15 Oct: International Day of Rural Women, Global Handwashing Day, White Cane Safety Day 2026

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News

Three days fall on 15 Oct. The International Day of Rural Women 2026 theme (UN) is 'Rural Women Farmers Caring for Mother Nature' – women produce half the world's food yet own only about 15% of farmland. Global Handwashing Day carries the multi-year theme 'Be a Handwashing Hero!'. White Cane Safety Day marks the independence of people who are blind or visually impaired.

Key facts

Rural Women Day	2026: 'Rural Women Farmers Caring for Mother Nature'; UNGA resolution 62/136 (2007); first observed 2008
India	15 Oct – 'Mahila Kisan Diwas' (Women Farmers' Day), since 2016, Agriculture Ministry
Handwashing Day	Begun at Stockholm World Water Week 2008; first observed 15 Oct 2008; theme 'Be a Handwashing Hero!' (multi-year)
White Cane Day	US Congress resolution (6 Oct 1964); first proclaimed by President Lyndon Johnson; no 2026 theme

Background

- The white cane: in 1921 James Biggs, a photographer from Bristol (UK), painted his walking stick white after losing his sight; the US Lions Clubs popularised it from 1930. Braille was devised by Louis Braille (France); 4 Jan is World Braille Day.
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 – recognised disabilities raised from 7 to 21 (including blindness and low vision); in force from 19 Apr 2017; 4% reservation in government jobs.
- Handwashing: washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds cuts diarrhoea and respiratory infections. In 1847 Ignaz Semmelweis (Hungary) showed the importance of handwashing in hospitals.

Tamil Nadu link: 'Magalir Thittam' self-help groups – Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (1983); the 'Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thogai' – ₹1,000 a month (from 15 Sept 2023). Tamil Nadu has a separate Department for the Welfare of Differently Abled Persons.

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