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WEEKLY — Current Affairs



NATIONAL NEWS

Patna Bird Sanctuary in UP designated as Ramsar wetlands

- **Smallest Sanctuary, Huge Impact:** Spanning only about 1.09 square kilometers, Patna Bird Sanctuary is the smallest bird sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh. Despite its size, it is a biodiversity hotspot that hosts over 180 species of birds and more than 250 plant species.
- **Critical Habitat on the Central Asian Flyway:** The site serves as a vital wintering ground for over 60,000 migratory birds annually. It is particularly known for supporting significant populations of the Northern Pintail, Rosy Pelican, and the endangered Sarus Crane.
- **Boosting India's Conservation Tally:** With this addition (alongside Gujarat's Chhari-Dhand), India's total number of Ramsar sites has reached 98. This designation also makes it the 11th Ramsar site in Uttar Pradesh, the second-highest count for any Indian state.

NGEL & Assago Signs MoU to Develop India's First Green Urea Plant

- **Pioneering Green Technology:** The plant will produce 1,000 tonnes per day (TPD) of Green Urea by using renewable feedstock—specifically Green Ammonia and captured Carbon Dioxide (\$CO_2\$).
- **Strategic Hub Location:** The project will be established within the Pudimadaka Green Hydrogen Hub near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. NGEL will provide the core infrastructure, including renewable power and green hydrogen derivatives, to support the facility.
- **National Impact & Self-Reliance:** This initiative is a major step toward Atmanirbhar Bharat in the fertilizer sector. It aims to reduce India's reliance on imported urea (currently 8–10 million tonnes annually) and significantly decarbonize the country's agricultural supply chain.

Footnotes: NGEL's CMD: Gurdeep Singh, HQ: New Delhi, Estd: 2022

Maharashtra won Best Tableau category

- **Winning Theme:** The tableau was titled "Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta" (Self-Reliance). It creatively portrayed the Ganesh festival not just as a religious event, but as a historical tool for community participation and economic self-reliance.
- **Cultural Highlights:** The display featured a vibrant blend of tradition and performance, including a high-impact Dhol-Tasha performance by Nagpur's Gajavakra troupe—the first time this traditional drumming style was featured on Kartavya Path—and a lively Lezim dance by women performers.

- **Judges' Choice:** Maharashtra secured the first prize in the States/Union Territories category (Judges' Choice), followed by Jammu & Kashmir (Handicrafts and Folk Dances) in second place and Kerala (Water Metro) in third.

India digitises Vintage Pechora Missile System

- **Indigenous Digital Overhaul:** Led by the Bengaluru-based firm Alpha Design Technologies, the upgrade replaced outdated analogue valve-and-transistor electronics with modern digital chips and a new radar transmitter. This has significantly improved target acquisition speed, tracking accuracy, and resistance to electronic jamming.
- **Cost-Effective Life Extension:** Instead of decommissioning the 50-year-old system, this ₹591.3 crore project extends its operational life toward 2030. It provides a high-readiness, "point-defense" shield for critical installations like airbases at a fraction of the cost of procuring entirely new missile systems.
- **Integration into "Mission Sudarshan Chakra":** The digitized Pechora is now integrated with the IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS). This allows it to function as a networked component of India's multi-layered air defense grid, capable of neutralizing modern threats such as low-flying drones and cruise missiles.

PFRDA launched NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme

- **Integrated Medical Corpus:** The scheme allows subscribers to build a dedicated fund specifically for medical expenses. Unlike traditional NPS, these funds can be used for both outpatient (OPD) and inpatient (IPD) costs. Existing non-government subscribers over the age of 40 can transfer up to 30% of their current NPS contributions into this new account.
- **Flexible Withdrawal Rules:** To ensure liquidity for health emergencies, PFRDA has relaxed standard withdrawal norms. Subscribers can make partial withdrawals of up to 25% of their own contributions once their corpus reaches ₹50,000. There is no limit on the number of withdrawals or a mandatory waiting period.
- **Critical Illness Safeguard:** In cases of severe medical emergencies where a single hospital bill exceeds 70% of the total corpus, the scheme allows for a 100% lump-sum premature exit. These payments are made directly to hospitals or Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) to ensure the funds are used exclusively for treatment.

Gujarat CM Launches 'Mukhyamantri Gramotthan Yojana'

- **Urban Facilities for Rural Areas:** The scheme aims to provide urban-style infrastructure to villages, including high-quality roads, underground drainage, solar

street lighting, community halls, and digital e-Gram services to reduce the rural-urban divide.

- **Two-Phase Implementation:** The first phase focuses on 114 villages that serve as Taluka headquarters but lack municipalities. The government plans to expand this to all villages with a population exceeding 10,000.
- **Grassroots Governance Boost:** Alongside the launch, the CM laid foundation stones for 2,666 Gram Panchayat Ghar-cum-Talati Awas buildings (worth ₹663 crore), ensuring that local administrators have dedicated spaces to live and work within the villages they serve.

Gujarat emerged as India's top Renewable Energy

- **National Leader in Capacity:** Gujarat has become the largest contributor to India's renewable energy (RE), holding a 16.5% share of the national total with an installed capacity of 42,583 GW. It currently ranks #1 in wind power and #1 in total RE capacity nationwide.
- **Rooftop Solar Hub:** The state leads the country in rooftop solar adoption, with over 11 lakh (1.1 million) installations generating roughly 6,413 MW. This accounts for more than 25% of India's total rooftop solar output, driven by the success of the Surya Gujarat and PM Surya Ghar schemes.
- **World-Class Infrastructure:** Gujarat is home to the Khavda Renewable Energy Park in Kutch, which has reached an operational capacity of over 11 GW. Once fully completed, it will be the world's largest renewable energy park at 30 GW, larger than the city of Singapore.

IR Launched 1st-ever LNG diesel dual-fuel DEMU Train

- **Significant Diesel Substitution:** The modified 1,400 HP train uses a dual-fuel system where Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) replaces approximately 40% of traditional diesel consumption, without any loss in engine performance or reliability.
- **Operational Range & Future Scaling:** Equipped with a 2,200-liter LNG tank, the train can cover up to 222 km daily on a single refill. Following the success of field trials (over 2,000 km), Indian Railways plans to convert eight more DEMU units to this dual-fuel mode.
- **Economic & Environmental Impact:** The initiative is expected to save nearly ₹24 lakh annually per 8-coach rake. It also significantly reduces carbon dioxide (\$CO_2\$), nitrogen oxides (\$NO_x\$), and particulate matter, drastically improving air quality along rail routes.

Chhari-Dhand Designated as India's 98th Ramsar Site

- **Unique Desert Ecosystem:** Spread over 227 sq. km, Chhari-Dhand (meaning "saline shallow lake") is a unique seasonal wetland situated between the arid Banni grasslands and the marshy Rann of Kutch. It is the first Ramsar site in Kutch and the fifth in Gujarat.
- **Global Biodiversity Hub:** It serves as a critical stopover on the Central Asian Flyway, hosting nearly 2 lakh birds including migratory species like the Common Crane, Great White Pelican, and Greater Flamingo. It also supports endangered wildlife like the Desert Fox, Caracal, and Wolf.
- **India's Rising Status:** With the simultaneous addition of Chhari-Dhand and the Patna Bird Sanctuary (UP), India now holds 98 Ramsar sites—ranking 1st in Asia and 3rd globally for the total number of recognized wetlands of international importance.

Sunetra Pawar sworn in as Maharashtra Deputy CM

- **A Historic First:** Sunetra Pawar has become the first woman to hold the post of Deputy Chief Minister in Maharashtra's history. She was sworn in by Governor Acharya Devvrat at Raj Bhavan in a ceremony attended by CM Devendra Fadnavis.
- **Key Portfolio Allocation:** Transitioning from her role as a Rajya Sabha MP, she has been assigned high-visibility portfolios including State Excise, Sports and Youth Welfare, and Minority Development. The crucial Finance portfolio, previously held by her husband, has been temporarily taken over by CM Fadnavis.
- **Ensuring Political Continuity:** Her elevation was a strategic move by the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) to maintain stability within the Mahayuti alliance and the Pawar family legacy. She was unanimously elected as the NCP Legislature Party leader just three days after Ajit Pawar's funeral.

Footnotes: Maharashtra's Governor: Acharya Devvrat, Capital: Mumbai

Govt issues New Customs Baggage Regulations, 2026

- **Significant Hike in Duty-Free Limits:** The general duty-free allowance for Indian residents and tourists of Indian origin arriving by air or sea has been increased from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000. For foreign tourists, the limit has been raised from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000. These limits apply to items carried in accompanied baggage for personal use.
- **Rationalized Jewellery & Laptop Allowances:** For the first time, jewellery allowances are now based solely on weight rather than value to account for fluctuating gold prices. Returning residents (abroad for >1 year) can bring 40g (females) and 20g (others) duty-free. Additionally, the rules now explicitly permit one new laptop duty-free for any passenger aged 18 or older.
- **Reduced Duty on Excess Goods:** In a major relief for shoppers, the Union Budget 2026 slashed the customs duty on "personal imports" (goods exceeding the free limit)

from 20% to 10%. This effectively halves the tax burden for travelers bringing home high-end electronics or luxury goods beyond their ₹75,000 quota.

Adampur Airport Renamed Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport

- **Cultural Significance:** The renaming honors Sri Guru Ravidas Ji, a revered social reformer whose teachings on equality and human rights have a profound influence in the Doaba region, where the airport is located.
- **Infrastructure Expansion:** The renaming coincided with the full operationalization of the airport's new terminal building, which was built at a cost of approximately 150 crore. This expansion allows the airport to handle up to 300 passengers during peak hours.
- **Boost to Religious Tourism:** This move is expected to significantly increase domestic and international footfall as the airport serves as a primary gateway for pilgrims visiting the Dera Sachkhand Ballan, a major spiritual center for the Ravidassia community located nearby.

Arunachal's Mountaineer Kabak Yano Summits Mount Aconcagua

- **South American Milestone:** On February 1, 2026, Kabak Yano successfully scaled Mount Aconcagua (22,831 feet) in Argentina, which is the highest peak in both South America and the Western Hemisphere.
- **Seven Summits Quest:** This climb is a major part of her ambitious "7-Summit Mountaineering Expedition." Having already conquered Everest, Kilimanjaro, and Elbrus, she is moving closer to her goal of summiting the highest peaks on all seven continents.
- **A First for her Community:** Hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, Yano is already recognized as the first woman from the Nyishi community to scale Mount Everest (May 2024), and this latest feat further solidifies her status as a trailblazer for women in adventure sports.

AP CM N. Chandrababu Naidu Launches 'Pilloo AI'

- **India's First Voice-Based AI Accounting:** Launched on February 2, 2026, Pilloo AI is an innovative platform that allows small business owners to manage billing, invoices, and accounting entirely through voice commands, eliminating the need for formal accounting expertise.
- **Empowering MSMEs:** Specifically designed for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the app helps shopkeepers and local entrepreneurs move away from manual record-keeping. It supports five Indian languages, allowing users to record transactions and generate balance sheets by speaking in their native tongue.

- **Vision for Digital Governance:** At the launch, the CM generated the first invoice using a voice command. He highlighted that the tool aligns with Andhra Pradesh's goal of becoming a global AI hub while improving financial transparency and "ease of doing business" at the grassroots level.

Yumnam Khemchand Singh Sworn In as Manipur CM

- **End of President's Rule:** His swearing-in marked the revocation of nearly a year of President's Rule, which had been imposed on February 13, 2025, following the resignation of former CM N. Biren Singh amidst prolonged ethnic conflict.
- **Tripartite Ethnic Representation:** In a move to restore peace and inclusivity, the new government includes two Deputy Chief Ministers from different ethnic backgrounds: Nemcha Kipgen and Losii Dikho.
- **Focus on Reconciliation:** Khemchand Singh, a former Speaker and Taekwondo expert, has prioritized inter-ethnic peace and development as his primary goal, aiming to bridge the divide between the Meitei, Kuki-Zo, and Naga communities.

Footnotes: Manipur's Previous CM: N. Biren Singh, **Governor:** Ajay Kumar Bhalla, **Capital:** Imphal

DEFENCE NEWS

Air Marshal Inderpal Singh took over as Chief of Eastern Air Command

- **Decorated Fighter Pilot:** Commissioned in June 1988, he is an alumnus of the NDA and a highly experienced combat pilot with over 3,200 hours of accident-free flying across multiple platforms, including the MiG-21, Su-30 MKI, and Jaguar.
- **Diverse Command Experience:** Before this role, he served as the Senior Air Staff Officer at EAC. His career includes commanding a frontline air base, the Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment (TACDE), and serving as a Defence Attaché to Japan and South Korea.
- **Succession:** He succeeds Air Marshal Surat Singh, who retired on January 31, 2026, after 39 years of service. For his distinguished contributions, Air Marshal Walia has previously been awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) and the Vayu Sena Medal (VM).

India & Kyrgyzstan's Joint Military Exercise KHANJAR begins

- **13th Edition in Assam:** The 13th edition of the joint military exercise commenced on February 4, 2026, at Misamari in Assam. The 14-day exercise (concluding February 17) is an annual event that alternates venues between India and Kyrgyzstan.
- **Elite Participation:** The drill features elite special forces, specifically India's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Kyrgyzstan's Scorpion Brigade, working together to share tactical expertise and best practices.

- **Strategic Focus:** Conducted under a United Nations mandate, the exercise focuses on high-risk operations including urban warfare, counter-terrorism, sniping, and room intervention. It aims to improve interoperability and strengthen the strategic partnership in addressing regional security threats.

Divakar Jayant Assumes Charge as DG of Navy

- **Distinguished Career & Succession:** A 1991-batch INAS officer with over 33 years of experience, Jayant succeeded Shri P. Upadhyay, who retired on January 31, 2026. He previously held leadership roles at major Naval Armament Depots in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, and Alwaye.
- **Technical Expertise:** An Electrical Engineering graduate from IIT Delhi, he is a specialist in the life-cycle management of torpedoes and the planning of complex explosive infrastructure projects, which are critical for the Navy's submarine and surface warfare capabilities.
- **Strategic Responsibility:** In his new role, he oversees the policies, maintenance, and safety of the Indian Navy's entire armament inventory. His leadership is central to the modernization and indigenization of naval weapon systems under the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.

Footnotes: Indian Navy's Chief: Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, Estd: 1950

Sagar Defence Delivers Surface Vessels to Indian Navy

- **Maiden Indigenous "Boat Swarm" Capability:** This delivery of the first two vessels (out of an order of 12) marks India's entry into an elite club of nations capable of deploying weaponized autonomous swarm technology.
- **Advanced Weaponry & Stealth:** Each craft is a high-speed Fast Interceptor Craft (FIC) equipped with a 12.7mm remote-controlled gun. They are capable of deploying short-range missiles and loitering munitions.
- **Electronic Warfare Resilience:** A standout feature is the ability of these vessels to operate in GPS-denied environments. Using indigenous AI and "Genesis" control systems, they can navigate and execute missions.

BANKING NEWS

Sarvesh Ranjan appointed as GM at UBI

- **Succession and Seniority:** Sarvesh Ranjan was promoted from his previous role as General Manager to fill the vacancy created by the superannuation of Shri Bhaskara Rao Kare, who retired on January 31, 2026. This elevation ensures leadership continuity in one of India's largest public sector banks.

- **Specialized Expertise:** Ranjan brings nearly three decades of banking experience, specifically excelling in high-stakes areas such as Central Reconciliation, Transaction Monitoring, and Anti-Money Laundering (AML). His background is considered critical as the bank navigates increasing regulatory scrutiny and the rise of digital transaction monitoring.
- **Strategic Qualifications:** Beyond his 30-year tenure, Ranjan is an Engineering Graduate with advanced leadership training from the University of Applied Sciences (Switzerland) and ISB Hyderabad. He also holds a specialized certification in IT and Cyber Security from IDRBT, positioning him to lead the bank's focus on secure and compliant digital banking.

Footnotes: UBI's MD & CEO: Ashish Pandey, HQ: Mumbai, Estd: 1919

Yes Bank appointed Vinay Tonse as MD & CEO

- **RBI Approval for 3-Year Term:** On February 3, 2026, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the appointment of Vinay Muralidhar Tonse as the Managing Director and CEO of Yes Bank for a three-year tenure, starting from the date he officially assumes charge.
- **SBI Veteran Expertise:** Tonse is a seasoned banker with over 35 years of experience at the State Bank of India (SBI), where he most recently served as Managing Director for Retail Business & Operations. His background is expected to bring enhanced operational discipline and retail growth to the private lender.
- **Planned Leadership Transition:** He succeeds Prashant Kumar, another former SBI executive who led the bank through its post-2020 recovery. Kumar's extended term is scheduled to conclude in April 2026, allowing for a smooth handover of the bank's stabilized operations and improved asset quality.

Footnotes: Yes Bank's MD & CEO: Prashant Kumar, Estd: 2003, HQ: Mumbai

Tripura Gramin Bank launches India's First RRB Co-Branded RuPay Credit Card

- **National First:** Launched in February 2026, Tripura Gramin Bank has become the first Regional Rural Bank (RRB) in India to introduce a co-branded RuPay credit card, setting a new benchmark for the country's rural financial sector.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** The card was developed in collaboration with Punjab National Bank (PNB)—TGB's sponsor bank—and PNB Cards & Services Ltd., utilizing the secure and indigenous RuPay payment ecosystem.
- **Focus on Digital Inclusion:** This initiative coincides with the bank's Golden Jubilee (50th year) and aims to provide rural and semi-urban customers with seamless access to modern credit facilities and digital payment tools.

Footnotes: Tripura Gramin Bank's Chairman: Satyendra Singh, Estd: 1976, HQ: Agartala

Axis Bank Launches 'Rooftop Solar Finance' for MSMEs

- **Collateral-Free & High Quantum:** MSMEs can access collateral-free loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹2 crore. This allows small businesses to adopt solar technology without tying up existing assets or straining their working capital.
- **Flexible Repayment & Long Tenure:** The scheme offers flexible repayment tenures of 4 to 7 years. This is structured to align with the "payback period" of solar installations, where the savings on electricity bills often cover the loan EMIs, making the transition cost-neutral over time.
- **End-to-End Technical Support:** Beyond just funding, Axis Bank has partnered with leading Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and tech partners. This ensures MSMEs receive quality equipment and transparent data on project costs, estimated energy savings, and execution timelines.

Footnotes: Axis Bank's MD & CEO: Amitabh Chaudhry, HQ: Mumbai, Estd: 1993

SPORTS NEWS

Novak Djokovic broke a 53-year-old Australian Open record

- **Oldest Finalist in Open Era:** By defeating Jannik Sinner in the 2026 semifinals, Djokovic became the oldest man in the Open Era to reach an Australian Open final.
- **Broke a 54-Year-Old Record:** He surpassed the mark previously held by Australian legend Ken Rosewall, who was 37 years and 2 months old when he reached (and won) the 1972 final.
- **Remarkable Longevity:** The victory also marked the longest time span between a player's first and latest Grand Slam final appearance—over 18 years since his first major final at the 2007 US Open.

India Triumphs Over New Zealand to Win T20I Series

- **Clinical Series Victory:** India clinched the series 4-1, finishing with a massive 46-run win in the final match at Thiruvananthapuram after posting 271/5—their highest-ever T20I total against New Zealand.
- **Suryakumar's Record-Breaking Run:** Captain Suryakumar Yadav was named Player of the Series (242 runs). During the finale, he became the fastest player in history to reach 3,000 T20I runs (by balls faced), surpassing Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

- **Individual Brilliance:** The final match saw Ishan Kishan smash his maiden T20I century (103 off 43 balls) and Arshdeep Singh claim his first career five-wicket haul (5/51), cementing their spots for the upcoming World Cup.

Haryana Wins Championship Title in Wrestling League 2026

- **Dramatic Finish:** The championship was decided in a nail-biting 5–4 victory over the Delhi Dangal Warriors. With the scores tied at 4–4 after eight bouts, the title was decided in the final 62kg women's match.
- **The Decisive Blow:** Paris Olympic silver medalist Iryna Koliadenko (Haryana) delivered a masterclass in the final bout, winning by technical superiority (16–0) to seal the trophy and a ₹1.5 crore prize for her team.
- **Standout Performers:** While Haryana's Neha Sangwan was named Player of the Match for keeping the final alive, Delhi's Turan Bayramov earned Player of the Tournament for winning all seven of his individual bouts throughout the season.

Elena Rybakina Clinches First Australian Open Crown

- **Strategic Redemption:** Rybakina defeated Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 at Rod Laver Arena. The win was a significant moment of redemption, reversing the result of the 2023 Australian Open final where Sabalenka had beaten her in three sets.
- **The "0-3" Comeback:** The match hinged on a dramatic third set where Rybakina trailed 0-3. Demonstrating immense mental resilience, she reeled off five consecutive games to seize control, eventually sealing the championship with a signature ace on her first match point.
- **Historic Milestone & Ranking:** Rybakina became the first Kazakhstani player to win the Australian Open singles title. With this victory and her recent WTA Finals trophy, she has reclaimed her career-high ranking of World No. 3, firmly cementing her position at the top of the women's game.

Devika Sihag Wins Maiden BWF Super 300 Title

- **Elite Company:** With this victory, Devika became only the third Indian woman to win a BWF Super 300 singles title, joining the legendary ranks of Saina Nehwal and P.V. Sindhu.
- **Dominant Path to the Final:** Ranked world No. 63 at the start of the tournament, the unseeded Haryana-born player pulled off several "giant-killing" upsets, including a straight-games victory over the top-seeded local favorite, Supanida Katethong, in the quarterfinals.
- **The Final Match:** Devika clinched the title after her opponent, Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei (a former two-time junior world champion), was forced to retire due to a

hamstring injury. Devika was firmly in command of the match, leading 21-8, 6-3 at the time of the withdrawal.

Olympian Esha Singh clinches gold in 10m pistol event

- **Second Career Title:** This victory marks Esha's second senior individual Asian Championship gold in this event, following her first continental title win in Jakarta in 2024.
- **A "Come-from-Behind" Win:** After a shaky start that saw her languishing in 7th place after the first series, she mounted a steady comeback to finish with a winning score of 239.8, surpassing silver medalist Cheng Yen-Ching of Chinese Taipei.
- **Double Gold Performance:** Beyond her individual success, Esha teamed up with Manu Bhaker and Suruchi Singh to secure the Team Gold for India with a combined score of 1,726, leading the host nation to a dominant opening day at the championships.

Pro Wrestling League 2026 championship won by Haryana Thunders

- **Nail-Biting Final Score:** The Haryana Thunders defeated the Delhi Dangal Warriors with a narrow 5–4 margin. The championship was undecided until the very last bout, as the teams were tied at 4–4 after the first eight matches.
- **Decisive Performance:** The title was sealed by Paris Olympic silver medalist Iryna Koliadenko, who delivered a masterclass in the final women's 62kg bout. She secured a dominant 16–0 technical superiority win over Delhi's Anjali to clinch the trophy for Haryana.
- **League Resurgence & Rewards:** This victory marked the successful return of the PWL after a seven-year hiatus. As champions, the Haryana Thunders took home a prize purse of ₹1.5 crore, while the runners-up received ₹75 lakh.

Anahat Singh Clinches Maiden PSA Bronze Title

- **Youngest Indian to Win at this Level:** With this win, Anahat became the youngest Indian squash player to secure a PSA Bronze title, surpassing the records previously held by icons like Joshna Chinappa and Dipika Pallikal at similar stages in their careers.
- **Dominant Performance & Top-Seed Defeat:** Throughout the tournament, Anahat exhibited exceptional form, dropping only two games across the entire draw. She notably defeated the top-seeded world No. 22 in the semi-finals before winning the final in straight games.
- **Significant Rankings Surge:** This title provides a massive boost to her professional ranking, propelling her into the World Top 30. This elevation is crucial as it grants her

direct entry into high-tier Platinum events on the PSA World Tour without having to go through qualifiers.

RCB clinches WPL Title 2026

- **Historic "Double" Achievement:** By winning the 2026 trophy, RCB became the first team in WPL history to win two titles (having previously won in 2024). This win firmly established them as the most successful franchise in the league's early years.
- **Smriti Mandhana's Masterclass:** Captain Smriti Mandhana was the standout performer of the tournament, winning the Orange Cap for most runs. Her aggressive captaincy and a match-winning half-century in the final proved decisive in RCB's unbeaten run during the knockout stage.
- **Emergence of Local Talent:** While international stars performed well, the 2026 campaign was defined by Shreyanka Patil's dominance; she claimed the Purple Cap with 21 wickets, including a crucial three-wicket haul in the final that dismantled the Mumbai middle order.

AWARD NEWS

Indian Navy won Best Marching Contingent Award

- **Elite Composition & Leadership:** The contingent consisted of 144 young sailors and was led by Lieutenant Karan Nagyal. He was supported by Platoon Commanders Lieutenant Pawan Kumar Gandhi and Lieutenant Priti, showcasing the Navy's commitment to gender-neutral leadership.
- **Symbolism of Strength:** The Navy's performance was praised by the panel of judges for its flawless synchronization and discipline. It was officially described as a representation of a "modern, progressive, and powerful maritime force" capable of protecting India's vast maritime interests.
- **Judges' Choice vs. Popular Choice:** While the Indian Navy secured the top spot in the Judges' Choice category (Armed Forces), the Assam Regiment won the "Popular Choice" award through public voting on the MyGov portal.

Indian Scientist Ramanathan Wins Crafoord Prize 2026

- **Pioneering "Super-Pollutant" Research:** Ramanathan was honored for his 1975 discovery that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are thousands of times more potent as greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide. This landmark finding proved that \$CO_2\$ is not the only driver of global warming and laid the scientific foundation for the Montreal Protocol.
- **Discovery of Atmospheric Brown Clouds:** His research identified "atmospheric brown clouds"—vast layers of soot and pollution over South Asia and the Indian Ocean. He demonstrated how these particles not only warm the atmosphere but also

dim sunlight at the surface, disrupting the Indian Monsoon and accelerating the melting of Himalayan glaciers.

- **Global Policy Influence:** Beyond his 18 career Grammys—wait, wrong Ramanathan!—beyond his decades of research, he has served as a key advisor to global leaders and the Vatican, bridging the gap between climate science and ethics to protect the world's most vulnerable populations.

K J Somaiya Institute Wins CSRI Award

- **Inaugural National Honor:** In January 2026, the K J Somaiya Institute of Management (KJSIM) was conferred with the award for “Best Management Institute Supporting Sports Ecosystem & Development.” The award was presented by the Confederation of Sports and Recreation Industry (CSRI), a national body working alongside the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- **Academic Integration:** The award specifically recognizes KJSIM's MBA in Sports Management, which blends rigorous business principles with hands-on exposure to high-performance sports settings. Notably, the institute assigns 10% academic weightage to physical fitness for all first-year students, embedding well-being into its core curriculum.
- **Industry Impact:** Adjudicated by an independent jury, the honor validates KJSIM's collaboration with the Somaiya Sports Academy (SSA), providing students with world-class infrastructure and experiential learning opportunities to develop leaders for India's rapidly evolving sports sector.

Dalai Lama honoured with Grammy Award

- **Historic First at 90:** At the age of 90, the Dalai Lama won his first-ever Grammy Award in the category of Best Audio Book, Narration & Storytelling Recording. He beat a high-profile field of nominees, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and former host Trevor Noah.
- **Award-Winning Work:** The honor was for his spoken-word album, *Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama*. Released in 2025, the project blends his teachings on compassion and shared humanity with musical compositions by Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan and his sons, Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash.
- **Message of Universal Responsibility:** Reacting to the win, the Dalai Lama stated that he viewed the award not as a personal triumph, but as a recognition of our "shared universal responsibility." The award was accepted on his behalf by musician Rufus Wainwright, who collaborated on the project.

Paradip Port Authority won Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025

- **Top National Ranking:** PPA secured the first position among all major Indian ports for its exemplary performance in cleanliness and sustainability. The award was presented by the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, to PPA Chairman P.L. Haranadh.
- **Three Core Pillars:** The port's success was driven by the effective implementation of three strategic pillars: Jan Bhagidari (massive community participation), Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (extensive plantation drives, including 40,000 saplings at Paradip beach), and Safai Mitra Suraksha (focusing on the welfare and dignity of sanitation workers).
- **Innovative Waste Management:** Beyond routine cleaning, PPA was lauded for its "Waste to Wealth" initiatives, such as the Scrap to Structure project and awareness campaigns that successfully reduced single-use plastics across the port ecosystem.

Footnotes: PPA's Chairman: P.L. Haranadh, Estd: 1966

Bhutan Queen Mother Honoured with 'Soldier of Humanity' Award 2025

- **Recognition of Humanitarian Leadership:** The award, presented by the International Human Rights Commission (IHRC), honors her four decades of tireless work in promoting gender equality, reproductive health, and the protection of vulnerable women and children in Bhutan.
- **Champion of Social Causes:** As the Royal Patron of RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women), she was specifically lauded for her role in tackling domestic violence and providing vocational training to marginalized communities, transforming the socio-economic landscape of the kingdom.
- **Global Advocacy Role:** The title highlights her influence beyond Bhutan's borders, particularly her long-standing role as a UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador.

APPOINTMENT & PERSON IN NEWS

Saurabh Joshi elected as Mayor of Chandigarh

- **Clean Sweep for BJP:** Saurabh Joshi secured 18 votes to defeat the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate, Yogesh Dhillon (11 votes), and the Congress candidate, Gurpreet Singh Gaba (7 votes). The BJP also won the posts of Senior Deputy Mayor (Jasmanpreet Singh) and Deputy Mayor (Suman Sharma), consolidating full control over the municipal leadership.
- **Historic "Show of Hands" Voting:** For the first time since 1996, the election was conducted by a show of hands rather than a secret ballot. This procedural change was aimed at ensuring transparency and preventing the "cross-voting" controversies that have plagued Chandigarh's mayoral polls in recent years.
- **Legacy and Experience:** A second-generation politician and an advocate by profession, Joshi is a former student leader from Panjab University and has been a

councillor since 2011. His one-year term represents the final year of the current five-year municipal corporation cycle (2022–2026).

Nitika Pawar appointed as GM of FCI

- **Breaking a Six-Decade Tradition:** Her appointment is significant as it breaks a long-standing administrative practice where the GM of FCI Punjab was almost exclusively an IAS officer from the Punjab cadre. Nitika Pawar is a 2012-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre, leading to formal objections from the Punjab state government.
- **Strategic Role in Food Security:** Based in Chandigarh, she will oversee procurement, storage, and distribution in Punjab—one of India's most critical agricultural zones. The role is vital for coordinating the National Food Security Act operations between the Centre and the state.
- **Lateral Shift and Tenure:** Pawar was appointed on a lateral shift basis from her previous posting as Deputy Financial Advisor for the Border Security Force (BSF). Her tenure in this new role is set for three years, or until further orders.

Maybelline New York Names Kiara Advani as India Brand Ambassador

- **A "New Era" of Branding:** Kiara Advani has been brought on board to represent a "new chapter" for Maybelline in India. The campaign moves away from traditional "transformative" beauty, instead focusing on self-expression and individuality, aligning the brand with Kiara's authentic and confident public persona.
- **Flagship Product Launch:** The partnership was marked by the debut of the Maybelline Serum Lipstick in India. Kiara is the face of the collection, specifically highlighting the bold matte shade 'Wildcard'. The product is marketed as a hybrid of high-performance color and skincare, infused with Hyaluronic Acid.
- **Focus on Inclusivity:** As part of this new era, the brand emphasized that the product line includes 13 shades specifically formulated to complement the diverse range of Indian skin tones, further cementing Maybelline's goal to be the most inclusive and accessible makeup brand in the country.

Nagma Mohamed Mallick accredited as Ambassador to Republic of Marshall Islands

- **Concurrent Accreditation:** Announced on February 2, 2026, Ms. Nagma Mohamed Mallick (IFS: 1991) has been concurrently accredited as India's next Ambassador to the Republic of Marshall Islands. She will handle this responsibility while continuing her primary role as the Ambassador of India to Japan.
- **Strategic Residency:** Although representing India's interests in the Marshall Islands, she will maintain her residence in Tokyo. This is a common diplomatic practice where

the Ambassador to a major regional power also oversees relations with smaller neighboring island nations.

- **Distinguished Trailblazer:** A career diplomat with over three decades of experience, Mallick is notable for being the first Muslim woman to join the Indian Foreign Service. Her previous high-profile assignments include serving as the Ambassador to Poland and Tunisia, as well as India's first woman Deputy Chief of Protocol.

Nivedita Dubey: 1st Woman Officer inducted into AAI Board

- **Historic Leadership Role:** She assumed charge as Member (Human Resources) on January 30, 2026, becoming the first woman to hold a full-time functional Director-level position on the AAI Board.
- **Extensive Experience:** A seasoned aviation professional with over 30 years of experience, she joined AAI in 1995 and previously served as the first woman Regional Executive Director (Eastern Region), where she managed 12 airports.
- **Strategic Responsibility:** In her new role, she is responsible for AAI's personnel policies, industrial relations, and workforce modernization, aligning the organization's human capital with the "AAI Vision 2047" roadmap.

Footnotes: AAI's Chairman: Vipin Kumar, HQ: New Delhi, Estd: 1995

OBITUARY NEWS

Former CBSE Chairman Thomas V.Kunnunkal passed away

- **Architect of Modern CBSE:** Serving as Chairman from 1980 to 1987, he is credited with transforming the CBSE into a national benchmark for excellence. He was personally invited by then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to lead the board, during which he convinced many schools to migrate to the CBSE system due to its increased academic credibility.
- **Founding Father of NIOS:** He conceptualized and established the National Open School in 1989 (now the National Institute of Open Schooling). As its founding chairman, he turned it into the world's largest open schooling system, specifically aimed at providing education to dropouts and the marginalized.
- **Decorated Legacy:** In recognition of his immense contributions to Indian education, he was awarded the Padma Shri (1974), India's fourth-highest civilian honor. He also served as the Principal of St. Xavier's School, Delhi, where he mentored notable figures, including the late Union Minister Arun Jaitley.

Padma Shri Awardee & Travel Writer Hugh Gantzer passed away

- **Pioneer of Indian Travel Journalism:** Alongside his wife, Colleen Gantzer (who passed away in 2024), he is credited with pioneering the genre of travel writing in

India. Together, they authored over 30 books, wrote thousands of articles, and produced the iconic 1980s Doordarshan series, *Looking Beyond*, which made them household names.

- **Joint Padma Shri Recognition:** In 2025, the couple was jointly awarded the Padma Shri for their extraordinary contribution to travel journalism. Hugh famously noted that he would only accept the honor if it recognized both him and Colleen, as they had always written "in one voice" for over five decades.
- **Naval Veteran & Environmentalist:** Before his literary career, he served as a Commander in the Indian Navy (retiring in 1974). In his later years, he became a fierce guardian of Mussoorie's ecology, serving on a Supreme Court-monitored committee and successfully lobbying Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to ban limestone mining in the region.

Padma Awardee Andre Beteille passed away

- **Pioneer of Indian Sociology:** Beteille was a monumental figure in Indian social sciences, best known for his landmark 1965 study, *Caste, Class and Power*. He was credited with shifting the focus of Indian sociology from purely ritual-based analysis with social hierarchy.
- **Academic Leadership & Honors:** A recipient of the Padma Bhushan (2005) for his contributions to literature and education, he served as a Professor of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics for decades.
- **Intellectual Bridge-BUILDER:** He successfully bridged the gap between Indian empirical realities and Western sociological theories.