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NATIONAL NEWS

PM Inaugurates Sacred Piprahwa Relics in Global Buddhist Exposition



The discovery and exhibition of the **Piprahwa relics** represent a landmark moment for both archaeology and spiritual history. By linking these physical remains to the life of Siddhartha Gautama, India provides a tangible bridge to the 5th century BCE.

Here is a closer look at the historical and geographical significance of these findings.

The Significance of the Piprahwa Relics

The Piprahwa relics are more than just archaeological artifacts; they are considered "bone relics" (*Saririka*) of the Buddha himself.

- **The 1898 Discovery:** William Claxton Peppé excavated a stupa at Piprahwa (near the Nepal border) and found a sandstone coffer containing soapstone (steatite) vases.



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- **The Inscription:** One of the vases bore an inscription in ancient **Brahmi script**, stating that the remains were those of the Buddha, enshrined by his kinsmen, the Sakyas.
- **Authenticity:** These are among the few relics worldwide that have a direct epigraphical link to the Saka clan, making them some of the most authentic physical remains of the Buddha ever found.

exhibitions strengthen ties with Buddhist-majority nations like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, and Vietnam.

- **Educational Insight:** For scholars, the relics provide a window into the transition from the Vedic period to the rise of *Sramana* traditions (monastic movements).
- **Heritage Preservation:** The use of modern preservation techniques ensures that these 2,500-year-old artifacts survive for future generations.

Historical Note: The Piprahwa relics are often divided into different "shares." While some remained in India (National Museum, New Delhi), others were gifted to the Royal Family of Thailand and Buddhist communities in Myanmar in the early 20th century.

Linking Piprahwa to Kapilavastu

For decades, historians debated the exact location of **Kapilavastu**, the capital of the Saka kingdom where Buddha spent his first 29 years.

The Evidence for Piprahwa:

1. **Sealings:** In the 1970s, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered terracotta sealings at Piprahwa inscribed with the words "*Om Devaputra Vihare Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sanghas*" (The Community of Monks of Kapilavastu in the Devaputra Vihara).
2. **Proximity:** The site is in the Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh, very close to Lumbini (the birthplace of Buddha).
3. **The Stupa Structure:** The evolution of the stupa at Piprahwa shows it was built and expanded over several centuries, indicating its long-standing status as a primary pilgrimage site.

Cultural and Diplomatic Impact

By hosting a global-level exhibition of these relics, India reinforces its role as the "**Land of the Buddha**."

* **Spiritual Diplomacy:** These

Piprahwa Relics Assessment

1. What made the 1898 discovery by William Claxton Pepé uniquely significant for Buddhist archaeology?
 - A) It was the first time a sandstone coffer had ever been found in India.
 - B) It contained soapstone vases with an inscription linking the remains to the Saka clan.
 - C) It provided the first evidence of the Vedic period's transition to monasticism.
 - D) It was the largest collection of gold artifacts found near the Nepal border.



2. Which piece of evidence found in the 1970s helped confirm Piprahwa as the historical site of Kapilavastu?

- A) A map carved into the sandstone coffer.
- B) The discovery of a royal palace belonging to King Suddhodana.
- C) Terracotta sealings inscribed with the name of the Kapilavastu monastic community.
- D) A direct letter from the Royal Family of Thailand.

3. In the context of Buddhist relics, what does the term "Saririka" refer to?

- A) Objects used by the Buddha, such as bowls or robes.
- B) Commemorative monuments built by the Sakya clan.
- C) Physical bone relics of the Buddha.
- D) Ancient scripts used to record monastic rules.

4. Based on the text, how does India utilize the Piprahwa relics in a modern "Spiritual Diplomacy" context?

- A) By restricting the relics to Indian scholars only to preserve heritage.
- B) By claiming exclusive ownership to prevent them being shared with other nations.
- C) By hosting global exhibitions to strengthen ties with Buddhist-majority nations.
- D) By relocating the relics permanently to Lumbini, Nepal.

5. According to the "Historical Note," what happened to the relics after their discovery? A)

They were all moved to the National Museum in New Delhi.

- B) They were lost for several decades until the ASI rediscovered them in the 1970s.
- C) They were divided, with portions gifted to Thailand and Myanmar.
- D) They were buried back in the stupa to respect the Sakya kinsmen.

NATIONAL NEWS

Integrated Security Hub Launched in Andaman and Nicobar Islands



This development highlights the strategic shift in how India manages its island territories, moving toward a "Smart Island" model that integrates military readiness with civil administration.

Here are the multiple-choice questions based on the details of the project:

Security and Governance in Island Territories

1. What is the primary objective of the newly launched ₹229 crore Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)?

- A) To facilitate the construction of new international airports.
- B) To strengthen security management and emergency response via high-tech integration.
- C) To provide a centralized hub for private tourism operators.
- D) To manage the migration of residents from the mainland to the islands.

2. The project's approach reflects a "broader vision" of the Indian government. Which three elements are combined in this vision?

- A) Agriculture, technology, and export.
- B) Education, healthcare, and digital literacy.
- C) National security, development, and tourism.
- D) Marine biology, deep-sea mining, and climate research.

3. Which feature best describes the operational capability of the new facility?

- A) It operates as a singular communication line for international diplomatic calls.
- B) It integrates surveillance and coordination among multiple agencies under one platform.
- C) It serves as a primary storage facility for naval hardware and ammunition.
- D) It acts exclusively as a weather forecasting station for the Bay of Bengal.

4. Why are the Andaman and Nicobar Islands specifically targeted for this level of security infrastructure investment?

A) Because they are the only islands in India with a population.

B) Due to their strategic importance and the need for technology-driven surveillance.

C) To compete with the infrastructure of the Lakshadweep Islands.

D) Because the islands are being converted entirely into a restricted military zone.

Answer Key and Explanations

Q#	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The text explicitly states the ICCC is a high-tech facility designed for security management and emergency response.
2	C	The initiative is described as reflecting a vision that combines national security, development, and tourism in strategic regions.
3	B	The core function of the center is to integrate surveillance, communication, and coordination among various agencies on one platform.
4	B	The text emphasizes the islands' "strategically important" nature and the government's focus on technology-driven governance in that specific region.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Bulgaria Adopts the Euro, Becomes 21st Member of the Eurozone



It sounds like you're following the significant economic evolution of Bulgaria! While the transition to the euro marks a definitive end to an era, it's actually the final step in a process that began decades ago.

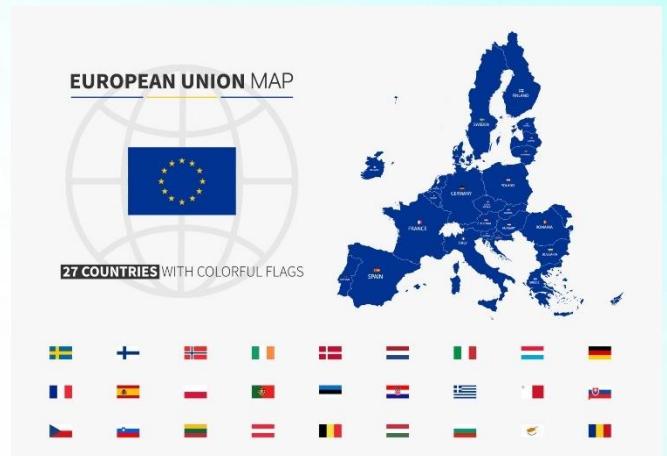
Since 1997, Bulgaria has operated under a **currency board arrangement**, meaning the Bulgarian lev wasn't floating freely; its value was fixed. This stability was a prerequisite for the eventual adoption of the euro.

The Path to Integration

Bulgaria's journey into the Eurozone is the culmination of several major geopolitical and economic milestones:

- **1881:** Establishment of the Bulgarian lev.
- **1997:** Implementation of the currency board (pegging the lev).
- **2004 & 2007:** Joining NATO and the European Union, respectively.
- **2024:** Accession to the Schengen Area (air and sea borders).

- **Today:** Adoption of the euro as the legal tender.



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Opportunities and Concerns

The transition is a "double-edged sword" in the eyes of the public, creating a divide between different demographics.

Feature	Opportunity	Challenge / Fear
Trade & Investment	Lower transaction costs and increased foreign investment.	Initial administrative costs for businesses.
Economic Stability	Direct protection by the European Central Bank.	Loss of independent monetary policy.
Consumer Impact	Easier travel and price transparency across the EU.	Inflation: Fear that retailers will "round up" prices.

Feature	Opportunity	Challenge / Fear
National Identity	Symbolizes "becoming European" and modernizing.	Emotional loss of the lev as a historical symbol.

Why This Matters for the EU

As one of the EU's poorest members, Bulgaria's successful integration is a litmus test for the Eurozone's ability to foster **convergence**—the idea that poorer nations can catch up to the living standards of wealthier ones like Germany or France through a shared currency.

Bulgaria's Transition to the Euro

1. For how long did the Bulgarian lev serve as the national currency before it was replaced by the euro on January 1, 2026?

- A) Since the end of the Cold War in 1989.
- B) Since the country joined the European Union in 2007.
- C) Since 1881.
- D) Since the currency board was established in 1997.

2. What economic mechanism was used since 1997 to prepare the Bulgarian lev for eventual euro adoption?

- A) A floating exchange rate to allow the market to determine its value.
- B) A currency peg, first to the Deutschmark and later to the euro.

C) A complete ban on the use of foreign currencies within Bulgarian borders.

D) A monthly devaluation strategy to boost exports to the EU.

3. According to the text, what is the correct chronological order of Bulgaria's integration into these international and European structures?

- A) Euro adoption → NATO → European Union → Schengen Area.
- B) European Union → Schengen Area → NATO → Euro adoption.
- C) NATO → European Union → Schengen Area → Euro adoption.
- D) Schengen Area → NATO → European Union → Euro adoption.

4. Why do some Bulgarian citizens express "anxiety" or opposition regarding the switch to the euro?

- A) They fear it will lead to restricted travel within the Schengen Area.
- B) They are concerned about rising prices and a loss of national identity.
- C) They believe the lev is more widely accepted in global markets than the euro.
- D) They fear that the transition will lead to a decrease in foreign tourism.

5. Which of the following best describes Bulgaria's economic status within the European Union at the time of its euro adoption?

- A) It is the wealthiest member state due to its strategic tourism sector.

- B) It has the largest population of the 21st eurozone members.
- C) It remains one of the EU's poorest members, with a population of about 6.5 million.
- D) It is the only EU member that does not belong to the Schengen Area.

Dr. Date is widely respected as one of India's most decorated and capable officers. His career is marked by several high-profile roles:

- **26/11 Hero:** He is famously known for his bravery during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.³ Despite being severely injured by grenade splinters, he fought and pinned down terrorists Ajmal Kasab and Abu Ismail at Cama Hospital.⁴ He was later awarded the President's Police Medal for Gallantry.

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- **National Leadership:** Before becoming the state DGP, he served as the Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), India's premier counter-terrorism body.⁵
- **Specialized Experience:** He has headed the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and served as the first Police Commissioner of the Mira-Bhayandar-Vasai-Virar (MBVV) jurisdiction.⁶
- **Academic Background:** He holds a doctorate in economic offences from Pune University and is a qualified cost accountant.⁷

APPOINTMENTS

Sadanand Date Appointed as New Maharashtra Police Chief



It sounds like you are following the recent change in Maharashtra's security leadership! This is a significant development for the state's internal security and administrative stability.

The senior officer you are referring to is **Dr. Sadanand Vasant Date**, a 1990-batch IPS officer who officially took charge as the **Director General of Police (DGP) of Maharashtra** on **January 3, 2026**.¹ He succeeds Rashmi Shukla, who was the state's first woman police chief and retired on the same day.²

Profile of Dr. Sadanand Date

Key Legal and Administrative Context

The appointment is particularly notable for how it adheres to judicial mandates aimed at insulating the police from political pressure.

Aspect	Details
Fixed Tenure	In accordance with the Supreme Court's Prakash Singh judgment , Dr. Date has been appointed for a fixed two-year term , which will extend until early 2028, even though his original superannuation was due in December 2026.
Stability	This fixed tenure is designed to ensure the police chief can make independent decisions without the threat of sudden transfer.
Selection Process	He was chosen from a shortlist of three senior IPS officers recommended by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

C) 3 Years

D) 5 Years

Q3. Prior to his appointment as the state's police chief, Dr. Sadanand Date served as the Director General of which national agency?

A) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

B) Intelligence Bureau (IB)

C) National Investigation Agency (NIA)

D) Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW)

Q4. Dr. Sadanand Date is famously recognized for his gallantry during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks (26/11) for his actions at which location?

A) Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

+1

B) Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT)

C) Cama Hospital

D) Leopold Cafe

Q5. Who was the first woman Director General of Police of Maharashtra, whom the new DGP succeeded?

A) Kanchan Chaudhary Bhattacharya

B) Rashmi Shukla

C) Meeran Borwankar

D) Kiran Bedi

SPORTS

Maharashtra Police Leadership MCQs

Q1. Who officially took charge as the Director General of Police (DGP) of Maharashtra on January 3, 2026?

A) Ritesh Kumar

B) Sanjay Verma

C) Sadanand Vasant Date

D) Hemant Karkare

Q2. In accordance with Supreme Court guidelines (Prakash Singh judgment), what is the fixed tenure for the newly appointed Maharashtra DGP?

A) 1 Year

B) 2 Years

PM Modi Opens 72nd National Volleyball Tournament

It is inspiring to see Varanasi—the Prime Minister's own constituency—becoming a hub for national sports!

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the **72nd Senior National Volleyball Championship** on January 4, 2026. The tournament is currently underway at the **Dr. Sampurnanand Sports Stadium** (Sigra Stadium) and is scheduled to conclude on January 11.

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Highlights of the Tournament

The event is being hailed as a "Sports Mahakumbh" for the region, marking the first time a national volleyball championship of this scale has been hosted in Varanasi.

- Massive Participation:** Over 1,000 players are participating, making up 58 teams (30 men's and 28 women's teams) from across 28 states, Union Territories, and premier

institutions like the Indian Railways and the Armed Forces.

- Mascots with Local Flavor:** The tournament features two unique mascots:
 - Nandu:** Inspired by the sacred bull, Nandi.
 - Neera:** Representing the Gangetic Dolphin, the national aquatic animal.
- International Oversight:** Observers from the **International Volleyball Federation (FIVB)** are present to monitor the high standard of competition.

Key Themes from the PM's Address

In his speech, the Prime Minister used the mechanics of volleyball as a metaphor for governance and national progress:

Volleyball Value	Connection to India's Growth
"Team First"	Mirroring the "India First" spirit where every citizen contributes to national goals.
Coordination	Like a successful spike requires a good set, national progress requires synergy between states and the center.
Constant Movement	Comparing the goal of keeping the ball "lifted" to the determination needed for a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India).

"Volleyball teaches us that no victory is ever achieved alone. Our success depends on our

coordination, our trust, and the readiness of our team." — PM Narendra Modi

Future Outlook

The Prime Minister also highlighted recent reforms, including the **National Sports Governance Act** and the **Khelo Bharat Policy 2025**, which aim to make Indian sports more "athlete-centric" and transparent. He even mentioned that India is strongly bidding to host the **2036 Olympics**.

Q1. Where was the 72nd National Volleyball Tournament inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

- A) New Delhi
- B) Ahmedabad
- C) Varanasi
- D) Lucknow

Q2. Through which medium did the Prime Minister address the players and officials at the inauguration ceremony?

- A) In-person attendance
- B) Video conferencing
- C) Radio broadcast (Mann Ki Baat)
- D) Recorded audio message

Q3. According to the Prime Minister's address, which qualities of volleyball reflect India's current development journey?

- A) Individual brilliance and speed
- B) Teamwork, coordination, and shared responsibility
- C) Physical strength and endurance

D) Defensive strategy and patience

Q4. The inauguration of this tournament underscores the government's focus on which of the following areas? A) Industrial expansion

- B) Sports and youth development
- C) Digital literacy
- D) Agricultural reform

Q5. Which edition of the National Volleyball Tournament was recently inaugurated in Uttar Pradesh?

- A) 50th
- B) 65th
- C) 72nd
- D) 75th

BANKING/ECONOMY

Indian Banks See Sharp Improvement in Asset Quality



It is truly a landmark period for the Indian financial sector. As of **early 2026**, the Indian banking system has achieved its healthiest state in over two decades, completing a remarkable turnaround from the "twin balance sheet" crisis of the mid-2010s.

According to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) December 2025 **Financial Stability Report**, the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio has plummeted to a multi-decade low of **2.1%** (as of September 2025), down from a staggering peak of 11.5% in 2017–18.

The Turnaround Story

The recovery is a result of a multi-pronged approach involving structural reforms and disciplined lending.

- Clean Balance Sheets:** Massive write-offs (nearly ₹10.4 lakh crore over the last nine years) have removed legacy "toxic" assets.
- Resolution Mechanisms:** The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** has shifted the power dynamic from debtors to creditors, speeding up recoveries.

- Stronger Capital Buffers:** Banks are well-capitalized, with a Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of **17.2%**, providing a significant cushion against future shocks.
- Profitability:** In FY 2024–25, Scheduled Commercial Banks recorded their highest-ever aggregate net profit of **₹4.01 lakh crore**.

Remaining Pockets of Stress

While the macro picture is bright, the RBI and analysts have identified specific "watchlists" that require vigilance:

Segment	Concern
Unsecured Retail Loans	Rapid growth in "Buy Now, Pay Later" (BNPL) and app-based personal loans has led to higher slippages in private banks.
Microfinance (MFI)	Stress is emerging in small-ticket loans, with GNPA in some MFI portfolios rising from 2% to over 4% in late 2025.
MSME Sector	While improving, the MSME segment still shows higher stress levels compared to large corporates, with a Special Mention Account (SMA) ratio of around 5.1%.
Global Spillovers	Geopolitical tensions and trade disruptions remain "external" risks that could impact domestic credit quality.

B) 1.9%

C) 1.1%

D) 2.1%

Q4. While the banking sector showed improvement, the RBI warned of "fresh accretions to NPAs" and rising write-offs in which specific financial sector?

A) Foreign Banks

B) Public Sector Banks

C) Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)

D) Life Insurance Companies

Q5. What does the "SMA-2" ratio, which recently declined to 0.8%, indicate in banking terminology?

A) Loans overdue by 0–30 days

B) Loans overdue by 31–60 days

C) Loans overdue by 61–90 days

D) Loans that have been written off completely

STATE NEWS

Ancient Vaishnavite Memorial

The "Expected Credit Loss" (ECL) Shift

A major development for 2026 is the transition to the **Expected Credit Loss (ECL)** framework. Unlike the older system, where banks only set aside money *after* a loan turned bad, the ECL model requires them to provision for potential losses from the moment a loan is granted. This is expected to make the system even more resilient, though it may temporarily impact bank margins during the transition.

Q1. According to the RBI's Financial Stability Report (December 2025), at what level did the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio of Indian banks stand in September 2025?

A) 3.2%

B) 2.1%

C) 1.5%

D) 0.5%

Q2. Which specific segment was flagged by the RBI as a "key vulnerability," contributing to more than 50% of retail loan slippages?

A) Home Loans

B) Agricultural Advances

C) Unsecured Loans (Personal loans and Credit cards)

D) Corporate Infrastructure Loans

Q3. Under the baseline scenario projected by the RBI, the GNPA ratio of scheduled commercial banks is expected to improve to what level by March 2027?

A) 2.5%



This is a significant find for the history of **Sri Vaishnavism**, as it physically anchors the hagiography of Nathamunigal to a specific geography in Tamil Nadu.

Nathamunigal (approx. 9th–10th century CE) is revered as the visionary who "rediscovered" the **Nalayira Divya Prabandham** (the 4,000 hymns of the Alvars) after they had been lost to time. The discovery of his **Thiruvarasu** (resting place or memorial) at Sorgapallam provides a tangible link to his final journey.

The Significance of the Site: Sorgapallam

The location near **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** is historically rich, but the specific finds at Sorgapallam (Sembodai) add a layer of spiritual heritage to the Ariyalur district:

- **The Srinivasa Perumal Idol:** The discovery of Lord Srinivasa with Sridevi and Bhoodevi half-buried under a tree suggests that an ancient temple or a private place of worship existed there long before the modern structures were built.

- **The Nathamunigal Idol:** Finding an idol specifically dedicated to the Acharya is rare. In Sri Vaishnavite tradition, a *Thiruvarasu* marks the spot where a great soul reached the lotus feet of the Lord.
- **Historical Context:** According to tradition, Nathamunigal spent his final days in a state of deep meditation. The identification of this site confirms the local oral histories that he had moved toward the Chola heartland during his last years.

Key Contributions of Nathamunigal

To understand why this discovery is so vital to the community, one must look at Nathamunigal's monumental impact on Indian philosophy and music:

Contribution	Impact
Recovery of the Prabandham	He performed intense penance at Kumbakonam to receive the lost 4,000 hymns directly from the Alvar Nammalvar.
Systematization	He classified the hymns into four parts and set them to Deva Gana (divine music), ensuring they could be sung in temples.
Lineage (Guru Parampara)	He is the grandfather of Alavandar and the spiritual predecessor to Sri Ramanujacharya.

Contribution	Impact
Yoga Rahasya	He is credited with reviving ancient teachings on Yoga, focusing on its therapeutic and spiritual benefits.

Question 2

What is the alternative name for the discovery site **Sorgapallam**, where the memorials are located?

- A) Sembodai
- B) Gangaikondam
- C) Veeranarayananapuram
- D) Kattumannarkoil

Question 3

Which other idols were found half-buried under a tree at the same location prior to the discovery of the Nathamunigal idol?

- A) Vishnu and Lakshmi
- B) Ranganatha and Andal
- C) Srinivasa Perumal with Sridevi and Bhoodevi
- D) Varadaraja Perumal and Perundevi Thayar

Question 4

The discovery at Sorgapallam is historically significant because it identifies the site as the:

- A) Birthplace (Avathara Sthalam) of Nathamunigal
- B) Teaching center (Paatashala) of Nathamunigal
- C) Memorial (Thiruvarasu) of Nathamunigal
- D) Royal palace of the Cholas

The Modern Temples

Following the discovery in 2000, the local community and devotees took swift action:

1. **Consecration:** Two separate shrines were built—one for the **Srinivasa Perumal** deity and another for **Nathamunigal**.
2. **Pilgrimage:** The site has since become a significant pilgrimage point for followers of the Vishishtadvaita school, who visit to pay respects at the memorial of the "First Acharya."

The proximity to Gangaikonda Cholapuram (the capital of Rajendra Chola I) suggests that this area remained a major cultural and religious nerve center for centuries, blending the imperial majesty of the Cholas with the deep-rooted bhakti of the Vaishnavas.

Question 1

In which district was the idol of Nathamunigal, the first Acharya of Sri Vaishnavism, discovered around the year 2000?

- A) Thanjavur
- B) Ariyalur
- C) Tiruchirappalli
- D) Cuddalore

Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

Q.1. India will recently overtake which country to become the world's largest rice producer?

- A. Vietnam
- B. Thailand
- C. United States
- D. China

1. D

India will surpass China to become the world's largest rice producer. This success is not only a testament to the hard work of farmers and government food security schemes, but also demonstrates India's growing role in the global food market. But behind this success lies a major environmental and policy crisis—rapidly depleting groundwater levels, rising farmer debt, and an unstable agricultural subsidy system.

Q.2. Which country was recently invaded by the US military and its President Nicolas Maduro was arrested along with his wife in their bedroom?

- A. Cuba
- B. Bolivia
- C. Venezuela
- D. Nicaragua

2. C

US President Donald Trump has said that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife have been captured and deported from the country where a major attack took place. In a

social media post, Mr. Trump said the US had successfully carried out a major attack against Venezuela and its leader. He added that the operation was carried out in collaboration with US law enforcement.

Q.3. Justice Sangam Kumar Sahu was recently appointed Chief Justice of which High Court?

- A. Kerala High Court
- B. Patna High Court
- C. Meghalaya High Court
- D. Allahabad High Court

3. B

Justice Sangam Kumar Sahu, a judge of the Odisha High Court, has been appointed Chief Justice of the Patna High Court. The Union Ministry of Law and Justice has issued a notification regarding the appointment of Justice Sahu, a judge of the Odisha High Court, as Chief Justice of the Patna High Court by the President of India.

Q.4. Gujarat recently formed a committee to protect energy infrastructure from:

- A. Natural disasters
- B. Cyberattacks
- C. Physical sabotage
- D. Power theft

4. B

With the increasing use of digital technologies such as smart meters, smart grids, and automated control systems, the power sector's energy infrastructure has become more vulnerable to cyber threats. Recognizing this

threat, the Gujarat government has taken necessary steps to strengthen cybersecurity in the energy sector. The state has established special committees to review preparedness, improve systems, and ensure the long-term security of critical power infrastructure.

Q.5. Which city is about to become India's first slum-free city?

- A. Mumbai
- B. Ahmedabad
- C. Surat
- D. Indore

5. C

Surat (Gujarat) is set to become India's first slum-free city, with the government aiming to completely eliminate slums and transform it into a major slum-free metropolis. Chandigarh, a smaller city, has already been officially declared slum-free. With its large population (7-8 million), Surat could become the first major city to achieve this feat, setting a precedent for urban development.

Q.6. Australian cricketer Usman Khawaja (of Pakistani origin) recently announced his retirement from:

- A. Test cricket
- B. ODI cricket
- C. International cricket
- D. T20 cricket

6. C

Veteran Australian batsman Usman Khawaja has announced that he will retire from

international cricket after the fifth Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The Pakistan-born cricketer said he hopes his lengthy Test career will inspire youngsters to take a "different" path and know that playing cricket for Australia is possible.

Q.7. The foundation stone for the Bhoramdev Corridor project was recently laid in which state?

- A. Madhya Pradesh
- B. Chhattisgarh
- C. Uttarakhand
- D. Rajasthan

7. B

The historic Bhoramdev Dham, located in the Kabirdham district of Chhattisgarh, is now being developed as a major hub for heritage-based tourism. In a major step towards this end, the foundation stone has been laid for the Bhoramdev Corridor Development Project, which aims to preserve the cultural and architectural heritage of the temple complex and strengthen its pilgrimage tourism infrastructure.

Q.8. The "Galaxy Frog" (Melanobatrachus indicus), which has recently been in the news due to its declining population, is endemic to which region?

- A. Eastern Himalayas
- B. Western Ghats
- C. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- D. Sundarbans

8. B

The Galaxy frog (*Melanobatrachus indicus*) is found in the wet evergreen forests of the Western Ghats region of India, particularly in the southern parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It lives under rotting wood and has recently been in the news for its population decline due to inaccurate wildlife photography.

Q.9. Under the recent Export Promotion (NIRYAT PROTSAHAN) sub-scheme, what is the base interest subvention provided on pre-shipment and post-shipment export credit for MSMEs?

- A. 1.5%
- B. 2.75%
- C. 3.5%
- D. 5.0%
- 9. B

Under the Export Promotion Sub-Scheme, the base interest subvention on pre-shipment and post-shipment export credit for MSMEs is 2.75% per annum, subject to a maximum benefit of ₹50 lakh per exporter per financial year, and additional incentives for emerging markets. This scheme has been launched as a pilot project under the Export Promotion Mission.

Q.10. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated a major international exhibition of the sacred relics of Lord Buddha at Piprahwa in:

- A. Lucknow
- B. Varanasi
- C. New Delhi
- D. Bodhgaya
- 10. C

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the mega international exhibition of the sacred relics of Lord Buddha from Piprahwa, titled "Light and Lotus: The Relics of the Enlightened One," at the Rai Pithora Cultural Complex in New Delhi. Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister said that after a wait of 125 years, India's heritage has returned.

Q.11. Turkmenistan recently legalized:

- A. Same-sex marriage
- B. Cryptocurrency mining and trading
- C. Online gambling
- D. Cannabis cultivation

11. B

Turkmenistan has passed a new law legalizing cryptocurrency mining and exchange from January 2026. The law was signed by President Serdar Berdimuhamedov, marking a major policy change in one of the world's most closed economies.

Q.12. The Assam government recently launched a financial assistance scheme for:

- A. Farmers
- B. Udasin devotees
- C. Women entrepreneurs
- D. Unemployed youth

12. B

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has launched a financial assistance scheme for Udasin devotees, providing ₹1,500 per month to celibate Vaishnava monks living in Satra institutions. The scheme will benefit 620 Udasin

devotees, with the highest number of them, 474, being from Majuli. Majuli is the world's largest river island and a major center of Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture.

Q.13. India and which country recently exchanged lists of nuclear installations and facilities under a consular agreement?

- A. China
- B. Pakistan
- C. Bangladesh
- D. Nepal

13. B

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of their nuclear installations under a bilateral agreement that prohibits attacks on each other's nuclear sites. The exchange took place despite strained relations between the two neighbours following four days of military hostilities in May last year.

Q.14. Kushavati recently became the third district of which state?

- A. Goa
- B. Sikkim
- C. Arunachal Pradesh
- D. Mizoram

14. A

The Goa government has announced the creation of a new district, Kushavati, in a major overhaul of the state's administrative structure. This move is a major step toward improving administrative facilities in the southern part of the state. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant,

announcing the decision, said the district was named after the ancient Kushavati River, which flows through the region.

Q.15. Which state recently guaranteed 50% of the last basic salary as pension for government employees?

- A. Kerala
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. Karnataka
- D. Andhra Pradesh

15. B

Tamil Nadu recently announced the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS) guaranteeing state government employees 50% of their last drawn basic pay as pension, fulfilling a long-standing demand and aligning benefits closer to the old pension system, with employee contributions and state government bearing the rest.

FACTS ABOUT INDIA

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was a monumental figure in the 19th-century "Bengal Renaissance," providing the literary and spiritual fuel that ignited the Indian independence movement. He is often called the Sahitya Samrat (Emperor of Literature) in Bengali.

Here is a look at the legacy of the man who gave India its "Mantra of Patriotism."

The "Mantra" of Vande Mataram

While Bankim Chandra was a government official, he composed *Vande Mataram* (meaning

"I bow to thee, Mother") around 1875. It was later included in his 1882 novel, *Anandamath*.

- Political Catalyst: The song first gained massive political momentum during the 1905 Anti-Partition of Bengal movement. It became a rallying cry so powerful that the British government eventually banned the public singing of it.
- National Song: On January 24, 1950, the Constituent Assembly of India officially adopted the first two stanzas as the National Song, giving it equal status with the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*.

Literary Contributions

Bankim Chandra is credited with pioneering the modern Indian novel, moving away from traditional verse to prose that explored human emotions and national identity.

Novel	Significance
Kapalkundala (1866)	Renowned for its poetic prose and exploration of human nature.

The "Janus-Faced" Intellectual

Interestingly, Bankim Chandra lived a life of dualities. He was one of the first two graduates of Calcutta University (1858) and served as a Deputy Magistrate for 32 years under the British Raj.

- The Bureaucrat: As a high-ranking official, he was known for being honest and fearless, often siding with Indian peasants over British indigo planters in his official reports.
- The Revolutionary: Through his magazine, *Bangadarshan*, and his novels, he covertly preached the message of self-reliance and resistance against colonial rule, influencing later leaders like Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal.

Novel	Significance
Rajmohan's Wife (1864)	Historically significant as the first Indian novel written in English.
Durgeshnandini (1865)	His first Bengali novel; it broke new ground in Bengali literature.
Anandamath (1882)	Set during the Sannyasi Rebellion, it introduced the concept of the Motherland as a goddess (<i>Bharat Mata</i>).



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