

1. Government Launches Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) Operational Guidelines

- The **Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)** was launched with a total outlay of **₹1 Lakh Crore**, running from **2025-26 to 2030-31**.
- Financial allocations include **₹90,000 crores** for project funding and **₹5,000 crores** for capacity building.
- A **Credit Repayment Guarantee System** was introduced specifically for Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities located in hilly and northeastern regions.
- The government will provide **25%** of the capital for the fund.

2. Celebration of the 173rd Anniversary of Indian Railways

- India officially celebrated the **173rd anniversary** of its first passenger train operation on **April 16**.
- The commemorative event was led by **Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw**.
- The very first Indian passenger train ran on **April 16, 1853**.
- It covered a distance of **34 km**, traveling from **Bori Bunder (Mumbai)** to **Thane**.

3. Digital and Legal Tech Advancements in State Policing and Transport

- The **Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC)** introduced a QR-based passenger feedback system inside their buses.
- **Gujarat Police** launched India's first AI tool for narcotic investigations called **NARIT AI (Narcotics Analysis RAG-based Investigation Tool)**.

4. Status and Expansion of the PM e-VIDYA Program

- The program was initially launched on **May 17, 2020**, during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Initiated by the **Ministry of Education** as a core component of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- The program aims for a "One Nation, One Digital Education Infrastructure."
- It targets multi-mode digital education access (TV, radio, online) for students from classes **1 to 12**.
- It currently successfully covers **24.8 crore** school students and **4.33 crore** higher education learners.
- **SATHEE platform** (launched in **Nov 2023** by **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur**) was highlighted for offering online coaching support for competitive exams like **Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)** and **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)**.
- The initiative operates on six main pillars:
 1. **SWAYAM**: Online courses for higher education.
 2. **SWAYAM PRABHA**: 24/7 educational DTH TV channels.
 3. **DIKSHA**: Online curriculum content and QR-coded textbooks.
 4. **Radio/Community Radio**: Educational podcasts.
 5. **Special e-content for CWSN**: Resources for **Children With Special Needs (CWSN)**.
 6. **Online Coaching**: Incorporating platforms like **SATHEE**.

5. Entry of Foreign Universities into the Indian Education Sector

- **Birkbeck, University of London**, received official approval from the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** to set up a physical campus in **Bengaluru**.
- Other prominent universities setting up campuses include the **University of New South Wales** and the **University of Liverpool** (both in **Bengaluru**), and the **University of Southampton** in **Gurugram**.

6. State Governance Decisions in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka

- **Andhra Pradesh** government partnered with the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)** to deploy an early warning system to forecast lightning strikes.
- The **Karnataka** government proposed a strict social media ban specifically targeted at children under **16 years of age**.

7. Cultural Celebrations and Heritage Milestones

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **Sri Guru Bhairavaikya Temple** in **Karnataka**.
- The **Dr. Ambedkar Foundation** (functioning under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**) celebrated the **136th birth anniversary** of **B.R. Ambedkar** on **April 14, 2026**.
- **Seattle** became the first US city to officially install a statue of **Swami Vivekananda**.

8. India's Macroeconomic Trade Data and Export Trends for FY26

- India achieved a record **\$860 billion** in total exports (goods and services combined) in **FY 25-26**, marking a **4.2%** growth from **\$825 billion** in **FY 24-25**.

- Total imports surged to **\$978.4 billion**, resulting in a national overall trade deficit of **\$119.30 billion**.
- Data was officially released by **Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal**.
- **China** replaced the **United States of America (USA)** to become India's largest trading partner in **FY26**, with bilateral trade hitting **\$151.1 billion**.
- India's specific trade deficit with **China** heavily widened to **\$112.16 billion**.
- Despite the deficit, India is officially recognized as the world's **sixth-largest economy**.
- Regarding specific commodity exports, the government extended the **Minimum Export Price (MEP)** of **\$1,400 per metric ton** on natural honey until **December 31, 2026**.
- Recent data showed **95,380 tonnes** of honey exported, worth **\$176.56 million**. Top export destinations include the **US, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar**. Top producing states are **Uttar Pradesh (17%)**, followed by **West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, and Rajasthan**.
- The budget for the **National Beekeeping and Honey Mission** was simultaneously extended by **₹300 crore**.

9. Inflation Data, GDP Projections, and Unemployment Rates

- **Retail inflation (CPI)** rose to a 13-month high of **3.4%** in **March 2026** (up from **2.75%** in January and **3.21%** in February).
- **WPI-based inflation** accelerated to a 38-month high of **3.88%** year-on-year.
- Unemployment rate (per the **National Statistical Office's (NSO) Periodic Labour Force Survey**) hit a 5-month high of **5.1%** in **March**.
- **CPI Base Year Changes:** Updated to **2024**, basket items increased to **358**, food/beverage weight reduced to **36.75%**, and travel weight increased to **17%**.
- **WPI Base Year:** Stood at **2011-2012**.
- **GDP Base Year:** Revised to **2022–23** from the previous **2011–12** series.
- **GDP Projections for India:**
- **Asian Development Bank (ADB):** **6.9%** (FY27), **7.6%** (FY26), and **7.3%** (FY28).
- **International Monetary Fund (IMF):** Projected **6.9%** and **6.5%** for FY27 and FY28.
- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI):** **6.9%** for FY27.
- **World Bank:** **6.6%**.

10. Growth in Intellectual Property and Patent Applications

- The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** reported that total patent filings in India increased by **30.2%** to **1.43 lakh** in **FY26**.
- Top states filing patents were **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra**.
- India now globally ranks **6th** in the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)** index.
- The top four nations leading the WIPO index are the **USA, Japan, South Korea, and China**.

11. RBI Launches Utkarsh 3.0 and Amends NBFC Branch Guidelines

- The RBI was established on **April 1, 1935 (Hilton Young Commission)** and nationalized on **January 1, 1949**. The **26th Governor** is **Sanjay Malhotra**, supported by four Deputy Governors: **T. Rabi Sankar, Swaminathan Janakiraman, Punam Gupta, and Srijish Chandra Murmu** (Terms are 3-5 years, or up to age 62).
- The RBI officially launched **Utkarsh 2029 (Utkarsh 3.0)**, a three-year medium-term strategy framework running from **April 2026 to March 2029**.
- The RBI amended branch authorization directions for **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** via the **PRAVAAH portal**. NBFCs no longer need prior approval to expand branches.
- New NBFC branch expansion limits apply based on **Net Owned Funds (NOF)** and credit ratings:
- **NOF over ₹50 crore + 'AA' rating or above:** Can open branches anywhere in India.
- **NOF over ₹50 crore + rating below 'AA':** Restricted to opening branches only within their registered home state.
- **NOF up to ₹50 crore or lower ratings:** Can only open branches in the state of their registered office.

12. India Digital Payment Report and Shifting Banking Market Capitalization

- According to **Worldline's India Digital Payment Report**, the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** processed **228.5 billion** transactions in **2025**, representing a **33%** year-on-year increase.

- The average ticket size for transactions declined by **10%**.
- Regarding market capitalization, **State Bank of India (SBI)** overtook **ICICI Bank** to become India's second-largest lender by market value (first time since **August 2019**).
- **HDFC Bank** remains the largest lender in the country.

• **Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI)** recorded the steepest market decline of **40.3%**.

13. Corporate Milestones, Banking Partnerships, and Technological Integrations

- **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** launched two new mobile apps in **Mumbai** via the **DIVE platform**: "**My LIC**" (for customers) and "**Super Sales Sathi**" / "**LIC Super Sales**" (for sales intermediaries/agents).
- **Catholic Syrian Bank (CSB Bank)** (founded in **1920**, HQ **Thrissur, Kerala**) launched the "**Smart Save Account**".
- **Reliance Jio & Bank of Baroda** partnered to launch the "**bob World lite**" mobile banking app on the **JioBharat 4G** platform.
- **Visa** and **HDFC Bank** launched a limited-edition **FIFA World Cup 2026 PIXEL Credit Card**.
- **Razorpay** partnered with **Sam Altman's OpenAI** to enable instant embedded payments in AI applications.
- **National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) Mohali** signed an agreement with **Novartis Healthcare Private Limited (NHPL)** for pharmaceutical innovation.
- **Shriram Finance** successfully received RBI approval to begin a primary dealer business.
- The new **FIFA World Cup 2026 PIXEL Credit Card** features a "Spend and Win" campaign offering merchandise and packages for the 48-team tournament hosted in the **US, Canada, and Mexico**.

14. Global Rankings and Multilateral International Engagements

- Three Indians featured in the **TIME 100 Most Influential People 2026** (23rd edition): **Google CEO Sundar Pichai** (Titan category, AI leadership), **Chef Vikas Khanna** (Innovator category, global Indian cuisine), and **Actor Ranbir Kapoor** (Artist category).
- **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Jay Shah** was included in the **World Economic Forum's (WEF) "Young Global Leaders Class of 2026"**.
- India hosted the **1st BRICS Health Working Group Meeting** in **New Delhi**, headed by India's Health Secretary, **Punya Salila Srivastava**.
- India and **New Zealand** are set to sign a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** on **April 27th** at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi** (finalized in just 9 months).
- **PM Modi** held bilateral talks with Austrian Chancellor **Christian Stocker** at **Hyderabad House, New Delhi**, focusing on trade, investment, and green technology.
- The **World Bank Group** launched the "**Water Forward**" initiative.
- As the **2026 BRICS chair**, India proposed a "**BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle**" focusing on diet, mental health, and reducing tobacco/alcohol risks. The BRICS 2026 theme is "**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability**".
- **Jay Shah** was recognized globally for his contributions to cricket, particularly for getting the sport included in the **2028 Los Angeles Olympics**.
- The **World Bank's "Water Forward"** initiative aims to provide water security to **1 billion people by 2030** (Targeting **400 million** directly, with the rest supported by banks like **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**).
- **TIME 100 Extras**: Youngest honoree is 19-year-old **Alisa Liu**, oldest is 96-year-old **Dollar**. Prominent global leaders included **Donald Trump**, Japan's PM **Sanai Takaichi**, and Nepal's PM **Balendra Shah**.
- **Diplomatic Facts**: **Austria** is a central European nation (capital: **Vienna**) and is not a **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** member. India and **Germany** also launched a commemorative logo marking **75 years** of diplomatic ties.

15. Defense Expeditions, Armed Forces Operations, and Military Tech

- The first edition of the **Indian Navy Commanders' Conference 2026** took place at **Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi**.

- The **Regiment of Artillery of the Indian Army** flagged off its first blue-water sailing expedition, "**Samudra Sahas**", from **Mumbai**.
- The **Indian Army's Trishakti Corps**, alongside the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**, launched **Operation Himshetu** in **North Sikkim**.
- The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** and US-based **GE Aerospace** announced a contract to establish in-country Depot facilities for **F404-IN20 engines**.

16. Major Sports Tournaments and International Player Retirements

- Indian grandmaster **R Vaishali** won the **FIDE Women's Candidates 2026** in **Cyprus**.
- **Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov** won the open section of the same tournament.
- 32-year-old Danish badminton player **Viktor Axelsen** and **Bangladesh** pacer **Rubel Hossain** both officially announced their retirements from international sports.
- India's **Sonam Maskar** finished **5th** in the women's 10m air rifle event at the **International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup** in **Spain**, where China's **Wang Zifi** won gold.
- **R Vaishali** became the first Indian woman to win the FIDE tournament. She scored **8.5/14 points**, defeated Russia's **Kateryna Lagno**, and successfully qualified for the World Championship to challenge China's **Ju Wenjun**.
- **Viktor Axelsen (Denmark Badminton Player)** retired due to a back injury after holding the world number one spot for **183 weeks** and winning Olympic golds in **Tokyo** and **Paris**, and a bronze in **Rio**.

17. Political Appointments, Corporate Signings, and Obituaries

- **Samrat Choudhary (Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP))** was sworn in as the **24th Chief Minister of Bihar**.
- Kurdish politician **Nizar Amedi** was elected as the new **President of Iraq** (defeating **Muthanna Amin Nader**).
- IT giant **Infosys** appointed world number one tennis player **Carlos Alcaraz** as their official brand ambassador.
- **Obituaries:**
- **Jim Whittaker**, the first American to summit Mount Everest (achieved on **May 1, 1963**, alongside **Nawang Gombu**), passed away.
- **Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury (Dalu Babu)**, veteran Congress leader, former MP from **Maldaha Dakshin**, and former Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, passed away in **Kolkata** at the age of **88**.

18. Observation of Important National and International Days in April

- **April 17: World Hemophilia Day** was observed. (The 2026 theme is "**Diagnosis: First Step to Care**")
- **April 13: Siachen Day** and the **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Anniversary** were officially observed.
- **April 12: International Day for Street Children** was observed. (Theme: "**Protect Not Punish**")
- **Siachen Day** marked the **42nd anniversary** of the Indian Army's presence at the **Siachen Glacier**, commemorating the **1984 Operation Meghdoot**.
- The **Jallianwala Bagh** observation marked the **107th anniversary** of the **1919** massacre where British troops fired on a peaceful crowd protesting the **Rowlatt Act**, killing nearly **379 people**.
- **World Hemophilia Day** was established in **1989** by the **World Federation of Hemophilia** honoring founder **Frank Schnabel**.