

1. PM Modi's 5-Nation Tour — Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Italy & UAE

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on a 5-Nation Tour starting May 15, 2026, covering the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Italy, and the UAE
- (i) UAE Visit:
 - India and UAE signed multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) covering petroleum reserves, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supply, and defense cooperation
 - UAE Investments in India: Total USD 5 Billion
- (ii) Norway Visit & India-Nordic Summit:
 - Highest Honor: PM Modi conferred Norway's highest civilian honor — "Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit" in Oslo — his 32nd International Honor
 - This was the first visit by a sitting Indian PM to Norway in 43 years
 - 3rd India-Nordic Summit held in Oslo on 19 May 2026, hosted by Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Store
 - Norway Static GK: Capital: Oslo; Currency: Norwegian Krone (NOK)
- (iii) Sweden Visit
 - Highest Honor: PM Modi awarded the "Royal Order of the Polar Star – Degree Commander Grand Cross" in Gothenburg — his 31st International Honor; Order instituted in 1748
 - PM Modi exchanged gifts with Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson to commemorate 100th Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's historic visit to Sweden in 1926
- (iv) Netherlands Visit
 - PM Modi met Dutch PM Rob Jetten in The Hague; agreed to boost cooperation in defense, technology, clean energy, healthcare, and investment
 - Chola Dynasty Copper Plates Returned: Netherlands returned 11th-century Chola Dynasty copper plates held in Leiden University vaults since 1862
 - Also called "Leiden Plates" or "Anaimangalam Copper Plates"
 - Feature Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions; weigh nearly 30 kg across 24 copper sheets
 - Handed over to Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
- (v) Italy Visit
 - PM Modi's final leg of the tour — official visit to Italy
 - Italy Static GK: Capital: Rome; Currency: Euro (EUR); President: Sergio Mattarella; PM: Giorgia Meloni

2. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar's Caribbean Tour

- Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, visited Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago to strengthen India's bilateral ties with the Caribbean region

3. Other Global Developments & Rankings

- EU Aquaculture Exports: The European Union (EU) (India's 3rd-largest seafood export market) released a list making India eligible to export aquaculture products, successfully avoiding a ban due after September 26th; India ensured exported seafood is free of antimicrobial medicines
- Indus Waters Treaty: India rejected a Court of Arbitration ruling on the Indus Waters Treaty as 'Null and Void'; Treaty signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan, mediated by the World Bank
- Kimberley Process Summit 2026: India hosted the international meeting in Mumbai, led by Piyush Goyal, to prevent conflict diamond trade and ensure ethical sourcing; Theme: "3 Cs: Credibility, Compliance, and Customer Confidence"
- World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) 2026: India ranked 157th out of 180 countries, falling in the 'Very Serious' category
- Youngest PM of Iraq: Ali Fali Kadhim Al-Zayadi sworn in as the youngest Prime Minister of Iraq
- UK Rich List: The Hinduja family topped the Sunday Times UK Rich List for the 5th consecutive year, with estimated wealth of £38 billion

4. Supreme Court Judges Strength Increased from 34 to 38

- The Supreme Court of India, when formed in 1950, had only 8 judges
- Article 124(1) of the Indian Constitution governs the appointment of Supreme Court judges

- President Droupadi Murmu approved an ordinance to increase the total strength of Supreme Court (SC) judges from 34 to 38 (37 judges + 1 Chief Justice of India)

5. Census 2027 — Phase 1 Launched (India's First Digital Census)

- India's previous census was conducted in 2011; the Census 2027 is the first to go fully digital
- Phase 1 (house listing and housing census) commenced in 5 States/UTs: Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Delhi
- This is India's first digital census — using apps and self-enumeration
- Official Mascots: Pragati (female) and Vikas (male), promoting India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047

6. Women Empowerment — Parliamentary Committee & Project Saksham

- Parliamentary Committee on Economic Empowerment for Women: Constituted by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for 2026-27 term, effective April 21; Chairman: Dr. D. Purandeswari (Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and MP)
- Objective: To skill women and guide them toward entrepreneurship
- Project Saksham: Launched by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Vertis Foundation to empower rural women through entrepreneurship, financial independence, and business skill training

7. Scheme Updates — PFRDA, AVYAY & Education Ministry Pilot

(i) PFRDA New Scheme

- Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) launched a new recruitment/benefit scheme for National Pension System (NPS) retirees
- Maximum subscription age extended from 75 to 85 years for both government and non-government subscribers

(ii) Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)

- Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for senior citizens aged 60+; provides shelter, food, healthcare, and financial security
- India's elderly population grew from 1.98 crore (1951) to 10.38 crore today

(iii) Education Ministry Pilot Program

- Implemented via National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS); launched in 10 high-concentration districts across 9 states
- Aligned with National Education Policy (NEP) goal of 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030
- Education Minister: Dharmendra Pradhan

8. Defense — Exports Record, CBI AI Bot & Operation RAGEPILL

(i) India's Defence Exports — All-Time High

- India's Defence Exports hit an all-time high of ₹38,424 Crore in FY2025-26, registering a 62.66% Year-on-Year (YoY) growth

(ii) CBI AI Chatbot 'Abhay'

- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) launched an AI-based chatbot named 'Abhay', unveiled by the Chief Justice, to verify authenticity of official CBI notices in real-time
- Purpose: Prevent 'digital arrest' cyber frauds
- CBI Static GK: Headquarters: New Delhi; Director: Praveen Sood

(iii) Operation RAGEPILL — NCB

- Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) dismantled an international Captagon trafficking network under Operation RAGEPILL
- Seized 227.7 kg of Captagon tablets/powder valued at ₹182 crore internationally
- MANAS Helpline (Toll-Free: 1933)

9. RBI — Penalties, Executive Director Appointment & FSDC Meeting

(i) RBI Penalties

- IIFL Finance: Penalized ₹3.10 lakh for violating Know Your Customer (KYC) norms regarding gold loans — failed to return surplus auction amounts to borrowers
 - Example: Gold pledged was sold for ₹1.3 lakh to cover a ₹70,000 loan, but surplus was not returned

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- Apnit Technology Pvt Ltd: Fined ₹5.80 lakh for non-compliance with KYC and Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI) guidelines — allowed customers to use small KYC wallets (₹10,000 limit) beyond the maximum one-year limit without full KYC
- (ii) Executive Director Appointment
 - Gunveer Singh appointed as Executive Director of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) starting May 18, heading the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems (DPSS)
- (iii) FSDC Sub-Committee Meeting
 - 33rd Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) Sub-Committee meeting held at RBI Headquarters, Mumbai, chaired by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra
 - Focus areas: inflation, job creation, production rates, and agriculture
 - Static GK: Main FSDC is chaired by Finance Minister; Sub-Committee always chaired by RBI Governor

10. Mergers, Acquisitions & Major Deals

- (i) RBL Bank Acquisition by Emirates NBD
 - Emirates NBD received approvals from RBI, Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Competition Commission of India (CCI), and Finance Ministry to acquire up to 51% to 74% stake in RBL Bank, worth USD 3 billion (increased from earlier 49%)
 - RBL Bank will convert from an Indian private bank to a foreign subsidiary bank
- (ii) Prudential PLC & Bharti Life Insurance
 - Prudential PLC (London-based) signed an agreement to acquire a 75% stake in Bharti Life Insurance for ₹3,500 crore (with a conditional ₹700 crore additional payment)
 - This is the first major deal since India allowed 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in insurance
 - Bharti retains 25% ownership
- (iii) TVS Venu Group & Jana Small Finance Bank (SFB)
 - TVS Venu Group is acquiring a 9.9% stake in Jana Small Finance Bank (SFB) for ₹193 crore via primary warrant and secondary share purchases
 - TVS Motor Company directly holds 4.9%
- (iv) Food Corporation of India (FCI) Fund Raising
 - Food Corporation of India (FCI) will borrow ₹5,000 crore in short-term debt (3 months) from scheduled banks, with a green shoe option of ₹2,500 crore

11. Capital Markets & Digital Finance

- (i) SEBI's 'Significant Indices' Framework
 - Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced a framework recognizing top benchmarks like Nifty 50, BSE Sensex as 'Significant Indices'
 - Qualification: Asset Under Management (AUM) over ₹20,000 crore for the last 6 months
 - 48 indices identified; tracked twice a year — June 30 and December 31
 - Tag removed only if AUM drops below ₹20,000 crore for 3 consecutive years
- (ii) NSE Electronic Gold Receipts (EGR)
 - National Stock Exchange (NSE) Electronic Gold Receipts (EGR): Live trading launched on May 18, enabling electronic gold trading via Demat accounts
- (iii) XFlow Stablecoin
 - Bengaluru-based XFlow launched India's first compliant cross-border stablecoin (US dollar-backed) transfer program for Indian businesses
- (iv) India's First AI-Powered Digital Bank Branch
 - Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered digital bank branch in Guwahati, launched by Slice Small Finance Bank for underserved communities
- (v) IDFC FIRST Bank — FD-Backed Credit Card
 - IDFC FIRST Bank launched the FD-backed 'FIRST Business Multiplier Credit Card' for founders/freelancers
 - Features: Minimum Fixed Deposit (FD) required; ₹1,000 annual fee (waivable); zero forex markup; 100% credit limit

(vi) Vienna Fintech

- Vienna Fintech received National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) certification for multiple payment infrastructure layers

12. Macroeconomic Indicators — Forex, Exports & GDP

(i) Forex & Rupee

- The Rupee closed at a record low of ₹96.35 against USD on 18 May 2026
- India's Forex Reserves: USD 696.988 billion (week ending 8 May 2026)
- Peak reserve: USD 728.494 billion on 27 February 2026

(ii) Export Targets

- Commerce Ministry set targets of USD 1 Trillion exports in 2026 and USD 2 Trillion in 5 years

(iii) GDP Projection

- Morgan Stanley projected India's GDP growth at 6.7% for FY27 and 7% for FY28

13. Environmental Innovations & Health Infrastructure

(i) Climate Innovation Startup Hub

- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune launched a Climate Innovation Startup Hub under Mission Mausam to invite AI-driven climate startups
- Mission Mausam Static GK: Launched January 14, 2025; Budget: ₹2,000 crore

(ii) India's First Solar-Powered Algae Tree

- Launched at Swami Vivekananda Park, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (MP)
- Uses microalgae to absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) and release oxygen

(iii) Advanced Footwear Testing Lab

- National Test House launched an Advanced Footwear Testing Lab in Ghaziabad for MSME quality assurance

(iv) First Satellite-Tagged Ganges Soft Shell Turtle

- Assam released its first satellite-tagged endangered Ganges Soft Shell Turtle in the Brahmaputra River at Kaziranga National Park on Endangered Species Day

(v) Ebola Outbreak — WHO Declaration

- World Health Organization (WHO), headed by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the Ebola outbreak (Bundibugyo strain; no approved vaccine) in Congo and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

14. Tripura — First to Complete National Compliance Deregulation Initiative

- Tripura became the first state to complete all 51 priority areas under Phase I (23 areas) and Phase II (28 areas) of the National Compliance Reduction and Deregulation Initiative (launched January 2026)
- Tripura Static GK: Capital: Agartala; Chief Minister (CM): Manik Saha; Governor (Gov): Indrasena Reddy Nallu

15. Assam — First Satellite-Tagged Turtle & State Static GK

- Assam has 21 turtle species
- National Parks: Kaziranga, Manas, Orang, Nameri, Dehing Patkai, Dibru-Saikhowa
- Tiger Reserves: Manas, Nameri, Kaziranga
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Garampani, Pobitora, Nambor, Sonai Rupai, Borail, Karbi Anglong, Nambor Doigrung, Amchang, Deepor Beel
- Deepor Beel: Assam's only Ramsar site

16. Andhra Pradesh — 'Children are Wealth' Scheme

- Andhra Pradesh's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) dropped to 1.5, below the 2.1 replacement level, indicating a demographic risk of aging workforce
- CM N. Chandrababu Naidu announced cash incentives under 'Children are Wealth' Scheme:
 - ₹30,000 for a 3rd child
 - ₹40,000 for a 4th child

17. Sikkim — 51st Statehood Day & Mission Sikkim Organics

- Statehood Day observed on May 16 (51st Edition); Jyotiraditya Scindia launched 'Mission Sikkim Organics', a ₹360 crore initiative

- Sikkim Static GK: Became 22nd state in 1975 via 36th Amendment Act

18. West Bengal — Annapurna Bhandar Scheme

- West Bengal Cabinet approved 'Annapurna Bhandar Scheme': ₹3,000 monthly financial assistance to women starting June 1st; existing Lakshmi Bhandar beneficiaries also eligible
- West Bengal Static GK: CM: Suvendu Adhikari; Gov: R.N. Ravi
- National Parks/Tiger Reserves: Gorumara, Jaldapara, Neora Valley, Singalila, Sundarbans, Buxa

19. Kerala — New Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan

- Congress leader V. D. Satheesan (United Democratic Front — UDF) sworn in as 13th Chief Minister of Kerala, succeeding Pinarayi Vijayan
- Oath administered by Gov Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar; UDF won 102 out of 140 assembly seats
- Kerala Static GK:
 - National Parks: Mathikettan Shola, Periyar, Silent Valley, Anamudi Shola, Pampadum Shola
 - Dances: Kathakali, Ottan Thullal, Mohiniyattam, Kaikottikali

20. Other States — Mizoram, Odisha & Goa

- Mizoram — Ginger Mission: Central Govt approved ₹189 crore; Mizo ginger has 6–8% oleoresin content vs 3% global average
- Odisha — Nimapara Patha Utsav 2026: Deputy CM Pravati inaugurated 'Nimapara Patha Utsav 2026' and 'Utkarsh Nimapara 2.0' in Pune; Mascot: 'Utkarsh Ghoda'; connects youth with Pala art and horse dance
- Goa: Santa Cruz village categorized as a 'No Development Zone'

21. National Bodies — UIDAI & GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)

(i) UIDAI

- Saurabh Vijay appointed CEO of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)
- Deadline for free online Aadhaar document updates extended by 1 year to June 14, 2027

(ii) GSTAT Benches

- GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) Benches constituted under Section 109 of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act 2017
- Two-tier structure: Principal Bench in New Delhi; State Benches in Vijayawada, Raipur, Patna, and Ahmedabad
- Digital filing system rolling out up to June 30

22. Asian U15 Boxing Championship & Asian Weightlifting Championship 2026

(i) Asian U15 Boxing Championship

- India won 27 medals: 9 Gold, 6 Silver, 12 Bronze

(ii) Asian Weightlifting Championship 2026

- Held at Mahatma Mandir Convention Center, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (May 11–17)
- India ranked 11th: 10 medals (1 Silver, 9 Bronze)
- Top 3: China (1st), North Korea (2nd), Chinese Taipei (3rd)

23. Italian Open 2026 Tennis — Winners

- Women's Singles: Elina Svitolina (Ukraine) beat Coco Gauff — her 3rd Italian Open title
- Men's Singles: Jannik Sinner beat Casper Ruud — first Italian winner in 50 years
- Men's Doubles: Simone Bolelli & Andrea Vavassori — first all-Italian duo to win
- Women's Doubles: Mirra Andreeva & Diana Shnaider

24. Mount Everest Records — Kami Rita Sherpa & Lhakpa Sherpa

- Kami Rita Sherpa (Nepal, aged 56), known as 'Everest Man', broke his own record by climbing Mount Everest (8,848.86 m) for the 32nd time
- Lhakpa Sherpa, known as 'Mountain Queen', climbed Everest for a record 11th time for women

25. Honorary Military Membership — Actor Ishaan Khatter

- Actor Ishaan Khatter honoured by the 45 Cavalry Regiment for his role in the movie Pippa

26. Mike Smith, former England Test cricket captain, passed away

27. IMPORTANT DAYS — MAY 15 TO MAY 20, 2026

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- May 15: Endangered Species Day (21st Edition); Theme: "Celebrating America's Wildlife Comeback Stories: Championing the Endangered Species Act"
- May 16: International Day of Light; Commemorates Theodore Maiman's first laser operation (1960); Theme: "Light for a Sustainable Future"
- May 16: National Dengue Day; Theme: "Community Participation for Dengue Control: Check, Clean, and Cover"
- May 17: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day; Theme: "Digital Lifeline Strengthening Resilience in Connected World"
- May 19: World Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Day (observed since 2010); Theme: "IBD has no borders, access to IBD care"
- May 20: World Bee Day; Marks birth anniversary of Anton Janša; Theme: "Bee Together for People and Planet: A partnership that sustains us all"

28. Key Static GK & Constitutional Facts

(i) RBI Facts

- RBI Offices: 34 locations; 5 training establishments

(ii) NSE Facts

- National Stock Exchange (NSE): Established in 1992 based on Pherwani Committee recommendations
- Rank: 5th largest stock exchange globally; Currently headed by Ashishkumar Chauhan

(iii) Constitutional Articles — Chief Ministers & Governors

- Article 163: Council of Ministers advises the Governor
- Article 164: Appointment of Chief Minister by the Governor
- Article 166: Executive actions taken in the Governor's name
- Article 167: Chief Minister's duty to inform the Governor
- Article 174: Governor summoning the legislature
- Article 356: President's Rule