

Date : 3rd Mar 2026

Weekly Current Affairs

English

## National

### Reliance Unveils Rs. 10 Trillion Plan to Strengthen India's AI Infrastructure

At the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Mukesh Ambani announced a Rs. 10 trillion artificial intelligence investment by Reliance Industries over seven years. The plan includes sovereign compute infrastructure, multi-gigawatt AI data centres in Jamnagar, and edge computing integrated with Jio Platforms. A 120 MW facility is expected by late 2026, powered by renewable energy. Ambani stressed that India must build its own AI capabilities to ensure affordability, strategic independence, and reduced reliance on foreign cloud providers.



### Andhra Pradesh Secures Rs. 8,175 Crore Lithium Battery Gigafactory Project

Waaree Energies will establish India's largest integrated lithium-ion battery Gigafactory in Rambilli, Anakapalli district, Andhra Pradesh, with an investment of Rs. 8,175 crore. The 16 GWh facility will cover cell production, battery pack assembly, and large-scale energy storage systems, generating around 3,000 direct jobs. Approved by the State Investment Promotion Board, the project strengthens domestic battery manufacturing, supports electric vehicle and renewable energy growth, and reduces import dependence. It marks a significant step in boosting India's clean-energy ecosystem and supply chain resilience.

### India and France Set Up Advanced AI Centre at AIIMS Delhi

India and France inaugurated the Indo-French Centre for AI in Health at AIIMS New Delhi during the RUSH 2026 meetings, led by J. P. Nadda and Emmanuel Macron. The centre will promote interdisciplinary research in AI-driven healthcare, brain science, and clinical innovation through collaboration between AIIMS, IIT Delhi, Sorbonne University, and the Paris Brain Institute. It aims to advance medical education, ethical AI use, and digital health systems, strengthening Indo-French cooperation in technology, research, and global healthcare innovation.

### Eight-year-old Ranvir Sachdeva becomes the youngest speaker at the India AI Impact Summit 2026

Eight-year-old Ranvir Sachdeva became the youngest speaker at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, astonishing global CEOs and AI experts. Calling himself a "technologist at heart," he spoke confidently about artificial intelligence, ethics, and India's global role. Having started coding at three, Ranvir has already studied machine learning and addressed international forums. At the summit, he met Sundar Pichai and Sam Altman, drawing widespread attention. Emphasising accessibility, inclusion, and Indian philosophical values, he urged that AI should benefit everyone and solve real-world problems responsibly.

### India updates the base year of its merchandise trade indices to 2022-23

On 20 February 2026, the Government of India revised the base year of its merchandise trade indices from 2012-13 to 2022-23 to reflect structural changes in the economy and evolving global trade trends. Conducted by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), the update improves commodity coverage, weighting patterns, and alignment with global classifications. The new series offers detailed indices by commodity, partner countries, and trade categories, along with refined terms of trade measures. This revision enhances data accuracy, helping policymakers better assess India's trade performance and competitiveness.

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### India's core sector growth eases to 4% in January 2026, led by strong steel and cement output

India's eight core industries grew by 4% in January 2026, slowing from 4.7% in December, according to the Index of Core Industries. Growth moderation was seen across most sectors, with crude oil and natural gas remaining in contraction. However, steel and cement posted strong double-digit gains, supported by sustained infrastructure and construction activity. Electricity, fertilisers, and coal also recorded moderate growth. Despite the slowdown in core sectors, overall industrial output remained robust, expanding 7.8% year-on-year, indicating continued strength in manufacturing and infrastructure-led economic activity.

### Bihar Cabinet clears Sonapur International Airport project

The Bihar Cabinet has approved the construction of a new international airport at Sonapur in Saran district, featuring a 4,200-metre runway capable of handling large aircraft like the Airbus A380. Spread over 4,228 acres, it will be the state's largest airport and is targeted for completion by 2030. With Rs. 1,302 crore allocated for land acquisition, the project aims to boost connectivity, trade and tourism in north Bihar. The cabinet also cleared 35 proposals, including Rs. 70 crore for flood-control embankment repairs in Bhagalpur district.

### PM Modi inaugurates Nam Bharat RRTS, Nation's first, and Meerut Metro

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the final segments of the **Delhi-Meerut RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System) corridor (total length 82 kms)**, linking Sarai Kale Khan to New Ashok Nagar and completing the Meerut section up to Modipuram & **the Meerut Metro (total length 21 kms) on February 22**. Launched from the same platform, the Nam Bharat Rapid Rail and Meerut Metro will operate on shared tracks and stations, a first in India. The end to end commute between Delhi & Meerut will be done within the hour. PM Modi highlighted expansion of metro services from five cities (pre-2014) to over 25 today, making India's network the world's third largest.



### Bihar declared Naxal-Free state

Bihar is now officially Naxal-free, **2nd state after Madhya Pradesh** in 2025, following the surrender of its last armed Maoist, **Suresh Koda, in Munger**. According to the Deputy Inspector General of Police Rakesh Kumar, DIG of the Munger range, no active insurgent squads remain **across the 23 previously affected districts**. Koda will now receive rehabilitation benefits under central government policies to support his transition to civilian life.

### Amit Shah launches Vibrant Villages Programme-II in Assam

Union Home Minister & Minister of Cooperation **Amit Shah** launched the **₹6,839 crore Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II) from village Nathunpur, Cachar district, Assam**. Shifting the perspective of border settlements from 'last villages' to the 'first villages' of India, the initiative aims to curb migration and enhance security by providing urban-grade infrastructure. This phase specifically targets 140 villages in Assam, integrating them into the national development mainstream while strengthening the country's territorial integrity.

### 5 stations under Northeast Frontier Railway awarded Eat Right Station certification

In a significant achievement towards ensuring safe and hygienic food for passengers, five stations under the Northeast Frontier Railway have been awarded the prestigious **'Eat Right Station' certification by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**. These include Dimapur Railway Station, Alipurduar Railway Station, Kokrajhar Railway Station, Golakganj Railway Station and New Mal Junction Railway Station.



### Meri Rasooi Scheme Rolled Out in Punjab

**Statement 1 is Correct:** The 'Meri Rasooi' scheme is a flagship initiative by the Punjab Government designed to provide free ration kits to approximately **40 lakh blue card holder** families, ensuring food security at the doorstep.

**Statement 2 is Correct:** As per recent policy updates for the 2026 cycle, the revamped phase of this distribution initiative is scheduled to commence in **April 2026**.

**Statement 3 is Incorrect:** This is a **State Government** initiative launched by the Government of Punjab, not the Central Government.

### Vice-President Unveils Tamil and Gujarati Editions of the Constitution

Vice-President **Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan** released the updated versions of the Constitution of India in **Tamil** and **Gujarati** on February 21, 2026.



### India Updates Base Year of Trade Indices to 2022–23

The Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S) has officially transitioned the base year for India's **Merchandise Trade Indices (MTI)** from **2012–13 to 2022–23**.

- **Purpose:** This update captures structural changes in India's trade profile, including new emerging commodities and shifting global demand.
- **Coverage:** It tracks the **Unit Value Index (UVI)** and **Quantum Index (QI)** for both exports and imports.
- **Accuracy:** Using 2022–23 ensures the data reflects modern price points and trade volumes, providing a more realistic picture of economic performance.

### Cabinet approves MSP for raw jute for 2026–27 season

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the MSP for Raw Jute (TD-3 grade) at Rs. 5,925 per quintal for the 2026–27 marketing season. The revised MSP, Rs. 275 higher than the previous year, ensures about 61.8% return over production cost, following the policy of fixing MSP at least 1.5 times the cost. The Jute Corporation of India will conduct procurement, with government reimbursement for losses. The decision aims to provide better income security to farmers, encourage jute cultivation, and strengthen the jute supply chain, particularly in eastern states.

### National Arogya Fair 2026 to be held in Shegaon, Maharashtra

The Ministry of Ayush and the All India Ayurvedic Congress will organise the National Arogya Fair 2026 from 25–28 February at Shegaon, Maharashtra, inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu. The event aims to expand access to Ayush-based healthcare by offering free consultations, check-ups, and medicines under systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy. It will include yoga sessions, lectures, and exhibitions. A special programme on medicinal plant cultivation will guide farmers on production and marketing, promoting rural livelihoods and strengthening the Ayush healthcare ecosystem.

### Union Cabinet approves renaming Kerala as "Keralam"

The Union Cabinet has approved a proposal to rename the state of Kerala as "Keralam", following a 2024 resolution by the Kerala Legislative Assembly. Under Article 3 of the Constitution, the President will refer the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill to the State Assembly

to the Constitution's First Schedule. The proposal aims to align the state's official name with its Malayalam usage and cultural identity. If Parliament approves the Bill, "Keralam" will become the official constitutional name

### SC imposes blanket ban on NCERT class 8 book

The Supreme Court has imposed a blanket ban on NCERT class 8 book carrying a chapter on corruption in the judiciary. The apex court ordered a seizure of all physical copies, along with takedown of its digital forms. The court ordered Centre and state authorities to comply with its directions immediately, and warned of serious action if directions are defied in any form. The SC bench led by CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymala Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took up the matter.



### Prime Minister conferred with highest honour of Israeli Parliament

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conferred with the 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to strengthening strategic relations between India and Israel on 25th February. The Indian Prime Minister is the first leader to receive this medal, which is the highest honour of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament. PM Modi received a standing ovation during his speech which was also marked by rapturous applause.

### Chungthang-Lachen Road and Taram Chu Bridge inaugurated in North Sikkim

Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth on Wednesday 25th February inaugurated the Chungthang-Lachen axis and the 400-ft Bailey Suspension Taram Chu Bridge in North Sikkim.

To re-establish vital lines of communication, the BRO cleared 96 landslides, built four major bridges and repaired two others under Project Swastik.



### International

### Amazon Surpasses Walmart in Revenue

In 2026, Amazon overtook Walmart to become the world's highest-revenue company, reporting 717 billion USD for FY2025, slightly ahead of Walmart's 713.2 billion USD. The shift reflects Amazon's strong growth beyond retail, particularly through Amazon Web Services and AI-driven infrastructure. While Walmart remains dominant in physical retail, Amazon leads in digital commerce and cloud services. Despite topping revenue charts, Amazon is not the most valuable firm by market cap, showing that scale and valuation differ significantly in the global corporate landscape.



### India Becomes Observer on Trump's Gaza Peace Board Amid Diplomatic Efforts

India attended the inaugural Gaza Board of Peace meeting convened by Donald Trump as an observer, represented by Namgya C Khampa in Washington DC. The forum focused on Gaza's reconstruction, peacekeeping mechanisms, and international funding. While not joining as a formal member, India signalled diplomatic engagement while maintaining strategic neutrality. Trump also repeated claims about mediating an India-Pakistan ceasefire, which India has denied. With over 40 nations and the European Union participating, the meeting underscored global efforts toward stabilisation and long-term peace in Gaza.

### The IPC has removed the ban, allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate in the Milan-Cortina 2026 Games

The International Paralympic Committee has lifted its ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes for the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics, allowing them to compete under their national flags with full anthem recognition. Russia has been allotted six quota places across para-alpine skiing, para-cross-country skiing, and para-snowboard, while Belarus receives four slots in cross-country skiing. The earlier restrictions followed Russia's doping scandal and the 2022 Ukraine conflict. This decision applies only to the Paralympics, not the Winter Olympics, and reignites debate over politics and fairness in international sport.

### Trump imposes a 10% universal tariff on imports following a Supreme Court ruling

After the US Supreme Court blocked Donald Trump's earlier tariffs under IEEPA on 20 February 2026, he imposed a uniform 10% tariff on all imports using Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. This provision permits temporary tariffs up to 15% for 150 days without Congressional approval. Effective from 25 February 2026, the move raises import costs and may fuel inflation in the US. Major exporters, including India, could face reduced demand, while the decision risks escalating global trade tensions and retaliatory measures.



### UAE introduces gene therapy for autism treatment

The United Arab Emirates has introduced two innovative gene therapy programmes to treat autism and rare neurogenetic brain disorders in children. Led by Emirates Health Services, the initiatives focus on addressing genetic causes rather than only managing symptoms. One project, developed with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, targets mutations linked to autism, epilepsy and BPAN. The second explores gene repair, biomarker research and AI-based genomic analysis using data from the Emirati Genome Programme. Together, these efforts highlight the UAE's commitment to precision medicine and advanced paediatric neurological care.

### Kim Jong Un re-appointed leader of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party

North Korea's ruling **Workers' Party re-elected leader Kim Jong Un as General Secretary** on the fourth day of its party congress meetings on 22 February, which opened on Thursday in Pyongyang. In his opening speech at the congress, Kim Jong Un vowed **to boost the country's economy and people's standard of living**. Since assuming power in 2011 following his father's passing, Kim Jong Un has prioritized the expansion of North Korea's nuclear arsenal. This strategic focus has significantly amplified the security threat Pyongyang poses to Western nations, particularly the USA.

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### **Mexican security forces eliminated leader of Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes**

In a major blow to organized crime, the Mexican military recently neutralized **Nemesio 'El Mencho' Oseguera Cervantes**, head of the **Jalisco New Generation Cartel**. This high-profile elimination of Mexico's most powerful cartel leader demonstrates the government's intensified anti-cartel cooperation with the Trump administration. He was wounded in an operation and died while he was being flown to Mexico city.

### **Rob Jetten Named Youngest Dutch Prime Minister**

Rob Jetten recently became the youngest-ever Prime Minister of the **Netherlands**.

At age 38, the leader of the centrist **Democrats 66 (D66)** party was officially sworn in by King Willem-Alexander on February 23, 2026. Beyond his record-breaking age, Jetten is also the country's first openly gay head of government. He leads a three-party minority coalition focused on pro-European policies and climate action, succeeding Dick Schoof following a significant generational shift in Dutch politics.

### **Peru elects Jose Maria Balcasar as interim President**

Peru's Congress elected Jose Maria Balcasar as interim President after the impeachment of Jose Jeri over corruption allegations. As head of Congress, Balcasar automatically assumed the presidency and became Peru's eighth leader since 2016, reflecting continuing political instability. The 83-year-old former judge pledged to ensure a peaceful and transparent democratic transition and credible elections in the coming months. His interim government will focus on stabilising political institutions and restoring public trust. The development highlights Peru's ongoing governance challenges and frequent leadership changes in recent years.

### **India deliver sharp rebuttal to Pakistan at 61st Session of UN Human Rights Council**

India delivered a sharp rebuttal to Pakistan at the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council, which is being held in Geneva from 23 February to 31 March. During the high-level segment held yesterday, India's

Anupama Singh, exercised the nation's Right to Reply to reject allegations made by Pakistan and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). India accused the neighbor of spreading propaganda, asserting that Jammu and Kashmir's development trajectory stands in stark contrast to Pakistan's economic troubles.



### **Kuwait moves to tighten citizenship law**

Kuwait's cabinet has approved a draft bill amending the country's long standing nationality law. The decision was taken at the cabinet's weekly meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace.

### **Ranks/Reports/Indices**

#### **Global AI Brain Race 2026**

The Global AI Brain Race Report 2026 ranks the United States first with 82/100, followed by China and Singapore, while India stands sixth. The study assessed countries on AI research, infrastructure, talent readiness, governance, academic strength, economic integration, and public perception. The U.S. leads due to strong innovation systems and AI adoption in industry. China excels in research scale and education, while Singapore benefits from high academic quality. India's strength lies in its talent pool, but it faces gaps in infrastructure and regulatory frameworks.

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## Summits/MoUs/Conferences/Agreement

### FCI Inks Major Pact with WFP to Provide 2 Lakh MT Rice Each Year

On 18 February 2026, the Food Corporation of India signed a five-year MoU with the World Food Programme to supply 200,000 metric tonnes of rice annually for humanitarian missions. The agreement strengthens India's contribution to global food security and supports the UN's Zero Hunger objective. With fixed pricing initially set at Rs. 2,800 per quintal, the deal ensures supply stability for vulnerable regions. The partnership enhances India's global standing while reinforcing its commitment to combating hunger and malnutrition worldwide.

### VoicERA AI Platform Launched on BHASHINI

India launched VoicERA, an open-source Voice AI stack, at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 to strengthen multilingual digital services. Unveiled by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on the BHASHINI infrastructure, the platform enables secure, scalable, and interoperable voice-based services. Developed with partners like EkStep and AI4Bharat, VoicERA supports real-time speech recognition and conversational AI. It expands Digital Public Infrastructure by promoting sovereign, inclusive voice technology, allowing citizens to access government services in their preferred languages.

### L&T Vyoma to assess a 250 MW green AI data centre project at Dholera SIR

At the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the Gujarat government signed an MoU with L&T Vyoma to explore building a 250 MW green, AI-ready data centre in Dholera Special Investment Region. The proposed 25,000 crore rupees project aims to strengthen India's AI and cloud infrastructure. L&T Vyoma will conduct a feasibility study covering land, infrastructure, and sustainability, while the state will provide policy and infrastructural support. Expected to be operational by 2028, the project could boost employment, attract AI startups, and position Dholera as a major digital and technology hub.

### Harsharan Kaur Trehan appointed as PSPCL's first female Director

Harsharan Kaur Trehan has been appointed Director (Commercial) of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) for a two-year term beginning 20 February 2026, becoming the first woman technocrat to reach board level in the corporation. She assumed charge at its Patiala headquarters. A 1987 recruit of the former Punjab State Electricity Board, she previously served as the first woman Engineer-in-Chief in 2021. With extensive experience in technical and commercial operations, she is expected to enhance billing systems, revenue management, and regulatory compliance.

### The World Ocean Conclave 2026

**The Fourth World Ocean Conclave 2026** (also referred to as **the World Ocean Science Congress 2026**) began in Goa, India, from 23-26 February. It is jointly organised by bodies such as **Vijnana Bharati**, **the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)**, **the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)** and **Goa University**. It is a **biannual international level conclave**, where maritime countries in and around India will participate to provide a common platform for all stakeholders of the ocean sector to meet, discuss and address common problems and priorities that need urgent attention.



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## India-Brazil sign MoU to boost cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector

India and Brazil on 21 February Saturday exchanged a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in the regulation of pharmaceutical and medical products, marking a significant step in expanding health sector collaboration between the two countries at Hyderabad House, New Delhi.

## Geneva to Host AI Summit in 2027; UAE in 2028

As announced during the **AI Impact Summit 2026** in New Delhi, the hosting roadmap for the global AI summit series is as follows:

- **2027 Host: Switzerland** (Geneva) will host the summit, with the UAE serving as a co-chair.
- **2028 Host: The United Arab Emirates (UAE)** will officially host the summit, solidifying its position as a global hub for advanced technology.

## 8-Year-Old Ranvir Speaks at India AI Impact Summit

**Ranvir Sachdeva**, an eight-year-old coder and technologist, became the youngest keynote speaker at the **India AI Impact Summit 2026** held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

During the event, he captivated global leaders like Google's Sundar Pichai and OpenAI's Sam Altman by discussing the integration of ancient Indian philosophies with modern Artificial Intelligence. Sachdeva, who began coding at age three, emphasized the importance of AI literacy and shared practical use cases for indigenous AI models to drive India's economic growth.

## MoEFCC to host 'Him-CONNECT' at WSDS 2026, New Delhi

The Ministry of Environment will host Him-CONNECT during WSDS 2026 in New Delhi from 25–27 February to promote climate-resilient innovations in the Indian Himalayan Region. The platform will connect researchers with startups, investors, and policymakers to support sustainable technologies and their commercial use. Over 24 innovations developed under the National Mission on Himalayan Studies will be displayed, focusing on water security, renewable

With participation from leading institutes and industry stakeholders, the initiative aims to strengthen climate resilience and encourage sustainable development in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.



## India and Nepal sign MoU to promote bilateral cooperation

India and Nepal have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote bilateral cooperation in the areas of forests, wildlife, environment, biodiversity conservation and climate change. The MoU was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav and Cabinet Minister for Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal, Madhav Prasad Chaulagain.

### Science and tech/Space/Defence

## India Presents Maldives with Its First High-Speed Ferry

India has presented the Maldives with its first high-speed ferry to begin Raajje Transport Link services in Faafu and Dhaalu Atolls. Built under Phase III of the High Impact Community Development Project, the initiative includes 12 ferries funded through Indian grant assistance. The project enhances inter-island connectivity, supports tourism and fisheries, and improves access to essential services. It reflects India's Neighbourhood First approach and deepening maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region, reinforcing bilateral ties and grassroots development in the island nation.

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### **GalaxEye's AI-driven OptoSAR satellite, Mission Drishti, is set to revolutionise Earth data analysis**

Bengaluru-based startup GalaxEye is preparing to launch Mission Drishti, an AI-powered OptoSAR satellite equipped with NVIDIA Jetson Orin for real-time data processing in orbit. The satellite integrates Electro-Optical and Synthetic Aperture Radar sensors through its SyncFused OptoSAR architecture, enabling high-resolution, all-weather Earth observation. Analysing data directly in space, it reduces reliance on ground systems and delivers faster insights for agriculture, disaster management, and environmental monitoring. The mission will also test Orbital Data Centres and support GalaxEye's goal of deploying a 10-satellite constellation by 2030.

### **Rajnath Singh launches the 13th edition of Exercise MILAN-2026**

Exercise MILAN-2026 was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Visakhapatnam, marking the largest edition of the biennial naval drill since its launch in 1995. Hosted by the Indian Navy under the Eastern Naval Command, the event saw participation from 74 nations, reflecting India's growing maritime influence. The exercise focuses on improving interoperability, professional exchange, and coordinated responses to threats such as piracy and disasters. It reinforces India's commitment to a rules-based maritime order and its vision of security and growth in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **India Unveils Prahhaar Counter-Terror Policy**

On **February 23, 2026**, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) unveiled '**PRAHAAR**', India's first-ever comprehensive **National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy**.

### **MeitY launches 'Blockchain India Challenge' to strengthen digital governance**

The Ministry of Electronics and IT launched the Blockchain India Challenge on 23 February 2026 in New Delhi to promote blockchain solutions for digital governance. Implemented by C-DAC, the initiative encourages DPIIT-recognised startups to develop permissioned blockchain systems, ensuring security, transparency, auditability, and tamper-proof records.

healthcare, agriculture, supply chains, and public distribution. Selected projects will receive phased funding to build scalable solutions for nationwide deployment. The programme aims to improve public service delivery and strengthen India's digital governance ecosystem through innovative and secure technologies.



### **India-Japan military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' begins in Uttarakhand**

The 7th edition of the India-Japan joint military exercise Dharma Guardian is being held at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand, from 24 February to 9 March 2026. Conducted annually between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, the exercise includes 120 personnel from each side, with India represented by the Ladakh Scouts and Japan by the 32nd Infantry Regiment. The drill focuses on interoperability, joint planning, and operations in semi-urban settings, including ISR tasks and heliborne missions. It strengthens defence cooperation, operational coordination, and strategic ties between the two countries.

### **Exercise Vayu Shakti 2026**

The Indian Air Force conducted a grand rehearsal of the 'Vayu Shakti-2026' exercise on 24 February at the Pokhran firing range near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, close to the India-Pakistan border marking a key milestone in validating all operational parameters ahead of the main event. Scheduled for February 27, the primary ceremony will take place with both the President and the Defence Minister in attendance.



**Sports**

**Harmanpreet Kaur scripts history by becoming the most-capped player in women's cricket**

On 20 February 2026, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur became the most-capped player in women's international cricket during the second T20I against Australia in Canberra. With 356 matches, she surpassed New Zealand's Suzie Bates (355). Debuting in 2009, Harmanpreet has featured in 6 Tests, 161 ODIs, and 189 T20Is, scoring over 8,000 international runs with 8 centuries. She also guided India to their maiden ICC Women's Cricket World Cup title in 2025. Her longevity, consistency, and leadership have cemented her status as one of the finest cricketers in the women's game.



**Norway sets a new Winter Olympics record with 17 gold medals at the 2026 Games**

At the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics 2026, Norway set a new record by winning 17 gold medals, surpassing its previous best of 16 at Beijing 2022. The milestone came after Johannes Dale-Skjevdal secured gold in the men's 15km biathlon mass start with flawless shooting. Norway's dominance in winter sports continues, especially in biathlon and Nordic events. In all-time Winter Olympics standings, Norway leads with 405 medals, ahead of the United States and Germany, highlighting its enduring excellence despite a small population.

**Indian hockey team loses to Australia by 5-4 in a penalty shootout**

The Indian men's hockey team **faced a 5-4 defeat to hosts Australia** during a penalty shootout after a 2-2 draw at full-time in their **FIH Pro League match at the Tasmania Hockey Centre on 22 February**. Both the sides **were tied at 2-2 after full time** with Amit Rohidas (15th) and Jugraj Singh (43rd) putting India in advantage before a brace from Joel Rintala (47th, 56th) helped Australia to get back in the game. **The FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26 (the 7th edition)** has a total duration of nearly seven months.

**Italy Hosts 2026 Winter Games; Norway Tops Medal Tally**

The **2026 Winter Olympics**, officially known as **Milano Cortina 2026**, were held in Italy from February 6 to February 22, 2026. The Games were hosted across multiple locations, primarily in **Milan** and the mountain resort of **Cortina d'Ampezzo**, with the closing ceremony taking place at the historic **Verona Arena**. Norway topped the medal tally for the fourth consecutive Winter Games, securing a record-breaking **18 gold medals and 41 medals overall**. The United States finished second with 12 golds, followed by the Netherlands and host nation Italy.

**Khelo India Winter Games 2026**

The 6th Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) 2026 concluded its second and final leg in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir, on February 26, 2026. The event followed the first leg held in Ladakh (January 20-26), where ice

and figure skating were the focus. The Indian Army topped the medal tally with 9 Gold medals.



### Miscellaneous

#### Arunachal Pradesh Foundation Day 2026

Arunachal Pradesh Foundation Day 2026 will be observed on 20 February, marking its elevation to India's 24th state in 1987. Earlier known as NEFA, the region became a Union Territory in 1972 before attaining full statehood. Popularly called the "Land of the Rising Sun," it holds strategic importance due to its borders with Bhutan, China, and Myanmar. The day celebrates the state's political journey, cultural diversity, and developmental progress. Official ceremonies, cultural performances, and public events highlight its heritage, unity among tribal communities, and achievements since statehood.



#### Assam Cabinet approves a 3% job reservation for Tea Tribes

Ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, the Assam cabinet approved 3% reservation for tea tribes and Adivasi communities in Class I and II state government jobs under the OBC quota, extending benefits beyond earlier Grade III and IV posts. The decision aims to enhance representation in higher administrative and academic roles. Additionally, the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan scheme has been expanded to include over 1 lakh more women, with 32 lakh beneficiaries already receiving Rs. 10,000 each to support entrepreneurship and rural income generation.

#### World Day of Social Justice 2026

World Day of Social Justice is observed on 20 February, and in 2026 the theme is "Renewed Commitment to Social Development and Social Justice." The observance follows the Doha Political Declaration and stresses translating global pledges into practical action. It highlights poverty reduction, decent work, full employment, and social inclusion as foundations of sustainable development. The International Labour Organization's Decent Work framework remains central to these efforts. Despite progress, challenges such as inequality, informal labour, gender gaps, climate risks, and youth unemployment underline the need for stronger, coordinated policy implementation worldwide.

#### Renowned Bengali writer Shankar dies at the age of 92

Renowned Bengali writer Mani Shankar Mukhopadhyay, known as Shankar, passed away at 92, marking the end of a significant literary era. Author of nearly 100 works, he vividly depicted urban India's moral conflicts, ambition, and socio-economic change. His celebrated novels, including *Chowringhee*, *Simabadhya*, and *Jana Aranya*, inspired acclaimed film adaptations, notably by Satyajit Ray. Rising from personal hardship, Shankar drew on real-life experiences to craft realistic narratives. Honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2021, he leaves behind a lasting legacy in Bengali and Indian literature.

#### International Mother Language Day 2026

International Mother Language Day 2026 will be observed on 21 February. The day is dedicated to linguistic diversity and the role of language in education.

later endorsed by the UN General Assembly, the day highlights the need to protect endangered languages. The 2026 theme, "Youth Voices on Multilingual Education," emphasises the role of young people in preserving linguistic heritage. With many learners lacking education in their native language, the observance supports inclusive learning, cultural identity, and Sustainable Development Goals, especially Quality Education and Reduced Inequalities.



### Nadda unveils India-made Td vaccine at Kasauli centre

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda launched an indigenously produced Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria (Td) vaccine at the Central Research Institute, Kasauli. The vaccine will replace the Tetanus Toxoid under India's Universal Immunisation Programme, with 55 lakh doses to be supplied by April 2026. The transition follows WHO and NTAGI recommendations to enhance protection against both tetanus and diphtheria. Highlighting India's 99% immunization coverage, the government termed the launch a major step toward health security, vaccine self-reliance, and strengthening public health infrastructure under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

### Vasai Cathedral receives UNESCO conservation award

The 475-year-old Our Lady of Grace Cathedral in Vasai earned the Award of Merit at the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation for its community-led restoration. Built during Portuguese rule using traditional mud-based techniques, the cathedral had suffered structural damage over time. A Rs. 4.5 crore conservation project restored its roof, façade, bell tower, and interiors using traditional

local donations and guided by architect Ainsley Lewis, the project highlights sustainable heritage preservation and strong community participation.

### Sameer Kanodia bags the CEO of the Year award once again

Sameer Kanodia, Managing Director and CEO of Lumina Datamatics and Vice Chairman and CEO of TNQTech, received the CEO of the Year Award for the second consecutive year at a ceremony in Mumbai on 16 February 2026. The recognition, part of The Business Leader of the Year programme, honours excellence in leadership, governance and social impact. Under his guidance, Lumina Datamatics has expanded globally, serving leading publishers and retailers. The company also earned the Great Place to Work Award for the third year, highlighting its strong workplace culture.

### Indian short film Boong won an award in BAFTA

The Indian Manipuri language comedy drama feature film 'Boong' was awarded the **Best Children's and Family Film Award** at the BAFTA Awards. 'Boong' is made under the banner of **Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment** and the film is directed by Laxmipriya Devi. 'Boong' is the first Indian film of this year to be nominated at the BAFTA Awards. The emotional drama was competing against Arco, Lilo & Stitch, and Zootropolis 2.



### Nation Observes Central Excise Day 2026

**Central Excise Day** is celebrated annually on **February 24** to commemorate the enactment of the **Central Excise and Salt Act** on this day in **1944**. The day honors the contribution of the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** to the national economy. It aims to encourage the employees of the excise department to carry out their duties with sincerity and prevent corruption in the manufacturing sector.



### 475-Year-Old Vasai Cathedral Receives UNESCO Honour

In February 2026, the cathedral was conferred the **2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation** (Award of Merit).

- **Historical Significance:** Built in **1574**, it is a 475-year-old monument representing Portuguese colonial architecture.
- **Conservation:** The **₹4.5 crore** restoration was a unique **community-funded** project led by architect Ainsley Lewis.
- **Unique Feature:** The structure was originally built using **stone masonry and mud**, notably without cement or modern bricks.

### Dr Jitendra Singh launches AI-powered biotech portal 'SUJVIKA'

On the 40th Foundation Day of DBT, Union Minister Jitendra Singh launched SUJVIKA, an AI-based biotech trade data portal developed with ABLE at CSOI, New Delhi. The platform provides verified statistics on biotechnology

imports, sector trends, and import dependence to support domestic manufacturing and research planning. The event highlighted India's expanding bioeconomy, rising biotech startups, and the goal of a 1 trillion USD bioeconomy by 2047. Key initiatives such as BioE3 Policy, GenomeIndia Project, biofoundries, and gene therapy trials reflect growing policy support and scientific progress in biotechnology.



### NIM-JIM&WS team summits Mt. Aconcagua, Argentina

A joint six-member team from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) and Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering & Winter Sports (JIM&WS) successfully climbed Mount Aconcagua, South America's highest peak, on 22 February 2026. Led by Col Hem Chandra Singh, the expedition began after a ceremonial flag-off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The team acclimatised by scaling Bonete Peak before attempting Aconcagua and faced extreme cold and strong winds during the climb. The achievement highlights India's growing strength in mountaineering and reflects the advanced training and teamwork of Indian climbers.



### India to launch first comprehensive carbon trading programme

India is preparing to launch its first compliance-based Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) to regulate industrial emissions. Covering April 2025–March 2026, the programme assigns emission targets to industries, allowing efficient units to earn carbon credits while higher emitters must buy credits or face penalties. Around 490 industrial units in seven sectors are included initially, with the steel and fertiliser sectors to be added later. Implemented by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, the scheme aims to promote cleaner production, improve energy efficiency, and align India with global climate commitments and carbon regulations.

### Launch of India's First Results-Based Zero Prize

On February 26, 2026, India unveiled its first-ever results-based environmental award, the Zero Prize. Launched in New Delhi with a total corpus of ₹5 crore, the prize will award ₹1 crore each to projects that demonstrate scientifically verified, on-ground reductions in air, water, and land pollution. Unlike traditional awards that recognize ideas, this initiative only rewards tangible and measurable environmental outcomes.

### India-Germany Climate Grant

The India-Germany Climate Grant, valued at €20 million (approx ₹180 crore), was officially announced on February 25, 2026, during a high-level climate dialogue in New Delhi.

This grant is part of Germany's International Climate Initiative (IKI) and specifically targets the enhancement of India's climate resilience.

