World Television Day 2026 – 21 November

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News

'World Television Day', highlighting television's role in communication, education and shaping public opinion, is observed on 21 November. The UN General Assembly proclaimed the day through resolution 51/205 adopted on 17 December 1996. The date marks the first 'World Television Forum' held at UN Headquarters on 21 and 22 November 1996. The UN does not announce a separate yearly theme for the day; there is no official theme for 2026. According to PIB, India has over 230 million TV households and about 900 million viewers. Prasar Bharati's free DTH service 'DD Free Dish' expanded to 482 channels in 2025.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Observed	21 November
UN resolution	51/205 – 17 December 1996
Why the date	First World Television Forum, 21–22 Nov 1996
2026 theme	None announced by the UN
Doordarshan began	15 September 1959, Delhi (AIR with UNESCO help)
SITE	1975–76; ISRO–NASA; 2,400 villages, 6 States

Point	Details
Colour TV	1982 – Asian Games, New Delhi
Airwaves ruling	1995 – 'airwaves are public property'
TV households	Over 230 million

Background

- History of science: On 26 January 1926, at his Frith Street workshop in London, Scottish engineer John Logie Baird gave the world's first public demonstration of live television before members of the Royal Institution (IEEE Milestone). Electronic television later replaced his mechanical system.
- Indian history: All India Radio began experimental telecasts in Delhi with UNESCO's help on 15 September 1959; daily transmission began in 1965. In 1975–76 the ISRO–NASA 'Satellite Instructional Television Experiment' (SITE) beamed programmes directly to about 2,400 villages in 6 States via NASA's ATS-6 satellite. Colour broadcasting arrived in 1982 with the Asian Games in New Delhi.
- Constitution: In 'Secretary, Ministry of I&B v. Cricket Association of Bengal' (1995), the Supreme Court held that airwaves are public property and that broadcasting is linked to free speech under Article 19(1)(a); it paved the way for independent broadcast regulation.
- Regulation & economy: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) frames tariff and interconnection rules for broadcasting and cable services. TRAI has also made recommendations on a service-authorisation framework for broadcasting under the Telecommunications Act, 2023.

Tamil Nadu link: Doordarshan Kendra Chennai began telecasting in 1975. The State-owned 'Tamil Nadu Arasu Cable TV Corporation' (TACTV) was incorporated on 4 October 2007 to provide good-quality cable signals to the public at low cost.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Observed: 21 November; UN resolution: 51/205 – 17 December 1996; Why the date: First World Television Forum, 21–22 Nov 1996; 2026 theme: None announced by the UN.

What is the background to this news?

History of science: On 26 January 1926, at his Frith Street workshop in London, Scottish engineer John Logie Baird gave the world's first public demonstration of live television before members of the Royal Institution (IEEE Milestone).

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Who gave the world's first public demonstration of live television in London in January 1926?

A) Guglielmo Marconi

B) John Logie Baird

C) Philo Farnsworth

D) Graham Bell

Answer: B – Explanation: John Logie Baird (Scotland) – mechanical television. Marconi pioneered wireless telegraphy.

2. India's colour TV broadcasting was introduced in 1982 to coincide with which event?

A) Commonwealth Games

B) Cricket World Cup

C) Asian Games

D) NAM Summit

Answer: C – Explanation: The 1982 Asian Games (9th edition) in New Delhi. Delhi hosted the Commonwealth Games only in 2010.

3. Which satellite was used for the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) of 1975–76?

A) ATS-6

B) Aryabhata

C) INSAT-1A

D) Bhaskara

Answer: A – Explanation: NASA's ATS-6 – ISRO built the ground systems, AIR made the programmes; 2,400 villages. INSAT-1A came only in 1982.

4. Which Tamil Nadu government corporation was set up in 2007 to give the public quality cable TV signals at low cost?

A) ELCOT

B) TANFINET

C) TIDEL Park

D) TACTV

Answer: D – Explanation: Tamil Nadu Arasu Cable TV Corporation (TACTV) – incorporated 4.10.2007. ELCOT is the electronics corporation; TANFINET runs the fibre network.

5. Which body frames tariff rules for broadcasting and cable TV services in India?

A) Prasar Bharati

B) TRAI

C) Press Council of India

D) CBFC

Answer: B – Explanation: TRAI (1997) regulates telecom and broadcasting. Prasar Bharati is the public broadcaster; CBFC certifies films.

Sources: UN A/RES/51/205; PIB backgrounder (Nov 2025); ISRO; MIB (SC judgment on airwaves); TACTV; IEEE Milestone (Baird, 1926),_1926. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.