Current Affairs – Notes

30 October 2026

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1 Chidambaram Nataraja temple: Madras High Court sets up retired judges-led committee to oversee administration

Tamil Nadu

News

In its judgment of 30 Oct 2026, a Madras High Court Bench (Justices G. Jayachandran and E. Manoharan) constituted a five-member committee to oversee the administration of the Chidambaram Nataraja temple. The verdict disposed of petitions by the Podhu Dikshitars against the Tamil Nadu G.O. (17 May 2022) allowing devotees to worship from atop the Kanaka Sabha, and petitions supporting it. The court said the temple had not been properly managed since administration was handed to the Dikshitars in 2014, full income accounts had not been given for about 12 years, and new constructions had damaged ancient sculptures. Daily rituals and festivals remain the Dikshitars' prerogative.

Key facts

Committee	Chairman: retd. Justice V. Bharathidasan; Vice-chairman: retd. Justice R. Sureshkumar; Member: retd. IAS officer C. Rajendran
Ex-officio members	Secretary, Podhu Dikshitars' body; Secretary, HR&CE Department
Tasks	Recover encroached property, inventory assets incl. jewels, collect rent arrears, remove unauthorised structures, renovation and consecration
Worship	All devotees to have equal access to the Kanaka Sabha and to sing Thevaram and Thiruvasagam
Constitution	Permanent supervision would violate Article 26(d); committee till defects are cured
Place	Chidambaram, Cuddalore district

Background

- Case history: the State appointed an Executive Officer in 1987; the High Court upheld it in 2009. But the Supreme Court (Justices B.S. Chauhan and S.A. Bobde), on 6 Jan 2014, held that the Podhu Dikshitars are a 'religious denomination' and that the State may intervene only temporarily to cure mismanagement, and returned the administration to them.
- Polity: Article 25 – freedom of conscience and religion; Article 26 – right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion; 26(d) – administer property in accordance with law. In Tamil Nadu temples are administered under the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Act, 1959.
- Culture–history: it is the 'Akasha' (space) shrine among the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams; the deity is Nataraja performing the Ananda Tandava. The 'Chidambara Rahasyam' denotes formless space. Nataraja was revered as the family deity of the Cholas; Parantaka Chola I is credited with covering the Chit Sabha with gold (Ponnambalam). The gopurams carry sculptures of the 108 karanas described in Bharata's 'Natya Shastra'.
- Literature: Manikkavasagar's 'Thiruvasagam' (8th Thirumurai) and 'Thirukkovaiyar' are linked with Chidambaram. Its old name 'Thillai' comes from the Thillai trees (a mangrove species) once found here.

Tamil Nadu link: Chidambaram is in Cuddalore district; Annamalai University here was founded in 1929 by Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar. The G.O. permitting worship from the Kanaka Sabha was issued by the Tamil Nadu Government on 17 May 2022.

2 ₹38,000 crore Thoothukudi shipyard: talks with HD Hyundai – Detailed Project Report within six months

Tamil Nadu

News

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal met HD Hyundai Chairman Chung Ki-sun in Seoul (South Korea) on 28 Oct 2026. A joint venture structure for the greenfield shipyard at Thoothukudi is under discussion; a joint working group will oversee it, and the Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be finalised within six months. Investment is about ₹38,000 crore (~$4 billion) and capacity about 2.5 million Gross Tonnage a year – once operational it would be India's largest commercial shipyard.

Key facts

Lead investor	HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering (HD KSOE) – HD Hyundai group
Indian side	NSHIP-TN – 50:50 JV of V.O. Chidambaranar Port and SIPCOT
MoU	20 Apr 2026 – tripartite MoU of HD KSOE, NSHIP-TN and Sagarmala Finance Corporation (during Korean President Lee Jae-myung's India visit)
Scale	₹38,000 crore; ~2.5 million GT/yr; ~15,000 direct jobs; anchor of a 2,500-acre shipbuilding cluster
Scheme	Shipbuilding Development Scheme (SbDS) – part of the ₹69,725 crore maritime package
Vision	Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 – target of 4.5 million GT annual shipbuilding by 2047

Background

- Visit: during his four-day South Korea visit, Sonowal also visited HD KSOE's shipyard at Ulsan. The project is a flagship of the India–Republic of Korea Special Strategic Partnership and includes technology transfer and workforce training.
- Economy: Indian public agencies plan to acquire over 400 vessels in the coming years; the yard can meet part of this demand. The Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 aims to place India among the world's top five shipbuilding nations.
- Science: 'Gross Tonnage' measures a ship's total internal volume, not its weight. 'Deadweight' is the weight of cargo, fuel etc. a ship can carry; 'Displacement' is the weight of water the ship displaces.
- Progress: in Sept 2026 VOC Port floated a ₹6.78 crore tender for a land and seabed study (127 boreholes); a techno-economic feasibility report has been completed.

Tamil Nadu link: Thoothukudi is called the 'Pearl City' for the pearl fishery of the Gulf of Mannar; nearby Korkai was the ancient pearl port of the Pandyas. In 1906 V.O. Chidambaram Pillai started the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company from here.

3 Direct recruitment to TN Government posts: upper age limit raised by 5 years – CM Vijay's order; 37 years for Group-I general category

Tamil Nadu

News

On the orders of CM C. Joseph Vijay, the upper age limit for direct recruitment to Tamil Nadu Government posts has been raised by 5 years. It is in force for five years from 30 Oct 2026. The Government press note says it accepted the demand of competitive-exam aspirants; it will help those who crossed the age limit owing to delays in recruitment and exam schedules. It is in addition to the existing age concessions for BC, BC(M), MBC/DNC, SC, ST and destitute widows.

Key facts

Group-I	General: 32 → 37; reserved: 37 → 42; PwD (general): 42 → 47; PwD (reserved): 47 → 52
Group-II, IIA	General: 30 → 35; PwD (general): 40 → 45; no upper limit for reserved categories (continues)
Group-IV	General: 30 → 35; BC, BC(M), MBC/DNC (SSLC-level qualification only): 32 → 37; SC/ST/destitute widows (SSLC-level only): 35 → 40; no upper limit for reserved categories with higher qualification
Validity	Five years from 30 Oct 2026
Reason	Aspirants' demand; recruitment and exam delays

Background

- Constitution: Part XIV (Articles 308–323) – services and public service commissions. Article 309 – the legislature may regulate recruitment and conditions of service; until then the Governor may make rules. Article 16 – equality of opportunity in public employment.
- Commission: Article 315 – Union and State PSCs; Article 316 – Governor appoints the State PSC chairman and members (6 years or till 62); Article 317 – removal by the President after a Supreme Court inquiry; Article 320 – functions; Article 323 – annual report to the Governor.
- TNPSC history: the 'Madras Service Commission' was set up in 1929 under an Act of the Madras Legislature – India's first provincial PSC. It became the Madras PSC in 1957 and the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSC) in 1970. It has 15 members including the chairman; HQ Chennai.

Tamil Nadu link: TNPSC conducts Group-I (Deputy Collector, DSP etc.), Group-II/IIA and Group-IV (VAO, Junior Assistant etc.) exams; the raise benefits lakhs of aspirants preparing for them.

4 CM Vijay to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting at Davos, Switzerland (18–22 Jan 2027)

Tamil Nadu

News

CM C. Joseph Vijay will attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting at Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, on 18–22 Jan 2027. The visit, on WEF's invitation, aims to attract global investment and showcase Tamil Nadu's strengths in technology, manufacturing and emerging sectors. Earlier, during his London visit (Sept 2026), investment agreements worth about ₹15,300 crore were signed, the State Government said.

Key facts

Meeting	WEF Annual Meeting 2027 – 18–22 Jan 2027
Venue	Congress Centre, Davos (Davos-Klosters), Switzerland
Aim	Global investment – technology, manufacturing, emerging sectors
Earlier visit	London (Sept 2026) – ~₹15,300 crore investment deals
WEF	Founded 1971 by Klaus Schwab (as 'European Management Forum'; renamed 1987); HQ Cologny, Geneva
2026 meeting	19–23 Jan 2026; theme 'A Spirit of Dialogue' (56th meeting)

Background

- Organisation: the World Economic Forum is a not-for-profit international organisation for public-private cooperation. Every January, heads of government, business leaders and economists meet at Davos.
- Reports: WEF publishes the Global Gender Gap Report, Global Risks Report, Future of Jobs Report and Travel & Tourism Development Index. The World Economic Outlook is by the IMF; World Development Report by the World Bank; Human Development Report by UNDP.
- Geography: Davos is a town in the Alps in the canton of Graubünden, eastern Switzerland. Switzerland's capital is Bern; currency, the Swiss franc.

Tamil Nadu link: 'Guidance Tamil Nadu' is the State's nodal agency for investment promotion and single-window facilitation. The Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet 2024 was held in Chennai on 7–8 January 2024.

5 TN Cabinet approves incentives for eight industrial projects worth ₹3,767 crore; 4,853 jobs

Tamil Nadu

News

The Tamil Nadu Cabinet, chaired by CM C. Joseph Vijay on 29 Oct 2026, approved incentives for eight industrial projects with a total investment of ₹3,767 crore, expected to create 4,853 jobs. Three are expansion projects. In technical textiles, aerospace & defence, life sciences and electronics, they will come up in Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Krishnagiri and Erode districts. Company names were not disclosed. Minister C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar briefed the media.

Key facts

Date	29 Oct 2026 – Cabinet meeting chaired by CM Vijay
Investment / jobs	₹3,767 crore; 4,853 jobs; 8 projects (3 expansions)
Sectors	Technical textiles, aerospace & defence, life sciences, electronics
Districts	Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Krishnagiri, Erode
Other decision	Commission headed by a retired judge for a statewide 'Social Justice Survey'

Background

- Polity: Article 163 – Council of Ministers with the CM at its head aids and advises the Governor; Article 164(2) – the Council is collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly; Article 167 – CM's

duty to communicate Cabinet decisions to the Governor.

- Economy: 'Technical textiles' are made for function rather than aesthetics – 12 segments including Agrotech, Meditech, Geotech, Protech and Mobiltech. The Union Ministry of Textiles launched the National Technical Textiles Mission in 2020.
- Geography: Hosur in Krishnagiri district, on the Karnataka border, is an automobile, EV and electronics hub; Erode is a turmeric-trade centre ('Erode Manjal' has a GI tag); Coimbatore is a textile, pump and engineering hub.

Tamil Nadu link: all projects are in Tamil Nadu; they are seen as part of investment commitments of about ₹1.02 lakh crore announced in the new Government's first 100 days. The same meeting approved a commission to conduct a statewide Social Justice Survey after the Centre's caste enumeration.

6 India's green hydrogen offtake contracts cross 5.5 lakh tonnes a year – world's largest, says MNRE

Energy, Defence & Health

News

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) said on 29 Oct 2026 that since the National Green Hydrogen Mission began (2023), Indian firms have signed 23 offtake (supply) contracts totalling 5,55,610 tonnes a year of 'green hydrogen equivalent' – the world's largest such commitments. In 2026 alone, 18 deals (over 4 lakh tonnes) were signed. Over 70% is meant for export (Japan, Germany, South Korea). These are future supply commitments, not current output; they need over ₹90,000 crore of investment.

Key facts

Announced by	MNRE, 29 Oct 2026
Contracts	23 deals – 5,55,610 tonnes a year (green H_2 equivalent); about 11% of the 2030 target
Exports	Over 70%; Japan, Germany, South Korea
Key deals	Reliance–Samsung C&T (S. Korea, green ammonia, over $3 bn, from 2028); AM Green–Germany (H2Global auction, from 2029)
Domestic (SIGHT)	6.7 lakh tonnes a year of green ammonia for 11 fertiliser units; 30,000 tonnes of green hydrogen for IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, NRL refineries
Investment	Over ₹90,000 crore (about $9.5 billion)

Background

- National Green Hydrogen Mission: approved by the Union Cabinet in Jan 2023; target of at least 5 MMT a year of production capacity by 2030; expected to bring over ₹8 lakh crore of investment, 6 lakh jobs and avoid 50 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year. Implementing agency for the auctions – SECI (Solar Energy Corporation of India).
- An 'offtake' contract is a long-term commitment to buy a fixed quantity from a producer. Since hydrogen gas is hard to ship, it is exported as ammonia (NH_3) or methanol (CH_3OH) – hence volumes are counted as 'green hydrogen equivalent'.

- Science: ammonia is made by the Haber–Bosch process – nitrogen + hydrogen over an iron catalyst at high pressure (about 200 atm) and about 450–500°C. With hydrogen from natural gas it is 'grey' ammonia; with hydrogen from renewable-powered electrolysis it is 'green' ammonia.
- H2Global: a German auction mechanism to import green hydrogen derivatives; its intermediary HINT.CO buys on long-term contracts and resells in Europe on short-term contracts. Numaligarh Refinery (NRL) – Golaghat district, Assam; an outcome of the 1985 Assam Accord.

Tamil Nadu link: no Tamil Nadu-specific deal is named in this announcement. The Chennai Petroleum Corporation (CPCL) refinery at Manali, Chennai, is a subsidiary of Indian Oil (IOCL); replacing grey hydrogen with green hydrogen in refineries is a key aim of the Mission.

7 Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia named Vice Chief of the Air Staff; takes over on 1 Nov

Energy, Defence & Health

News

The Ministry of Defence announced on 30 Oct 2026 that Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia will be the next Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS) of the Indian Air Force. He takes over on 1 Nov 2026 from Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, who becomes the 29th Chief of the Air Staff on 31 Oct. He now heads the Eastern Air Command as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C).

Key facts

Announced	Ministry of Defence, 30 Oct 2026; takes over 1 Nov 2026
Predecessor	Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit – Chief of the Air Staff from 31 Oct
Present post	AOC-in-C, Eastern Air Command (since 1 Feb 2026); HQ Shillong
Commissioned	11 June 1988 – fighter stream; alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA)
Experience	Qualified on MiG-21, MiG-23, MiG-27, Jaguar, Su-30 MKI
Earlier posts	Commanded a frontline fighter squadron and TACDE; Defence Attaché to Japan & South Korea; SASO, Eastern Air Command
Awards	Vayu Sena Medal (2008), Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (2018)

Background

- IAF structure: HQ – Vayu Bhawan, New Delhi. Seven commands – five operational (Western – Delhi; Eastern – Shillong; Central – Prayagraj; South Western – Gandhinagar; Southern – Thiruvananthapuram), Training Command – Bengaluru, Maintenance Command – Nagpur. The VCAS is a principal staff officer at Air HQ.
- The National Defence Academy (NDA) is at Khadakwasla near Pune, Maharashtra – a joint-services academy that trains cadets of the Army, Navy and Air Force together.
- TACDE (Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment) – started at Adampur (Punjab) on 1 Feb 1971; now at Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh). It trains the IAF's best fighter pilots in air-combat tactics.
- Gallantry: the highest wartime award is the Param Vir Chakra. The only IAF recipient – Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon (1971 war, Srinagar, Gnat aircraft, posthumous). The Vayu Sena Medal is an IAF-specific medal for devotion to duty or courage.

Tamil Nadu link: the Air Force Administrative College is at Coimbatore. Sulur (Coimbatore) hosts Tejas squadrons; Thanjavur hosts No. 222 'Tigersharks' Su-30MKI squadron; there is also an Air Force Station at Tambaram, Chennai.

8 CCS clears 8 Next Generation Corvettes for the Indian Navy at over ₹40,000 crore

Energy, Defence & Health

News

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by PM Narendra Modi, on 28 Oct 2026 approved the building of 8 Next Generation Corvettes (NGCs) for the Indian Navy at over ₹40,000 crore. Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, will build 5 and Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL) 3. The design is indigenous, made in-house by the Navy; speed about 30 knots. The first ship is expected by 2030; contracts are to be signed shortly.

Key facts

Approval	Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), 28 Oct 2026
Value	Over ₹40,000 crore; 8 corvettes
Shipyards	GRSE, Kolkata – 5; GSL, Goa – 3
Roles	Surveillance, escort, deterrence, Surface Action Group, search-and-attack, coastal defence
Speed / design	About 30 knots; Navy's in-house design
Earlier stage	DAC AoN on 6 June 2022; GRSE emerged L1 bidder in May 2025
Delivery	First ship by 2030 (expected)

Background

- Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS): chaired by the PM; members – the Defence, Home, Finance and External Affairs Ministers. It gives final approval to big defence buys. Sequence: DAC Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) → bidding → price negotiation → CCS approval → contract.
- Warship types (in rising size): corvette → frigate → destroyer. A corvette is small and fast – suited to coastal defence and anti-submarine warfare. GRSE built the 'Kamorta' class (Project 28) – anti-submarine stealth corvettes; the lead ship INS Kamorta was commissioned in 2014.
- Shipyards: GRSE (Kolkata) – a Defence Ministry PSU; it built and exported the patrol vessel 'CGS Barracuda' to Mauritius. GSL is at Vasco da Gama, Goa. Science: 1 knot = 1 nautical mile per hour = 1.852 km per hour.

Tamil Nadu link: no Tamil Nadu shipyard is part of this order. INS Parundu, the naval air station at Uchipuli in Ramanathapuram district (commissioned under this name on 26 March 2009), watches over the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait; it is under the Eastern Naval Command.

9 Tobacco-Free Youth Campaign 4.0 launched – 60-day nationwide drive focused on colleges and universities

Energy, Defence & Health

News

On behalf of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of State Prataprao Jadhav launched 'Tobacco-Free Youth Campaign 4.0' (TFYC 4.0) on 28 Oct 2026 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences – Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi. It runs nationwide for 60 days. Aims: stop young people from starting tobacco, help users quit and enforce the law; this edition focuses on colleges and universities. It follows a whole-of-government approach involving several ministries and State/UT administrations.

Key facts

Launch	28 Oct 2026 – ABVIMS & RML Hospital, New Delhi
Launched by	Prataprao Jadhav – MoS Health; MoS (Independent Charge) AYUSH
Duration	60 days – nationwide
Six strategies	Awareness; Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI); tobacco-free villages; enforcement; social media; colleges & universities
Laws	COTPA 2003; Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act (PECA) 2019
Earlier editions	1.0 – 31 May 2023; 2.0 – Sept 2024; 3.0 – Oct 2025; so far 5.8 lakh+ institutions and 73,000+ villages declared tobacco-free

Background

- COTPA 2003 (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act): Section 4 – ban on smoking in public places; Section 5 – ban on tobacco advertising; Section 6 – no sale to under-18s or within 100 yards of educational institutions; Section 7 – health warnings on packs. TFYC 3.0 saw 1,45,477 challans under COTPA.
- The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act (PECA) 2019 bans the production, sale, import, export and advertising of e-cigarettes.
- International: the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) – adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2003, in force from 2005; India ratified it in 2004. India's National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) dates from 2007–08. World No Tobacco Day – 31 May.
- Science: the addictive chemical in tobacco is nicotine – an 'alkaloid'. Tobacco is a major cause of mouth, lung and throat cancers.

Tamil Nadu link: in May 2013 the Tamil Nadu government banned gutka, pan masala and other chewable tobacco products under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006; the Commissioner of Food Safety renews the ban each year by notification.

10 Sikkim holds its first 'Himalayan Yak Festival' at Gnathang Valley near the India–China border

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

Sikkim's first 'Himalayan Yak Festival' was held in late October 2026 (27–29 Oct; main events from 28 Oct) at Gnathang Valley in Pakyong district, at about 13,500 ft, near the India–China border. It was organised by the State's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department with 'Sikkim INSPIRES', in collaboration with ATREE and the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment. About 400–500 yaks took part, and herders from Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh attended. Yak products and advances in artificial insemination were displayed. Aims: yak conservation, herders' livelihoods and high-altitude tourism.

Key facts

Venue	Gnathang Valley, Pakyong district, Sikkim (~13,500 ft)
Dates	27–29 Oct 2026 (first edition)
Organiser	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services Dept, Sikkim + Sikkim INSPIRES
Participation	About 400–500 yaks; herders from Sikkim, Arunachal, Ladakh
Sikkim yaks	'Sikkimese yak' – distinct breed registered by NBAGR; reared by the Dokpa herders
Proposal	A 'Himalayan Pole'/'Yak Pole' to mark the yak's importance (Thupden Lachungpa)

Background

- Science: the domestic yak is Bos grunniens (Poephagus grunniens), family Bovidae, adapted to cold high-altitude areas; it gives milk, meat, fibre and carries loads. ICAR–National Research Centre on Yak was set up in 1989 at Dirang, West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh.
- Challenges: shrinking grazing land, unpredictable weather, and falling yak numbers as young people move to other jobs. Gnathang–Machong MLA Pamin Lepcha hopes the festival becomes an annual event.
- Polity: Sikkim became India's 22nd State through the 36th Amendment (1975); Article 371F contains special provisions for Sikkim.
- History & geography: in the Anglo-Tibetan war of 1888, British and Tibetan forces clashed at Gnathong on 22 May 1888. The Doklam plateau is about 35 km away; Pakyong district was carved out of East Sikkim in 2021.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu too has a hill pastoral tradition like yak herding – the Toda tribe of the Nilgiris are traditional buffalo herders, and their life and rituals centre on the buffalo. The news itself has no direct Tamil Nadu link.

11 GST on e-commerce delivery services cut from 18% to 5% (without ITC) – 57th GST Council recommendation; notifications effective 1 Nov

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

The 57th GST Council meeting, held in New Delhi on 8 Oct 2026 under Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, recommended 5% GST without input tax credit (ITC) on delivery services (other than courier and postal) supplied through e-commerce operators (ECOs). Where the actual provider is not liable to register, the platform pays the tax under Section 9(5) of the CGST Act. Until now such services attracted 18% (56th Council, Sept 2025). PIB Fact Check and CBIC clarified that this is a cut from 18% to 5%, not a new tax. Notifications (e.g. No. 09/2026-Central Tax (Rate)) were issued on 27 Oct 2026, effective 1 Nov 2026.

Key facts

Meeting	57th GST Council, 8 Oct 2026, New Delhi; chair – Nirmala Sitharaman
Rate	18% → 5% (without ITC); courier and postal services excluded
Who pays	E-commerce operator – Section 9(5), CGST Act
GTA exemption	Exemption (Entry 21A) for GTA transport of e-commerce goods to unregistered persons withdrawn
In force	Notifications 27 Oct 2026; effective 1 Nov 2026
Earlier	56th Council (3 Sept 2025) – local delivery at 18% from 22 Sept 2025

Background

- Polity: GST came through the 101st Amendment (2016) and began on 1 July 2017. Article 279A – GST Council; chair – Union Finance Minister; members – Union MoS (Finance/Revenue) and all State finance/taxation ministers. The Union Revenue Secretary is its ex-officio Secretary.
- Article 366(12A): GST is a tax on the supply of goods or services except alcoholic liquor for human consumption. So liquor stays outside GST – States levy excise and VAT on it.
- Economic concepts: input tax credit (ITC) lets a business set off tax paid on purchases against tax on sales; '5% without ITC' means no such set-off. Section 9(5): for notified services the e-commerce platform is deemed the supplier and pays the tax (e.g. restaurant delivery, cab services).
- GST 2.0: from 22 Sept 2025, two main slabs – 5% and 18% – and 40% for luxury and sin goods. Finance Ministry sources said rate changes will now be considered only once a year, taking effect from 1 April (PTI, 6 Oct).

Tamil Nadu link: in Tamil Nadu, State GST (SGST) is administered by the Commercial Taxes Department (headed by the Commissioner of Commercial Taxes), and the State Finance Minister is a member of the GST Council. With heavy food and quick-commerce delivery in cities like Chennai and Coimbatore, the cut directly affects consumers and delivery platforms.

12 New pink-flowering shrub species 'Osbeckia assamensis' discovered in Assam's Manas National Park

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

A new flowering plant species, 'Osbeckia assamensis', has been found in the grasslands of Manas National Park, Assam. The paper by researchers Barnali Das and Namita Nath was published in the journal 'Phytotaxa' on 22 Oct 2026, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced it on 26 Oct. It was found during field surveys in 2021–2025; the first specimen was collected on 8 Oct 2022. It is a perennial shrub (2–2.5 m) of the family Melastomataceae, with pink flowers (3–3.5 cm), 30–35 per cluster, flowering from September to February.

Key facts

Species	Osbeckia assamensis – family Melastomataceae
Location	Grasslands of Manas National Park, Assam
Study	Barnali Das, Namita Nath; 'Phytotaxa', 22 Oct 2026
Features	Perennial shrub, 2–2.5 m; pink flowers 3–3.5 cm; 30–35 per cluster
Difference	Differs from the related O. nayarii in stem, leaves, flower arrangement, hairy calyx margins and seed size
Flowering / status	Sept–Feb; assessed 'Data Deficient' under IUCN criteria

Background

- Manas National Park lies in the Himalayan foothills of Assam. It became a UNESCO natural World Heritage Site in 1985 and was on the 'In Danger' list from 1992 to 2011. In 1973 it was among the first tiger reserves under Project Tiger.
- Geography: the park is named after the Manas River, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra, and borders Bhutan's Royal Manas National Park to the north.
- Wildlife: tiger, greater one-horned rhino, swamp deer, the pygmy hog (the world's smallest wild pig), Bengal florican, Asian elephant and gaur.
- Botany: Melastomataceae is one of the ten largest families of flowering plants (order Myrtales). 'Kaya' (Memecylon umbellatum) of the same family grows in South India and Sri Lanka; its leaves contain a yellow dye.

Tamil Nadu link: the Southern Regional Centre (Southern Circle, 1955) of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) is at Coimbatore; the old 'Madras Herbarium' was moved from Chennai to Coimbatore and handed over to it. 'Kaya' (Memecylon umbellatum), a member of Melastomataceae, also grows in Tamil Nadu.

13 Chhattisgarh's Sirpur Cultural and Archaeological Landscape added to UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

The 'Sirpur Cultural and Archaeological Landscape' on the banks of the Mahanadi in Mahasamund district, Chhattisgarh, has been added to UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List. India's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO submitted it on 28 Sept 2026; the Sirpur Special Area Development Authority (SSADA) announced it on 21 Oct 2026. It is proposed in the cultural category under criteria II and IV. With the Karst–Mud-Volcano Complex of Baratang and the Andaman Subduction Volcanoes also added, India's Tentative List now has 81 properties.

Key facts

Site	Sirpur (ancient 'Shripur') – Mahasamund district, on the Mahanadi; about 78 km from Raipur
Submitted / announced	28 Sept 2026 / 21 Oct 2026 (SSADA)
Criteria	Cultural – criterion II (exchange of human values), IV (outstanding architecture)
Core zone (9)	Lakshmana, Rama, Gandheshwar temples; Anandaprabhu Kuti & Swastika viharas; market complex; royal palace; Harshagupta & Tivaradeva viharas; Baleshwar group
Also added	Baratang karst–mud-volcano complex; Andaman subduction volcanoes (Barren, Narcondam islands)
India's list	81 properties on the Tentative List

Background

- History: from the 5th to the 12th century CE Sirpur was the capital of 'Dakshina Kosala' (South Kosala). Copper-plate grants of the Sharabhapuriya kings Pravararaja and Mahasudevaraja attest its antiquity. The Panduvamshi king Mahashivagupta Balarjuna ruled for about 57 years; a Shaiva, he also patronised Buddhist monasteries.
- Architecture: the 7th-century Lakshmana temple (Vishnu) is built of brick – among India's earliest and best-preserved brick temples. It was commissioned by Queen Vasata, widow of Harshagupta and mother of Balarjuna. Alexander Cunningham visited and reported on it in 1882.
- Religious harmony: Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist and Jain traditions flourished together. In the 7th century the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang recorded its Buddhist tradition. The Anandaprabhu Kuti and Swastika viharas are notable.
- UNESCO process: a site must first be on a country's Tentative List before it can be nominated for the World Heritage List. ICOMOS evaluates cultural sites and IUCN natural ones. The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972; India joined in 1977. Next, the ASI and SSADA will prepare the full nomination dossier.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's 'Chettinad, Village Clusters of the Tamil Merchants' and the 'Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam' have been on India's Tentative List since 2014. The Mahabalipuram monuments, the Great Living Chola Temples and the Nilgiri Mountain Railway are already World Heritage Sites.

14 UAE confers 'First Class Order of Zayed II' on Indian pilot Captain Smit Machchhar – awarded by President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan conferred the 'First Class Order of Zayed II' on flydubai's Indian captain Smit Machchhar and crew members (27 Oct 2026). Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed presented the honours. It recognises his courage on flight FZ1073 on 30 Sept 2026, when, though injured in an attack by the co-pilot in the cockpit, he protected the aircraft and passengers. He is believed to be the third Indian to receive it (the earlier two were Indian ambassadors). Note: this is the UAE's second-highest civilian honour; the highest is the 'Order of Zayed'.

Key facts

Honour	First Class Order of Zayed II – the UAE's second-highest civilian honour
Conferred by	President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed; presented by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed (Dubai Crown Prince)
Date	27 Oct 2026
Reason	Courage during the cockpit attack on flydubai FZ1073 (30 Sept 2026)
Earlier Indians	Ambassadors Navdeep Singh Suri (2019), Sunjay Sudhir (2025)
Earlier honour	Israel's Presidential Award for Civilian Heroism, announced by President Isaac Herzog (8 Oct 2026)

Background

- Award: the 'Order of Zayed' is the UAE's highest civilian honour, usually for heads of state; PM Narendra Modi received it in 2019 (announced 4 Apr, presented 24 Aug). The 'Order of Zayed II' usually goes to ambassadors and officials. Both are named after the UAE's founding President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.
- Geography: the UAE is a federation of seven emirates (1971); capital Abu Dhabi. It lies on the Persian Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz.
- India–UAE ties: the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been in force since 1 May 2022. PM Modi opened the BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi's first traditional stone temple, on 14 Feb 2024. The UAE has been a BRICS member since 1 Jan 2024.
- Aviation safety: the two-person cockpit rule spread after the 2015 Germanwings crash. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is in Montreal.

Tamil Nadu link: the Tamil Nadu Government gives the 'Anna Medal for Gallantry' for acts of bravery in life-threatening situations – the Chief Minister presents it every year at the Republic Day function (e.g. in 2025 to Leading Fireman K. Vetrivel, who saved three people from drowning in the Adyar).

15 PM inaugurates ₹325-crore Bharat Bovine Breeding and Research Centre at Bhildi, Banaskantha (Gujarat) – Kankrej, Gir and other native breeds

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

On 30 Oct 2026 PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Bharat Bovine Breeding and Research Centre' (BBBRC) at Bhildi, Banaskantha district, Gujarat, to the nation. Built by Banas Dairy on 127 acres at about ₹325 crore, with technical guidance from the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and support from the 'Rashtriya Gokul Mission', it will use ovum pick-up–in-vitro fertilisation (OPU-IVF) and embryo transfer (ET) to improve native cattle such as Kankrej and Gir and buffalo breeds such as Mehsani and Banni. It targets 25,000 high-quality embryos a year, aiming for 10–20 calves a year from one elite cow instead of one by conventional breeding.

Key facts

Centre	Bharat Bovine Breeding and Research Centre (BBBRC) – 127 acres
Place / date	Bhildi, Banaskantha district, Gujarat / 30 Oct 2026 – PM Modi
Cost / built by	About ₹325 crore / Banas Dairy; NDDB technical guidance; ₹38.83 crore from Rashtriya Gokul Mission
Technology	OPU-IVF and embryo transfer (ET); target 25,000 embryos a year
Breeds	Cattle: Kankrej, Gir, Sahiwal, Tharparkar; buffalo: Mehsani, Banni, Jaffrabadi, Murrah
Other projects	Banas Dairy bio-CNG plants – Tharad, Radhanpur (foundation)

Background

- Kankrej breed: an indigenous breed of the Rann of Kutch area on the Gujarat–Rajasthan border; dual-purpose – milk and draught. Silver to dark grey coat; both sexes have large horns. Also called Talabda and Wadhiar.
- Global link: Kankrej cattle exported to Brazil from about 1870 gave rise to the 'Guzerá' breed, which also contributed to the American 'Brahman'. Ongole (as 'Nelore') and Gir (as 'Gyr') are also famous in Brazil.
- Science: in IVF, egg and sperm are united outside the body in a lab; the embryo is placed in a surrogate cow (embryo transfer), so one elite cow can yield many calves a year. Indian native cattle belong to 'Bos indicus' (humped zebu).
- Scheme: Rashtriya Gokul Mission (Dec 2014) – to conserve and develop indigenous breeds; run by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. Banas Dairy is a member union of the 'Amul' federation (GCMMF), headquartered at Palanpur.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's registered native cattle breeds – Kangayam (Kongu region – Tiruppur, Erode), Umblachery (Cauvery delta), Pulikulam (Sivaganga–Ramanathapuram), Bargur (Erode hills) and Alambadi (Dharmapuri–Krishnagiri).

16 Bihar Museum ranked 9th in 'World's 100 Best Museums' list – the only Asian museum in the top 10

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

In the 2026 'World's 100 Best Museums' list by the Germany-based international travel guide 'Worth a Journey', Patna's Bihar Museum ranked 9th (reports of 27–28 Oct 2026). It is the only Asian and only Indian museum in the top 10 – ahead of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (10th) and the Louvre, Paris (31st). Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology is first. The ranking is based on algorithmic analysis checked by in-person visits.

Key facts

List	'World's 100 Best Museums' 2026 – Worth a Journey (Germany)
Rank	9th – the only Asian museum in the top 10; the only Indian museum on the list
Top five	National Museum of Anthropology (Mexico), Prado (Madrid), Louisiana (Denmark), Hermitage (Russia), Kunsthistorisches (Vienna)
Bihar Museum	Patna; opened 2015; over 13 acres
Design	Maki and Associates (Japan) + Opolis Architects (Mumbai)
Star exhibit	Didarganj Yakshi – Mauryan-period sculpture (found near Patna, 1917)

Background

- Art history: the Didarganj Yakshi is a standing female figure holding a chauri (fly-whisk), carved in Chunar sandstone with the mirror-like 'Mauryan polish'. It is generally assigned to the Mauryan period and was found at Didarganj on the Ganga in 1917.
- Museum: Bihar's story from the Stone Age onward – sculptures, coins, manuscripts and folk art; it has a Children's Gallery and a Diaspora Gallery. The third Bihar Museum Biennale was held in 2025. A roughly 1.5 km underground walkway to the older Patna Museum is planned.
- Patna (ancient Pataliputra): capital of Magadha and later of the Mauryan Empire, on the Ganga. The Greek envoy Megasthenes described it in his 'Indica'.
- Indian museums: India's oldest museum is the Indian Museum, Kolkata (1814, Asiatic Society). International Museum Day is 18 May (ICOM, since 1977); ICOM is headquartered in Paris.

Tamil Nadu link: the Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai (1851) is India's second-oldest museum, famous for the Amaravati Buddhist sculptures and Chola bronzes. A site museum at Keeladi, Sivaganga district, opened in 2023.

17 UNEP recognition: India's Ganges River Dolphin Recovery Programme cited among the UN World Restoration Flagships

States, Tax, Environment, Culture & Awards

News

The report 'Nature's Comeback – Scaling Ecosystem Restoration for People and Planet', released in October 2026 by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), cited India's Ganges River Dolphin Recovery Programme as one of 35 'UN World Restoration Flagships'. It was held up as a model that links species protection, river-ecosystem restoration and local livelihoods. The report comes at the mid-point of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and warns that restoration is not moving fast enough to meet the 2030 goals.

Key facts

Recognition	UNEP–FAO–CBD 'Nature's Comeback' report (Oct 2026) – one of 35 World Restoration Flagships
Implementation	Union Environment, Forest & Climate Change Ministry – 'Project Dolphin'; Comprehensive Action Plan for dolphins 2022–2047
Species	Ganges river dolphin – Platanista gangetica; 'susu'; IUCN: Endangered
Legal protection	Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 – Schedule I; CITES – Appendix I
Status	India's National Aquatic Animal (2009); State aquatic animal of Assam; 5 Oct – National Dolphin Day
First estimate	3 Mar 2025 – 6,327 river dolphins (8 States, 28 rivers); Uttar Pradesh highest, then Bihar, West Bengal, Assam

Background

- Biology: the Ganges dolphin is a freshwater dolphin with very poor eyesight – it finds prey in muddy water by ultrasonic clicks and echoes (echolocation). Being air-breathing, it surfaces every 30–120 seconds through a blowhole on top of its head; its breathing sound gives the name 'susu'. It is an indicator species of river health.
- Geography: found in the Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna and Karnaphuli–Sangu river systems of India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (1991) on the Ganga in Bhagalpur district, Bihar, was set up for it. Threats: dams and barrages, low flows, pollution and entanglement in fishing nets.
- Policy history: declared National Aquatic Animal in 2009; the PM announced 'Project Dolphin' on 15 Aug 2020. The first river-dolphin estimation report was released on 3 Mar 2025 at the National Board for Wildlife meeting at Sasan Gir, Gujarat. 'Namami Gange' was named a World Restoration Flagship at CBD COP15 in Montreal in Dec 2022 (among the first 10).
- Global context: the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly and is led by UNEP and FAO. Countries have pledged to restore about 1 billion hectares of degraded land. Target 2 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: restore at least 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

Tamil Nadu link: the Ganges dolphin does not occur in Tamil Nadu's rivers. But Tamil Nadu leads in marine-mammal protection – India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve was notified in Palk Bay in

2022, and dolphins are also seen in the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park. (Tamil Nadu ACS Supriya Sahu won UNEP's 'Champions of the Earth' 2025 – 13.10.2026 set.)

18 Google to invest €13 billion (about $15 billion) in AI infrastructure in Finland – its largest single investment in Europe

International, Science, Technology & Indices

News

On 9 September 2026 Google announced it will invest €13 billion (about $15 billion) in Finland over the next two years – its largest single investment in Europe. It covers expansion of its Hamina data centre, three new data centres at Kajaani, Muhos and Vaala, and clean-energy and battery projects, to meet demand for services such as Search, Maps and Gemini AI. Construction is planned for 2027–28 and is expected to support over 37,000 jobs.

Key facts

Announced	9 Sep 2026 – Google (Bikash Koley, VP, Global Infrastructure)
Amount	€13 billion (≈ $15 billion) over 2 years – Google's largest single investment in Europe
Sites	Hamina (former paper mill bought 2009; seawater cooling) + new centres: Kajaani, Muhos, Vaala
Energy	22-year deal with Fortum's Loviisa nuclear plant (from 2028; up to 50% of output); 94 MW battery system; new onshore wind
Jobs	37,000+ during construction (2027–28); €3.6 billion a year to Finland's GDP
Controversy	Oct 2026 (reported 7 Oct) – Finland's supervisory agency (LVV) ordered work halted at the Muhos and Kajaani sites over forest clearing without environmental impact assessment

Background

- Geography: Finland is a Nordic country of northern Europe; capital Helsinki. Sweden lies to the west, Norway to the north and Russia to the east (its longest land border); the Gulf of Finland is to the south (Estonia across it) and the Gulf of Bothnia to the west. 'Land of a thousand lakes'. Hamina is a town on the Gulf of Finland coast.
- Polity: after long neutrality, Finland became NATO's 31st member in April 2023 following the Russia–Ukraine war; Sweden joined as the 32nd in March 2024. NATO – 1949 Washington Treaty; HQ Brussels. Finland has been an EU member since 1995; PM Petteri Orpo.
- Science–economy: training and running AI models needs huge computing power and electricity; cooling is a major data-centre cost. Finland's cold climate and low-carbon power (nuclear, wind, hydro) attract data centres; Microsoft and TikTok owner ByteDance have also announced investments there. The Loviisa nuclear plant supplies about 10% of Finland's electricity.

Tamil Nadu link: Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent Alphabet, was born in Madurai and grew up in Chennai; he studied engineering at IIT Kharagpur.

19 SBI launches 'CyRIS', its cybersecurity Centre of Excellence, in Mumbai

International, Science, Technology & Indices

News

Department of Financial Services Secretary Sanjay Lohiya inaugurated 'CyRIS', the State Bank of India's (SBI) cybersecurity Centre of Excellence, in Mumbai on 26 October 2026, in the presence of SBI Chairman Challa Sreenivasulu Setty. Bringing cyber policy, a cyber academy, research and innovation, threat intelligence and cyber defence onto one platform, it rests on three pillars – THINK, INNOVATE and DEFEND. Focus areas include digital forensics, malware analysis, ethical hacking, fraud analytics, AI security and quantum-safe technologies.

Key facts

Launch	26 Oct 2026, Mumbai – DFS Secretary Sanjay Lohiya; SBI Chairman C.S. Setty
Three pillars	THINK (policy, academy, citizen awareness); INNOVATE (research, global benchmarking); DEFEND (cyber defence, threat intelligence)
Focus areas	Digital forensics, malware analysis, ethical hacking, fraud analytics, AI security, quantum-safe tech
Partners	Government & regulators, financial institutions, fintechs, academia, technology partners
Training	About 1.81 lakh SBI staff completed mandatory cybersecurity e-learning in 2025–26

Background

- Legal framework: under Section 70A of the IT Act 2000, the national nodal agency for protecting Critical Information Infrastructure (CII – banking, power, telecom etc.) is NCIIPC, a unit of the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO); under Section 70B, CERT-In is the national agency for responding to cyber-security incidents. The Home Ministry's I4C coordinates action on cybercrime; complaint helpline 1930.
- Technology: 'ransomware' encrypts data and demands payment to release it (e.g. 'WannaCry', 2017); 'phishing' steals passwords via fake e-mails/links. Future quantum computers (Shor's algorithm) could break today's public-key encryption such as RSA; the US NIST released 'quantum-safe' (post-quantum) encryption standards in August 2024.
- Banking history: SBI is India's largest public sector bank; formed from the Imperial Bank on 1 July 1955; HQ Mumbai. The Department of Financial Services (DFS), under the Union Finance Ministry, oversees public sector banks and insurers.

Tamil Nadu link: the 'Tamil Nadu State Cyber Crime Coordination Centre' (TN-S4C), the State counterpart of the Centre's I4C, was set up in August 2026 at the Cyber Crime Wing headquarters in Chennai – its State Cyber Command Centre runs the 1930 helpline, and its State Cyber Crime Investigation Centre handles ransomware and crypto crimes. 'Tamil Nadu Cyber Security Policy 2.0' for government departments was released in September 2024 (first policy 2020).

20 WJP Rule of Law Index 2026: India 88th of 143 countries (score 0.48; 86th in 2025); Denmark first, Venezuela last

International, Science, Technology & Indices

News

In the 'Rule of Law Index 2026' released on 21 October 2026 by the US-based World Justice Project (WJP), India ranked 88th of 143 countries with a score of 0.48 (86th in 2025 – down two places); it is 3rd in South Asia after Nepal and Sri Lanka. Denmark is first, Norway 2nd and Finland 3rd. Venezuela is last at 143rd; Afghanistan is 142nd and Haiti 141st. Rule of law declined globally for the 9th year in a row – scores fell in 62% of countries.

Key facts

Publisher	World Justice Project (WJP), Washington, D.C.; 21 Oct 2026; 143 countries and jurisdictions
India	88th; score 0.48 (0–1 scale); 86th in 2025; 3rd in South Asia (after Nepal, Sri Lanka)
Top three	Denmark (1), Norway (2), Finland (3)
Bottom three	Venezuela (143), Afghanistan (142), Haiti (141)
Neighbour	China – 92nd
8 factors	Constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order & security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, criminal justice

Background

- About WJP: started in 2006 by William H. Neukom as an American Bar Association (ABA) presidential initiative; independent non-profit since 2009; HQ Washington, D.C. The index is built from surveys of the general public and experts. This year freedom of expression fell in 64% of countries and freedom of assembly in 67%.
- Constitution: the 'rule of law' was explained by British jurist A.V. Dicey ('Law of the Constitution', 1885) – supremacy of law, equality before law and predominance of legal spirit. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees 'equality before the law' (British idea) and 'equal protection of the laws' (American idea). The Supreme Court has held the rule of law to be part of the basic structure.
- Justice system: free legal aid – Article 39A; Legal Services Authorities Act 1987. Case backlogs and a high share of undertrial prisoners are seen as factors dragging down India's criminal- and civil-justice scores.

Tamil Nadu link: on the index's 'absence of corruption' factor – Tamil Nadu's main agency for investigating corruption by public servants is the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC), Chennai, which registers cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988. The State Lokayukta was set up under the Tamil Nadu Lokayukta Act 2018.

21 Indian-origin NASA astronaut Anil Menon completes his 4th spacewalk at the International Space Station

International, Science, Technology & Indices

News

Indian-origin NASA astronaut Anil Menon, with Joshua Kutryk of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), completed a 7-hour 11-minute spacewalk (EVA) at the International Space Station (ISS) on 29 Oct 2026 (US time; early hours of 30 Oct IST), installing the station's 7th IROSA (roll-out solar array); the 8th and final one is planned for a 5 Nov spacewalk. It was Menon's 4th career spacewalk; he has now logged 26 h 31 min of spacewalking on this mission. It was the 100th US spacewalk from the ISS without a Space Shuttle docked, and Kutryk's first. Menon reached the ISS on 14 July 2026 aboard Russia's 'Soyuz MS-29' from Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

Key facts

Spacewalk	29 Oct 2026 – 7 h 11 min; Menon's 4th; installed 7th IROSA solar array
Partner	Joshua Kutryk (Canada, CSA) – his first
Mission	Soyuz MS-29 – 14 July 2026, Baikonur (Kazakhstan); with Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina (Russia); Expeditions 74/75
Anil Menon	Born Minneapolis (USA); father of Kerala roots, mother Ukrainian; physician; NASA class of 2021; former SpaceX flight surgeon
Comparison	Sunita Williams – 9 spacewalks, 62 h 6 min (most among Indian-origin astronauts)
Wife	Anna Menon – SpaceX engineer; flew 'Polaris Dawn' (2024)

Background

- India in space: Rakesh Sharma – first Indian in space; flew Soviet 'Soyuz T-11' to the 'Salyut 7' station on 3 Apr 1984 (Interkosmos programme). Asked by Indira Gandhi how India looked, he replied 'Saare Jahan Se Achha'.
- Indian-origin astronauts: Kalpana Chawla (Karnal, Haryana) – first India-born woman in space; STS-87 Columbia (1997); died in the Columbia disaster (STS-107) on 1 Feb 2003. Sunita Williams – 9 spacewalks. Raja Chari – NASA astronaut (father from Telangana).
- Axiom-4 (Ax-4): Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla lifted off on 25 June 2025 on SpaceX Falcon 9 / Dragon and became the first Indian to visit the ISS – the second Indian in space, 41 years after Rakesh Sharma.
- Gaganyaan: India's human spaceflight programme (ISRO). On 27 Feb 2024 at VSSC, Thiruvananthapuram, four astronaut-designates were named – Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Ajit Krishnan, Angad Pratap and Shubhanshu Shukla (all IAF).
- Science: a spacewalk (EVA – Extra-Vehicular Activity) is work done outside a spacecraft in a pressurised suit. The first spacewalk was by Alexei Leonov (USSR) on 18 Mar 1965.

Tamil Nadu link: human-rating tests of Gaganyaan engines are done at the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tirunelveli district.

22 Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar's 119th Jayanti and 64th Guru Puja – 30 Oct, Pasumpon

Important Days

News

The 119th Jayanti and 64th Guru Puja of freedom fighter Pasumpon U. Muthuramalinga Thevar are being held as a State function on 30 Oct 2026 at his memorial in Pasumpon, near Kamuthi, Ramanathapuram district. As Thevar was both born (1908) and died (1963) on 30 October, the Jayanti and Guru Puja fall on the same day. Political leaders and the public pay homage; heavy security arrangements are in place.

Key facts

Born	30 Oct 1908 – Pasumpon (near Kamuthi), Ramanathapuram district
Died	30 Oct 1963
Ordinals	2026 – 119th Jayanti, 64th Guru Puja (2023 – 116th, 61st)
Party	All India Forward Bloc – Tamil Nadu president (from 1948); associate of Netaji
Lok Sabha	Elected thrice – 1952, 1957, 1962
Honours	Postage stamp – 1995; statue in Parliament complex – 1 Oct 2002 (unveiled by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)
Gold armour	9 Feb 2014 – 13-kg gold armour donated by CM J. Jayalalithaa; State function since 1979 (MGR)

Background

- History – with Netaji: in the 1939 Congress presidential election Subhas Chandra Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhiji's nominee; Thevar backed Bose at the Tripuri session. In May 1939 Bose founded the 'Forward Bloc' as a left-wing group within the Congress; Thevar built it up in Tamil Nadu.
- Society: he fought the British 'Criminal Tribes Act', which branded whole communities as 'born criminals'. The Act was repealed in 1952 and those communities became 'Denotified Tribes'.
- Temple entry: on 8 July 1939 A. Vaidyanatha Iyer led the oppressed classes into the Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple; Thevar openly supported it. Rajaji's government passed the Temple Entry Authorisation and Indemnity Act in 1939.
- Labour movement: led the unions of the Pasumalai Mahalakshmi Mills and Meenakshi Mills, Madurai; arrested in the 1938 agitation. 1937 – Madras Legislative Assembly (Ramanathapuram); Mudukulathur Assembly seat – 1952, 1957.

Tamil Nadu link: in 1979 CM M.G. Ramachandran declared Thevar Jayanti a State function. Every year between 28 and 30 Oct the gold armour is taken from a bank locker in Madurai and placed on the Pasumpon statue. The Mukkulathor community reveres him as a deity.

23 World Thrift Day (World Savings Day) 2026 – 30 Oct in India; 31 Oct worldwide

Important Days

News

World Savings / Thrift Day is observed worldwide on 31 Oct to promote the saving habit; India observes it on 30 Oct, because 31 Oct is the death anniversary of PM Indira Gandhi, assassinated on 31 Oct 1984. The 2026 World Savings Day campaign slogan is 'AI advises, human decides' – run by the Brussels-based World Savings and Retail Banking Institute (WSBI).

Key facts

Origin	31 Oct 1924 – 1st International Savings Bank Congress, Milan (Italy); proclaimed by Italian Prof. Filippo Ravizza
India	30 Oct (31 Oct – Indira Gandhi's death anniversary, 1984)
2026 slogan	'AI advises, human decides'
Body	WSBI – World Savings and Retail Banking Institute, Brussels (Belgium)
Stamp	World Thrift Day stamp – 31 Oct 1971 (20 paise)
NSSF	National Small Savings Fund – 1 Apr 1999; in the Public Account of India; Finance Ministry (DEA)

Background

- Economy: Saving = Income − Consumption. Household savings fund investment through bank deposits and small savings. Small-savings schemes include the Post Office Savings Account, PPF, National Savings Certificate (NSC), Kisan Vikas Patra, Sukanya Samriddhi and the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme.
- Polity: small-savings collections are credited to the 'National Small Savings Fund' (NSSF), kept in the Public Account of India under Article 266(2) – not the Consolidated Fund. The Union Finance Ministry notifies small-savings interest rates every quarter.
- History: Prof. Filippo Ravizza proclaimed 'International Saving Day' on the last day of the 1924 Milan congress. WSBI, which traces its origin to 1924, runs the World Savings Day campaign every year.

Tamil Nadu link: Thiruvalluvar stresses thrift in the chapter 'Valiyarithal' (Knowing One's Strength) – Kural 478 'Aakaaru alavittithaayinum kedillai pokaaru akalaak kadai': a small income does no harm if spending does not exceed it.

24 National Unity Day (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas) 2026 – Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 151st birth anniversary, 31 Oct

Important Days

News

National Unity Day marks the 151st birth anniversary (31 Oct 2026) of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. Celebrations are held on 30–31 Oct near the 'Statue of Unity' at Ekta Nagar (Kevadia), Gujarat; PM Narendra Modi will attend and address the National Unity Parade on 31 Oct – about 10,000 police and paramilitary personnel, 4,700 artists and an IAF flypast. 'Bharat Parv 2026' runs 29 Oct – 15 Nov. 'Run for Unity' events and the unity pledge are held across the country.

Key facts

Born	31 Oct 1875 – Nadiad (Gujarat); died 15 Dec 1950, Bombay
Day	National Unity Day – since 2014 (Union Government)
Statue of Unity	182 m – world's tallest statue; Sadhu Bet island, Narmada river; unveiled 31 Oct 2018; sculptor Ram V. Sutar
Titles	'Iron Man of India'; 'Patron Saint of civil servants'; Bharat Ratna – 1991 (posthumous)
2026 event	Ekta Nagar 30–31 Oct; National Unity Parade 31 Oct (PM); Bharat Parv 29 Oct – 15 Nov
Feat	Integrated more than 560 princely states into the Indian Union

Background

- Freedom struggle: Kheda Satyagraha (1918) – peasants' struggle with Gandhi. Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) – against a land-revenue hike; after its success the women of Bardoli gave him the title 'Sardar' (leader). Presided over the 1931 Karachi Congress session.
- Polity: in the Constituent Assembly he chaired the 'Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal & Excluded Areas' and the 'Provincial Constitution Committee'. (Drafting – Ambedkar; Union Powers – Nehru; Steering – Rajendra Prasad.) He championed the All India Services (IAS, IPS).
- Integration: as Home Minister, with V.P. Menon, he brought the princely states in through the Instrument of Accession; Hyderabad – 'Operation Polo' police action, 1948.
- Geography: the Statue of Unity stands at Ekta Nagar (Kevadia), Narmada district, Gujarat, facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam; the Narmada flows west between the Satpura and Vindhya ranges. Built by L&T (2018).

Tamil Nadu link: Pudukkottai State, ruled by the Tondaiman kings in present-day Tamil Nadu, merged with the Indian Union in 1948 (last ruler Rajagopala Tondaiman); today it is Pudukkottai district.

25 India's extreme poverty falls from 27.1% to 2.6% (2011–2023) – World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief

Economy

News

The World Bank's October 2026 Poverty and Equity Brief on India says extreme poverty fell from 27.1% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2023 – one of the fastest declines in the world – with about 496 million people moving out of poverty in that period. At the lower-middle-income line of $4.20 a day (2021 PPP), poverty fell from 57.7% to 16.1%, and is projected (indicative estimate) at 14.2% in 2026 and 12.1% by 2028. Consumption growth, jobs (largely rural women) and social transfers such as food assistance are cited as drivers. The brief also flags concerns: real earnings broadly flat, jobs mostly in low-productivity sectors, and youth unemployment up from 14.6% (Q1 FY26) to 15.9% (Q1 FY27).

Key facts

Report	World Bank – Poverty and Equity Brief (India), October 2026
Extreme poverty	27.1% (2011) to 2.6% (2023)
Poverty lines	International extreme-poverty line $3.00 a day (2021 PPP, since June 2025); lower-middle-income line $4.20
At $4.20 a day	57.7% (2011) to 16.1% (2023); projected 14.2% (2026), 12.1% (2028)
People lifted	About 496 million (2011–2023)
Multidimensional	OPHI MPI 53.8% (2005-06) to 16.4% (2019-21); World Bank measure 15.5% (2022-23)
Concerns	About 57% of the poor in the UP–West Bengal belt; youth unemployment 15.9%

Background

- In June 2025 the World Bank moved the international poverty line from $2.15 (2017 PPP) to $3.00 (2021 PPP); India's extreme poverty was then put at 5.3% for 2022-23.
- Poverty estimates in India use the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) of the NSO (Ministry of Statistics).
- Official Indian poverty line: Tendulkar Committee (2009) – 21.9% in 2011-12; the Rangarajan Committee (2014) report was not adopted.
- NITI Aayog's multidimensional poverty estimate: about 24.82 crore people moved out between 2013-14 and 2022-23 (discussion paper, Jan 2024).

Tamil Nadu link: In NITI Aayog's National MPI (2023), Tamil Nadu is among the states with the lowest multidimensional poverty (about 2.2% in 2019-21).

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