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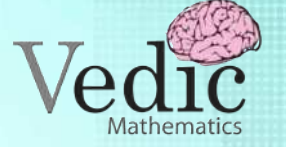
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## National News

### India's First Sleeper Vande Bharat Train Launched



On January 17, 2026, India reached a significant milestone in rail travel with the launch of its **first-ever Sleeper Vande Bharat Express**. This new variant is a major evolution from the existing chair-car models, specifically designed to handle long-distance overnight journeys with premium comfort.

#### A New Milestone in Indian Railways: India's First Sleeper Vande Bharat Express Launched

A significant milestone has been established in the history of Indian Railways with the launch of the country's first-ever Sleeper Vande Bharat Express.

#### Key Highlights:

- **Inauguration:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the train on January 17, 2026, from Malda Town in West Bengal.
- **Route:** The train operates between Howrah (Kolkata) and Kamakhya (Guwahati, Assam), serving as a vital link connecting Eastern and Northeastern India.
- **Time Efficiency:** It covers a distance of approximately 970 km in just 14 hours, saving nearly 3 hours of travel time compared to other trains on this route.





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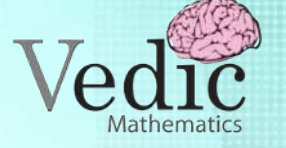
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### Special Features:

- Capacity: The train consists of 16 coaches with a total capacity of 823 passengers.
- Ride Quality: Equipped with an advanced suspension system, it ensures a "jerk-free" and exceptionally silent travel experience.
- Comfort: Includes redesigned, easy-to-climb ladders for upper berths and luxury bedding arrangements.

### Estimated Ticket Fares (Including premium regional meals):

- 3 AC: ₹2,299
- 2 AC: ₹2,970
- 1st AC: ₹3,640

### Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

#### Section 1: Launch & Geography

1. On what date was India's first-ever Sleeper Vande Bharat Express officially launched? A) January 1, 2026

B) January 17, 2026

C) January 26, 2026

D) February 1, 2026

Answer: B

2. The Sleeper Vande Bharat Express operates between which two major stations? A) Delhi and Mumbai

B) Howrah and Kamakhya

C) Chennai and Bengaluru

D) Malda Town and Kolkata

Answer: B

3. From which station did Prime Minister Narendra Modi flag off the inaugural run? A) Howrah Junction

B) Guwahati Station

C) Malda Town

D) Kamakhya Junction

Answer: C

#### Section 2: Technical Specifications

4. What is the total passenger capacity of the 16-coach Sleeper Vande Bharat? A) 520 passengers

B) 750 passengers

C) 823 passengers

D) 910 passengers

Answer: C

5. Which mechanical feature ensures the train provides a "jerk-free" and exceptionally silent travel experience? A) Magnetic levitation

B) Advanced suspension system

C) High-speed braking units

D) Aerodynamic engine nose

Answer: B

6. How many hours of travel time are saved by this train compared to existing express trains on the Howrah-Kamakhya route? A) 1 hour

B) 2 hours

C) 3 hours

D) 5 hours

Answer: C

#### Section 3: Comfort & Pricing

7. Which improvement was specifically mentioned to help passengers reach upper berths more easily?

A) Automated elevators







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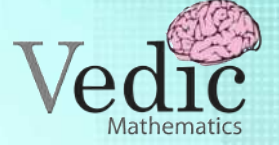
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- B) Folding side-steps  
C) Redesigned, easy-to-climb ladders  
D) Rope handles

Answer: C

8. What is the approximate fare for a 1st AC ticket on this premium long-distance service? A) ₹2,299

- B) ₹2,970  
C) ₹3,640  
D) ₹4,100

Answer: C

## National News

### Supreme Court Rules Unreserved Seats Open to All Candidates on Merit



This recent Supreme Court ruling is a landmark decision in Indian reservation jurisprudence, reinforcing the idea that "merit is not a quota." On **January 16, 2026**, the Court clarified that unreserved seats are an open pool for every citizen, regardless of their social category.

### Core Principles of the Ruling

- **The "Open Pool" Concept:** The Court held that the unreserved (UR) category is **not a quota** for the general category. Instead, it is a merit-based pool accessible to everyone—SC, ST, OBC, and General candidates alike.
- **Merit-Induced Shift:** If a candidate from a reserved category qualifies purely on merit (scoring above the general cut-off), they must be adjusted against an **unreserved seat**.
- **Protection of Quota:** By shifting high-performing reserved candidates to the "Open" list, their original reserved seats remain vacant for the next most meritorious candidates within that specific reserved category.
- **Constitutional Basis:** The verdict is rooted in **Article 14** (Equality before Law) and **Article 16** (Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment).

### The "No Double Benefit" Caveat

The Court established a clear distinction regarding **relaxations**:

- **Without Relaxations:** If a reserved candidate qualifies using the same standards as a general candidate (no age relaxation, no fee concession, no lower prelims cut-off), they **can** claim an unreserved seat.
- **With Relaxations:** If a candidate has already availed of a "substantive relaxation" (like a relaxed age limit or lower qualifying marks in a preliminary round), they generally **cannot** migrate to the unreserved category, even if their final score is higher than the general cut-off.

### Case Background: AAI Recruitment

The ruling (specifically in *Airports Authority of India vs. Sham Krishna B.*) overturned a 2020 Kerala High Court judgment.





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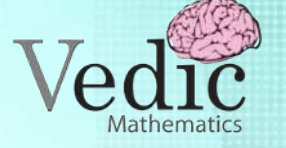
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- **The Dispute:** In a 2013 recruitment for Junior Assistants, the AAI filled unreserved seats with high-scoring reserved category candidates.
- **The Challenge:** A general category candidate on the waiting list argued these candidates should stay in their own quotas to make room for him.
- **The Outcome:** The Supreme Court rejected this, stating that "penalizing merit" because of a candidate's social category is unconstitutional.

### Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

1. Which constitutional articles were primarily cited in this 2026 judgment?

- A) Articles 19 and 21
- B) Articles 14 and 16
- C) Articles 25 and 28
- D) Articles 32 and 226

Answer: B

2. According to the SC, what happens to a reserved category seat when a meritorious candidate from that category moves to an unreserved seat?

- A) The seat remains empty.
- B) The seat is converted to a general seat.
- C) It becomes available for the next meritorious candidate in the reserved category.
- D) It is cancelled for the next recruitment cycle.

Answer: C

3. True or False: A candidate who uses an age relaxation can always claim an unreserved seat if their final score is high enough. (Answer: False—availing relaxations usually binds the candidate to the reserved category.)

4. What is the "Merit-Induced Shift" mentioned in the 2026 Supreme Court ruling?

- A) Shifting general category candidates into reserved quotas.
- B) Moving high-scoring reserved category candidates (who qualify on general standards) into unreserved seats.
- C) Automatically increasing the number of seats for SC/ST/OBC candidates.
- D) Converting all reserved seats into unreserved seats based on average scores.

Answer: B

5. Which two Constitutional Articles form the bedrock of this judgment?

- A) Article 19 and Article 21
- B) Article 14 and Article 16
- C) Article 25 and Article 30
- D) Article 44 and Article 51A

Answer: B

6. Under the "No Double Benefit" caveat, which candidate is ELIGIBLE to move to an unreserved seat?

- A) An OBC candidate who used an age relaxation to apply.
- B) An SC candidate who qualified with a score above the general cut-off without using any concessions.
- C) An ST candidate who received a fee waiver for the application.
- D) A candidate who passed the preliminary round using a lower category-specific cut-off.

Answer: B







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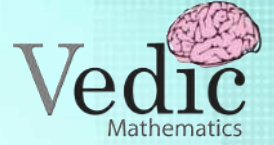
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7. The Supreme Court ruling in January 2026 overturned a 2020 judgment from which High Court?

- A) Bombay High Court
- B) Delhi High Court
- C) Kerala High Court
- D) Allahabad High Court

Answer: C

8. What happens to the seat originally assigned to a reserved category candidate if they "migrate" to an unreserved seat on merit?

- A) The seat is cancelled.
- B) It is converted into a general category seat.
- C) It remains vacant for the next most meritorious candidate in that reserved category.
- D) It is carried forward to the next recruitment year.

Answer: C

## International News

### India and Germany Sign Joint Declaration on Telecommunications Cooperation



On January 16, 2026, India and Germany formalised a significant strategic partnership by signing a **Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI)** on Telecommunications

Cooperation. This agreement was a central outcome of German Chancellor **Friedrich Merz's** official visit to India.

#### Key Highlights of the Declaration

- **Signatories:** The agreement was signed by **Amit Agrawal** (Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, India) and **Dr. Philipp Ackermann** (German Ambassador to India).
- **Institutional Framework:** It establishes a structure for **regular consultations** and high-level annual meetings. These will be supported by dedicated working groups involving government, industry, and academia.
- **The "Work Plan":** Both sides agreed to develop a specific work plan to outline measurable goals for the **2026-2027** period, ensuring the partnership produces concrete results rather than just diplomatic dialogue.

#### Strategic Significance

1. **Diversification:** For Germany, this moves their tech supply chain away from over-dependence on specific regions (the "China-plus-one" strategy).
2. **Innovation-Led Growth:** For India, it provides access to German engineering excellence in **Industry 4.0**, semiconductors, and high-end telecom hardware.
3. **Cybersecurity:** Both nations emphasized the importance of **network security** and resilient critical infrastructure at a time when AI-driven cyber threats are rising globally.

#### Strategic Areas of Cooperation

- **Development of Emerging Technologies:** Both nations have committed to joint research and development in cutting-edge fields, specifically focusing on **6G technology**, **Open Radio Access**





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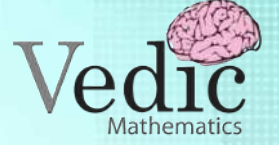
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Networks (Open RAN), and other transformative digital innovations.

- **Strengthening Manufacturing Capabilities:** A key pillar of the agreement is the enhancement of **telecom equipment manufacturing** within India, directly supporting the "Make in India" initiative and building more resilient global supply chains.
- **Regulatory Alignment and Exchange:** India and Germany will share expertise and best practices concerning **policy frameworks, spectrum allocation strategies**, and administrative reforms designed to improve the **ease of doing business** in the telecom sector.
- **Unified Global Standards:** The two countries will take **joint action in international forums**, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to advocate for shared perspectives on digital governance and technical standards.

**Answer: B**

4. Which specific future mobile network technology is a major focus of this cooperation?

- A) 4G LTE
- B) 5G Satellite
- C) 6G development
- D) Wi-Fi 7

**Answer: C**

5. The cooperation on "Open RAN" is primarily aimed at which sector?

- A) Regulatory frameworks
- B) Emerging Tech / Network Architecture
- C) Consumer pricing
- D) Satellite TV

**Answer: B**

### Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

1. Who represented Germany in the signing of the JDI in January 2026?

- A) Chancellor Friedrich Merz
- B) Ambassador Philipp Ackermann
- C) The Minister of Digital Transformation
- D) The CEO of Deutsche Telekom

**Answer: B**

2. Which of the following is a primary objective of the India-Germany telecom pact?

- A) Launching a joint satellite constellation
- B) Collaboration on 6G and telecom manufacturing
- C) Merging BSNL with German telcos
- D) Privatizing all Indian spectrum

6. In which international body will India and Germany work together to promote digital governance?

- A) UNESCO
- B) ITU (International Telecommunication Union)
- C) WHO D) INTERPOL

**Answer: B**

### Section 1: International Partnerships

7. During whose visit to India was the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) on 6G and Open RAN signed in January 2026? A) President Joe Biden

- B) Chancellor Friedrich Merz
- C) Prime Minister Rishi Sunak
- D) President Emmanuel Macron

**Answer: B**







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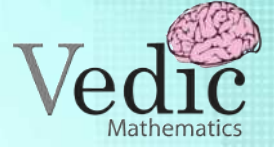
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8. In January 2026, India signed a pact with which country to establish a strategic supercomputing cluster? A) USA

B) Germany

C) UAE

D) Japan

Answer: C

9. Which international body did India partner with in December 2025 to drive innovation in "Digital Twins"? A) UNESCO

B) World Bank

C) ITU (International Telecommunication Union)

D) GSMA

Answer: C

### Section 2: Policy & Regulatory Milestones

10. What was the primary focus of the TRAI regulations issued in August 2024? A) Reducing the cost of SIM cards

B) Mandating new Quality of Service (QoS) standards for 5G/6G

C) Banning international roaming charges

D) Privatizing BSNL

Answer: B

11. The National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) that aligned Indian spectrum with international 6G standards took effect on which date? A) August 15, 2024

B) October 2, 2025

C) December 30, 2025

D) January 1, 2026

Answer: C

12. At which global event did India showcase its indigenous 4G/5G stacks and announce an Open Telecom AI Platform in 2025? A) G20 Summit, New Delhi

B) MWC Barcelona

C) CES Las Vegas

D) World Economic Forum, Davos

Answer: B

### Section 3: Growth & Connectivity Milestones

13. As of January 19, 2026, India reached a major milestone by becoming the second-largest 5G user base in the world. How many subscribers did it officially reach? A) 100 Million+

B) 250 Million+

C) 400 Million+

D) 600 Million+

Answer: C

14. Which organization signed an MoU with India in October 2025 to collaborate on global telecom policy and capacity building? A) ITU

B) GSMA (GSM Association)

C) BRICS

D) ASEAN

Answer: B

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## Appointments

### Shri Praveen Vashista Appointed Vigilance Commissioner in Central Vigilance Commission



Shri **Praveen Vashista**, a retired 1991-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Bihar cadre, was officially sworn in as the **Vigilance Commissioner** in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) on **January 16, 2026**.

His appointment follows a warrant issued by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, on December 12, 2025. With his induction, the CVC has now reached its **full operating strength**, consisting of the Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners.

### Key Details of the Appointment

- Oath Administration:** The oath was administered by the Central Vigilance Commissioner, **P.K. Srivastava**, who was authorized by the President under Section 5(3) of the CVC Act, 2003.
- Tenure:** He will serve for a term of **four years** or until he attains the age of **65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- Previous Role:** Prior to this appointment, Vashista served as the **Special Secretary**

(**Internal Security**) in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). He took voluntary retirement from the IPS just a week before his swearing-in to facilitate this transition.

### Professional Background

Praveen Vashista brings over three decades of experience in law enforcement and national security. His career highlights include:

- State Level (Bihar):** Served as the Inspector General (IG) of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).
- Central Deputation:** Held various senior positions in the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, including Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary, where he was instrumental in handling Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and internal security policy.
- Investigative Roles:** Served as Superintendent of Police (SP) and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) in the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)**.

### Structure of the Central Vigilance Commission

The CVC is India's apex integrity institution, mandated to fight corruption and ensure transparency in public administration.

Position	Current Incumbent
<b>Central Vigilance Commissioner</b>	Praveen Kumar Srivastava
<b>Vigilance Commissioner 1</b>	A.S. Rajeev (Appointed Feb 2024)
<b>Vigilance Commissioner 2</b>	<b>Praveen Vashista</b> (Appointed Jan 2026)







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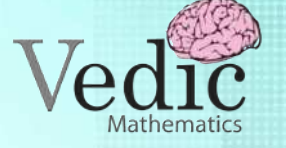
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## Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

### Section 1: Appointment & Tenure

1. On what date was Shri Praveen Vashista officially sworn in as the Vigilance Commissioner? A) December 12, 2025

B) January 1, 2026

C) January 16, 2026

D) January 26, 2026

Answer: C

2. Who administered the oath of office to Shri Praveen Vashista? A) President Droupadi Murmu

B) Prime Minister Narendra Modi

C) Central Vigilance Commissioner P.K. Srivastava

D) Chief Justice of India

Answer: C (Authorized by the President under Section 5(3) of the CVC Act, 2003)

3. What is the prescribed tenure for a Vigilance Commissioner in the CVC? A) 5 years or until 65 years of age

B) 4 years or until 65 years of age

C) 3 years or until 62 years of age

D) 6 years or until 70 years of age

Answer: B

### Section 2: Professional Background

4. Shri Praveen Vashista is a retired IPS officer from which state cadre and batch? A) 1990 Batch, Uttar Pradesh

B) 1991 Batch, Bihar

C) 1988 Batch, Assam-Meghalaya

D) 1995 Batch, Maharashtra

Answer: B

5. Which high-ranking position did Vashista hold in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) immediately before joining the CVC? A) Director of Intelligence Bureau

B) Special Secretary (Internal Security)

C) Secretary of Border Management

D) Joint Secretary (Foreigners)

Answer: B

6. In which premier investigating agency did Shri Vashista serve as Superintendent of Police (SP) and Deputy Inspector General (DIG)? A) Enforcement Directorate (ED)

B) Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

C) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

D) National Investigation Agency (NIA)

Answer: C

### Section 3: Institutional Structure

7. With the appointment of Praveen Vashista, the CVC has reached its full strength. What does this full strength consist of? A) One Commissioner and three Vigilance Commissioners

B) One Central Vigilance Commissioner and one Vigilance Commissioner

C) One Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners

D) A Board of five Directors

Answer: C

8. Which committee is responsible for recommending the appointment of the Central Vigilance Commissioner and Vigilance Commissioners to the President? A) A committee led by the Chief Justice of India



B) A committee consisting of the PM, Home Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha

C) The Cabinet Committee on Appointments

D) The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

Answer: B

## Sports

### Aaryan Varshney Becomes India's 92nd Chess Grandmaster



In a significant milestone for Indian chess, **Aaryan Varshney**, a 21-year-old from Delhi, has become **India's 92nd Grandmaster (GM)**. He officially secured the title on **January 16, 2026**, after a dominant performance at the 16th Andranik Margaryan Memorial in Armenia. His achievement is particularly remarkable due to his unconventional path to the top, having reached the pinnacle of chess without a professional coach or attending elite academies.

### Key Highlights of the Achievement

- The Final Norm:** Aaryan clinched his third and final GM norm by winning the **Andranik Margaryan Memorial** tournament with a round

to spare. He finished unbeaten with a score of **\$7/9\$** points.

- Rapid Ascent:** He achieved all three of his required Grandmaster norms in a span of just **six months** (August 2025 to January 2026).
- Rating Milestone:** He crossed the mandatory Elo rating of **2500** in late 2025, ensuring he met all FIDE requirements for the title.
- Delhi's Legacy:** He is the **8th Grandmaster** to emerge from the National Capital Region (Delhi).

### An Unconventional Journey

Aaryan's rise is being hailed as a "home-grown" success story:

- No Professional Coach:** Unlike most modern GMs who train with high-profile coaches, Aaryan was trained entirely by his father, **Gaurav Varshney**, a physics teacher.
- Self-Taught Methods:** He famously never used traditional chess books, instead relying on **Chess Base software**, intensive game analysis, and practical play to hone his skills.
- Personal Resilience:** Growing up in a single-parent household after his mother left when he was five, Aaryan and his father dedicated themselves to the sport, starting serious training when he was just seven years old.

### Grandmaster Norm Timeline

Norm	Tournament	Date
1st Norm	34th Vasilis Theodoridis Kavala Open (Greece)	August 2025
2nd Norm	3rd Leonine GM Round-Robin (Bangladesh)	November 2025





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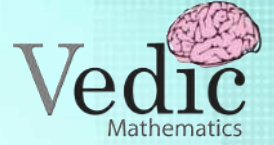
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Norm	Tournament	Date
3rd Norm	16th Andranik Margaryan Memorial (Armenia)	January 2026

## Career Milestones

- **2014:** Played his first rated tournament with a rating of **1261**.
- **2018:** Won the **National Under-13 Championship** and earned the FIDE Master (FM) title.
- **2024:** Achieved the **International Master (IM)** title.
- **2026:** Became India's **92nd Grandmaster**.

Aaryan has stated that his next ultimate goal is to become a "Super Grandmaster" (rating above 2700) and compete against the world's best, including fellow Indian prodigy and World Championship contender D.Gukesh.

## Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

1. Who is India's 92nd Chess Grandmaster?

- A) Ilamparthi AR
- B) D. Gukesh
- C) Aaryan Varshney
- D) Prithu Gupta

Answer: C

2. In which country did Aaryan secure his final Grandmaster norm?

- A) Greece
- B) Bangladesh
- C) Armenia
- D) India

Answer: C

3. What is particularly unique about Aaryan Varshney's training?

- A) He trained at the Westbend Chess Academy in Europe.
- B) He became a GM without any professional coach or using chess books.
- C) He is the youngest Indian to ever achieve the title.
- D) He achieved all three norms in a single tournament.

Answer: B

4. How many Grandmasters has Delhi (NCR) produced including Aaryan?

- A) 5
- B) 8
- C) 12
- D) 92

Answer: B

5. What score did Aaryan achieve in the tournament that secured his final GM title?

- A) \$6/9\$
- B) \$7/9\$ (Unbeaten)
- C) \$9/9\$
- D) \$8.5/9\$

Answer: B

6. Who holds the record for being the youngest Indian to ever become a Grandmaster?

- A) Viswanathan Anand
- B) R. Praggnanandhaa
- C) D. Gukesh



D) Aaryan Varshney

Answer: C

7. In which city did D. Gukesh win the World Chess Championship title in December 2024?

A) Toronto

B) Chennai

C) Singapore

D) Wijk aan Zee

Answer: C

8. How many Indian players have officially crossed the 2800 Elo rating mark as of early 2026?

A) Only Viswanathan Anand

B) Viswanathan Anand and Arjun Erigaisi

C) Viswanathan Anand and D. Gukesh

D) None yet

Answer: B (Arjun Erigaisi crossed 2800 in late 2024/2025; Gukesh's peak as of Jan 2026 is 2794).

## Banking/Economy

### ICICI Bank Reappoints Sandeep Bakhshi as MD & CEO Till 2028



In a move to ensure leadership stability at India's second-largest private sector lender, the Board of Directors of ICICI Bank has approved the reappointment of Sandeep Bakhshi as its Managing Director and CEO.

The decision was finalized during a board meeting on January 17, 2026, following the bank's strong financial performance and improved asset quality under his leadership.

### Key Details of the Tenure Extension

- New Term:** The board has cleared a fresh two-year term.
- Duration:** From October 4, 2026, to October 3, 2028.
- Approvals Needed:** The reappointment is subject to final approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the bank's shareholders, and other statutory authorities.
- Context:** While the board typically seeks three-year terms, the two-year extension is seen as a way to provide clarity through 2028 while deferring immediate speculation about succession planning.

### Leadership at ICICI Bank

Sandeep Bakhshi took the helm of ICICI Bank in October 2018, succeeding Chanda Kochhar during a period of significant regulatory and financial stress.

Metric	Impact Under Bakhshi (Approx. 2018 vs. 2025)
Asset Quality	Gross NPA reduced from over 8.8% to roughly 1.5%.
Market Cap	Surged from ₹2.01 lakh crore to over ₹8.1 lakh crore.



<b>Metric</b>	<b>Impact Under Bakhshi (Approx. 2018 vs. 2025)</b>
<b>Strategic Focus</b>	Successfully pivoted toward a <b>retail-heavy portfolio</b> (now >50% of advances).

## Executive Director Extension

Alongside Bakhshi, the board also extended the tenure of **Ajay Kumar Gupta** as Executive Director. His new term will run from **November 27, 2026, to November 26, 2028**. Gupta, a veteran who joined the bank in 1991, oversees critical functions including technology, data sciences, and analytics.

## Financial Performance (Q3 FY26)

The reappointment coincided with the bank's third-quarter results, which showed:

- **Core Operating Profit:** Grew by 6% year-on-year to ₹17,513 crore.
- **One-off Impact:** A provision of ₹1,283 crore was made following an RBI review of agricultural priority sector loans, which caused a slight (4%) dip in reported net profit, though the bank's underlying fundamentals remain strong.

## Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

### Section 1: Leadership & Tenure

- For what period has the Board of Directors reappointed Sandeep Bakhshi as the MD & CEO of ICICI Bank? A) October 4, 2026, to October 3, 2029 (3 years)  
B) October 4, 2026, to October 3, 2028 (2 years)  
C) January 17, 2026, to January 16, 2028 (2 years)  
D) October 15, 2018, to October 14, 2026 (8 years)

*Answer: B*

2. Whose tenure as Executive Director was also extended by two years during the same board meeting? A) Chanda Kochhar

- B) Sandeep Batra  
C) Ajay Kumar Gupta  
D) Anup Bagchi

*Answer: C*

3. Which critical functions are overseen by Ajay Kumar Gupta at ICICI Bank? A) Human Resources and Marketing

- B) Technology, Data Sciences, and Analytics  
C) Retail Branch Operations only  
D) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

*Answer: B*

### Section 2: Financial Performance & Metrics

4. Under Sandeep Bakhshi's leadership (2018–2025), how much has ICICI Bank's Market Capitalization grown? A) From ₹1.5 lakh crore to ₹5 lakh crore

- B) From ₹2.01 lakh crore to over ₹8.1 lakh crore  
C) It has remained stable at ₹4 lakh crore  
D) From ₹8.1 lakh crore to ₹10 lakh crore

*Answer: B*

5. What was the Gross Non-Performing Asset (NPA) ratio of ICICI Bank as of the recent update? A) 8.8%

- B) 4.0%  
C) 1.5%  
D) 0.5%

*Answer: C*



6. What caused the slight 4% dip in ICICI Bank's reported net profit in Q3 FY26? A) A surge in corporate defaults

B) A provision of ₹1,283 crore for agricultural priority sector loans

C) A decline in net interest income

D) Massive investment in new physical branches

Answer: B

### Section 3: Strategic & Regulatory Context

7. What is the current strategic focus of ICICI Bank's loan portfolio? A) Heavy concentration on large-scale infrastructure projects

B) A retail-heavy portfolio (now exceeding 50% of advances)

C) International corporate lending only

D) Government-backed securities

Answer: B

8. The reappointment of the MD & CEO is subject to final approval from which primary statutory authority? A) SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India)

B) Ministry of Finance

C) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

D) NITI Aayog

Answer: C

9. Which bank currently leads in Net Interest Margin (NIM) as of Q3 FY26? A) HDFC Bank

B) Axis Bank

C) ICICI Bank

D) Kotak Mahindra Bank

Answer: C (4.30%)

10. When do the new RBI Credit Risk Management Amendment Directions take full effect? A) January 1, 2026

B) April 1, 2026

C) October 4, 2026

D) January 16, 2026

Answer: B

11. What is the "Reciprocally Related Party" rule designed to stop? A) Charging high interest to rural farmers

B) Directors of different banks giving each other preferential loans

C) Banks operating without a physical branch

D) Using AI for credit scoring

Answer: B

## State News

### Corporate Research Centre



in India, "Corporate Research Centre" most commonly refers to the R&D wings of major Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) or new industry-academia partnerships.





The most notable recent use of this term involves a strategic partnership between **Coromandel International** and **IIT Madras**, announced in January 2026.

### Coromandel-IIT Madras Corporate Research Centre (New)

In January 2026, Coromandel International (a leading agricultural solutions provider) signed an MoU with **IIT Madras** to establish a dedicated Corporate Research Centre at the **IIT Madras Research Park**.

- **Objective:** To bridge the gap between academic research and industrial application in the agricultural sector.
- **Focus Areas:** Agrotech, sustainable farming solutions, and scalable agricultural technologies.
- **Key Figures:** The MoU was exchanged in the presence of **S. Jaishankar** (Minister of External Affairs) and **V. Kamakoti** (Director, IIT Madras).

### IREL Corporate Research Centre (Kollam)

The **IREL (India) Limited** (formerly Indian Rare Earths Limited) operates a prominent Corporate Research Centre in **Kollam, Kerala**.

- **Function:** It focuses on value-added products from processed minerals and "nano" rare earth materials.
- **Legacy:** Originally known as the Mineral Research and Development Centre (1991), it was renamed to its current form to reflect its expanded role in the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) ecosystem.

### Corporate R&D Centres in Indian PSUs

Many of India's leading corporations have "Corporate Research & Development Centres" (CRDCs) that act as their primary innovation hubs:

Organization	Centre Name / Location	Key Research Focus
<b>Bharat Petroleum (BPCL)</b>	Corporate R&D Centre (Greater Noida)	Bio-fuels, refining processes, and petrochemicals.
<b>NTPC</b>	NETRA (NTPC Energy Technology Research Alliance)	Climate change, waste management, and renewable energy.
<b>Indian Oil (IOCL)</b>	R&D Centre (Faridabad)	"SERVO" lubricants, hydrogen fuel cells, and refining tech.
<b>ABB India</b>	Corporate Research Center (Bangalore)	Industrial software, cyber security, and automation.

### Note on "Central Registration Centre" (CRC)

It is important not to confuse a *Corporate Research Centre* with the **Central Registration Centre (CRC)**. The latter is an initiative by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** used for the speedier incorporation of companies and name approvals, rather than scientific research.



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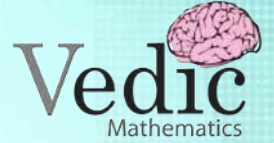
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## Quick Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

1. Which recent industry-academia partnership led to the establishment of a new Corporate Research Centre at the IIT Madras Research Park in January 2026?

- A) Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL)
- B) Coromandel International
- C) Bharat Petroleum (BPCL)
- D) NTPC Limited

2. The IREL Corporate Research Centre in Kollam was originally established in 1991 under what name?

- A) Indian Rare Earths Research Institute
- B) Atomic Mineral Research Lab
- C) Mineral Research and Development Centre (MRDC)
- D) Rare Earths Extraction Facility

3. Which PSU's Corporate R&D Centre is located in Greater Noida and focuses on bio-fuels and "Green Silica" from rice straw?

- A) NTPC
- B) BPCL
- C) IOCL
- D) ABB India

4. What is the primary function of the "Central Registration Centre" (CRC) under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs?

- A) Researching nano-rare earth materials
- B) Speedier incorporation of companies and name approvals
- C) Developing hydrogen fuel cell technology

D) Managing climate change data for the energy sector

## Part 2: Matching Exercise

Match the Organization in **Column A** with its specific R&D Centre/Focus in **Column B**.

Column A (Organization)	Column B (Centre/Focus)
1. NTPC	A. "SERVO" lubricants and Hydrogen Fuel Cells
2. ABB India	B. NETRA (Focus on Climate Change & Waste Management)
3. Indian Oil (IOCL)	C. Corporate Research Center in Bangalore (Automation)
4. IREL (India) Ltd	D. Value-added products from processed minerals (Kollam)

## Part 3: True or False

- [True / False] The Coromandel-IIT Madras partnership was announced in the presence of India's Minister of External Affairs.
- [True / False] NETRA stands for "National Energy Technical Research Agency."
- [True / False] IREL is under the administrative control of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- [True / False] The BPCL R&D centre is situated in Faridabad.

## Part 4: Assertion and Reasoning

**Directions:** In the following questions, a statement of **Assertion (A)** is followed by a statement of **Reason (R)**. Choose the correct option:

- (a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.







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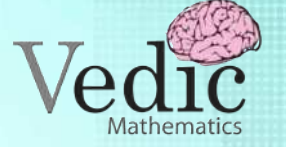
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(b) Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A.

(c) A is true, but R is false.

(d) A is false, but R is true.

**Assertion (A):** The Central Registration Centre (CRC) should not be categorized as a scientific Corporate Research Centre.

**Reason (R):** The CRC is a regulatory initiative by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs aimed at the "Ease of Doing Business" through faster company incorporation.

### Answer Key

Part 1: 1-B, 2-C, 3-B, 4-B

Part 2: 1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-D

Part 3: 1-True, 2-False (NTPC Energy Technology Research Alliance), 3-True, 4-False (BPCL is in Greater Noida; IOCL is in Faridabad)

Part 4: Option (a)

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

**Q.1. Who was recently appointed Director General of the Border Security Force?**

A. Anil Saxena

B. Somesh Kapoor

C. Mukesh Agrawal

D. Praveen Kumar

1. D

Senior IPS officer Praveen Kumar was recently appointed Director General (DG) of the Border Security Force (BSF). He will take over his previous role as DG of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and replace Daljit Singh Chaudhary, and will hold the post until his retirement in September 2030.

**Q.2. How many illegal betting and gambling websites did the Indian government recently block?**

A. 142

B. 200

C. 242

D. 300

2. C

The government has blocked links to 242 illegal betting and gambling websites. According to sources, since the Online Gambling Act was passed, more than 7,800 illegal betting and gambling websites have been shut down, marking a significant increase in the crackdown.

**Q.3. Which country recently became the world's second-largest 5G user base?**

A. India

B. China





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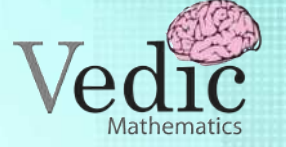
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C. America

D. Japan

3. A

India has crossed another historic milestone in its digital revolution, now having the second-largest 5G subscriber base in the world, behind only China. Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced that the number of 5G users in India has exceeded 400 million (40 crore), making it one of the fastest 5G adopters in the world.

Q.4. Who recently released the books 'Gen V Bano' and 'Mahatma' at the NAMO Book Fest?

A. Amit Shah

B. Narendra Modi

C. Dr. Jitendra Singh

D. Rajnath Singh

4. C

Minister of State for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh released two new books in New Delhi. Titled "General V. Bano" and "Mahatma," the books were released at India's first NaMo Book Festival. Dr. Singh stated in a social media post that the festival features a special exhibition of books on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said it provides a platform for writers, thinkers, and youth to share ideas.

Q.5. Recently, the Supreme Court stated that unreserved seats are open to whom?

A. Only General category

B. Only Reserved category

C. All candidates on merit

D. Government nominees

5. C

As per the recent Supreme Court judgement, unreserved (general) seats are open to all candidates on the basis of merit, including those from reserved categories (SC, ST, OBC, EWS) who score above the general cut-off, without any relaxation, they should be given preference over unreserved seats, so that reserved seats are left for the needy.

Q.6. Which gas pipeline project did GAIL recently complete?

A. Delhi-Jaipur

B. Mumbai-Nagpur

C. Surat-Bhopal

D. Chennai-Bengaluru

6. B

India has achieved a major infrastructure milestone. Public sector company GAIL (India) Limited has completed a unique natural gas pipeline project in Maharashtra. The 694-kilometer Mumbai-Nagpur Natural Gas Pipeline is laid almost entirely along an expressway, in a corridor only 3 meters wide. This is the first such project in the country, demonstrating that transport corridors can also be used as utility corridors through integrated planning.

Q.7. The Jamma Bane land record reform, which was recently in the news, is associated with which state?

A. Kerala

B. Karnataka

C. Tamil Nadu

D. Maharashtra

7. B

The Karnataka government has amended its Land Revenue Act to modernize the unique and long-standing system of land records in the Coorg region. The reform aims to resolve decades-old







documentation issues affecting the Jamma Bane lands, which are essential to the Kodava community's heritage and livelihood.

**Q.8. With which country did India recently sign a joint declaration on telecommunications cooperation?**

- A. France
- B. Japan
- C. Germany
- D. Australia

8. C

India and Germany have signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on Telecommunications Cooperation. The Communications Ministry said the two sides agreed to regularly share information and enhance cooperation in future emerging technologies.

**Q.9. Which river was recently recognized as the world's oldest flowing river?**

- A. Nile
- B. Amazon
- C. Indus
- D. Finke River

9. D

Rivers have shaped human civilization for thousands of years, but some rivers have stories older than human history itself. Scientists believe that the Finke River, flowing through Australia's arid interior, is the oldest surviving river system on Earth. Geological evidence suggests that this river has flowed along much the same path for millions of years.

**Q.10. From which date will the RBI launch its Central Complaints Processing Centre (CRPC)?**

- A. April 1, 2026

**B. June 1, 2026**

**C. July 1, 2026**

**D. January 1, 2027**

10. C

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a major reform in the grievance redressal framework to improve the consumer experience in the financial system. Under this, RBI will now create a centralized centre for redressal of complaints under the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. This new system will ensure faster, transparent and easier grievance redressal for consumers across the country. The Reserve Bank of India has announced the creation of a Centralized Receipt and Processing Centre (CRPC) under the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, which will come into effect from July 1, 2026.

**Q.11. When will SEBI's performance-based expense framework for mutual funds be implemented?**

- A. January 2026
- B. April 1, 2026
- C. July 2026
- D. April 2027

11. B

India's mutual fund industry is poised for a major regulatory overhaul. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has notified major changes to mutual fund regulations, allowing the charging of performance-linked expenses for the first time. Approved in December 2025, the revised framework will come into effect on April 1, 2026, with a strong focus on transparency, governance, and investor protection.

**Q.12. What was India's recent foreign exchange reserves?**

- A. \$650 billion





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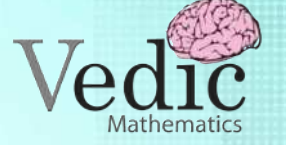
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B. \$670 billion

C. \$687.19 billion

D. \$700 billion

12. C

India's external sector showed stability in mid-January 2026, as the country's foreign exchange reserves increased slightly. According to the latest weekly data released by the central bank, overall reserves increased despite a decline in foreign currency assets, mainly supported by a strong jump in gold reserves. According to data released by the Reserve Bank of India, India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$392 million to \$687.19 billion.

Q.13. Who was recently appointed Vigilance Commissioner?

A. Rakesh Asthana

B. Praveen Vashista

C. Ajay Kumar

D. Sanjay Mishra

13. B

The Central Government has strengthened the country's anti-corruption system with a significant appointment. Mr. Praveen Vashisht, a senior Indian Police Service officer, has been appointed Vigilance Commissioner of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). He formally assumed office after taking the oath of office, marking a major shift in India's vigilance and integrity administration.

Q.14. On which day will the Sukhatme National Statistical Award be presented?

A. Census Day

B. Mathematics Day

C. Statistics Day (29 June)

D. National Science Day

14. C

The Sukhatme National Award in Statistics was instituted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). It recognizes outstanding lifetime contributions to statistics and the improvement of official statistical systems. The award has been given biennially since 2000 to an eminent Indian statistician aged 45 years and above. The award will be presented on Statistics Day, June 29, 2026.

Q.15. Who recently became India's 92nd chess grandmaster?

A. R. Praggnanandhaa

B. Arjun Erigaisi

C. Aaryan Varshney

D. Nihal Sarin

15. C

Recently, 21-year-old Aryan Varshney became India's 92nd Grandmaster by achieving the final norm at the Andranik Margaryan Memorial Tournament in Armenia. Aryan trained at home with his father, Gaurav Varshney, a physics teacher, and did not hire a professional coach.

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