload ever carried by an Indian rocket, on a contract from NSIL, ISRO's commercial arm. GISAT-1A replaced the GISAT-1 lost in 2021.

SCIENCE & TECH

Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication

Vehicle-to-vehicle communication lets vehicles exchange speed, position and braking data directly through on-board units, without using a mobile network, warning drivers of sudden braking, collision risk or an

approaching ambulance. Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said in January 2026 that India would make it mandatory by the end of 2026, with spectrum allotted in the 5.9 GHz band.

DEFENCE

India-EU Security and Defence Partnership

At the 16th India-EU Summit in New Delhi on 27 January 2026, EU High Representative Kaja Kallas and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar signed the first India-EU Security and Defence Partnership, covering maritime security, defence industry and technology, cyber and hybrid threats, space and counter-terrorism. It creates an annual dialogue and opens talks on a Security of Information Agreement for classified material.

DEFENCE

US strikes on Venezuela and the global drug supply chain

Washington justified its January 2026 action against Venezuela as a strike on a narco-state, though the indictment against Nicolas Maduro concerns cocaine rather than fentanyl. The episode sharpened scrutiny of India, now a leading source of fentanyl precursor chemicals reaching Mexican cartels. India polices narcotics through the NDPS Act 1985 and the Narcotics Control Bureau.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****INSV Kaundinya: stitched ship sails Porbandar to Muscat**

INSV Kaundinya, a stitched-plank sailing ship built by the Indian Navy to the design of a fifth-century vessel painted at the Ajanta Caves, began its maiden voyage from Porbandar in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman on 29 December 2025, reviving India's ancient maritime tradition. Its sails carry the Gandabherunda and Sun motifs; Ajanta is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****Somnath Swabhimhan Parv: 1,000 years since Ghazni's raid**

The Somnath Swabhimhan Parv was held from 8 to 11 January 2026 at Prabhas Patan in Gujarat, marking a thousand years since Mahmud of Ghazni raided and plundered the Somnath temple in 1026. Somnath, on the Saurashtra coast, is counted among the twelve jyotirlingas, and the present temple was rebuilt after Independence at Sardar Patel's initiative.

HISTORY

Zehanpora: Kushan-era Buddhist site in Baramulla

Archaeologists identified a Kushan-era Buddhist complex more than 2,000 years old at Zehanpora in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir — the largest known Buddhist site in Kashmir, spread over about ten acres, with apsidal stupa foundations and monastic cells. A century-old photograph in a French museum archive led researchers to it. Kanishka convened the Fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir.

HISTORY

Gandhi's writings and their global relevance

Gandhi wrote Hind Swaraj in Gujarati in 1909, aboard a ship returning from London to South Africa, attacking modern industrial civilisation and the violent nationalism some Indians had embraced. His autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, was serialised through the 1920s. Champaran in 1917 was his first satyagraha in India; both texts still frame debates on non-violence.

HISTORY

Granth Kutir and India's 11 classical languages

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Granth Kutir at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 23 January 2026, a library of more than 2,300 books and 50 manuscripts, some written on palm leaf and tree bark, in India's eleven classical languages — Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali. It also holds the Constitution in those languages.

GEOGRAPHY **MUST-KNOW****Greenland: US claims and Arctic geopolitics**

United States claims over Greenland resurfaced, putting the world's largest island at the centre of Arctic geopolitics. Greenland is an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, with its capital at Nuuk; it won home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009, and hosts the American Pituffik Space Base, formerly called Thule, in the north-west.

GEOGRAPHY

Shaksgam Valley: Chinese construction

India protested in January 2026 against Chinese infrastructure building in the Shaksgam Valley, the External Affairs Ministry calling the activity illegal and invalid and restating that India has never recognised the 1963 agreement by which Pakistan ceded the Trans-Karakoram Tract to China. Beijing rejected the protest, and Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi called the 1963 agreement illegal.

REPORTS & INDICES

WEF Global Risks Report 2026

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026, released ahead of the Davos meeting in January, named geoeconomic confrontation — trade restrictions, sanctions and economic coercion used as instruments of rivalry — the leading global risk over the next two years, ahead of misinformation and societal polarisation. For India, cyber insecurity topped the list.

REPORTS & INDICES

Global Water Bankruptcy report (UNU-INWEH)

The UN University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health launched its Global Water Bankruptcy report at UN headquarters in New York in January 2026, arguing that sustained over-extraction has pushed river basins and aquifers past recovery. Nearly three-quarters of the world's people live in water-insecure or critically water-insecure countries, and groundwater pumping has sunk land across six million square kilometres.

REPORTS & INDICES

UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026

UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026, released in January, forecast world output growth of 2.7 per cent for 2026, down from 2.8 per cent in 2025. South Asia was projected to grow 5.6 per cent, led by India at 6.6 per cent on resilient consumption and public investment. Global military spending hit a record \$2.7 trillion in 2024.

AWARDS **MUST-KNOW****Padma Awards 2026**

The Padma Awards 2026, announced on the eve of Republic Day, went to 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri recipients. Actor Dharmendra and the former Kerala Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan were among the Padma Vibhushan awardees, both posthumously. Instituted in 1954, the awards rank Padma Vibhushan above Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

AWARDS

Madhav Gadgil dies

The ecologist Madhav Gadgil died in Pune on 7 January 2026, aged 83. He founded the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science and chaired the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, whose 2011 report urged that about three-quarters of the Ghats be declared ecologically sensitive — a figure the Kasturirangan committee cut back in 2013.

SPORTS

Sports Governance Conclave and India's Olympic targets

The Sports Governance Conclave met in Ahmedabad on 9 January 2026, bringing national sports federations onto a common platform under the Khelo Bharat Niti and the new National Sports Governance Act. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya set a target of 12 to 14 golds and 30 to 35 medals at the 2036 Olympics, with a top-ten finish the stated national goal.

DAYS & EVENTS

Army Day and Armed Forces Veterans' Day: the Cariappa link

Army Day on 15 January marks the day in 1949 when K M Cariappa took over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. The 78th Army Day parade was held in 2026 on Mahal Road in Jaipur, the first ever staged outside a cantonment. Armed Forces Veterans' Day, on 14 January, marks Cariappa's retirement in 1953.

DAYS & EVENTS

Republic Day parade 2026 awards

Maharashtra's tableau, 'Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta', was judged the best among States and Union Territories at the Republic Day parade of 26 January 2026, with Jammu and Kashmir second for its handicrafts and folk dances and Kerala third. The Ministry of Culture won among central ministries, and the Navy was the best marching contingent.

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ENTRIES

All 54 stories of the month, grouped by subject. **20** are marked must-know — take those first.

POLITY **MUST-KNOW****Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls**

After Bihar, the Election Commission extended its Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls to twelve

states and union territories from 4 November 2025, then pushed the enumeration deadline to 11 December. On 4 December the Supreme Court asked states to depute extra staff after several Booth Level Officers died during the house-to-house work.

POLITY

Sixth Schedule and autonomous councils

The Sixth Schedule returned to the news in December 2025 through Assam's Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, where Karbi groups began a hunger strike on 9 December over tribal land rights in grazing reserves, and through Ladakh's demand for Sixth Schedule status. The Schedule covers tribal areas only in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

POLITY

Panchayat Devolution Index

The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj released the Panchayat Devolution Index, built on an Indian Institute of Public Administration study of 172 panchayats across 68 districts. Scoring states on framework, functions, finances, functionaries, capacity building and accountability, it found the national average had climbed from 39.92 to 43.89 over a decade, with Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu leading.

POLITY

Sanchar Saathi and SIM binding: telecom cyber-safety orders

On 3 December 2025 the Department of Telecommunications withdrew its order requiring smartphone makers to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi cyber-safety app, after objections that it amounted to surveillance. Separately it directed WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal and others to work only while the registered SIM stays active, using the Telecommunication Cybersecurity Amendment Rules, 2025 notified in October.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Personality rights of celebrities (Delhi HC, R Madhavan)**

The Delhi High Court granted actor R Madhavan an order protecting his name, image, voice and likeness from unauthorised commercial use, including by artificial-intelligence tools. India has no standalone statute on personality rights, so courts draw on Article 21 privacy after Puttaswamy, the Trade Marks Act 1999 and performers' rights under the Copyright Act.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****SHANTI Act 2025: private entry into nuclear power**

Parliament passed the SHANTI Act in December 2025 and the President assented on 20 December, letting private companies build and run nuclear power plants. It repeals the Atomic Energy Act 1962 and the Civil

Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010 and backs a 100 GWe target for 2047, but commences only when the Centre notifies it.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Four labour codes in force**

The four labour codes, which consolidate 29 central labour laws, came into force on 21 November 2025. They create a statutory floor wage, extend social security to gig and platform workers and raise the thresholds at which industrial relations and factory rules bite. Labour is a Concurrent List subject; critics call the package a glorified informalisation of work.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Aravalli hills: SC's 100 m definition and mining**

On 20 November 2025 the Supreme Court accepted a height-based definition of the Aravallis, any landform 100 metres or more above local relief, and barred fresh mining leases until a sustainable-mining management plan is settled. On 29 December it kept that order in abeyance and set up a new expert committee.

LAW & JUDICIARY **MUST-KNOW****Uniform Civil Code and state personal-law reform (Assam polygamy bill)**

The Assam Assembly passed the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill on 26 November 2025, banning polygamy across religions while exempting Scheduled Tribes and Sixth Schedule areas. It is a state-level move within the Uniform Civil Code debate that Article 44 frames as a Directive Principle, and follows Uttarakhand's UCC of 2024.

INTL RELATIONS **MUST-KNOW****PM's Jordan-Ethiopia-Oman tour and the India-Oman CEPA**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi toured Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman from 15 to 18 December 2025. In Muscat he signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, India's second trade deal with a Gulf Cooperation Council state after the UAE, under which Oman gives zero-duty access on 98 per cent of its tariff lines.

INTL RELATIONS

Somaliland recognised by Israel

Israel became the first United Nations member state to recognise Somaliland as an independent, sovereign country on 26 December 2025, in a joint declaration signed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Somaliland's President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdallah. Somalia, Saudi Arabia and the Arab League

condemned it and the Security Council met on 29 December. Somaliland had declared independence in 1991.

SUMMITS

23rd India-Russia Annual Summit

President Vladimir Putin visited New Delhi on 4 and 5 December 2025 for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, the highest institutionalised dialogue between the two countries. They signed sixteen pacts, two on the movement of workers, and restated the goal of lifting bilateral trade from about \$70 billion to \$100 billion.

SUMMITS

Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine

The World Health Organization's Global Traditional Medicine Centre and India's Ministry of Ayush held the second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from 17 to 19 December 2025, themed 'Restoring balance: the science and practice of health and well-being'. A WHO Traditional Medicine Global Library was announced.

SUMMITS

50 years of the Biological Weapons Convention

The Biological Weapons Convention, the first treaty to ban an entire class of weapons of mass destruction, completed fifty years in force in 2025 with 189 states parties. It still has no verification machinery, only an Implementation Support Unit and confidence-building measures states have submitted annually since 1992, leaving it weak against dual-use advances in biotechnology and artificial intelligence.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****Insurance FDI raised to 100%: Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha Bill, 2025**

Parliament passed the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill on 17 December 2025 and the President assented on 20 December, raising foreign direct investment in Indian insurers from 74 to 100 per cent. It amends the Insurance Act 1938, the LIC Act 1956 and the IRDA Act 1999.

ECONOMY **MUST-KNOW****India now the 6th largest economy (IMF World Economic Outlook)**

The International Monetary Fund's April 2026 World Economic Outlook put India's economy at about \$4.15 trillion for the year, sixth in the world behind Japan and

the United Kingdom, down from fourth. The slip reflects a weaker rupee and India's revision of its GDP base year rather than slower growth.

ECONOMY

Masala bonds: ED's FEMA notice over KIIFB

In early December 2025 the Enforcement Directorate issued a show-cause notice of about Rs 466 crore under the Foreign Exchange Management Act to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, former finance minister Thomas Isaac and others, alleging that money the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board raised through masala bonds went into barred land acquisition.

ECONOMY

State finances: cash transfers vs capital spending, and NITI's Fiscal Health Index

States are spending heavily on cash transfers to women, such as Maharashtra's Majhi Ladki Bahin and West Bengal's Lakshmi Bhandar, raising fears that welfare is squeezing capital investment. NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index, launched on 24 January 2025, scored 18 states for 2022-23; Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand led, Punjab lagged.

ECONOMY

RBI Financial Inclusion Index

The Reserve Bank of India's Financial Inclusion Index rose to 67 in March 2025 from 64.2 a year earlier, indicating deeper access to banking, credit, insurance and pensions. The single value runs from 0, complete exclusion, to 100, full inclusion, and blends access weighted 35 per cent, usage 45 and quality 20.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****Delhi-NCR air pollution: causes and legal framework**

Delhi's winter smog returned in December 2025, fed by vehicles, stubble burning, industry and coal plants. A CREA analysis found nearly a third of the city's PM_{2.5} is secondary ammonium sulphate, formed when coal-plant sulphur dioxide meets farm ammonia. From 18 December non-BS-VI private vehicles registered outside Delhi were barred; GRAP and the statutory CAQM frame the emergency response.

ENVIRONMENT **MUST-KNOW****COP30 Belem and the Tropical Forest Forever Facility**

Brazil launched the Tropical Forest Forever Facility at COP30 in Belem on 6 November 2025. The fund pays tropical countries an annual sum for every hectare of forest left standing, and deducts for deforestation,

instead of financing individual projects. It targets the Amazon and Congo basins and stresses the role of Indigenous peoples.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate finance gap: UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2025

UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2025, subtitled 'Running on Empty' and released on 29 October 2025 ahead of COP30 in Belem, estimated that developing countries will need \$310 billion to \$365 billion a year by 2035 to adapt to climate change, about twelve times the current international public adaptation finance flowing from developed countries.

ENVIRONMENT

Warming data: WMO GHG Bulletin and Global Climate Indicators

The World Meteorological Organization's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin reported that globally averaged carbon dioxide rose 3.5 parts per million in a year to a record 423.9 ppm in 2024, 152 per cent of pre-industrial levels. The WMO also confirmed 2024 as the warmest year recorded, about 1.55 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures.

ENVIRONMENT

Arctic thaw and India's Arctic presence

NOAA's Arctic Report Card 2025 found the region at its warmest in 125 years, with March 2025 sea ice the lowest winter maximum in the 47-year satellite record. The melt opens the Northern Sea Route to Russian and Chinese ambition; India, an Arctic Council observer since 2013, runs Himadri station in Svalbard.

SCIENCE & TECH

AI data centres and India's energy governance

Artificial-intelligence data centres run continuously and need high-quality power and large volumes of cooling water; the International Energy Agency expects global data-centre electricity use to reach about 945 terawatt-hours by 2030. Microsoft, Google and China are turning to nuclear reactors. India's data capacity may reach 2.5 gigawatts by 2027, testing a coal-based grid.

SCIENCE & TECH

Indigenous microprocessors: DHRUV64 and Vikram 3201

C-DAC launched DHRUV64 on 15 December 2025, India's first home-grown 1.0 gigahertz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor, developed under the Microprocessor Development Programme and the Digital India RISC-V initiative. Earlier, at Semicon India on 2 September

2025, ISRO and the Semiconductor Laboratory, Chandigarh, had unveiled Vikram 3201, India's first fully indigenous 32-bit space-grade processor.

DEFENCE

RELOS: India-Russia military logistics pact

President Vladimir Putin signed the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Support agreement into Russian federal law in December 2025, days after his 4-5 December visit to New Delhi. It gives each side access to the other's air and naval bases, for India from Vladivostok to Murmansk, mirroring the LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA pacts with Washington.

DEFENCE

Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025: 'no-war, no-peace'

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi released the Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025 on 2 December 2025, in Navy Day week. For the first time the Navy's apex guidance document recognises 'no-war, no-peace' as a distinct category between peace and conflict. It updates a doctrine first published in 2004, revised in 2009 and amended in 2015.

DEFENCE

President's sortie on INS Vaghsheer

President Droupadi Murmu sailed aboard the Kalvari-class submarine INS Vaghsheer from the Karwar naval base in Karnataka, becoming only the second President to make an operational submarine voyage after A P J Abdul Kalam in February 2006. Vaghsheer, the sixth Scorpene boat built under Project 75, was commissioned in January 2025. The President is Supreme Commander under Article 53(2).

SOCIETY **MUST-KNOW****Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill: single higher-education regulator**

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill, 2025 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 15 December 2025 and referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee the next day. It would replace the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education and the National Council for Teacher Education with a single higher-education regulator.

HISTORY **MUST-KNOW****Deepavali on UNESCO's Intangible Heritage list; India hosts ICH Committee**

India hosted the 20th session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Red Fort from 8 to 13 December 2025, the first held in India. Deepavali

was inscribed on the Representative List there, taking India's tally to sixteen elements, a list opened by Kutiyattam and Vedic chanting in 2008.

HISTORY

Punjab declares three 'Holy Cities'

The Punjab government granted 'Holy City' status to Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib and Talwandi Sabo, the seats of three of the five Sikh Takhts, respectively the Akal Takht, Kesgarh Sahib and Damdama Sahib. The status bans the sale of liquor, tobacco and meat inside the cities. Guru Hargobind founded the Akal Takht in 1606.

HISTORY

Hornbill Festival, Nagaland

Nagaland's 26th Hornbill Festival, the Festival of Festivals, opened on 1 December 2025, the day the state was created in 1963. It is named for the Great Hornbill, listed Vulnerable by the IUCN and placed on Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala.

GEOGRAPHY **MUST-KNOW****New seismic map: Zone VI in the revised code**

The Bureau of Indian Standards issued a revised earthquake design code, IS 1893:2025, which used probabilistic seismic hazard assessment to create a new highest-hazard Zone VI along the whole Himalayan arc. The code was then withdrawn by gazette notification on 3 March 2026 and the 2016 version restored, after the housing ministry flagged cost escalation and inadequate consultation.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****World Inequality Report 2026 (World Inequality Lab)**

The World Inequality Lab published the World Inequality Report 2026, the third edition after 2018 and 2022. India's top 10 per cent take 58 per cent of national income while the bottom half receive 15 per cent; the richest tenth hold about 65 per cent of wealth and the top 1 per cent roughly 40.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****World Happiness Report 2025 and 2026**

Finland topped the World Happiness Report for an eighth straight year in 2025 and led again in 2026. Produced by Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre with Gallup, it ranks countries by people's own life evaluations. India stood 118th in 2025, behind Pakistan at 109th, with Afghanistan last at 147th, and improved to 116th in 2026.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2025**

The World Economic Forum's 19th Global Gender Gap Report, covering 148 countries, found 68.8 per cent of the global gender gap closed, the strongest annual gain since the pandemic, yet full parity still about 123 years away. Iceland stayed the most gender-equal economy for a sixteenth year; India slipped two places to 131st.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****UNDP Human Development Report 2025**

The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2025, on people and their choices in the age of artificial intelligence, ranked India 130th with a Human Development Index value of 0.685 for 2023, up from 0.676. It warned that the gap between low and very high HDI countries widened for a fourth year.

REPORTS & INDICES **MUST-KNOW****WIPO Global Innovation Index 2025**

The World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index 2025 placed Switzerland first, ahead of Sweden and the United States, and reported research and development growth slowing to 2.9 per cent. India ranked 38th, first among lower-middle-income economies and first in Central and Southern Asia, strongest on knowledge and technology outputs and weakest on business sophistication and institutions.

REPORTS & INDICES

IQAir World Air Quality Report 2024

IQAir's World Air Quality Report 2024, from the Swiss air-quality technology company, again named Delhi the world's most polluted national capital, for a sixth consecutive year, and Byrnihat on the Assam-Meghalaya border the most polluted city anywhere. Chad, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Congo and India were listed as the five most polluted countries measured that year.

REPORTS & INDICES

Global Peace Index 2025

The Institute for Economics and Peace published the 19th Global Peace Index in 2025, covering 163 countries and 99.7 per cent of the world's population. Global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.36 per cent, with 87 countries worsening and 74 improving. Iceland again led the table; India ranked 115th with a score of 2.229.

REPORTS & INDICES

UN World Water Development Report 2025: glaciers as water towers

UNESCO released the United Nations World Water Development Report 2025, subtitled 'Mountains and

Glaciers: Water Towers', on 21 March, the first World Day for Glaciers. It found snow cover reduced in nearly all mountain regions, glaciers melting faster, permafrost thawing and snowfall growing erratic, with higher elevations in several regions warming faster than lower ones.

REPORTS & INDICES

WHO Global TB Report 2025

The World Health Organization's Global TB Report 2025 showed India cutting tuberculosis incidence by 21 per cent and deaths by 28 per cent between 2015 and 2024, far short of the End TB milestones of 50 and 75 per cent, though ahead of the global 12 per cent fall in incidence.

AWARDS

Ram V Sutar, sculptor of the Statue of Unity, dies

Sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar died on 18 December 2025, aged 100. He designed the Statue of Unity, the 182-metre figure of Sardar Patel unveiled in Gujarat in 2018 and still the world's tallest statue, and the seated Gandhi outside the old Parliament. He received the Padma Bhushan in 2016 and the Maharashtra Bhushan in 2025.

AWARDS

Siddhi Jain: first woman to win the President's Medal at NDA

Cadet Siddhi Jain of Ujhani in Uttar Pradesh won the President's Bronze Medal for overall order of merit at the National Defence Academy's 149th course passing-out parade at Khadakwasla on 30 November 2025, the first woman cadet to take any President's Medal. Women could sit the NDA examination only after an interim Supreme Court order in August 2021.

SPORTS

India wins the Squash World Cup

India beat top seeds Hong Kong China 3-0 in the Squash World Cup final at Chennai on 14 December 2025, winning the title for the first time after a bronze in 2023. Joshna Chinappa, Abhay Singh and seventeen-year-old Anahat Singh all won their matches. India is the first Asian country to take the trophy.

SPORTS

FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025

Germany beat Spain in the final of the FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025, staged in Chennai and Madurai, to claim a record eighth title in the competition. India finished third, beating Argentina in

the bronze-medal match. The tournament is the sport's premier under-21 championship for men and was hosted in India by Hockey India.

DAYS & EVENTS **MUST-KNOW****Human Rights Day and the UDHR**

Human Rights Day falls on 10 December, the date the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris in 1948, laying a foundation stone of the post-war international order. The 2025 theme was 'Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials'. India's National Human Rights Commission works under a 1993 Act.

DAYS & EVENTS

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities falls on 3 December and has been marked every year since 1992, after the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed it by resolution 47/3. The 2025 observance focused on fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress. India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 recognises 21 disabilities.

DAYS & EVENTS

International Anti-Corruption Day and UNCAC

International Anti-Corruption Day has been observed on 9 December since 2005, and the 2025 theme was 'Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity'. Days later, from 15 to 19 December, Doha hosted the eleventh Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, which adopted a Doha Declaration on using artificial intelligence against corruption.

DAYS & EVENTS

Veer Bal Diwas

Veer Bal Diwas is observed on 26 December, declared in January 2022 to honour Guru Gobind Singh's two youngest sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. Captured after the family fled Anandpur Sahib, the boys were held at Sirhind and bricked alive there in December 1705 on Wazir Khan's orders for refusing to convert.

APPOINTMENTS

Raj Kumar Goyal sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner

President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath to Raj Kumar Goyal as Chief Information Commissioner at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 15 December 2025, filling a post vacant since Heeralal Samariya's term ended on 13 September. Eight Information Commissioners were

sworn in alongside him. The Commission, set up under the Right to Information Act, 2005, may have up to ten Information Commissioners.

APPOINTMENTS

CEC Gyanesh Kumar chairs International IDEA

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar took over as the 2026 chair of International IDEA, the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, India succeeding Switzerland in the annual rotation. The intergovernmental body, which

works to support sustainable democracy worldwide, has 35 member states and two observers; India has belonged to it since 1995.

APPOINTMENTS

Barham Salih to head UNHCR

The United Nations General Assembly elected Barham Salih, President of Iraq from 2018 to 2022, as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 18 December 2025. He succeeds Italy's Filippo Grandi from 1 January 2026. UNHCR, created in 1950, guards the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, neither of which India has signed.



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