

Weekly Current Affairs 24th May to 30th May 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Ayushman Bharat set to make Bengal entry

In the News: West Bengal is set to launch Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana from July 2026, marking the entry of the Centre's flagship health assurance scheme into the state. Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced the move after a virtual meeting with Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda. Existing beneficiaries of the state's Swasthya Sathi scheme are expected to be incorporated into the Ayushman Bharat framework.

Key Pointers:

- **Ayushman Bharat Rollout in Bengal:** West Bengal will start implementing Ayushman Bharat from July 2026. This is important because the state had earlier relied on its own health insurance scheme, Swasthya Sathi. For exams, link this with Centre-State cooperation in health policy.
- **Integration with Swasthya Sathi:** Around six crore people covered under Swasthya Sathi are expected to receive Ayushman Bharat benefits. The exact operational model may involve phased integration while existing state health benefits continue. This is relevant for questions on welfare scheme convergence and public health administration.
- **About PM-JAY:** Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY provides health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation. Treatment is provided through empanelled public and private hospitals. For prelims, remember that the National Health Authority is the apex body for implementing PM-JAY.
- **Hospital Onboarding:** More than 300 private hospitals and clinical establishments joined onboarding workshops linked to Ayushman Bharat's digital health ecosystem. The process includes registration under the Health Facility Registry and Healthcare Professionals Registry. This connects the scheme with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and digital health infrastructure.
- **Centre's Push for Health Schemes:** The Centre has urged West Bengal to fast-track PM-JAY along with HPV vaccination and TB elimination programmes. This shows that the rollout is part of a wider public health coordination effort. For exams, connect this with National Health Mission, preventive healthcare and disease elimination targets.
- **Ayushman Arogya Mandir Link:** Health and wellness centres in Bengal are also being rebranded as Ayushman Arogya Mandir under NHM-linked norms. These centres focus on primary healthcare, immunisation, screenings and maternal health services. For exams, distinguish PM-JAY hospital insurance from Ayushman Arogya Mandir primary care services.

What did SC say about bail under UAPA

In the News: The Supreme Court recently revisited the law on bail under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, while granting bail in Syed Iftikhar Andrabi v. NIA, Jammu. The Court said that "bail is the rule and jail is the exception" applies even under UAPA, because personal liberty flows from Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution. A later Bench also referred the broader conflict on UAPA bail and prolonged incarceration to a larger Bench for authoritative clarity.

Key Pointers:

- **Core Supreme Court View:** The Court held that UAPA's strict bail provision cannot completely override constitutional liberty. It stated that the bail principle is not merely a CrPC slogan, but a constitutional principle linked with Articles 21 and 22.
- **Section 43D(5) of UAPA:** Section 43D(5) restricts bail when the court finds reasonable grounds to believe that accusations are prima facie true. For exams, remember that this makes UAPA bail stricter than ordinary criminal bail, especially in terror-related cases.



- **Article 21 and Speedy Trial:** The Court reaffirmed that prolonged detention without timely trial can violate Article 21. It relied on the K.A. Najeeb principle, under which constitutional courts may grant bail if trial delay makes continued custody oppressive.
- **Facts of the Andrabi Case:** Syed Iftikhar Andrabi had been in custody for more than five years and eleven months. The Court noted that more than 350 prosecution witnesses were still to be examined, making early conclusion of trial highly unlikely.
- **Bail Is Not Automatic:** The Court did not say that every UAPA accused must get bail merely because time has passed. A later order clarified that courts must examine the nature of allegations, role of accused, witness risk, delay and national security concerns.
- **Larger Bench Reference:** Because different Supreme Court Benches have interpreted UAPA bail principles differently, the issue has been placed before the Chief Justice for a larger Bench.
For exams, connect this with judicial discipline, precedent, coordinate Benches and binding value of larger Bench judgments.

Government Unveils BHAVYA Scheme Guidelines to Build 100 World-Class Industrial Parks Across India

In the News: The Union Government released operational guidelines for the BHAVYA Scheme, officially known as Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna. The scheme aims to develop 100 world-class plug-and-play industrial parks across India with an approved outlay of ₹33,660 crore.

Key Points:

- **About the BHAVYA Scheme:** BHAVYA stands for Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna and focuses on creating ready-to-use industrial parks. These parks will provide land, basic infrastructure, utilities and common services so that industries can begin operations faster.
- **Target and Financial Outlay:** The scheme aims to develop 100 industrial parks across states and Union Territories. It has a total financial outlay of ₹33,660 crore and will support industrial parks of different sizes depending on location and land availability. For prelims, remember the target of 100 parks and the focus on plug-and-play industrial development.
- **Challenge-Based Selection:** The first phase will invite applications for 50 industrial parks through a competitive selection process. States with better land availability, power supply, water access, connectivity and reform readiness are likely to receive priority.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity Support:** The scheme will support roads, drainage, underground utilities, warehousing, testing labs, treatment facilities and worker housing. It will also focus on improving external connectivity with transport and logistics networks.

Supreme Court's Revival of Sedition Trials

In the News: The Supreme Court, in Kamran v. State of Madhya Pradesh, clarified that lower courts may proceed with trials, appeals, or other proceedings involving Section 124A of the IPC when the accused explicitly consents. The clarification was issued on 21 May 2026 and creates a limited exception to the 2022 freeze on sedition proceedings. It is important because it connects sedition, Article 21, free speech, criminal procedure, and pending constitutional challenges.

Key Pointers:

- **Limited revival of proceedings:** The Supreme Court did not fully revive sedition prosecutions. It only allowed courts to proceed where the accused has no objection to the continuation of trial, appeal, or related proceedings.
- **Link with 2022 sedition freeze:** In 2022, the Supreme Court had directed that pending trials, appeals, and proceedings under Section 124A IPC be kept in abeyance. The 2026 clarification modifies that position only for consenting accused persons.

- **Importance of accused consent:** The clarification is based on the idea that some accused persons may want their cases to move forward instead of remaining stalled. This is especially relevant where delay affects their right to speedy trial under Article 21.
- **Constitutional validity still pending:** The ruling does not decide whether Section 124A IPC is constitutionally valid or invalid. The larger constitutional challenge to sedition law continues to remain pending before the Supreme Court.
- **Section 124A IPC:** Section 124A dealt with sedition and punished acts bringing hatred, contempt, or disaffection against the government established by law. It has long been debated because of its connection with free speech under Article 19(1)(a).
- **Kedar Nath Singh precedent:** In Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar, 1962, the Supreme Court upheld Section 124A but limited its application to acts involving incitement to violence or public disorder.
- **BNS connection:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has replaced the IPC and does not use the word “sedition.” However, Section 152 of the BNS deals with acts endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India, making it relevant for current legal debates.

India's First National AI and Digital Water Summit

In the News: India's first National AI and Digital Water Summit, officially titled the National AI Summit on Water 2026, is scheduled to be held in Bengaluru on 27 May 2026. It is being organised by Elets Technomedia in strategic collaboration with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board. The summit will focus on using AI, IoT, digital platforms, advanced analytics, and smart infrastructure for urban water management.

Key Pointers:

- **Host city and organiser:** Bengaluru will host the summit, making it an important current affairs topic linked to urban governance and water security. The key institutional partner is BWSSB, the city's water supply and sewerage authority.
- **Main theme:** The summit focuses on “powering intelligent water utilities of the future.” It aims to explore how AI, IoT, digital twins, digital platforms, and advanced analytics can improve water supply and management.
- **Digital water technologies:** Important technologies discussed include IoT sensors, SCADA systems, smart metering, digital twins, data visualisation, and leakage detection. These tools are useful for monitoring pipelines, reducing water loss, and improving service delivery.
- **Governance relevance:** The summit is important for public administration because it links technology with accountable water governance. It highlights policy, regulation, compliance systems, and transparent institutional frameworks for urban utilities.
- **Climate and sustainability angle:** The event will also cover climate-smart water security through groundwater monitoring, wastewater reuse, and lake rejuvenation. This connects the summit with climate resilience, sustainable cities, and SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation.
- **Financing of water infrastructure:** The summit includes discussions on sustainable investment models, PPPs, blended finance, and technology partnerships.

Assam Introduces UCC Bill 2026 in Assembly, Proposing Major Personal Law Reforms

In the News: The Assam government introduced the Uniform Civil Code Bill in the State Assembly on May 25, 2026. Assam is the third state to introduce UCC legislation, after Uttarakhand (first to pass into law) and Gujarat (passed in March 2026). The Bill proposes major reforms in personal laws, including a ban on polygamy, compulsory registration of live-in relationships and uniform marriage-related provisions. It connects Article 44, personal laws, gender justice, federalism and Scheduled Tribe exemptions.

Key Points:

- **Major Provisions:** The Bill seeks to ban polygamy and make the registration of live-in relationships compulsory. It also proposes a common civil framework for matters such as marriage, divorce, succession and related personal law issues.

- **Scheduled Tribe Exemption:** The Bill provides that it will not apply to Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam. This exemption is linked to the customary laws followed by many tribal communities and their protection under constitutional and legal frameworks.
- **Marriage Age Rules:** The Bill fixes the minimum marriage age at 21 years for men and 18 years for women. It also prohibits polygamy under the proposed framework.
- **Constitutional Link:** Uniform Civil Code is mentioned under Article 44 of the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy. DPSPs are not enforceable in courts, but they guide law-making by governments.

Oil India Finds New Gas-Bearing Zone in Rajasthan's Dandewala Field

In the News: Oil India Limited has unlocked a new gas-bearing pay zone in Rajasthan's Dandewala Field in Jaisalmer district. Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the flow of natural gas from the shallower Sanu Formation was nearly 25,000 standard cubic metres per day. The discovery links domestic energy production, hydrocarbon exploration, import dependence and energy security.

Key Points:

- **Location of Discovery:** The new gas-bearing zone has been found in the Dandewala Field of Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan. The region is part of western Rajasthan's hydrocarbon landscape.
- **Gas Flow and Formation:** The discovery recorded nearly 25,000 standard cubic metres per day of gas flow. It was reported from the shallower Sanu Formation, making it significant for exploration in already known fields.
- **Oil India Limited:** Oil India Limited is a state-owned Maharatna public sector company engaged in oil and gas exploration and production. The discovery strengthens its role in India's upstream hydrocarbon sector.
- **Energy Security Importance:** The find can help strengthen domestic natural gas production and reduce dependence on imported fuel. Natural gas is also important as a transition fuel in India's energy mix.
- **Rajasthan's Hydrocarbon Role:** Rajasthan is already important for India's oil and gas sector due to fields in the western desert region. The Dandewala discovery reinforces the energy potential of the state.

Government Launches PM-AJAY Portal for Real-Time Monitoring of SC Welfare Schemes

In the News: Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar launched the PM-AJAY Portal and AJAY Mobile App on May 26, 2026. The digital platform has been launched to strengthen implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana for Scheduled Caste welfare. It connects digital governance, welfare delivery, real-time monitoring and social justice schemes.

Key Points:

- **About PM-AJAY:** PM-AJAY stands for Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana. It is implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for socio-economic development of Scheduled Caste communities.
- **Purpose of the Portal:** The portal aims to shift scheme implementation from paper-based processing to end-to-end digital workflow. It will enable real-time monitoring, transparent governance and milestone-linked fund flow.
- **Three Main Components:** The portal covers Adarsh Gram, Grants-in-Aid and Hostel components under PM-AJAY. These relate to SC-majority village development, livelihood support and hostel infrastructure.
- **Monitoring Indicators:** The portal will monitor development in more than 47,000 SC-majority villages and track beneficiaries across scheme components. The Adarsh Gram component uses 50 socio-economic indicators across 10 developmental domains.
- **AJAY Mobile App:** The mobile app supports field-level monitoring, digital beneficiary registration, offline surveys and geo-tagged, time-stamped photographs. It is designed to improve inspection, reporting and beneficiary tracking.

Supreme Court Upholds 28% GST on Online Gaming

In the News: The Supreme Court upheld the 28% Goods and Services Tax levy on online gaming involving monetary stakes. The ruling validated tax demands on the full face value of deposits or bets, not merely platform fees or gross gaming



revenue. Its significance has changed after Parliament passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which banned online money gaming and was operationalised with rules effective from May 2026.

Key Points:

- **SC Ruling:** The Supreme Court held that the GST framework for online gaming is constitutionally valid. It upheld tax demands and show-cause notices issued to gaming companies for 28% GST on the full value of deposits made through online gaming platforms.
- **Gameskraft Case Reference:** The dispute is linked with the landmark Gameskraft litigation, commonly cited in exam material as Directorate General of GST Intelligence v. Gameskraft Technologies Pvt. Ltd. The case became central to the debate on whether online money gaming should be taxed as betting or gambling.
- **Full Face Value Principle:** The dispute centred on whether GST should apply to the full face value of bets or only to platform commission. The Court accepted the tax department's position that the full value of online gaming bets could be taxed.
- **Skill vs Chance Issue:** The Court observed that once money is staked on an uncertain outcome, the distinction between skill-based and chance-based games becomes less relevant for GST treatment. This strengthens the state's fiscal and regulatory control over online money games.
- **Online Gaming Act Impact:** Parliament passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, banning online money gaming while promoting e-sports, educational games and social gaming. With the rules taking effect from May 2026, the real-money gaming industry has effectively been prohibited even as past GST demands remain enforceable.

VB-G RAM G rules: What changes as the new job scheme replaces MGNREGS from July 1?

In the News: The Union Government has released draft rules for the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, which will replace MGNREGA from July 1, 2026. The new rural employment framework provides 125 days of statutory wage employment and introduces new rules on funding, wage payments, job cards and allocation norms. The transition is one of the biggest changes in India's rural employment guarantee system since MGNREGA.

Key Points:

- **Replacement of MGNREGA:** The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 will come into force nationwide from July 1, 2026. From the same date, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 will stand repealed.
- **125 Days of Work:** The new framework guarantees 125 days of wage employment in a financial year to eligible rural households. This increases the guarantee from the 100 days provided under MGNREGA.
- **Transition of Job Cards:** Existing e-KYC verified MGNREGA job cards will remain valid until Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued. Workers without job cards may continue to register at the Gram Panchayat level.
- **Wage Payment System:** Wages will continue to be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer into bank or post office accounts. Payment is to be made weekly or within fifteen days from the closure of the muster roll.
- **Funding and Allocation Changes:** The draft rules introduce a normative allocation system and revised fund-sharing responsibilities. The Indian Express reported that the rules also include performance-linked allocation parameters and provisions for states bearing expenditure beyond their normative allocation.

Article 142

In the News: The Supreme Court exercised its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to recognise the right to safe travel on National Highways as part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21. The order was passed in the Phalodi Accident suo motu matter after serious highway accidents raised concerns over illegal parking, encroachments, blackspots and emergency response gaps. The ruling gives road safety a constitutional dimension and places positive obligations on state authorities.

Key Points:

- **Article 142 Power:** Article 142 allows the Supreme Court to pass orders necessary for doing complete justice in matters before it. In this case, the Court used the power to issue nationwide road safety directions.
- **Article 21 Link:** The Court held that the right to life is not limited to protection from unlawful killing. It includes a positive duty on the State to ensure a safe environment where human life is preserved.
- **Highway Safety Directions:** The Court directed action on encroachments, highway inspections, citizen grievance systems, blackspots, lighting, emergency response and truck lay-by facilities. It also ordered creation of District Highway Safety Task Forces.
- **National Highways Concern:** The Court noted that National Highways form about 2% of India's road length but account for nearly 30% of road fatalities. This made highway safety a matter of urgent constitutional concern.
- **Administrative Accountability:** Implementing agencies such as NHAI, NHIDCL, State PWDs and other authorities were made responsible for compliance within their jurisdictions. The order also required reports on compliance and safety measures.

Supreme Court Review of Wetland Conservation Rules, 2017

In the News: The Supreme Court has sought the Centre's response on a petition challenging the definition of "wetland" under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017. The petition alleges that the definition under Rule 2(g) is vague and excludes several ecologically important water bodies from regulatory protection. The issue is linked with environmental governance, Ramsar obligations, wetland conservation and constitutional environmental rights.

Key Points:

- **Issue Before SC:** The Court limited its notice to the alleged vagueness in the definition of wetlands under Rule 2(g). The Union of India and the National Wetlands Committee were asked to respond.
- **Petitioners' Argument:** The petitioners argued that the 2017 Rules diluted wetland protection and excluded many ecologically sensitive sites. They claimed that several sites lost regulatory safeguards because of the exclusionary language in the rules.
- **Excluded Categories:** The rules and guidelines exclude certain categories such as river channels, paddy fields and specified human-made water bodies constructed for drinking water, aquaculture, salt production, recreation or irrigation.
- **Constitutional Challenge:** The petition sought a declaration that Rule 2(g) is ultra vires Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution. The challenge raises questions about equality, environmental rights and the right to life.
- **Wetland Governance:** The 2017 framework relies on State Wetlands Authorities, the National Wetlands Committee and integrated management plans. The case may affect how India identifies, notifies and protects wetlands under domestic environmental law.

Sikkim Becomes India's Fifth Fully Literate State Under ULLAS Initiative

In the News: Sikkim was declared a fully literate state under the ULLAS initiative during a programme linked with the Sikkim University convocation in Gangtok. The declaration was made in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu. Sikkim became India's fifth fully literate state after Mizoram, Goa, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh.

Key Points:

- **ULLAS Initiative:** ULLAS stands for Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society. It is linked with adult education, functional literacy and lifelong learning for persons aged 15 years and above.
- **Fifth Fully Literate State:** Sikkim joined Mizoram, Goa, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh in the group of fully literate states. The recognition reflects progress under the ULLAS framework and community-based literacy efforts. Additionally, three UTs namely Ladakh, Chandigarh, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have also been declared fully literate under ULLAS.
- **NEP 2020 Link:** ULLAS is aligned with the National Education Policy 2020. The programme focuses on foundational literacy, numeracy, life skills and continuing education among adult learners.



Assam Assembly Passes Uniform Civil Code Bill 2026, Creating History in Northeast India

In the News: The Assam Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code Bill, 2026, making Assam the first northeastern state to pass such legislation. The Bill proposes a common legal framework for personal matters such as marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships. The development is linked with Article 44, personal law reform and state-level civil code legislation.

Key Points:

- **UCC Bill Passed:** Assam became the first state in the Northeast and the third BJP-ruled state after Uttarakhand and Gujarat to move ahead with UCC legislation. The Bill was passed by the State Assembly on May 27, 2026.
- **Major Provisions:** The Bill bans polygamy and mandates registration of live-in relationships. It also seeks uniformity in civil matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession.
- **Tribal Exemption:** Scheduled Tribes in Assam have been kept outside the ambit of the Bill. This exemption is relevant because tribal communities often follow customary laws protected through constitutional and legal arrangements.
- **Marriage Rules:** The Bill fixes the minimum marriage age at 21 years for men and 18 years for women. It also prohibits polygamy within the framework of the proposed civil code.
- **Constitutional Link:** Uniform Civil Code is mentioned in Article 44 of the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy. The Assam Bill reflects a state-level attempt to create uniform civil rules while retaining exemptions for tribal communities.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Launches ₹236 Crore Mission Queen Pineapple in Tripura

In the News: Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M. Scindia launched the ₹236 crore Tripura Queen Pineapple Mission on May 27, 2026. The mission is a convergence-led initiative for pineapple cultivation and value-chain development in Tripura. It aims to promote Tripura's GI-tagged Queen Pineapple as a premium agricultural brand.

Key Points:

- **Mission Launch:** The Mission Queen Pineapple was launched by Jyotiraditya Scindia along with Tripura Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha. It has been designed as a three-year roadmap from Q2 FY2026 to Q4 FY2028.
- **GI-Tagged Product:** Tripura Queen Pineapple has Geographical Indication status and is known for its aroma, low-fibre texture and distinct quality. The mission aims to convert this local strength into a stronger domestic and export-oriented brand.
- **Value-Chain Focus:** The mission covers production, aggregation, processing, branding, packaging and exports. It seeks to shift farmers from raw crop sales to higher-value participation across the full pineapple economy.
- **Infrastructure Plan:** The programme will create a hub-and-spoke post-harvest ecosystem with one central hub near Agartala airport and eight spoke collection centres. It will include grading facilities, cold storage, reefer logistics, solar cold storage and traceability systems.

Supreme Court Collegium Recommends Five New Judges Including Senior Advocate V Mohana

In the News: The Supreme Court Collegium recommended five names for appointment as judges of the Supreme Court of India. The recommendations include four High Court Chief Justices and Senior Advocate V. Mohana. The decision was taken in Collegium meetings held on May 22 and May 27, 2026.

Key Points:

- **Five Names Recommended:** The Collegium recommended Justice Sheel Nagu, Justice Shree Chandrashekhar, Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva, Justice Arun Palli and Senior Advocate V. Mohana for elevation to the Supreme Court.
- **High Court Chief Justices:** Justice Sheel Nagu is Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Shree Chandrashekhar is Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, and Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva is Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

- **Justice Arun Palli:** Justice Arun Palli is Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. His parent High Court is the Punjab and Haryana High Court.
- **Senior Advocate V. Mohana:** V. Mohana is a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India. Her recommendation is significant because she has been recommended directly from the Bar.
- **Judicial Appointments Process:** Collegium recommendations are sent to the Union Government for appointment under the constitutional process. The development is linked with Supreme Court vacancies, judicial capacity and higher judicial appointments.

What Is SARTHAK-PDS? Key Features and Benefits of the New PDS Scheme

In the News: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved SARTHAK-PDS as an umbrella scheme to strengthen and modernise India's Public Distribution System. The scheme has an outlay of ₹25,530 crore as Central share for the next five years. It integrates existing support for intra-state movement of foodgrains, Fair Price Shop dealer margins and technology-led PDS reforms.

Key Points:

- **Full Form:** SARTHAK-PDS stands for Scheme for Assistance in Ration Transport and Handling-Income with Automation in PDS. It is structured as an umbrella scheme for strengthening PDS implementation under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- **Integrated Schemes:** It combines two ongoing schemes: assistance for intra-state movement of foodgrains and FPS dealer margins under NFSA, and SMART PDS for technology-based reforms in the distribution system.
- **Financial Support:** The scheme provides assured support for intra-state movement, handling of foodgrains and Fair Price Shop dealer margins. The revised norms are meant to support states and Union Territories in running the ration distribution network.
- **PDS Modernisation:** SARTHAK-PDS aims to create a unified, citizen-centric and interoperable PDS architecture. Its purpose is to improve last-mile delivery, reduce leakages and strengthen food security under NFSA.
- **Beneficiary Coverage:** The scheme supports the food security framework covering 81.35 crore persons under NFSA. It builds on earlier digitisation efforts such as end-to-end computerisation of TPDS, IM-PDS, SMART PDS and citizen-facing applications.

India's Fertility Rate Drops Below Replacement

In the News: India's latest Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2024 recorded the country's Total Fertility Rate at 1.9 children per woman, below the replacement level of 2.1. The report was released by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The trend marks a major demographic transition, with regional differences continuing across states and Union Territories.

Key Points:

- **Total Fertility Rate:** Total Fertility Rate refers to the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her reproductive years. India's TFR was recorded at 1.9 in 2024, while the replacement level is generally taken as 2.1.
- **Regional Pattern:** Bihar recorded the highest TFR at 2.9, while Delhi recorded the lowest TFR at 1.2. Only six states remained above the replacement level: Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.
- **Rural-Urban Difference:** Rural India recorded a higher fertility level than urban India. The rural TFR stood at 2.1, while the urban TFR was 1.5, showing a clear rural-urban demographic gap.
- **Source of Data:** The Sample Registration System provides annual estimates of fertility and mortality indicators. It is one of India's key demographic data systems and supports planning in health, population policy and welfare administration.



Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar Becomes 48th Vice Chief of Naval Staff

In the News: Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar assumed charge as the 48th Vice Chief of the Naval Staff on May 29, 2026. He took over after serving in several major operational, command and staff appointments in the Indian Navy. His appointment is significant for naval leadership, maritime security and tri-service operational coordination.

Key Points:

- **New Appointment:** Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, PVSM, AVSM, NM, became the 48th Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. On assuming charge, he paid homage at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.
- **Professional Background:** He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Pune, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1988. He is a specialist in Gunnery and Missile Systems.
- **Command Experience:** He has commanded Indian Naval Ships Nashak, Vibhuti and Kirpan. He was also the Commissioning Commanding Officer of INS Trikand and commanded the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.
- **Recent Assignments:** Before becoming Vice Chief, he served as Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command. He earlier served as Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command, during a challenging security situation in the Western Maritime Theatre.
- **Decorations:** Vice Admiral Kochhar has received the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2022 and the Param Vishisht Seva Medal in 2026. His career includes major operational, training, warship acquisition and policy roles.

Innovative Rock Check Dam on Indus River Aims to Solve Ladakh's Water Crisis

In the News: India's first rock check dam on the Indus River was inaugurated at Upshi in Leh, Ladakh, by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena. The project has been developed under the Sindhu Jal Samridhhi Abhiyan to improve long-term water and agricultural security in Ladakh. Built at a high-altitude site, it uses locally available rocks without cement or concrete.

Key Points:

- **About the Rock Check Dam:** The dam has been built over the Indus River around 44 km from Leh at an altitude of about 11,400 feet. It is described as India's first such rock check dam and is intended to address Ladakh's water scarcity.
- **Sindhu Jal Samridhhi Abhiyan:** The project has been named Sindhu Jal Samridhhi Abhiyan by the Lieutenant Governor. The initiative aims to create rock check dams at suitable narrow stretches of the river where water can be tapped more effectively.
- **Eco-Friendly Construction:** The structure uses large rocks sourced from the riverbed and surrounding areas. Since cement and concrete are not used, the project has been presented as a low-cost and eco-friendly water conservation model.
- **Agricultural Utility:** In many parts of Ladakh, the Indus becomes too shallow for standard pumps to lift water to uphill fields. The check dam is expected to create pondage and store water for use during the peak sowing season.

Indian Railways Launches New 18-Star Logo After Creation of South Coast Railway Zone

In the News: Indian Railways has unveiled a revised 18-star logo after the operationalisation of the South Coast Railway Zone. The new South Coast Railway became India's 18th zonal railway from June 1, 2026. The revised logo was approved by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Railway Board for official use across Indian Railways.

Key Points:

- **Reason for New Logo:** The revised Indian Railways logo now carries 18 red stars. The change reflects the creation of South Coast Railway as the 18th zonal railway in India.
- **South Coast Railway Zone:** South Coast Railway has its headquarters at Visakhapatnam. The new zone was formed out of the existing East Coast Railway and South Central Railway zones.
- **Legal Basis:** The Ministry of Railways issued the gazette notification under Section 3(4) of the Railways Act, 1989. This provision empowered the Central Government to constitute the new zonal railway.

- **Divisional Structure:** The South Coast Railway Zone includes Guntakal, Guntur, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam divisions. These divisions cover parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- **Waltair Division Changes:** The existing Waltair Division of East Coast Railway has been bifurcated. One part remains with East Coast Railway as Rayagada Division, while the other becomes Visakhapatnam Division under South Coast Railway.

India Launches Logistics Port Performance Index and Four Digital Maritime Initiatives

In the News: India launched the Logistics Port Performance Index for FY 2024-25 along with four major digital maritime initiatives. The initiatives were launched by Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal during the 37th Foundation Day celebrations of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority in Mumbai. The reforms aim to improve port efficiency, transparency and ease of doing business in the maritime sector.

Key Points:

- **Logistics Port Performance Index:** The LPPI has been developed under the Sagar Aankalan framework. It is a national benchmarking mechanism designed to assess and improve operational performance across Indian ports.
- **Policy Alignment:** The index aligns with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. It seeks to strengthen India's position in global logistics and maritime trade.
- **Performance Parameters:** The index evaluates ports across dry bulk, liquid bulk and container cargo segments. Indicators include cargo handled, vessel turnaround time, berth idle time, pre-berthing waiting time, container dwell time and ship berth day output.
- **Digital Maritime Initiatives:** The four initiatives include a 24x7 grievance redressal module under e-Navik, a ship registration module on e-Samudra, a medical practitioner module and a unified ship recycling credit note module. These were developed by the Directorate General of Shipping.
- **Seafarer Welfare and Governance:** The grievance platform allows complaints through the e-Navik portal, toll-free helplines, WhatsApp and dedicated email services. The reforms are linked with better service delivery, accountability and digital governance in the shipping ecosystem.

Government Approves Two New SEZs in Puducherry, Investment to Cross ₹1,975 Crore

In the News: The Government of India notified two new Special Economic Zones in Puducherry after approval by the Board of Approval for SEZs under the Department of Commerce. The projects include an IT/ITES SEZ by Oulgaret Municipality and a multi-sector SEZ by Pondicherry Industrial Promotion Development and Investment Corporation. The combined proposed investment is around ₹1,975 crore with expected employment generation of about 8,500 jobs.

Key Points:

- **Oulgaret Municipality SEZ:** The IT/ITES SEZ will be developed by Oulgaret Municipality at Thattanchavady village in Oulgaret Taluk. It is significant as India's first SEZ to be developed by an Urban Local Body.
- **PIPDIC Multi-Sector SEZ:** The second SEZ will be developed by Pondicherry Industrial Promotion Development and Investment Corporation at Karasur village in Villianur Taluk. It is planned as a multi-sector zone for diversified manufacturing and services.
- **Investment and Jobs:** The Oulgaret IT/ITES SEZ involves a proposed investment of ₹725 crore and is expected to generate 3,500 jobs. The PIPDIC multi-sector SEZ involves ₹1,250 crore investment and is expected to create 5,000 jobs.
- **SEZ Framework:** A Special Economic Zone is a geographically delineated duty-free enclave treated as foreign territory for trade, customs duties and tariffs while remaining within India's sovereign territory. India's SEZ framework is governed by the SEZ Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006.
- **Institutional Approval:** The Board of Approval under the Department of Commerce is the highest decision-making authority for SEZ approvals. SEZ proposals are evaluated on factors such as additional economic activity, export promotion, employment creation, infrastructure development and national sovereignty.

INTERNATIONAL

What Russia's growing dependence on China means for India's security

In the News: Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China again highlighted Moscow's deepening dependence on Beijing in trade, energy, technology and diplomacy. Russia-China ties have grown stronger after Western sanctions linked to the Ukraine war, making China a major economic and strategic lifeline for Russia. For India, this is important because Russia remains a key defence and energy partner, while China remains India's main security challenge along the northern border.

Key Pointers:

- **Russia Becoming China's Junior Partner:** Russia's growing dependence on China may reduce Moscow's strategic autonomy. For India, this matters because Russia may find it harder to remain neutral during India-China tensions. This can affect India's traditional balancing strategy in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Defence Supply Chain Concerns:** India still uses a large inventory of Russian-origin defence platforms, including aircraft, tanks, missiles and submarines. SIPRI data shows Russia remains India's largest arms supplier, though its share has fallen sharply in recent years. For exams, link this with defence diversification, indigenisation and supply-chain resilience.
- **Impact on India-China Border Security:** If Russia becomes more dependent on Beijing, India may get less diplomatic support from Moscow during crises along the LAC. This is important because Russia earlier had space to engage both India and China separately. A Russia tilted towards China could narrow India's options in continental security.
- **Energy and Economic Dependence:** China has become a major buyer of Russian oil and gas after Western sanctions on Moscow. Reuters reported that Russia-China energy ties have expanded significantly through oil, gas and LNG trade. For India, this matters because energy geopolitics affects crude prices, sanctions risks and India's Russian oil imports.
- **Technology and Military Cooperation:** Russia is increasingly looking to China for high-tech goods, electronics and AI-related hardware due to Western restrictions. This may gradually increase China's leverage over Russian defence and technology sectors. For exams, connect this with strategic technologies, dual-use exports and military modernisation.
- **Pressure on India's Multi-Alignment:** India has traditionally balanced close ties with Russia, strategic cooperation with the US, and competition with China. A tighter Russia-China axis complicates this approach by reducing India's room for manoeuvre. This makes strategic autonomy, Quad cooperation and defence partnerships with France, Israel and the US more important.

Kumbhalgarh Fort Recognized as World's Second Longest Continuous Wall By UNESCO

In the News: Kumbhalgarh Fort in Rajasthan has come into focus after its wall was highlighted as the world's second-longest continuous wall, after the Great Wall of China. The fort is located in Rajsamand district and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Hill Forts of Rajasthan," inscribed in 2013. The development is important because it connects Indian heritage, UNESCO sites, Rajput architecture, and Rajasthan's cultural geography.

Key Pointers:

- **Location:** Kumbhalgarh Fort is located in the Rajsamand district of Rajasthan, in the Aravalli Hills. Its strategic hilltop position made it an important defensive structure of the Mewar region.
- **Second-longest wall:** The fort wall stretches for nearly 36 km and is widely known as the "Great Wall of India." It is ranked after the Great Wall of China among the longest continuous walls in the world.
- **UNESCO connection:** Kumbhalgarh Fort was included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site list in 2013 as part of the "Hill Forts of Rajasthan." This serial site includes six forts representing Rajput military architecture.
- **Hill Forts of Rajasthan:** The UNESCO-listed group includes Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambore, Gagron, Amber, and Jaisalmer forts. These forts reflect the political, military, and cultural power of Rajput kingdoms.

- **Historical importance:** Kumbhalgarh Fort was built in the 15th century by Rana Kumbha of Mewar. It also holds special importance as the birthplace of Maharana Pratap, one of the most prominent rulers of Mewar.
- **Architectural features:** The fort has strong defensive walls, fortified gates, temples, palaces, and structures adapted to rugged terrain. Its design shows the importance of geography in Rajput military planning.

Quad Unveils 5 Major Indo-Pacific Initiatives at Delhi Meet: What It Means

In the News: The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in New Delhi on May 26, 2026, with India, the United States, Japan and Australia participating. The meeting announced major Indo-Pacific initiatives covering maritime surveillance, critical minerals, energy security, port infrastructure and emerging technologies. The developments are linked with India's Indo-Pacific strategy, maritime security, supply-chain resilience and multilateral diplomacy.

Key Points:

- **Quad Delhi Meet 2026:** The meeting was the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting and was hosted by India in New Delhi. It focused on strengthening a free, open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific. The Quad members are India, the United States, Japan and Australia.
- **Maritime Surveillance Initiative:** The Quad launched the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration to improve maritime domain awareness. It will initially focus on the Indian Ocean Region through information sharing, expert exchanges and tabletop exercises. The initiative is linked with maritime security and illegal activities at sea.
- **Critical Minerals Framework:** The Quad announced a Critical Minerals Initiative Framework to coordinate investments in mining, processing and recycling. Critical minerals are essential for clean energy, electronics, defence and advanced technologies. The initiative also reflects concern over supply-chain concentration and China's dominance in rare earths.
- **Energy Security Initiative:** The Quad launched an Indo-Pacific Energy Security initiative to strengthen regional energy resilience. It will focus on technology, management, policy coordination, market analysis and emergency response exercises. The initiative is relevant amid risks to global energy routes and supply chains.
- **Emerging Technology Cooperation:** The Quad discussed Open RAN cooperation, next-generation communication standards, digital identity standards and AI-based agricultural innovation. These initiatives show that Quad cooperation is not limited to defence and security. They also connect with digital infrastructure, 5G, 6G and technology governance.

India Overtakes UK to Become Sri Lanka's Second-Largest Export Destination in 2026

In the News: India has overtaken the United Kingdom to become Sri Lanka's second-largest export destination in 2026, according to Sri Lanka Export Development Board data reported in May 2026. The United States remained Sri Lanka's largest export market, while India moved ahead of the UK during the January-April 2026 period. The development reflects growing India-Sri Lanka economic ties, regional trade integration and Sri Lanka's export diversification.

Key Points:

- **India's New Position:** India became Sri Lanka's second-largest export market during January-April 2026. The United States remained Sri Lanka's top export destination. The shift is significant because the United Kingdom had traditionally been one of Sri Lanka's major Western export markets.
- **Export Value to India:** Sri Lanka's exports to India rose by 8.9% to USD 364.15 million during January-April 2026. India had also emerged as Sri Lanka's fastest-growing major export destination in the first quarter of 2026. This shows India's growing role in Sri Lanka's regional trade pattern.
- **Q1 Growth Trend:** During January-March 2026, Sri Lanka's shipments to India rose 12.02% year-on-year to USD 287.49 million. This helped India overtake the UK during the first quarter as well. The trend highlights India's increasing importance in Sri Lanka's export recovery.
- **Sectors Supporting Export Growth:** Growth was supported by sectors such as coconut-based products, electronics, processed food, ICT and business process management services. Coconut-based products showed strong performance during the period. Apparel and tea exports faced pressure in some traditional markets.

India Ranks Second in APAC Data Centre Capacity

In the News: India has emerged as the second-largest data centre market in the Asia-Pacific region, with 1.6 GW of operational capacity. The ranking comes from Cushman & Wakefield's Global Data Center Market Comparison 2026 report. India is also among the top three global markets by development pipeline, with 3.1 GW of capacity under construction and planned.

Key Points:

- **India's APAC Ranking:** India now ranks second in Asia-Pacific data centre capacity, showing its growing role in digital infrastructure. The growth is being driven by cloud services, artificial intelligence workloads, enterprise digitisation and rising data consumption.
- **Operational and Planned Capacity:** India has 1.6 GW of operational data centre capacity and 3.1 GW in the development pipeline. The large pipeline shows that investors expect sustained demand from hyperscalers, cloud providers and AI-based services.
- **Major Indian Data Centre Markets:** Mumbai remains India's main data centre hub and is expected to cross 1 GW operational capacity by the end of 2026. Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Pune and Bengaluru are also becoming important markets in India's data centre ecosystem.
- **Role of AI and Cloud Demand:** AI workloads and hyperscale cloud deployments are shaping capacity expansion across Indian markets. Data centres are becoming critical infrastructure for digital payments, e-commerce, telecom, fintech, cloud storage and public digital platforms.

Blue Origin Wins NASA Lunar Mission Contract

In the News: NASA awarded Blue Origin a contract on May 26, 2026, for lunar payload delivery linked with NASA's Moon Base initiative and Artemis lunar surface plans. Blue Origin's role is to provide the Blue Moon Mark 1 Endurance lander for delivering payloads, including rover-related cargo, to the Moon's South Pole region. The rovers themselves are being developed by Astrolab and Lunar Outpost under separate NASA contracts.

Key Points:

- **Blue Origin Contract:** NASA awarded Blue Origin \$188 million, with an option period worth \$280.4 million, for two task orders related to lunar payload delivery. The company's role is to use its Blue Moon Mark 1 Endurance lander to transport payloads to the lunar surface, not to build the rovers.
- **Moon Base Mission Link:** NASA announced the first three Moon Base missions to begin building sustained lunar operations near the Moon's South Pole. Moon Base I is targeted for launch no earlier than fall 2026 and will use Blue Origin's Blue Moon Mark 1 Endurance lander to deliver NASA science and technology payloads.
- **Lunar Rover Component:** NASA separately awarded Astrolab and Lunar Outpost contracts to build and deliver the first phase of Lunar Terrain Vehicles. These vehicles are expected to support astronaut transport, autonomous traverses, terrain preparation, technology demonstrations and scientific investigations.
- **CLPS and Artemis Relevance:** The Blue Origin delivery task orders are linked with NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services framework, but the larger context is NASA's Moon Base initiative under the Artemis campaign. These missions are intended to test surface mobility, payload delivery, landing safety, navigation and long-duration lunar operations before future crewed Artemis landings.

UN Blacklist Adds Israel and Russia for Sexual Violence

In the News: The United Nations has added Israeli and Russian armed and security forces to its annual blacklist on conflict-related sexual violence. The listing appears in the latest UN Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict zones. The development is important for international relations, human rights law, armed conflict reporting and the role of UN monitoring mechanisms.

Key Points:

- **UN Blacklist:** The UN blacklist is part of the Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence. It names state and non-state parties suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in armed conflicts.
- **Israel's Inclusion:** Israeli armed and security forces were added for the first time in connection with allegations involving Palestinian detainees. Reported concerns relate to detention settings linked with Gaza and the West Bank. Israel has denied the allegations and criticised the listing.
- **Russia's Inclusion:** Russian armed and security forces were also added in relation to the war in Ukraine. The UN report refers to documented cases involving prisoners of war and civilians held during the conflict. Russia has also rejected the allegations.
- **Other Listed Parties:** The UN blacklist includes several state and non-state parties across conflict zones such as Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Syria and Mali. Hamas had already been listed earlier and remains on the blacklist.

Russia to Build Kazakhstan's First Nuclear Power Plant

In the News: Russia and Kazakhstan signed a \$16.5 billion agreement for the construction of Kazakhstan's first nuclear power plant. The project will be built by Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom at Ulken, near Lake Balkhash. It is significant because Kazakhstan is the world's top uranium producer but does not yet operate a nuclear power plant.

Key Points:

- **Project Location:** The nuclear power plant will be located at Ulken, near Lake Balkhash in Kazakhstan. The location has become central to Kazakhstan's plan to diversify its electricity generation and reduce dependence on coal-based power.
- **Rosatom's Role:** Rosatom, Russia's state nuclear corporation, will lead the project. It secured the lead contract over rival bidders from China, France and South Korea, making the project an important example of Russia's nuclear diplomacy in Central Asia.
- **Reactor Technology:** The plant will have two Russian VVER-1200 Generation III+ reactors. These reactors are part of Russia's modern nuclear export portfolio and are designed for large-scale power generation.
- **Timeline and Financing:** Construction is expected to begin in 2027, with the first reactor planned to become operational by early 2034. The project will be supported by a large Russian export loan, while Kazakhstan will participate in financing and implementation.

UN to Honour Two Fallen Indian Peacekeepers on International Day of UN Peacekeepers

In the News: The United Nations announced that two fallen Indian peacekeepers would be honoured posthumously with the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal around the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. Lance Havildar Harbhajan Singh and Naib Subedar Sujit Kumar Pradhan were named for the honour. Major Abhilasha Barak of India is also set to receive the 2025 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

Key Points:

- **Indian Peacekeepers Honoured:** Lance Havildar Harbhajan Singh and Naib Subedar Sujit Kumar Pradhan will receive the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal posthumously. The medal honours UN personnel who lost their lives while serving in peacekeeping operations.
- **UN Missions:** Lance Havildar Harbhajan Singh served with MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Naib Subedar Sujit Kumar Pradhan was deployed with UNMISS in South Sudan.
- **International Day:** The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers is observed every year on May 29. It honours the service, sacrifice and professionalism of UN peacekeeping personnel across missions.
- **Major Abhilasha Barak:** Major Abhilasha Barak serves with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon as Commander of the Female Engagement Team. She became the third Indian recipient of the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.
- **India's Role:** India remains one of the major contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. Indian personnel serve in several UN missions, including deployments in Africa, West Asia and other conflict-affected regions.



India-China 35th WMCC Meeting

In the News: India and China held the 35th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs in Beijing on May 27, 2026. The Indian delegation was led by Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary (East Asia), while the Chinese side was led by Hou Yanqi. The talks focused on border areas, peace and tranquillity, delimitation, border management and cross-border cooperation.

Key Points:

- **About WMCC:** WMCC stands for Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs. It is a diplomatic mechanism used by both countries to discuss border-related matters and maintain communication.
- **Delegation Leaders:** The Indian delegation was led by Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary (East Asia) in the Ministry of External Affairs. The Chinese delegation was led by Hou Yanqi, Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department.
- **Main Issues Discussed:** The two sides discussed delimitation, border management, mechanism building and cross-border cooperation. India also stressed an early meeting of the next Expert Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers.
- **Border Situation:** Both sides reviewed the situation in India-China border areas and expressed satisfaction with progress in maintaining peace and tranquillity. This was linked with gradual normalisation of bilateral relations.

International Day of UN Peacekeepers: Recognizing Service and Sacrifice in Conflict Zones

In the News: The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was observed on May 29 to honour personnel serving in UN peacekeeping missions and those who lost their lives in the line of duty. In 2026, the United Nations announced posthumous Dag Hammarskjöld Medals for two Indian peacekeepers, Lance Havildar Harbhajan Singh and Naib Subedar Sujit Kumar Pradhan. Major Abhilasha Barak of India was also recognised with the 2025 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

Key Points:

- **International Day of UN Peacekeepers:** The day is observed every year on May 29 to recognise the service and sacrifice of military, police and civilian peacekeepers. It honours personnel deployed in conflict zones under the United Nations flag.
- **Dag Hammarskjöld Medal:** Lance Havildar Harbhajan Singh and Naib Subedar Sujit Kumar Pradhan were named for the posthumous Dag Hammarskjöld Medal. Harbhajan Singh served with MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while Sujit Kumar Pradhan served with UNMISS in South Sudan.
- **Major Abhilasha Barak:** Major Abhilasha Barak received the 2025 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award. She served with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and commanded the Female Engagement Team.
- **India's Peacekeeping Role:** India remains a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. Indian personnel have served in several missions across Africa, West Asia and other conflict-affected regions.

APPOINTMENTS

Rajesh Kumar Singh Gets Additional Charge as DRDO Chairman

In the News: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh was given additional charge as Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development, and Chairman of the Defence Research and Development Organisation. The assignment follows the completion of the extended tenure of outgoing DRDO Chairman Dr Samir V. Kamat. The charge is effective from May 31, 2026, until a regular appointment is made or further orders are issued.

Key Points:

- **Additional Charge:** Rajesh Kumar Singh will hold charge as DRDO Chairman along with his current role as Defence Secretary. The order covers both the post of Secretary, Department of Defence R&D, and Chairman, DRDO.
- **Predecessor:** Dr Samir V. Kamat's extended tenure as DRDO Chairman ends on May 31, 2026. The temporary arrangement has been made after completion of his tenure.
- **Administrative Authority:** The order was issued through the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet mechanism. Such appointments relate to senior positions in the Union Government and strategic departments.
- **About DRDO:** DRDO functions under the Ministry of Defence and is responsible for defence research and development. Its work covers missiles, aeronautics, electronics, combat vehicles, naval systems and other strategic technologies.

Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar Appointed 48th Vice Chief of Naval Staff on May 29

In the News: Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar assumed charge as the 48th Vice Chief of the Naval Staff on May 29, 2026. He paid homage at the National War Memorial in New Delhi after taking charge. His appointment brings senior operational, command and tri-service experience to Naval Headquarters.

Key Points:

- **New Vice Chief:** Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, PVSM, AVSM, NM, became the 48th Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. The Vice Chief is one of the senior-most appointments in the Indian Navy and plays a key role in naval planning and administration.
- **Service Background:** He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Pune, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1988. He is a specialist in Gunnery and Missile Systems.
- **Warship Commands:** He has commanded Indian Naval Ships Nashak, Vibhuti and Kirpan. He was also the Commissioning Commanding Officer of INS Trikand and has commanded the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.
- **Senior Appointments:** Before becoming Vice Chief, he served as Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command. He earlier served as Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command, and commanded the Western Fleet in 2021.
- **Decorations:** He was awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2022 and the Param Vishisht Seva Medal in 2026. His career includes operational, acquisition, training and strategic staff roles within the Indian Navy.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Sansad Ratna Awards 2026 Explained: Full Winners List and Why the Parliamentary Honour Matters

In the News: The Sansad Ratna Awards 2026 were announced on May 23, 2026, with 12 MPs and 4 Parliamentary Standing Committees selected for recognition. The awards will be presented during the 16th Sansad Ratna Awards ceremony in New Delhi in July 2026. The award is important because it links parliamentary performance, legislative accountability, committee system and civil society monitoring of democracy.

Key Points:

- **About the Sansad Ratna Awards:** The Sansad Ratna Awards were instituted in 2010 by Prime Point Foundation on the suggestion of former President Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. They recognise top-performing Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Committees.
- **Full Winners List of MPs:** The 2026 awardees include Jagdambika Pal, P. P. Chaudhary, Nishikant Dubey, Dr Shrikant Eknath Shinde, Praveen Patel, Bidyut Baran Mahato, Lumbaram Chaudhary, Dr Hemant Vishnu Savara, Smita Uday Wagh, Naresh Ganpat Mhaske, Dr Medha Vishram Kulkarni and Narhari Amin. These MPs were selected for parliamentary performance up to the end of the Budget Session 2026.
- **Parliamentary Committees Selected:** Four Parliamentary Committees were selected for the honour in 2026. These are the Committee on Agriculture, Finance Committee, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Committee, and Coal and Mines Committee.

- **Maharashtra's Strong Representation:** Maharashtra secured five awards through Dr Shrikant Eknath Shinde, Dr Hemant Vishnu Savara, Smita Uday Wagh, Naresh Ganpat Mhaske and Dr Medha Vishram Kulkarni. This makes the state one of the most visible contributors in the 2026 list. For prelims, remember Maharashtra's five awardees and two women awardees in the list.
- **Selection Criteria:** The winners are selected by a jury consisting of senior award-winning parliamentarians, retired constitutional authorities and academicians. Selection is based on performance data of MPs and committees, with inputs from PRS Legislative Research, Lok Sabha Secretariat and Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
- **Why the Honour Matters:** The award encourages MPs to take Parliament seriously through questions, debates, private member initiatives and committee participation. It also helps citizens understand that parliamentary performance is measurable beyond elections. For mains, connect this with transparency, accountability, representative democracy and strengthening legislative institutions.

Padma Awards 2026: President Murmu Honours 66 Distinguished Personalities at Rashtrapati Bhavan

In the News: President Droupadi Murmu presented Padma Awards 2026 at the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on May 25, 2026. In this first ceremony, 66 distinguished personalities were honoured, including 2 Padma Vibhushan, 6 Padma Bhushan and 58 Padma Shri awardees. For 2026, the President approved 131 Padma Awards to be conferred across two ceremonies.

Key Points:

- **Total Padma Awards 2026:** The approved list includes 131 Padma Awards for 2026. This includes 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri awards.
- **Award Categories:** Padma Vibhushan is given for exceptional and distinguished service. Padma Bhushan recognises distinguished service of high order, while Padma Shri recognises distinguished service in any field.
- **Fields Covered:** The awards recognise contributions in fields such as art, literature and education, science and engineering, medicine, social work, public affairs, sports, civil service, trade and industry.
- **First Ceremony Details:** The first Civil Investiture Ceremony honoured 66 personalities at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The remaining awardees are to be honoured in a second ceremony.

Sikkim Police Awarded Prestigious President's Police Colour by President Droupadi Murmu

In the News: President Droupadi Murmu presented the President of India's Police Colour to the Sikkim Police in Gangtok on May 28, 2026. The ceremony was held at Paljor Stadium during the President's visit to the state. Sikkim became the 15th state in India and the third from the Northeast to receive this honour.

Key Points:

- **President's Police Colour:** The President's Police Colour is a prestigious ceremonial honour given to police forces for distinguished service. It is also known as Nishaan.
- **Sikkim Police Recognition:** The honour recognises the service of Sikkim Police in maintaining peace, security and justice in the state. The President noted the force's long institutional history since its establishment in 1897.
- **Ceremony Venue:** The award ceremony was held at Paljor Stadium in Gangtok. Police personnel participated in the Alankaran Parade during the presentation.
- **National Position:** Sikkim became the 15th state police force in India to receive the President's Police Colour. It also became the third police force from the Northeast to receive the honour.

STATIC

Birth Anniversary of Veer Savarkar

In the News: The birth anniversary of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, popularly known as Veer Savarkar, was observed on May 28, 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Savarkar's courage, patriotism and contribution to social reform. Several public tribute programmes were also held to mark his 143rd birth anniversary.

Key Points:

- **Birth Details:** Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born on May 28, 1883, at Bhagur near Nashik in Maharashtra. He is remembered as a freedom fighter, political thinker, writer and social reformer.
- **Public Tributes:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Savarkar on his Jayanti. The tribute highlighted his courage, patriotism, intellect and role in social reform.
- **Parliamentary Recognition:** Floral tributes to Savarkar have been traditionally paid at his portrait in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan. Parliamentarians and dignitaries have participated in such commemorative events.
- **Freedom Movement Link:** Savarkar was associated with revolutionary nationalist activities against British rule. He also founded organisations aimed at mobilising young Indians for the cause of independence.
- **Literary and Social Role:** Savarkar is also remembered as a poet, writer and social reformer. His public memory is linked with debates on nationalism, revolutionary politics and social change in colonial India.

SCIENCE AND TECH

China Launches Shenzhou 23 Mission with Three Astronauts for Major Tiangong Space Station Mission

In the News: China launched the Shenzhou-23 crewed spacecraft on 24 May 2026, sending three astronauts to the Tiangong space station from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. The mission was carried by a Long March-2F rocket and is important because one astronaut is expected to undertake China's first year-long human spaceflight. The mission also supports China's long-term goal of a crewed lunar landing by 2030.

Key Pointers:

- **Mission crew:** The Shenzhou-23 crew includes commander Zhu Yangzhu, Zhang Zhiyuan, and Li Jiaying, also known as Lai Ka-ying in Cantonese. Li Jiaying is significant as the first astronaut from Hong Kong to join a Chinese space mission.
- **Launch vehicle and site:** The spacecraft was launched aboard the Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China. This launch centre is a major base for China's human spaceflight missions.
- **Tiangong docking:** Shenzhou-23 docked with the Tiangong space station on 25 May 2026. It completed a fast automated rendezvous and docking with the nadir (Earth-facing) port of the Tianhe core module.
- **Crew handover:** After entering Tiangong, the Shenzhou-23 astronauts met the Shenzhou-21 crew, beginning a new in-orbit handover. Such crew rotations are important for maintaining continuous human presence aboard the space station.
- **Year-long stay experiment:** One major objective is to conduct a one-year in-orbit stay experiment. This will help China study long-duration human spaceflight, astronaut health, and life-support systems for future deep-space missions.

Rajnath Singh Launches India's First 300-km Rocket System Suryastra in Major Defence Boost

In the News: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently inaugurated the NIBE Defence Manufacturing Complex in Shirdi, Maharashtra, and flagged off India's first 300-km Universal Rocket Launching System, Suryastra. The system is being highlighted as a major step in India's indigenous long-range precision strike capability.

Key Points:

- **About Suryastra:** Suryastra is described as India's first indigenous Universal Rocket Launching System with a strike range of around 300 km. It is meant to strengthen long-range surface-to-surface strike capability.
- **Developer and Manufacturing Link:** The system has been developed by Pune-based private defence firm NIBE Limited. Rajnath Singh flagged it off during the inauguration of NIBE's defence manufacturing complex at Shirdi in Ahilyanagar district.
- **Recent Testing:** NIBE reportedly tested Suryastra rockets at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha. Reports mentioned two rocket variants, including EXTRA with 150-km range and Predator Hawk with 300-km range. For prelims, remember Chandipur as a major missile and rocket testing location.
- **Defence Manufacturing Push:** The Shirdi facility will work on artillery systems, missile and space technologies, rocket systems, energetic materials and autonomous defence platforms. This supports India's push for domestic defence production and reduced import dependence. For mains, connect this with Atmanirbhar Bharat and defence industrial corridors.
- **Private Sector in Defence:** Rajnath Singh said the government wants to raise the private sector's share in defence production. This shows a shift from government-dominated defence production towards greater industry participation.

Indian Scientist Discovers Loktak Protocluster

In the News: Indian astrophysicist Dr Ronaldo Laishram, associated with the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, led an international team that discovered the Loktak Protocluster. The structure existed about 12.6 billion years ago, when the Universe was around 1.2 billion years old. It has been named after Manipur's Loktak Lake because four galaxy concentrations are linked like floating islands in one larger system.

Key Points:

- **About Loktak Protocluster:** The Loktak Protocluster is a primitive galaxy cluster from the early Universe. Such protoclusters are considered the early building blocks of massive galaxy clusters seen in the present-day Universe.
- **Scientific Discovery:** The structure was discovered using the Subaru Telescope's wide-field camera, Hyper Suprime-Cam. Scientists identified the dense galaxy region by tracing Lyman-alpha emitters, which are useful markers of young star-forming galaxies.
- **Role of JWST:** The James Webb Space Telescope studied the structure in greater detail. The study found that galaxies in dense regions were more extended than similar galaxies in less crowded environments.
- **Naming Link with Manipur:** The structure was named after Loktak Lake in Manipur. The name reflects how four separate galaxy concentrations are connected into one larger structure, resembling the lake's floating phumdis.

Blue Origin's New Glenn Rocket Explodes During Ground Test Ahead of Satellite Launch

In the News: Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket exploded during a static fire ground test at Launch Complex 36 in Cape Canaveral, Florida, on May 28, 2026. The test was being conducted ahead of a planned satellite launch in early June. Blue Origin confirmed an anomaly, while reports said all personnel were safe and the cause was under investigation.

Key Points:

- **About New Glenn:** New Glenn is Blue Origin's heavy-lift launch vehicle. It is designed for orbital missions and is central to the company's commercial satellite and lunar mission plans.
- **Ground Test Failure:** The explosion occurred during a static fire test, where engines are fired while the rocket remains fixed on the launch pad. Such tests are used to check propulsion and launch readiness before flight.
- **Launch Site:** The incident took place at Launch Complex 36 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The site is Blue Origin's main launch facility for New Glenn missions.
- **Planned Satellite Mission:** The rocket was being prepared for a launch connected with Amazon's low-Earth-orbit internet satellite network. Reports said the planned mission involved a batch of Amazon satellites.
- **Space Programme Impact:** The incident may affect Blue Origin's near-term launch schedule and commercial heavy-lift plans. It is also relevant because Blue Origin has contracts linked with NASA's lunar and Artemis-related missions.



ENVIRONMENT

Jharia coal fires may burn hotter, emit more greenhouse gases

In the News: A recent study published in Communications Earth & Environment has found that the underground coal fires in Jharia Coalfield, Jharkhand, may be burning much hotter and emitting far more greenhouse gases than earlier estimated. The study says collapse structures in East Jharia can act as vents for heat and gases, making these fires important for climate and disaster-risk studies. For exams, this topic is relevant for environment, mining hazards, climate change, fugitive emissions and rehabilitation policy.

Key Pointers:

- **About Jharia Coalfield:** Jharia Coalfield is located in Dhanbad district of Jharkhand and is one of India's major coking coal regions. It is important for India's steel sector because coking coal is used in blast furnaces. For exams, connect Jharia with coal mining, Damodar Valley, land subsidence and industrial pollution.
- **Higher Temperature and Emissions:** The study estimated that some collapse structures may support temperatures up to 4,000°C. It also estimated emissions of more than 700 megatonnes of CO₂-equivalent, nearly twice the UK's reported territorial emissions in 2023. This makes Jharia important for questions on greenhouse gases and climate accounting.
- **Fugitive Emissions Concern:** Emissions from coal fires are called fugitive emissions because they are uncontrolled and difficult to monitor. Such emissions may include carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane and other combustion gases. For exams, link this with India's greenhouse gas inventory, climate commitments and environmental monitoring.
- **Policy and Rehabilitation Link:** Jharia is also linked with land subsidence, unsafe settlements, toxic gases and displacement of affected families. The Union Cabinet approved a Revised Jharia Master Plan in June 2025 to address fire, subsidence and rehabilitation issues. For mains, connect this with disaster management, sustainable mining and just rehabilitation of mining-affected communities.

SPORTS

Gurindervir Singh Becomes Fastest Indian Sprinter with Historic 10.09-Second 100m Run

In the News: Gurindervir Singh became the fastest Indian sprinter ever after clocking 10.09 seconds in the men's 100m at the 29th National Senior Athletics Federation Competition in Ranchi on 23 May 2026. The performance gave him the national record and the men's 100m title. It is important for exams as it connects Indian athletics, national records, Commonwealth Games qualification and sports achievements by armed forces personnel.

Key Points:

- **Historic 100m Record:** Gurindervir Singh clocked 10.09 seconds in the men's 100m final at Ranchi. This made him the fastest Indian ever in the 100m sprint. He also became the first Indian man to go below the 10.10-second mark in the event.
- **Event and Venue:** The record was set at the National Senior Athletics Federation Competition held at Birsa Munda Stadium, Morabadi, Ranchi. The competition was scheduled from 22 May to 25 May 2026. This makes the venue and event important for sports current affairs questions.
- **Record Progression:** Gurindervir had earlier clocked 10.17 seconds in the semifinal. Animesh Kujur also ran 10.15 seconds in another semifinal, before Gurindervir reclaimed the record with 10.09 seconds in the final. This showed a rapid improvement in India's men's sprinting standards.
- **Commonwealth Games Qualification:** His 10.09-second timing also achieved the Glasgow Commonwealth Games qualification mark of 10.16 seconds. He also bettered the meet record of 10.18 seconds set by Animesh Kujur in 2025. For exams, this links the achievement with India's preparation for major international athletics events.



Sports Ministry Notifies Rules for National Sports Board and Tribunal Under Governance Reform Act

In the News: The Union Government notified the National Sports Governance Board Rules, 2026 and the National Sports Tribunal Rules, 2026 on May 26, 2026. These rules were issued under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. The reform aims to strengthen governance of sports bodies and create a dedicated system for resolving sports-related disputes.

Key Points:

- **National Sports Board:** The National Sports Board will oversee recognition and governance standards of National Sports Bodies. It will function as the central authority for ensuring compliance with governance, financial and ethical norms.
- **Board Composition:** The Board will have a Chairperson and two Members appointed by the Central Government. Their names will be recommended by a Search-cum-Selection Committee under the notified rules.
- **National Sports Tribunal:** The National Sports Tribunal will function as a dedicated adjudicatory body for sports-related disputes. It is expected to reduce dependence on civil courts and provide faster dispute resolution.
- **Digital Process:** The Tribunal rules provide for a dedicated portal for filing disputes, notices, documents and clarifications. They also provide for communication from the Tribunal, publication of orders, virtual hearings and digital maintenance of records.
- **Governance Reform:** The rules are part of a broader effort to make sports administration more transparent, accountable and professionally regulated. They are linked with institutional reform in national sports federations and athlete-related dispute handling.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Hits Record 65 Sixes in IPL 2026, Surpasses Chris Gayle

In the News: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi set a new six-hitting record in IPL 2026 by reaching 65 sixes in a single season. The 15-year-old Rajasthan Royals batter surpassed Chris Gayle's previous single-season IPL record of 59 sixes from 2012. The record came during Rajasthan Royals' Eliminator win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, where Sooryavanshi scored 97 runs off 29 balls.

Key Points:

- **New Six-Hitting Record:** Vaibhav Sooryavanshi became the batter with the most sixes in a single IPL season. His tally reached 65 sixes in IPL 2026, going past Chris Gayle's 59 sixes in IPL 2012. The record is now an important sports current-affairs fact linked with IPL batting milestones.
- **Performance Against SRH:** The record-breaking innings came in the IPL 2026 Eliminator against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Sooryavanshi scored 97 off 29 balls and hit 12 sixes in that match. Rajasthan Royals won by 47 runs and moved into Qualifier 2.
- **Surpassing Chris Gayle:** Chris Gayle's 2012 record had stood for more than a decade before Sooryavanshi crossed it. Gayle had set the benchmark while playing for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Sooryavanshi's achievement is significant because it came at the age of 15 in a high-pressure IPL season.
- **Season Impact:** Sooryavanshi's 65 sixes also made him the leading six-hitter of IPL 2026. Reports noted that he had scored 680 runs at a strike rate above 240 after the Eliminator. His batting form became a major factor in Rajasthan Royals' playoff campaign.