

1. Government Launches Biopharma SHAKTI Scheme

- **SHAKTI** stands for **Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology, and Innovation**.
- The scheme was launched with a **₹10,000 crore** outlay over **five years**.
- It features the establishment of a **Discovery Grant Fund**, an **Equity Fund**, and the setup of **1,000** clinical trial sites.
- Clinical trials and drugs in **India** are overseen by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**, which was established in **1940** with its headquarters in **New Delhi**.
- The current **Drug Controller General** is **Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi**.

2. Ministry of Education Introduces SATHEE App Initiative

- The initiative was introduced to serve as a free digital learning platform for competitive exams like **JEE, NEET, CUET, SSC, IBPS, CLAT, and ICAR**.
- The platform was introduced by the **Ministry of Education** in collaboration with the **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT Kanpur)**.
- The platform democratizes education by offering content in **English, Hindi, and 12 regional languages**.

3. Ministry of Health Approves Ease of Doing Business Reforms

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** approved regulatory reforms that will come into effect starting **April 1, 2026**.
- The basic registration turnover limit was increased from **₹12 lakh** to **₹1.5 crore**.
- Under the new framework, state licensing applies up to a **₹50 crore** threshold, after which central licensing is legally required.

4. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) :

- Originally evolved from **Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA)** for zero-balance needs, the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** was launched in **2014** to boost financial inclusion.
- The scheme continues to offer a zero minimum balance, a **RuPay** debit card, **₹2 lakh** accident insurance, and a **₹10,000** overdraft facility (preferentially for women).
- The scheme is the backbone for **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)** via the **Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile (JAM) Trinity**, functioning to eliminate middlemen and corruption.

5. India Post Launches "24 Speed Post" Delivery Upgrades

- Launching on **March 17** under the **Ministry of Communications**, three new secure (OTP-based) services were introduced in **New Delhi**: **24 Speed Post**, **24 Speed Post Parcel**, and **48 Speed Post**.
- **Phase 1** of the rollout covers **six** major cities: **New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad**.
- The 24-hour service guarantees next-day delivery for urgent consignments, dramatically improving postal efficiency.

6. Major State-Specific Schemes and Infrastructure Developments

- **Andhra Pradesh**: Chief Minister **N. Chandrababu Naidu** launched the **Divyang Shakti Scheme** in **Amaravati**, providing free bus travel for individuals with **40%** or more disability.
- **Assam**: Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **Lower Kopili Hydroelectric Project**.
- **Chhattisgarh**: Chief Minister **Vishnu Deo Sai** launched the **Godham/Gaudhan Yojana** at **Lashar village** to protect stray cattle, setting up **1,460 to 14,460** shelters ("**Surabhi Gaudham**" / "**Surbhi Godhams**") for up to **200** cattle each, with feed support of **₹10 to ₹35** daily, **₹1 lakh** annual maintenance, **₹47,000** per acre for fodder, and **₹19,016** shepherd honorarium.
- **Gujarat**: Launched a **Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)** vaccination campaign (**March 1 - April 15**) with animal data uploaded to the **Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH)** portal, while **Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation (GMDC)** partnered with **National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC)** for rare earth elements.
- **Himachal Pradesh**: Signed **three MoUs** with the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** for milk processing and infrastructure, launching **two** processing plants.

- **Jammu & Kashmir:** Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** inaugurated **Asia's largest Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden (74 acres, Zabarwan range)**; hosted the first **National Conference on Cold Water Fisheries** in Srinagar; Union Minister **Rajiv Ranjan Singh** announced a **₹100 crore Integrated Aqua Park** in Anantnag; and **PMMSY** dedicated **₹299.56 crore** for fisheries.
 - **Maharashtra:** Partnered with **Wadhvani AI** to implement AI in public health.
 - **Puducherry:** Central Government approved a **₹1,250 crore IT SEZ** project across **21.3 acres**.
 - **Uttar Pradesh:** **World Bank** approved a **\$299.66 million** loan (**10-year** tenure, **2-year** grace) for the **UP Clean Air Management Program** (targets **200** monitors, e-buses, **700** kilns).
 - **West Bengal:** Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **Haldia Bulk Terminal**; launched India's first overnight **Vande Bharat Sleeper Train (Guwahati/Kamakhya to Howrah)**, built by **BEML Bengaluru**, designed by **ICF Chennai**; **World Bank** approved a **\$286 million** health loan; **State Bank of India (SBI)** launched a **Global Trade Finance Center (GTFC)** in Kolkata.
- 7. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) 59th Monetary Policy and Banking Regulations**
- The **6-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** kept the **Repo Rate** unchanged at **5.25%**.
 - Other standard rates: **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)** at **5.0%**, **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)** and **Bank Rate** at **5.50%**, **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** at **3%**, and **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)** at **18%**. • Collateral-free loan limits for **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** were raised from **₹10 lakh** to **₹20 lakh** (effective **April 1, 2026**).
 - **Ways and Means Advances (WMA)** limit for states/UTs was changed to **₹60,118 crore**.
 - **RBI** penalized **Cashfree Payments ₹3.10 lakh** for escrow account violations.
 - Under the **Integrated Ombudsman Scheme**, maximum compensation increased from **₹10 lakh** to **₹30 lakh**, and mental harassment compensation from **₹1 lakh** to **₹3 lakh** (effective **July 1, 2026**).
 - A one-time compensation of **₹25,000** from the **Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA)** Fund was created for digital fraud victims.
 - **Financial Literacy Week (11th edition, Feb 9-13, 2026)** theme was "**KYC - Your first step to safe banking**".
 - **Digital Payment Awareness Week (March 9-13)** featured a pilot in **Maharashtra** (with **Common Service Centres (CSC)**) and a campaign "**Thoda Dhyan Se**".
 - **RBI** won the "**Initiative of the Year**" award from **Central Banking** in London for its **".bank.in"** and **".fin.in"** domains (executed with **Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT)** and **National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI)**).
 - **RBI** signed an agreement with the **European Securities Market Authority (ESMA)** in Paris.
- 8. Macroeconomic Indicators: Trade, Employment, and Inflation Data**
- India's Trade Data (April-February): Merchandise and service exports rose **5.79%** to **\$790.86 billion** (Merchandise: **\$402.93 billion**, Service: **\$387.93 billion**).
 - Imports stood at **\$900.51 billion**, yielding a trade deficit between **\$110 billion** and **\$210 billion**.
 - Overall unemployment in **February 2026** was **4.9%** (Urban dropped to **6.6%**), as released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.
 - **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)**-based inflation reached an **11-month high** of **2.13%** in **February 2026**.
 - Female workforce participation saw notable growth, reaching **40%** in rural areas and **25.5%** in urban areas.
 - India's top trading partners currently are **China, United States of America (USA), United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, and **Hong Kong**.
- 9. Expansion of Digital Banking Products and Corporate Milestones**
- **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)** expanded **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** merchant acceptance in **Sri Lanka** via **Lanka QR** code.
 - **Jio Payments Bank** launched a **UPI-based cash withdrawal facility** at **Business Correspondent (BC)** points via **QR code**.
 - **State Bank of India (SBI)** raised **₹651 crore** issuing **Basel III-compliant Tier-2** bonds (**10-year** tenure, **5-year** call option, **7.05%** interest).

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- **SBI Securities** launched a "**Women's Mode**" under the "**Infinity 8**" initiative based on **6,000+** female investors' feedback (During this segment broadcast, a disruptive chat troll was addressed and reported to cyber police).
 - **22-year-old** friends **Branden Fody**, **Adarsh Hiremath**, and **Surya Midha** became the youngest billionaires, co-founding the AI hiring platform **Mercor** (raised **\$350 million**, **\$10 billion** valuation, holding **~22%** equity for a **\$2B+** net worth).
- 10. Gujarat Launches First Single-Stage Sub-Orbital Sounding Rocket**
- The sounding rocket was launched from **Bavaliyari** near **Dholera, Gujarat**.
 - It was executed by **Om Space Rocket and Exploration Pvt Ltd (OSR)** under **IN-SPACE** and the **Gujarat Space Tech Policy 2025-30**.
- 11. Defense Milestones: Sagar Defence Maritime Center, Exercise Sea Dragon, and Ordnance Day**
- Foundation laid for India's first **Autonomous Maritime Ship Building and Systems Centre** at **Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh** (occupies **29.58 acres**).
 - The **Indian Navy** (deploying a **Boeing P8I**) participated in the USA-led anti-submarine **Exercise "Sea Dragon"** at **Andersen Air Force Base in Guam**, alongside the **USA, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand**.
 - **Ordnance Factories Day** was celebrated on **March 18** by the **Ministry of Defence** with the theme "**Atmanirbhar Bharat**".
- 12. International Relations: BIMSTEC, Europe Engagement, and Asia Africa Agri Alliance**
- The **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** held its first **Young Professionals Exchange Program (March 9-15)** in **Mumbai/Pune**, organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** and **Maharashtra**.
 - **Cyprus** currently holds the **EU presidency**.
- 13. Winners of the 98th Academy Awards (Oscars 2026)**
- The highest honors in international cinema were awarded in **Los Angeles**, hosted by **Conan O'Brien**.
 - **Best Picture: "One Battle After Another"** (won the highest total awards: **6**).
 - **Best Director: Paul Thomas Anderson ("One Battle After Another")**.
 - **Actor (Lead): Michael B. Jordan ("Sinners")**.
 - **Actress (Lead): Jessie Buckley ("Hamnet")**.
 - **Supporting Actor: Sean Penn ("One Battle After Another")**.
 - **Supporting Actress: Amy Madigan ("Weapon")**.
 - **Autumn Durald Arkapaw** won **Cinematography** for "**Sinners**", making history as the first woman and first woman of color to win.
 - "**Sinners**" received the highest total nominations (**16**).
 - Other Winners: **Original Song: "Golden" (K-pop Demon Hunters)**; **Animated Feature: K-pop Demon Hunters**; **Documentary: Mr. Nobody Against Putin**; **Original Screenplay: Ryan Coogler ("Sinners")**; **Adapted Screenplay: Paul Thomas Anderson ("One Battle After Another")**; **International Feature: Sentimental Value (Norway)**; **Visual Effects: Avatar: Fire and Ash**; **Best Sound: F1**.
- 14. Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025 and BCCI Naman Awards 2026 Announced**
- **Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025** Winners: **Mamta Kalia** (Hindi), **Navesh Sharma** (English), **Prasun Bandyopadhyay** (Bengali), **Sa Tamil S** (Tamil), and **Sadhu Bandraas** (Sanskrit).
 - **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Naman Awards 2026** (honoring the **2024-25** season): **Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement** went to **Roger Binny** and **Rahul Dravid**; **Women's Lifetime** went to **Mithali Raj**.
 - The Sahitya Akademi Award is India's second-highest literary award, recognizing authors across **24** languages (**22 Scheduled + English & Rajasthani**).
- The literary prize includes **₹1 lakh**, a plaque, and a shawl.
- Former **Bandhan Bank MD/CEO Chandra Shekhar Ghosh** won the **West Bengal Governor Award of Excellence (Vande Mataram Puraskar 2026)**.
- 15. Major Sporting Events and Achievements across Multiple Disciplines**

- **Para Athletics:** India topped the **World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026** in Delhi with **208 medals (75 Gold, 69 Silver, 64 Bronze)**, defeating **Russia (2nd)** and **Bosnia & Herzegovina (3rd)**. Gold winners included **Preethi Pal (W-200m T35/T37)**, **Shubham Jial (M-Shotput)**, **Rakesh Bhai Bhatt (M-200m)**, and **Manoj Kumar Sabhapati (M-800m)**; **Bina Shambhu** won Bronze.
- **Tennis:** At the **2026 BNP Paribas Open (Indian Wells)**, **Jannik Sinner** won Men's Singles, and **Aryna Sabalenka** won Women's Singles (defeating **Elena Rybakina**). Women's Doubles: **Katerina Siniakova / Taylor Townsend**; Men's Doubles: **Guido Andreozzi / Manuel Guinard**; Mixed: **Belinda / Flavio**.
- **Hockey:** The **India Women's team** (Coach: **Sjoerd Marijne**, Key Player: **Navneet Kaur**) qualified for the **2026 FIH World Cup** (co-hosted by **Netherlands / Belgium**).
- **Football:** **Services** won the **79th Santosh Trophy**, defeating **Kerala** in Assam.
- **Arpita Patra** summited **Nevado Ojos del Salado** (Chile/Argentina, **6,893m**), becoming the **2nd** Indian woman (after **Arunima Sinha**) to achieve this.
- **Cricket:** Former **Pakistan** captain **Sarfaraz Ahmed** retired (**100** intl matches, **11** consecutive T20I series wins, **2** ICC final wins vs India).
- **Formula 1:** **Mercedes** driver **Andrea Kimi Antonelli** won the **Chinese Grand Prix** in Shanghai (**George Russell** 2nd, **Lewis Hamilton** 3rd).
- **Hockey Cups Revised** in syllabus: **Agha Khan, Beighton, Dhyan Chand, Indira Gold, Nehru, Sahni, Rangaswami, Murugappa, Modi Gold, Zendre Champions**.
- **Broadcast Interactive Note:** The **Davis Cup** is known as the 'World Cup' of Tennis.

16. Important National and International Days Observed

- **March 13: World Sleep Day** (Theme: "Sleep well, live better").
- **March 14: International Day of Mathematics / Pi Day** (Theme: "Mathematics and Hope").
- **March 15: World Consumer Rights Day & International Day to Combat Islamophobia**.
- **March 16: National Vaccination Day / National Immunization Day** (Theme: "Immunization for All is Humanly Possible").
- India separately celebrates **National Math Day** on **Dec 22** honoring Ramanujan.
- Festivals observed include the **Indian Rocket Festival** in **Pakyong, Sikkim** (Theme: "Orchids for Beauty and Prosperity") and the **Bharat Tribes Fest** in **New Delhi**.

17. Key Corporate Appointments, Brand Ambassadors, and Obituaries

- **Arun Mamen** was re-elected Chairman of the **Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA)**.
- **R. Vijay Anand** appointed MD & CEO of **City Union Bank** (3-year term).
- **Yumnam Khemchand Singh** appointed **13th Chief Minister of Manipur**.
- **Vinay Murlidhar Tonse** appointed MD & CEO of **Yes Bank** (3 years).
- **Sunetra Pawar** became the first woman Deputy CM of **Maharashtra**.
- **Kota Ravi** appointed CMD of **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.
- New Brand Ambassadors include: **Jasprit Bumrah (Uniqlo)**, **Vidya Balan (Federal Bank)**, **Andre De Grasse (21st Tata Mumbai Marathon)**, **MS Dhoni (Pune Grand Tour 2026)**, **AR Rahman (DSC Developer)**, **Sania Mirza (Derma Co)**, and **Ravindra Jadeja (City Union Bank, 2-year contract)**.

Obituaries: Renowned Hindi film actress **Madhu Malhotra** (famous for the song "Lambi Judai") passed away.