United Nations Day 2026 – 24 October; 81 years since the UN Charter came into force

International & Important Days · 23 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/23



News

24 October is celebrated every year as 'United Nations Day', marking the entry into force of the UN Charter on 24 Oct 1945; 2026 is the 81st anniversary. The UN's 80th anniversary (UN80) was marked in 2025. The big event this year: as Secretary-General António Guterres's term ends on 31 Dec 2026, the Security Council is selecting his successor. In the sixth informal straw poll on 16 Oct (the first with colour-coded ballots), Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan held a narrow lead, but no one has been recommended yet. The new Secretary-General will take office on 1 Jan 2027. The President of the 81st UN General Assembly session is Bangladesh's Khalilur Rahman.

Key facts

UN Charter	Signed 26 June 1945, San Francisco; in force 24 Oct 1945
Members	51 original members (incl. India); now 193 (latest South Sudan, 2011)
HQ	New York; other main offices – Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi
Secretary-General	António Guterres (Portugal) – term to 31 Dec 2026; successor from 1 Jan 2027
Race (16 Oct)	6th straw poll – Rebeca Grynspan (Costa Rica) leads; no recommendation yet

UNGA-81 President	Khalilur Rahman (Bangladesh)

Background

- History: the name 'United Nations' was first used in the Declaration of 1 Jan 1942. At the San Francisco Conference (April–June 1945), 50 countries signed the Charter; Poland signed later, becoming the 51st original member. India (then British India) is an original member. The UN's predecessor, the League of Nations, began in 1920.
- Six principal organs: General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice (The Hague) and Secretariat. The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 Nov 1994 after Palau, the last trust territory, became independent.
- Charter rules: the Security Council has 5 permanent members (USA, Russia, China, UK, France – with veto power) and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. Article 97: the General Assembly appoints the Secretary-General on the Security Council's recommendation.
- India and the UN: India has been a non-permanent member of the Security Council 8 times (latest 2021–22) and is a candidate for 2028–29. In 1953 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first woman President of the General Assembly. India is among the largest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping.

Tamil Nadu link: Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar (1887–1976) – born at Kurnool in the then Madras Presidency (now Andhra Pradesh); studied at Madras Christian College and Madras Law College; a leading Justice Party figure. He led India's delegation at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, signed the Charter, and chaired the conference committee on economic and social matters. On 23 Jan 1946 he was elected the first President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); later the last Dewan of Mysore.

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