

**Dear Aspirants,**

We invite you to subscribe to our WhatsApp & You tube channel and activate the notification bell to receive updates on job openings and current affairs.



**NATIONAL NEWS**

**India Becomes World's Number 2 Smartphone Giant**



That is a massive milestone! To put that in perspective, India's active smartphone base of **740 million** is now larger than the entire population of Europe.

While shipment numbers (new sales) often get all the headlines, this "active installed base" metric is actually a better health check for a digital economy. It shows that people aren't just buying phones; they are keeping them longer and integrating them deeply into their daily lives—from UPI payments to 5G streaming.

Here is a breakdown of what's driving this shift and who the major players are in this new landscape:

**The "Big Three" Trends Driving Growth**

The 2025 data suggests India is moving away from being a "budget-only" market to a much more mature ecosystem.

- **The Premiumization Wave:** For the first time, nearly **22%** of all shipments in India are now "premium" (priced above ₹30,000).

Consumers are choosing to invest more upfront for devices that last longer.

- **The 5G Revolution:** 5G phones now account for roughly **87%** of all new shipments. This rapid migration is pushing users to retire their old 4G handsets faster than expected.
- **Easy Financing:** Nearly **two-thirds** of premium smartphone purchases are now done through EMI and financing schemes, making high-end tech accessible to a much broader demographic.

### Key Market Players in 2025

The competitive landscape has shifted, with brands focusing as much on *loyalty* as they do on *sales*.

Brand	Status	Key Driver
vivo	Volume Leader	Strong offline presence and success of the camera-centric V and X series.
Apple	Value Leader	Captured a record <b>28%–29% value share</b> ; the iPhone 16 was the top-shipped model in 2025.
Samsung	The All-Rounder	Dominates the foldable market ( <b>88% share</b> ) and maintains a massive installed base across all price points.
Motorola	Fastest Growing	Achieved a staggering <b>54% YoY growth</b> by capturing the mid-range with clean software and bold designs.

### Why the "Installed Base" Matters

Unlike annual sales, the **740 million active users** represent a stable platform for India's digital future.

- **Software over Hardware:** Brands are now shifting focus to AI features and software updates to keep this massive user base engaged.
- **Customer Loyalty:** With replacement cycles stretching to nearly **3.5 years**, the first brand a user picks often dictates their ecosystem (apps, watches, tablets) for nearly half a decade.
- **Manufacturing Hub:** Beyond consumption, India is now the **world's second-largest mobile manufacturer**, with exports surging (especially iPhones to the US) due to the PLI schemes.

It's a fascinating shift—India isn't just a market for smartphones anymore; it's becoming the world's "mobile-first" laboratory.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**Q1. According to the 2025 Counterpoint Research report, what is India's global rank in terms of active smartphone installed base?**

- A) First
- B) Second
- C) Third
- D) Fourth

**Q2. As of 2025, how many active smartphones are currently in use in India?**

- A) 650 million

- B) 1.45 billion
- C) 740 million
- D) 500 million

**Q3. What percentage of India's population (1.45 billion) is estimated to actively use a smartphone based on the report?**

- A) Less than 25%
- B) Exactly 40%
- C) More than 50%
- D) Nearly 90%

**Q4. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a key factor driving India's smartphone market strength?**

- A) Growing purchasing power
- B) Increasing demand for better features
- C) Rising popularity of premium devices
- D) Decrease in overall population growth

**Q5. The "active installed base" metric used in the report reflects which of the following consumer behaviors?**

- A) Only the number of new phones sold in 2025
- B) Long-term device usage and customer loyalty
- C) The number of smartphones exported to China
- D) The total number of broken or recycled devices

**Answer Key**

Question	Answer
Q1	B) Second
Q2	C) 740 million
Q3	C) More than 50%
Q4	D) Decrease in overall population growth
Q5	B) Long-term device usage and customer loyalty

**NATIONAL NEWS**

**India's Agri Exports to US Set to Rise as 75% Items Get Zero Tariff**



This development, based on the **State Bank of India (SBI) report** from February 2026, marks a historic shift in Indo-US trade relations. By securing zero-tariff access for **75% of agricultural exports**, India is positioning itself as a primary food supplier to the American market.

Here is a detailed breakdown of the beneficiaries and the strategic math behind this deal:

## The "Zero-Tariff" Winners

According to the report, products worth **\$1.36 billion** will now enter the US without additional duties. This is a game-changer for several high-volume sectors:

- **Rice (The Volume King):** India already holds a **24.7% share** (\$341 million) of the US global rice import market. Removing tariffs will help Indian Basmati and non-Basmati varieties compete even more aggressively against Southeast Asian suppliers.
- **The Plantation Economy: Tea, coffee, and spices** currently hold only a **2.8% market share** (\$396 million) in the US. The tariff removal is specifically designed to help these sectors scale up to capture a larger slice of the \$14 billion US import pie.
- **Fisheries (The Comeback):** This sector was previously hampered by high US duties and anti-dumping investigations. With the new structure, India's **\$1.8 billion** worth of seafood exports (9.6% market share) is expected to see a significant rebound.
- **Fruits & Nuts:** Items like **mangoes, guavas, papayas, cashews, and Brazil nuts** are now set to become much more price-competitive on American grocery shelves.

## Strategic Trade Snapshot

The SBI report highlights that while India's current penetration in some US categories is small, the "addressable market" is massive.

Category	Total US Global Imports	India's Current Share	Impact Level
Rice	\$1.38 Billion	24.7%	High
Fish & Aquatic Invertebrates	\$18.84 Billion	9.6%	High
Tea, Coffee & Spices	\$14.02 Billion	2.8%	Medium
Edible Fruit & Nuts	\$21.52 Billion	<1%	High Potential

## Protecting the "Red Lines"

A critical takeaway from the 2026 trade framework is that India has **not** given reciprocal access to the US in its most sensitive agricultural areas.

- **The "Negative List":** India continues to protect **dairy, poultry, meat, and staple grains** (wheat, maize, millets) from US imports to safeguard rural livelihoods.
- **GM Ban Stays:** India remains firm on its ban of Genetically Modified (GM) products, specifically blocking American GM corn and soybean.
- **Calibrated Opening:** In a move to help the poultry industry, India will allow limited imports of **Red Sorghum** and **DDGS** (animal feed) as non-GM alternatives, but only in "demand-based" quantities.

## The Economic Bottom Line

The SBI report suggests that this tariff rationalization is a "golden opportunity" that

could push India's total trade surplus with the US toward **\$90 billion annually**. For farmers, it moves the needle from merely exporting surplus to becoming a strategic partner in the US food security chain.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**Q1. According to the State Bank of India (SBI) report, what percentage of Indian agricultural export items to the US now enjoy zero tariff access?**

- A) 25%
- B) 50%
- C) 75%
- D) 90%

**Q2. What is the current value of India's trade surplus in agricultural trade with the United States?**

- A) \$1.035 billion
- B) \$1.3 billion
- C) \$1.36 billion
- D) \$750 million

**Q3. What is the expected primary benefit of agricultural products worth \$1.36 billion receiving zero additional US duty access?**

- A) Reducing the total volume of exports
- B) Improving price competitiveness and expanding market opportunities
- C) Increasing the cost of Indian goods for US consumers

D) Shifting focus from the US to European markets

**Q4. Based on the report, how much in agricultural products is specifically assured "zero reciprocal tariff"?**

- A) \$1.3 billion
- B) \$75 million
- C) \$1.36 billion
- D) \$1.035 billion

**Q5. The strengthening of the agricultural trade surplus suggests that India's agricultural exports to the US are:**

- A) Consistently higher than its imports from the US in this sector
- B) Equal to its imports from the US in this sector
- C) Lower than its imports from the US in this sector
- D) Declining due to high tariff barriers

### Answer Key

Question	Answer
Q1	C) 75%
Q2	B) \$1.3 billion
Q3	B) Improving price competitiveness and expanding market opportunities
Q4	D) \$1.035 billion
Q5	A) Consistently higher than its imports from the US in this sector

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### India Hosts First BRICS Sherpas Meeting 2026



India's 2026 BRICS Chairship officially kicked off with the **Sherpas and Sous Sherpas meeting** in New Delhi (February 9–10, 2026). This is a landmark year as it marks the **20th anniversary** of the grouping and is the first time the expanded "BRICS+" (now 11 members including Indonesia) is operating under Indian leadership.

Guided by the theme **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,"** India is positioning BRICS as a "non-Western, not anti-Western" bridge between the Global North and South.

#### The Five Pillars of India's 2026 Roadmap

During the New Delhi meetings, India's Sherpa, **Sudhakar Dalela**, outlined a strategy focused on "Humanity First." The discussions prioritized:

- **Resilience:** Strengthening supply chains and financial systems (including more trade in national currencies) to withstand global shocks and unilateral sanctions.

- **Innovation:** Scaling India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** model (like UPI and Aadhaar) to other BRICS nations to drive financial inclusion and tech-led growth.
- **Cooperation:** Focusing on counter-terrorism and maritime security. India has been vocal about making "condemning terrorism a principle, not a convenience" within the bloc.
- **Sustainability:** Coordinating on green energy transitions and climate finance, ensuring the burden of climate action is shared equitably by developed and developing nations.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Pushing for urgent reforms in the UN Security Council and the IMF to better reflect the economic weight of emerging markets.

#### BRICS+ 2026: Key Participants & New Faces

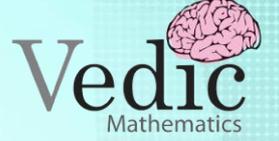
The meeting saw the first-ever participation of **Belarus** as a "Partner Country" in a Sherpa meeting, signaling the continued expansion of the BRICS influence.

Member Status	Countries Represented
Original 5	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
Expanded Members	Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, <b>Indonesia</b> (joined 2025)
Partner Countries	Belarus (and 9 others invited to the opening session)

10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



### The "People-Centric" Agenda

Moving beyond pure economics, India is introducing several "soft power" tracks to deepen the ties between the 3.7 billion people living in BRICS nations:

- **BRICS Women's Business Alliance:** Focusing on female entrepreneurship.
- **Youth & Sports Connect:** Proposed BRICS Games and youth exchange programs.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Delegates at the Sherpa meeting visited the **Akshardham Temple** and the **National Crafts Museum**, highlighting the role of heritage in modern diplomacy.

"As BRICS completes 20 years, it stands as a valuable forum for international cooperation... taking forward its people-centric agenda."

— *Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister*

### The "Bridge Builder" Role

A unique aspect of 2026 is that India is slated to host both the **BRICS Summit** and the **QUAD Summit**. This reinforces India's "multi-alignment" strategy—balancing its role in a grouping with Russia and China while maintaining its deep strategic partnership with the US, Japan, and Australia.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. Where was the first meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas held under India's 2026 Chairship?**

A) Mumbai

B) New Delhi

C) Bengaluru

D) Varanasi

**2. What is the official theme for the BRICS 2026 Chairship under India's leadership?**

A) Strengthening Multilateralism for Global Security

B) Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity and Consolidation

C) Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability

D) Fostering Economic Growth for a Post-Pandemic World

**3. Which of the following is NOT listed as a key track for cooperation in the 2026 roadmap?**

A) Economic stability

B) Climate resilience

C) Space exploration

D) Inclusive global governance

**4. The meeting of "Sherpas and Sous Sherpas" primarily serves what purpose in the BRICS context?**

A) Finalizing international trade contracts

B) Preparing the agenda and roadmap for the heads of state

C) Managing the BRICS Development Bank's daily loans

D) Providing military coordination between member nations



5. India's 2026 Chairship emphasizes "Sustainable development" and "Technological innovation." Which key point focuses on the reform of international institutions?

- A) Economic stability
- B) Inclusive global governance
- C) Climate resilience
- D) People-centric tracks

**Answer Key**

Question	Answer
1	B (New Delhi)
2	C (Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability)
3	C (Space exploration - not mentioned in your specific key points)
4	B (Preparing the agenda and roadmap)
5	B (Inclusive global governance)



The event is particularly significant this year as it commemorates the success of **Operation Sindoor**, reflecting PNB's historical roots in nation-building, originally established by the great freedom fighter **Lala Lajpat Rai**.

**Event Details & Categories**

Scheduled for **April 5, 2026**, the marathon will move from the corporate office to the iconic **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium** in New Delhi.

Category	Type	Age Limit	Details
21KM Half Marathon	Timed	18+ Years	3h 30m Cut-off
10KM Run	Timed	15+ Years	2h Cut-off
5KM Run	Non-Timed	10+ Years	"Run for Fun" / No Cut-off

- **Prizes:** Top performers stand a chance to win from a total cash prize pool of up to **₹19 Lakh**.
- **Perks:** Participants receive a dry-fit race T-shirt, an achiever's medal, a goodie bag, a personalized video reel, and a post-race breakfast.

**BANKING/ECONOMY**

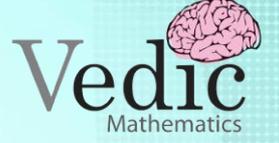
**PNB Announces 'PNB Soldierathon 2026' Ahead of 132nd Foundation Day Celebrations**

Punjab National Bank (PNB) is kicking off its **132nd Foundation Day** celebrations with a powerful tribute to the Indian Armed Forces. The **PNB Soldierathon 2026**, announced at the bank's Dwarka headquarters, is more than just a race—it's a movement aimed at bridging the gap between civilians and the military.

10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



### Key Highlights of the Launch

The pre-launch ceremony was high on energy and patriotism, featuring prominent figures:

- **Chief Guest:** Major Dr. Surendra Poonia, VSM, a former Special Forces officer and veteran marathoner, who emphasized building "national consciousness."
- **The Unveiling:** PNB MD & CEO Ashok Chandra unveiled the official event T-shirt and medal, alongside a short film highlighting the success of the inaugural 2025 edition.
- **Purpose:** Apart from honoring soldiers and martyrs, the bank is using this flagship event to align with the **Fit India Movement**, encouraging the "PNB Parivaar" and the general public to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

### Why the Date Matters

While the marathon is on **April 5**, the actual PNB Foundation Day is April 12.

The bank was founded in 1894 and opened for business on April 12, 1895, in Lahore. It holds the distinction of being the first bank managed solely by Indians with Indian capital that has survived to this day. This "Soldierathon" serves as the grand curtain-raiser for a week of commemorative activities.

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. Where did Punjab National Bank officially announce the launch of 'PNB Soldierathon 2026'?

A) New Delhi, Connaught Place

B) Mumbai, Bandra-Kurla Complex

C) New Delhi, Dwarka

D) Chandigarh, Sector 17

2. The 'PNB Soldierathon 2026' is part of the celebrations for which upcoming milestone for the bank?

A) 100th Foundation Day

B) 125th Foundation Day

C) 132nd Foundation Day

D) 150th Foundation Day

3. Which edition of the PNB Soldierathon is being organized in 2026?

A) First

B) Second

C) Third

D) Fifth

4. What is the official theme for the PNB Soldierathon 2026?

A) Run for Fitness, Run for India

B) PNB Cares: Honouring our Heroes

C) PNB Soldierathon 2026 – Run with Soldiers, Run for Soldiers

D) Banking for the Brave: A Tribute to the Armed Forces

5. Besides promoting fitness, what is the primary objective of the Soldierathon event?

A) To increase the bank's digital banking users

B) To honour the Indian Armed Forces and promote national pride



C) To raise funds for new corporate office branches

D) To celebrate the anniversary of the Indian Independence

**Answer Key**

Question	Answer
1	C (New Delhi, Dwarka)
2	C (132nd Foundation Day)
3	B (Second)
4	C (PNB Soldierathon 2026 – Run with Soldiers, Run for Soldiers)
5	B (To honour the Indian Armed Forces and promote national pride)

**BANKING/ECONOMY**

RBI Digital Payments Index Soars to 516.76



The latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) confirms that India’s digital payment ecosystem is not just growing—it’s accelerating. The **RBI-DPI** reaching **516.76** in September 2025 represents a **5x increase** in digital

adoption since the base period of March 2018 (\$100\$).

This surge highlights a fundamental shift where digital transactions are becoming the "default" rather than an alternative to cash.

**The Five Pillars of the Index**

The RBI-DPI isn't just one number; it's a composite of five key parameters that measure different aspects of the digital ecosystem. The recent growth was primarily led by the two heaviest hitters: **Payment Performance** and **Payment Enablers**.

Parameter	Weight	What it Measures
<b>Payment Performance</b>	45%	Transaction volumes, values, and unique users.
<b>Payment Enablers</b>	25%	Internet penetration, mobile density, and bank accounts.
<b>Supply-side Infrastructure</b>	15%	POS terminals, QR code deployments, and ATMs.
<b>Demand-side Infrastructure</b>	10%	Debit/Credit cards, prepaid instruments, and mobile banking.
<b>Consumer Centricity</b>	5%	Awareness, safety, and grievance redressal efficiency.

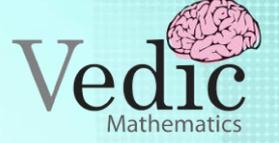
**The Growth Trajectory (2024–2025)**

The momentum has remained consistent, with the index being published every six months. The jump from March to September 2025 shows a healthy semi-annual growth rate of approximately **4.7%**.

10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



- **September 2024:** 465.33
- **March 2025:** 493.22
- **September 2025:** 516.76

### Key Drivers of the Surge

Why did the index cross the 500-mark so decisively in 2025? Several factors converged:

- **UPI Dominance:** As of mid-2025, UPI accounts for roughly **80% of all retail digital payments** in India. The "UPI for Secondary" (offline/small-value) transactions has seen a massive uptick in rural areas.
- **The QR Revolution:** There are now over **350 million** merchant QR codes across India, effectively turning every small "Kirana" store into a digital terminal.
- **DPI Global Footprint:** With India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) being exported to countries like the UAE, France, and Singapore, cross-border digital remittances have contributed to the "Performance" metric.
- **Credit on UPI:** The integration of RuPay credit cards with UPI has allowed users to spend credit via QR codes, further boosting transaction values.

### The Challenges Ahead

Despite the record high, the RBI and industry experts point to a few "speed bumps" that need addressing to maintain this pace:

1. **Cybersecurity:** A surge in sophisticated phishing attacks remains the biggest threat to consumer trust.

2. **Digital Literacy:** While urban markets are saturated, deeper penetration in remote rural clusters requires more simplified, voice-based payment solutions.
3. **Platform Stability:** As transaction volumes hit new peaks (often exceeding 15 billion a month), the underlying banking infrastructure must evolve to minimize "transaction timeouts."

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

1. What was the value of the RBI Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) for September 2025?

- A) 493.22
- B) 500.00
- C) 516.76
- D) 525.10

2. According to the Reserve Bank of India, what was the RBI-DPI score in March 2025?

- A) 516.76
- B) 485.50
- C) 493.22
- D) 502.12

3. Which institution is responsible for calculating and releasing the Digital Payments Index (DPI) in India?



A) National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

B) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

C) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

D) NITI Aayog

**4. The rise in the Digital Payments Index between March and September 2025 was primarily driven by growth in which two parameters?**

A) Payment Infrastructure and Consumer Base

B) Payment Performance and Payment Enablers

C) Digital Literacy and Internet Penetration

D) Merchant Onboarding and QR Code Deployment

**5. What does the surge in the RBI-DPI from 493.22 to 516.76 signify for the Indian economy?**

A) A decline in cash-based transactions only in urban areas

B) Steady progress in the digitization of payments across the country

C) A shift from digital payments back to traditional banking

D) The completion of the 100% digital literacy mission

**Answer Key**

Question	Answer
1	C (516.76)
2	C (493.22)
3	B (Reserve Bank of India)
4	B (Payment Performance and Payment Enablers)
5	B (Steady progress in the digitization of payments)

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

**Trump administration reaches trade deal to lower Taiwan's tariff barriers**



The signing of the **US-Taiwan Agreement on Reciprocal Trade** on February 12, 2026, represents a massive strategic pivot in the Asia-Pacific trade landscape. Signed in Washington by US Trade Representative **Jamieson Greer** and Taiwan's Vice Premier **Li-chiun Cheng**, the deal effectively trades tariff reductions for a

monumental "reshaping" of the global semiconductor supply chain.

Here is a breakdown of the key components of this historic pact:

### The Tariff Swap

The deal significantly lowers the trade barriers that were heightened during the initial "reciprocal tariff" phase of the Trump administration in 2025.

- **For the US:** Taiwan will eliminate or reduce **99%** of its tariff barriers. This opens the door for American autos, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural products (specifically beef, pork, and wheat) to enter Taiwan with near-complete market access.
- **For Taiwan:** Exports to the US will now be taxed at a **15% "all-in" rate** (or the Most Favoured Nation rate, whichever is applicable). This is a sharp reduction from the previous reciprocal rates, which in some cases had climbed as high as 35% during 2025.

### The \$500 Billion Commitment

The most striking part of the agreement is the financial commitment from the Taiwanese side, aimed at "reshoring" high-tech manufacturing to American soil:

1. **Direct Investment (\$250 Billion):** Taiwanese tech giants, led by **TSMC**, have pledged at least \$250 billion to build and expand advanced semiconductor fabs, AI applications, and green energy projects in the US.
2. **Credit Guarantees (\$250 Billion):** The Taiwanese government will provide an

additional \$250 billion in credit guarantees to help smaller supply-chain partners (parts manufacturers, chemical suppliers) relocate to new "world-class industrial parks" being established in the US.

### Energy & Aviation "Buy American"

Beyond tech, the deal secures long-term purchase agreements that help balance the trade deficit:

- **Energy:** Taiwan will purchase **\$44.4 billion** worth of US liquefied natural gas (LNG) and crude oil.
- **Power:** **\$25.2 billion** will be spent on US-made power equipment, grids, and storage facilities.
- **Aviation:** **\$15.2 billion** is earmarked for US civilian aircraft and engines.

### Strategic "Shield" to "Interdependence"

For decades, Taiwan relied on its "**Silicon Shield**"—the idea that its dominance in chipmaking protected it from conflict. This deal evolves that strategy into "**Strategic Interdependence.**" By embedding its most critical companies into the US industrial ecosystem, Taiwan is making its security a direct domestic interest of the United States.

"The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade with Taiwan will... significantly enhance the resilience of our supply chains, particularly in high-technology sectors."

— *Jamieson Greer, US Trade Representative*

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. What percentage of its tariff barriers did Taiwan agree to remove or reduce under the new trade deal?**

- A) 50 per cent
- B) 75 per cent
- C) 90 per cent
- D) 99 per cent

**2. Who were the two primary signatories of the reciprocal agreement signed in Washington?**

- A) Donald Trump and Lai Ching-te
- B) Jamieson Greer and Li-chiun Cheng
- C) Antony Blinken and Joseph Wu
- D) Katherine Tai and Hsiao Bi-khim

**3. Under the terms of the deal, at what rate will Taiwan's exports to the US be taxed?**

- A) A flat 5 per cent rate
- B) A 15 per cent rate or the Most Favoured Nation rate
- C) They will be completely duty-free
- D) A 25 per cent luxury tax rate

**4. How much has Taiwan committed to investing in US industries as part of this agreement?**

- A) 100 billion US Dollars
- B) 250 billion US Dollars
- C) 500 billion US Dollars
- D) 750 billion US Dollars

**5. Which specific industries are highlighted as the focus for Taiwan's investment in the US?**

- A) Automotive, textiles, and agriculture
- B) Computer chips, artificial intelligence, and energy
- C) Pharmaceuticals, aerospace, and tourism
- D) Steel production, shipbuilding, and telecommunications

### Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	D (99 per cent)
2	B (Jamieson Greer and Li-chiun Cheng)
3	B (15 per cent rate or the Most Favoured Nation rate)
4	B (250 billion US Dollars)
5	B (Computer chips, artificial intelligence, and energy)

### STATE NEWS

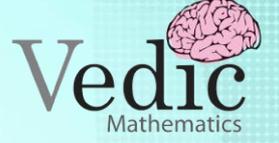
**CM Stalin inaugurates open museum in Keeladi**

On February 13, 2026, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin virtually inaugurated the **Keeladi Open-Air Museum** in Sivaganga district. This landmark facility is the first of its kind in India, designed to let the public view ancient urban structures in the exact spots where they were unearthed.

10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



(dating back to the 6th Century BCE) with evidence of sophisticated civic planning:

- **Massive Brick Structures:** Original walls and floors made of high-quality brick with silica content, indicating advanced, durable manufacturing.
- **Water Management:** Elaborate **terracotta pipelines**, covered drainage systems, and **ring wells** (some intricately decorated) that demonstrate ancient mastery over sanitation.
- **Industrial Evidence:** Excavated dyeing vats and spindle whorls that highlight a thriving textile industry contemporary to the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **Literacy:** Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds which push the documented origins of the Tamil script back to at least 580 BCE.

While the existing Keeladi Heritage Museum (opened in 2023) focuses on artifacts like jewelry and pottery, this new 4.5-acre site is a "living classroom" focused on **ancient urban engineering**.

### Museum Overview

Developed at a cost of **₹24.3 crore**, the open-air museum bridges the gap between traditional museum-going and an active archaeological dig.

- **Design:** A steel-structured complex featuring glass roofing and Mangaluru tiles to protect the site while allowing natural light.
- **Two Exhibition Halls:** These galleries cover a built-up area of **65,380 sq. ft.** and are located about 80 meters apart.
- **On-Site Experience:** Visitors can walk through 48 trenches that preserve structural remains from the **second, fifth, and sixth** phases of excavation.

### What's on Display?

The museum showcases the "Second Urbanization" of the Indian subcontinent

### Part of a Larger Heritage Hub

The inauguration of this open-air museum is part of a broader push to make Keeladi a global educational and tourism landmark:

- **Location:** Established right alongside the **Keeladi Heritage Museum** (which already houses over 15,000 artifacts).
- **Related Projects:** On the same day, the Chief Minister laid the foundation for the **Noyyal Museum** (Erode) and the **Navai Museum** (Ramanathapuram), while announcing a dedicated **Chola Museum** for Thanjavur.

"Keeladi has emerged as a symbol of pride... proving our ancestors lived in a highly developed urban society contemporary to the Indus Valley."



— Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu

### Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. Who inaugurated the first-of-its-kind open museum in Keeladi?**

- A) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- B) Chief Minister MK Stalin
- C) Governor R. N. Ravi
- D) Minister for Archaeology Thangam Thennarasu

**2. In which district of Tamil Nadu is the newly inaugurated open museum located?**

- A) Madurai
- B) Thanjavur
- C) Sivaganga
- D) Ramanathapuram

**3. What is the approximate cost involved in the development of the Keeladi open museum?**

- A) Rs 12.5 crore
- B) Rs 18.2 crore
- C) Rs 24.3 crore
- D) Rs 30.0 crore

**4. How much land area does the new open museum cover?**

- A) 2.5 acres
- B) 4.5 acres
- C) 6.0 acres
- D) 10.0 acres

**5. What is the primary feature of this open museum that distinguishes it from the existing Keeladi museum?**

- A) It only displays digital recreations of artifacts
- B) it showcases original structures unearthed during previous excavations
- C) It is a private museum dedicated to modern art
- D) It is an underground facility focused on maritime trade

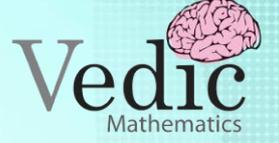
### Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	B (Chief Minister MK Stalin)
2	C (Sivaganga)
3	C (Rs 24.3 crore)
4	B (4.5 acres)
5	B (Showcases original unearthed structures)

10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



### Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

**Q.1. What is the total outlay of the recent Uttar Pradesh Budget 2026-27?**

- A. ₹8.75 lakh crore
- B. ₹9.00 lakh crore
- C. ₹9.13 lakh crore
- D. ₹9.50 lakh crore

1. C

Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna presented a ₹9.13 lakh crore budget for 2026-27, prioritizing education and agriculture. The budget increases spending by 12.2%, with significant allocations for education (12.4%) and health (6%). The budget emphasizes skill development, agricultural export promotion, and simplified business processes to boost economic growth and employment.

**Q.2. Where will the Indian Air Force conduct exercise Vayu Shakti 26?**

- A. Rajgir
- B. Jaisalmer
- C. Gurdaspur
- D. Dispur

2. B

The Indian Air Force will conduct the Vayu Shakti-26 exercise at the Pokhran air-to-ground range in Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan. The exercise, scheduled for February 27, 2026, will showcase the IAF's frontline fighter aircraft,

including the Rafale, Tejas, Sukhoi-30MKI, and Mirage-2000, and demonstrate their strike capabilities.

**Q.3. Which ministry recently issued the first formal protocol for the national song 'Vande Mataram'?**

- A. Ministry of Culture
- B. Ministry of Education
- C. Ministry of Home Affairs
- D. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

3. C

The Union Home Ministry has issued the first formal protocol for the national song "Vande Mataram." According to this order, all six verses of Vande Mataram will be sung at government functions and will be mandatory before the national anthem. The duration will be 3 minutes and 10 seconds.

**Q.4. The recent joint in-situ air exercise is being conducted between which two air forces?**

- A. IAF and USAF
- B. IAF and RAF
- C. IAF and RTAF
- D. IAF and JASDF

4. C

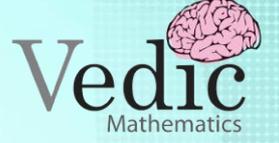
The Indian Air Force (IAF) is conducting a joint in-situ air exercise with the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) aimed at enhancing operational coordination and interoperability between the two forces. This exercise marks another milestone in enhancing defense cooperation between India and Thailand.



10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



**Q.5. How many new high-speed rail corridors were recently announced in the Union Budget 2026-27?**

- A. Five
  - B. Six
  - C. Seven
  - D. Eight
5. C

A total of seven (7) new high-speed rail corridors have been announced in the Union Budget 2026-27. These corridors will have a total length of approximately 4,000 kilometers and will boost connectivity by connecting major industrial and economic centers across the country.

**Q.6. Under which scheme is the RBI going to issue revised guidelines for banks?**

- A. PMJDY
  - B. PMFBY
  - C. Kisan Credit Card (KCC)
  - D. Stand-Up India
6. C

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released revised draft rules for the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme. These changes aim to extend the validity of KCC cards to six years, align loan limits with the cost of crop production, and include technical expenses such as soil testing and organic farming.

**Q.7. Which organization recently released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025?**

- A. World Bank

B. Transparency International

C. OECD

D. UNDP

7. B

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025 was released by Transparency International, a non-governmental organization. The index measures the level of corruption in the public sector in 182 countries. India ranked 91st with a score of 39.

**Q.8. How many countries were recently evaluated in the CPI 2025?**

- A. 175
  - B. 178
  - C. 180
  - D. 182
8. D

India has climbed five places to 91st on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025, showing a modest but significant improvement in its global ranking on public sector integrity. The index, released by Transparency International, assesses the level of perceived corruption in 182 countries and territories around the world.

**Q.9. According to a UBS report, what was the total wealth of global billionaires in 2025?**

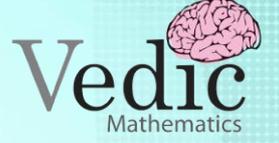
- A. \$14.2 trillion
- B. \$15.0 trillion
- C. \$15.8 trillion
- D. \$16.5 trillion



10 Years of Excellence

 spardhaguru2022  Spardhaguru Current affairs  Spardhaguru1

 SpardhaGuru  Spardha.guru  www.spardha.guru



9. C

According to UBS's 2025 'Billionaire Ambition Report', the total wealth of billionaires worldwide is set to reach a record \$15.8 trillion in 2025. The report states that with 196 new self-made billionaires, the number of billionaires worldwide has increased to nearly 3,000, representing a 13% increase in 12 months.

**Q.10. With whom did the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIAA) recently sign a common empanelment agreement?**

- A. IRDAI
- B. LIC of India
- C. General Insurance Council
- D. National Health Authority

10. C

The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), under the Ministry of AYUSH, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Insurance Council (GIC) in New Delhi to join a common panel. Terming it a major step towards integrating Ayurveda into the mainstream health insurance system, the ministry said that with this agreement, AIIA has been empanelled with all 32 general insurance companies under the General Insurance Council, enabling patients to avail cashless treatment for Ayurveda-based healthcare services.

**Q.11. Recently, the RBI constituted a committee to review the regulatory framework of which sector?**

- A. Microfinance Institutions
- B. Business Correspondents

C. Payment Banks

D. Small Finance Banks

11. B

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed a committee to review the regulatory framework for business correspondents. It will release draft amendments to the guidelines for public consultation. The committee includes officials from the RBI, the Department of Financial Services (DFS), the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The committee is tasked with examining the working methods of business correspondents and suggesting improvements to improve their efficiency.

**Q.12. Recently, FDI equity inflows into the banking sector declined to what amount in FY25?**

- A. USD 95 million
- B. USD 105 million
- C. USD 115 million
- D. USD 125 million

12. C

Foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows into India's banking sector declined sharply in fiscal year 2025 (FY25), falling to US\$115 million from US\$898 million in fiscal year 2023. This represents a significant decline in foreign capital inflows into the banking sector, while overall FDI inflows into India remained strong, according to information provided to Parliament.



**Q.13. Recently, PB Pay Private Limited received permission from the RBI to operate as what?**

- A. Prepaid Payment Instrument Issuer
- B. Account Aggregator
- C. Payment Aggregator
- D. White Label ATM Operator

13. C

PB Pay Private Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of PB Fintech Limited, has received an authorization certificate from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator (PA). This will enable the company to offer online payment services and process payments for merchants.

**Q.14. Which bank recently launched a gold loan product for MSMEs? What is the deadline?**

- A. SBI
- B. Punjab National Bank
- C. Axis Bank
- D. HDFC Bank

14. C

Axis Bank has launched a new 'gold-backed loan' product specifically for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). It offers working capital from ₹50,000 to ₹1 crore, with a high loan-to-value (LTV) of up to 82%.

**Q.15. Recently, SEBI directed AIFs to report the NAV of their units to depositories by which date?**

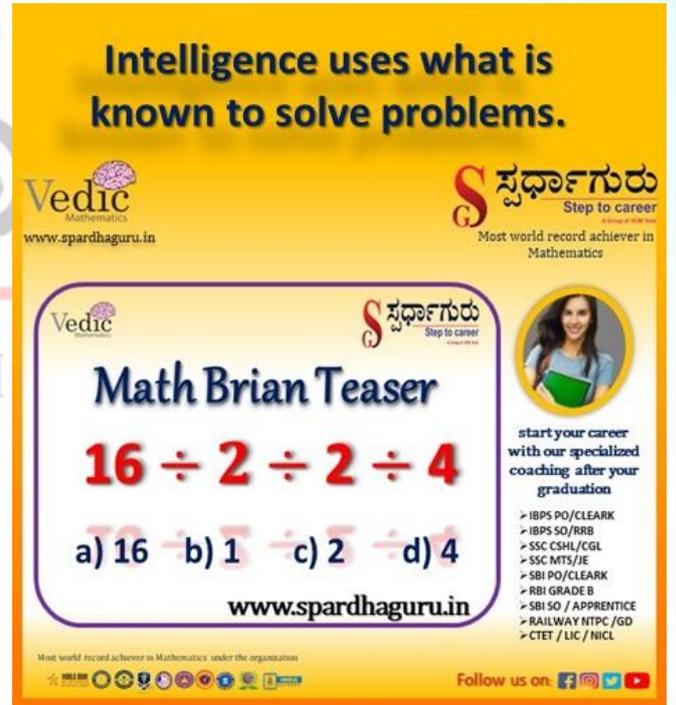
- A. 31 March 2026
- B. 30 April 2026

C. 1 May 2026

D. 30 June 2026

15. C

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has set a deadline for Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to report the latest Net Asset Value (NAV) of their units to depositories through Registrars and Transfer Agents (RTAs) as May 01, 2026, or within 30 days from the date of portfolio valuation, whichever is later.



**Intelligence uses what is known to solve problems.**

**Math Brian Teaser**  
**16 ÷ 2 ÷ 2 ÷ 4**  
a) 16   b) 1   c) 2   d) 4

www.spardhaguru.in

Most world record achiever in Mathematics under the organization

Follow us on: 



**Vedic Mathematics** **Spardhaguru**

Most world Record Achievers in Mathematics

www.spardhaguru.in   info@spardhaguru.in

Follow us on: 

## FACTS ABOUT BHARAT

While the origins and legal framework you mentioned capture the gravity of the dowry system, there are some significant updates and historical nuances to consider, especially regarding recent laws and statistics.

### Historical Context: Colonialism & Property

The idea that the British "made dowry mandatory" is a common historical argument, notably advanced by scholar **Veena Talwar Oldenburg**.

- **Pre-Colonial:** Dowry (*Stridhan*) was historically a woman's own property, ensuring her financial security in a patriarchal society where she couldn't inherit land.
- **The Colonial Shift:** With the **Permanent Settlement of 1793**, the British privatized land and barred women from ownership. This effectively turned "gifts for the bride" into "gifts for the groom's family," as the husband became the sole legal owner of all assets. While they didn't pass a law "mandating" dowry, their legal reforms to property rights are widely blamed for transforming a protective custom into an exploitative "marriage market."

### The Law: It's Stricter Than You Might Think

The punishments you listed have been significantly upgraded through various amendments. The **Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)** is now much more severe:

Offence	Minimum Punishment	Fine
Giving/Taking Dowry	5 years imprisonment	₹15,000 or the value of dowry (whichever is higher)
Demanding Dowry	6 months to 2 years	Up to ₹10,000
Advertising for Dowry	6 months to 5 years	Up to ₹15,000

**Important Note:** In 2024–2025, India transitioned to the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**. Section 304B of the IPC is now **Section 80 of the BNS**, which mandates a minimum of 7 years to life imprisonment for "Dowry Death."

### Modern Statistics (NCRB 2023–2025)

The 2010 figure of 8,391 deaths was a historical peak. Recent data from the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** shows a slow but steady decline in deaths, though overall "harassment" cases are rising:

- **Dowry Deaths (2023):** Approximately **6,156** deaths were reported (a significant drop from 2010, but still nearly **17 deaths per day**).
- **Geographic Trends:** Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue to report the highest number of cases, accounting for nearly **half** of all dowry deaths in India.
- **The Reporting Gap:** Experts suggest that for every 1 reported death, dozens of cases of domestic cruelty (**Section 85 of BNS**) go unregistered due to social stigma.

## A Gentle Correction

You mentioned that "gifts given without a precondition... are legal." While true, the law now requires that a **signed list of gifts** (called a *Prohibition of Dowry Rules List*) be maintained by both families. If a list isn't kept, or if the gifts are seen as "excessive" relative to the family's income, they can still be investigated as dowry under modern judicial scrutiny.

## Knowledge Check for Proficiency

**1. According to the text, what was the original intent of giving gifts to a bride during medieval times?**

- A) To pay the groom's family for the marriage
- B) To ensure the bride's financial independence after marriage
- C) To comply with colonial tax laws
- D) To show off the family's social status

**2. During which period did the practice of dowry become a mandatory legal requirement for marriage?**

- A) Medieval period
- B) Post-Independence era
- C) Colonial period
- D) Ancient Vedic period

**3. In 2010, India reported 8,391 dowry deaths. What was the calculated rate of deaths per 100,000 women?**

- A) 0.5 deaths
- B) 1.4 deaths

C) 5.2 deaths

D) 10.0 deaths

**4. Under the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, what distinguishes a "legal gift" from "illegal dowry"?**

- A) The total value of the gift
- B) Whether the gift is cash or an object
- C) Whether the gift was demanded as a precondition for marriage
- D) Whether the groom's family likes the gift

**5. What is the maximum fine mentioned for asking for or giving dowry?**

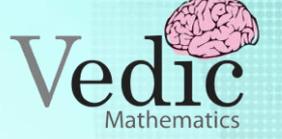
- A) ₹1,000
- B) ₹5,000
- C) ₹10,000
- D) ₹50,000

## Answer Key

Question	Answer
1	B (To maintain her independence)
2	C (Colonial period)
3	B (1.4 deaths)
4	C (Precondition for marriage)
5	B (₹5,000)

**A Quick Reality Check:** While the text mentions a fine of ₹5,000 and six months imprisonment, it's worth noting that the **Dowry Prohibition Act** has been amended over time.

**10 Years of Excellence**



Today, the punishment is generally much stricter—usually a minimum of 5 years in prison and significantly higher fines—to better reflect the gravity of the offense.

*Dear Aspirants,*

"We trust that this current affairs preparation will be beneficial for your upcoming examination. Consistent daily study of current affairs is highly recommended. Should you have any suggestions for improvement or feedback regarding the class, please feel free to communicate them. Your ideas are valuable, and we welcome your assistance in helping us to provide enhanced support in the future."

We wish best for your studies & Exams

**Best Wishes**

Murthy sir (MSM)  
Aptitude Trainer

**Spardhaguru Skill Edge Aptitude Academy**

Spardhaguru India Pvt Ltd

**Biggest E-learning platform for Competitive Exams**

Mysore – 570029

[www.spardha.guru](http://www.spardha.guru)

