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New Districts in Ladakh

May 2026



NATIONAL

NEW DISTRICTS IN LADAKH

The **Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh** has **officially notified** the creation of **5 new districts** in the **Union Territory: Nubra, Sham, Changthang, Zaskar, and Drass.**

This follows the **preliminary approval** granted by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** in **2024**. With this, the total number of districts in the UT has **increased from 2 to 7**. It is to be noted that the region previously consisted of only the **Leh and Kargil** districts.

FREE FLOW TOLLING SYSTEM

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has inaugurated the **first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF)** based tolling system of India at the **Chorayasi Toll Plaza**, located on the **Surat-Bharuch section** of **National Highway-48 (NH-48)** in **Gujarat**. The system aims to **modernize the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) infrastructure.**

The **MLFF** framework enables **barrier-less tolling** with minimal human intervention, allowing vehicles to transit toll locations without stopping for a **seamless traffic flow**. It is to be noted that **41,500 vehicles** used the facility on the inaugural day of its implementation.

VILLAGES ADDED TO VVP

The central government has included **6 strategically located border villages** in the **Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)** into the **second phase** of the **Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP).**

The initiative aims to **accelerate development and improve living conditions** in remote frontier regions. The villages designated under the **VVP-II** include **Bobiya, Kadyala, Gajnal, Karol Krishna, Rathua, and Gujjar Chak.**

PAPERLESS JUDICIARY

Sikkim has become the **first fully paperless state judiciary** in India, marking a milestone that coincides with the **50th anniversary of the statehood of Sikkim**. The declaration was made by **Chief Justice of India Surya Kant** during a **two-day national conclave on technology and judicial education** held in **Gangtok**.

The transition to a digital system incorporates **AI tools** to assist judicial officers. These include the **Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court's Efficiency (SUPACE)** for legal research and the **Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS)** for language translation.

NEW STANDARDS FOR ASSISTIVE PRODUCTS

The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has published **6 new standards** for priority **Assistive Technologies (AT)** under the framework of the **National List of Essential Assistive Products (NLEAP)**. It is to be noted that NLEAP is an initiative led by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).**

The new standards for mobility aids include **IS 18558** (elbow crutches), **IS 5145** (multi-leg walking sticks), and **IS 19631** (portable ramps) to ensure safety, performance, and accessibility. BIS has also established standards for accessibility aids, specifically **IS 19189** (tactile guide maps) and **IS 19190** (Braille on signage).

SOUTH COAST RAILWAY ZONE NOTIFIED

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has officially notified the establishment of the **South Coast Railway (SCoR)** zone, headquartered in **Visakhapatnam**. The SCoR is the **18th railway zone** in India and is scheduled to start operations from **June 2026**.

The newly created zone will **integrate the Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, and Guntur divisions** in **Andhra Pradesh** to **strengthen railway administration and infrastructure in the region.**

MISSION FOR COTTON PRODUCTIVITY

The **Union Cabinet** has approved the '**Mission for Cotton Productivity**' (**Kapas Kanti**) with a total outlay of **₹5,659.22 crore**. The mission will be implemented for a period of **5 years** from **FY27 to FY31**.

The initiative aims to increase **lint productivity** from 440 kg/hectare to **755 kg/hectare** by 2031, targeting a total production of **498 lakh bales** (**1 bale = 170 kg**) by 2030-31. It is expected to benefit **32 lakh cotton farmers** and will initially focus on **140 districts across 14 states** to enhance national cotton production.

MORE SUPREME COURT JUDGES

The **Union Cabinet** has approved the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026**, to increase the **sanctioned strength** of the Supreme Court (SC). The bill proposes to expand the total number of judges to **38 from 34** (including the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**), adding 4 more judges to the existing 33.

This marks the **first increase in the judicial strength** of the SC in **6 years**, since the last expansion in **2019**. The bill aims to amend the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956**. It is to be noted that **Article 124(1)** of the Constitution of India empowers the **Parliament to determine the number of judges** in the apex court.

NEW PROJECTS FOR ODISHA

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has inaugurated the **Bhimmandali Eco Heritage Site** in the Naktideul Block of **Sambalpur district, Odisha**. The centre has sanctioned over **₹8.3 crore** for the project.

He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for **304 projects**, including a new **Nursing College** at the **Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital** with an investment of **₹580 crore**. The **Panchayati Raj Samikshya portal** was also launched to enhance **transparency and accountability in rural governance** systems.

NEW RURAL EMPLOYMENT ACT INTRODUCED

The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** has notified the implementation of the '**Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)**' (**VB-G RAM G**) Act, 2025, which will come into effect from **July 2026**. This Act will **repeal** the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA, 2005)**.

The new Act provides a **statutory guarantee of 125 days of unskilled manual work** per financial year to every household, an **increase from the 100-day provision** under the MGNREGA. The scope of work under the **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025**, covers **4 key areas: water security, rural infrastructure, livelihood infrastructure, and climate resilience**.

MILESTONE IN REGULATORY REFORMS

Tripura has become the **first state in India** to complete all **Priority Areas** under **Deregulation Phase-II** of the **national Compliance Reduction and Deregulation initiative**, spearheaded by the **Cabinet Secretariat**.

The state is the first in the country to successfully implement **all 51 Priority Areas** under both **Phase-I and Phase-II** of the reform programme. The reforms, launched in **January 2026**, aim to enhance the **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** and strengthen **technology-driven governance** through comprehensive regulatory improvements.

SEHAT MISSION LAUNCHED

Union Minister **JP Nadda** and Union Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** have launched the '**SEHAT Mission**' (**Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation**) in New Delhi.

The mission is **jointly launched** by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW)**. The initiative aims to **connect agriculture, nutrition, and public health** through scientific collaboration to build a framework for '**Healthy Food, Healthy Farms and a Healthy India**'.

COMMITTEE ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has constituted the parliamentary **Committee on Empowerment of Women** for the **2026-27 session**, effective from **April 21, 2026**, with **Dr. Daggubati Purandeswari** appointed as the **Chairperson**.

The committee comprises **30 members**, with **20 nominated by the Speaker from the Lok Sabha** and **10 nominated by the Chairman from the Rajya Sabha**. The **tenure** of the JPC **does not exceed one year**, and it is **reconstituted annually**.

ALGAE TREE INSTALLED IN BHOPAL

The first solar-powered 'Algae Tree' in India has been installed at **Swami Vivekananda Park** in **Bhopal** under the **Smart City initiative** to **mitigate urban air pollution**.

Developed by the **Mushroom World Group**, this **3-metre-tall** climate-tech device uses **microalgae-based photobioreactor technology** to function as an **artificial lung**. It is capable of absorbing **1.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂)** and generating about **1 tonne of pure oxygen annually**.

GUIDELINES FOR BHAVYA SCHEME RELEASED

The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry** has released the detailed operational guidelines for the implementation of the **BHAVYA Scheme**. The **Central Sector Scheme** aims to develop investment-ready, world-class industrial parks across the country.

The scheme aims to develop **100 industrial parks** over a **6-year period** from **FY27 to FY32**, with a total financial outlay of **₹33,660 crore**. In the **first phase**, up to **50 industrial parks** will be selected through a challenge-based competitive selection process.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE COMMITTEE

The central government has constituted the **High-Level Committee on Demographic Change (HLCDC)** to conduct a **scientific assessment** of 'unnatural demographic changes' resulting from **illegal immigration and other abnormal factors**.

The committee, set up under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, is chaired by **Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar (Retired)**. The other members of the HLCDC include **Mritunjay Kumar Narayan (Census Commissioner of India)**, **Durga Shankar Mishra**, **Balaji Srivastava**, and **Dr Shamika Ravi**.

INDIA LAUNCHES SKYCAST SYSTEM

Union Minister of State Dr. Jitendra Singh has inaugurated **India's first 'SkyCast' system** at the **Indira Gandhi International Airport** in **New Delhi**. With this, **India** has become the **19th country globally** to implement this **advanced integrated aviation weather monitoring system**.

Developed under '**Mission Mausam**', the system aims to **enhance aviation safety** by facilitating safer take-offs and landings. It integrates **advanced atmospheric sensors** to monitor atmospheric conditions up to an altitude of **3 km**. A **second facility** is planned to be established at the **Jewar Airport** in **Uttar Pradesh**.

ECONOMY

GDP FORECAST

According to the "**India Forward- Emerging Perspectives**" report jointly released by **S&P Global Market Intelligence** and **CRISIL Ratings Ltd**, the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of India for FY27** is revised downward by **50 basis points (bps)** to **6.6%**.

The report estimated the **GDP growth for FY26** at **7.6%** and the **average annual growth between FY23 and FY26** at **7.3%**. The **retail inflation** is projected to average **5.1%** in FY26. The **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** is expected to expand from 0.8% of GDP in FY26 to **2.2%** in **FY27**. Further, the **debt-to-GDP ratio** of India is forecasted to increase to **57.5%** from 56.1% in FY26.

GDP FORECAST BY ICRA

According to a report by **ICRA Ltd (formerly Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited)**, the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of India for FY27** is **revised down by 30 basis points (bps)** to **6.2%**, compared to its previous estimate of 6.5%. The **GDP growth for FY26** is projected at **7.5%**.

GDP FORECAST BY UNDESA

According to the "**World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026**" report released by the **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)**, the **GDP growth of India for FY27** is revised down to **6.4%** from the previous projection of 6.6%. The **growth forecast for FY28** is also reduced to **6.6%**.

AGREEMENTS

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Union Minister Piyush Goyal and **Todd McClay** have signed the **India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (IN-NZ FTA)** at **Bharat Mandapam**, **New Delhi**.

Under the IN-NZ FTA, India has secured **100% duty-free access** on all **8,284 tariff lines** to New Zealand. In return, India has liberalized **70.03%** of its tariff lines, which covers 95% of the total bilateral trade value.

MEGA GREENFIELD SHIPYARD

The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)** has signed a **tripartite MoU** with **HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering Co Ltd (HD KSOE)**, **National Shipbuilding & Heavy Industries Park Tamil Nadu Ltd (NSHIP-TN)**, and **Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SMFCL)** to develop the **first Mega Greenfield Shipyard in India** at **Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu**.

The project will have an annual shipbuilding capacity of **2.5 million Gross Tonnage (MGT)**. The agreement was exchanged during the state visit of the **President of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Lee Jae Myung**. It is part of the **India-ROK Comprehensive Framework 'VOYAGES'** (Shared Vision for Operation of Yard Assisted Growth with Efficiency and Scale).

DEFENCE

MDL DELIVERS MAHENDRAGIRI

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) has delivered the advanced stealth frigate '**Mahendragiri (Y-12654)**' to the Indian Navy (IN) under **Project 17A (Nilgiri-class)**.

It is the **6th ship delivered under the project** and the **4th frigate built by MDL**, marking the completion of all warships assigned to the shipyard under this initiative. The frigate, named after the **Mahendragiri mountain peak in the Eastern Ghats of Odisha**, features **75% indigenous content**.

EXERCISE CINBAX-II

The **2nd edition** of the bilateral military exercise between the **Indian Army (IA)** and the **Royal Cambodian Army (RCA)** named "**CINBAX-II**" has commenced at the Techo Sen Phnom Thom Mreas Prov Royal Cambodian Air Force Training Centre (Camp Basil) in **Kampong Speu Province, Cambodia**.

The IA contingent comprises 120 personnel from the **Battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry Regiment**, while the RCA is represented by 160 personnel. Conducted under **Chapter VII of the UN mandate**, the exercise focuses on **sub-conventional operations in jungle and semi-urban environments**.

MAIDEN FLIGHT-TRIAL OF TARA

The **DRDO** and the **Indian Air Force** have successfully conducted the **maiden flight-trial** of the **Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA)** weapon off the **Odisha coast**.

It is to be noted that **TARA** is the **first indigenous glide weapon system** of India, designed as a **modular range extension kit** to **convert unguided warheads into precision-guided munitions**.

ICGS ACHAL COMMISSIONED

The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** has commissioned the Indian Coast Guard Ship '**Achal**', a new-generation "**Adamy-class**" **Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV)**, at the **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)** in **Vasco, Goa**. The vessel will be stationed at **Vadinar, Gujarat**.

It is to be noted that the ship is the **5th of the eight FPVs** being indigenously built by the GSL for the ICG. The **51 metre long vessel**, featuring **over 50% indigenous content**, is powered by two 3,000 kW diesel engines. It has a maximum speed of **27 knots** and an operational endurance of **1,500 nautical miles**.

INDIAN ARMY INDUCTS INDIGENOUS DRONES

The **Indian Army** has inducted two indigenous combat systems named the **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Munition (ULPGM)** and the **AGNIKAA VTOL-1** (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) **First-Person View (FPV) Kamikaze Drone**. These were procured from **Adani Defence & Aerospace Limited** under the **Emergency Procurement-6 (EP-6)**.

The induction followed successful **high-altitude and Electronic Warfare (EW) trials** conducted in the presence of officials from the **Western Command** of the IA. The ULPGM, **co-developed by the DRDO and Adani Defence & Aerospace Ltd**, is the **first indigenous loitering munition of India**, while the AGNIKAA VTOL-1 is the **first FPV kamikaze drone of India in its category**.

EXERCISE PRAGATI

The **inaugural edition** of the multilateral military exercise named '**Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region (PRAGATI) 2026**' commenced at the **Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya**.

A total of **12 friendly foreign nations** are participating in the exercise alongside India. These include **Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka** from the immediate neighbourhood; **Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam** from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and the **Maldives and Seychelles** from the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHES NEW PATROL VESSEL

The **Indian Navy (IN)** has launched '**Sanghmitra**' (Yard 3039), its **first Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV)**, at the **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)** facility in **Kolkata**.

The construction of **11 NGOPVs** is being carried out across **two domestic shipyards** to enhance the **naval presence of India in multi-domain operations**. These **indigenously designed vessels** have a **displacement of 3,000 tonnes**, measure **113 metres in length** and **14.6 metres in width**, and can achieve a **maximum speed of 23 knots**.

ALL-WOMEN TEAMS SCALE MT EVEREST

The **Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP)** has completed its **first-ever all-women international mountaineering expedition** to **Mount (Mt) Everest**, the highest peak in the world at **8,848 m**. The **14-member team** scaled the summit through the **South Col Route** from Nepal.

Meanwhile, the **Border Security Force (BSF)**, a **Central Armed Police Force (CAPF)** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, has also successfully scaled Mt Everest through its inaugural all-women expedition named '**Mission Vande Mataram**'. This expedition was organised as a part of its **Diamond Jubilee** celebrations, marking **60 years of service**.

BUSINESS

SPACE-TECH UNICORN

Skyroot Aerospace has become the **first space-technology unicorn of India** after raising **\$60 million (₹570 crore)** in a funding round, reaching a valuation of **\$1.1 billion**.

The company will use the capital to scale manufacturing operations and accelerate the development of the '**Vikram**' series of rockets.

GREEN METHANOL PLANT

The **first green methanol production facility of India** is being established at the **Deendayal Port Authority (DPA)** in **Kutch, Gujarat**.

The project is being executed by **Thermax Ltd** for Synthesis in collaboration with **Ankur Scientific**. The plant has an initial production capacity of **5 tonnes per day**. It is to be noted that the facility uses **advanced biomass gasification technology** to convert **Prosopis juliflora** (an invasive shrub locally known as '**Gando Baval**') into **green marine fuel** for ocean-going vessels.

SCIENCE

PIXXEL PARTNERS WITH SARVAM

Pixxel has partnered with **Sarvam** to develop and operate the **first orbital data centre satellite of India** named "**Pathfinder**". The **200 kg-class spacecraft** is projected to be deployed in orbit by the **fourth quarter (Q4) of 2026**.

It is to be noted that Pixxel will handle the **design, construction, and launch** of the satellite, while Sarvam will integrate an **AI framework** to facilitate **on-orbit training and inference** through **full-stack language models**.

MISSION DRISHTI

Bengaluru-based **GalaxEye** has launched "**Mission Drishti**", the **largest and heaviest privately developed Earth observation satellite (EOS) of India** to date. The **190 kg** satellite was launched aboard a **Falcon 9 rocket** of **SpaceX** from **California, USA**.

It is the **world's first operational "OptoSAR" satellite**, which combines **Electro-Optical (EO) sensors** and **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)** on a single platform. This allows for **24/7 all-weather surveillance** through clouds, rain, and darkness, providing high-resolution imagery at **1.5-meter**.

GEOCELL FROM PLASTIC WASTE

The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI)** and **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)** have developed “**Phoenix Geocell**”, **India’s first technical textile geocell** made from **100% end-of-life mixed plastic waste**.

The technology uses a **3-dimensional (3D) honeycomb-like structure** made from processed mixed plastic waste. It is to be noted that the innovation has been recognized by the “**India Book of Records**” and “**Asia Book of Records**” during a ceremony at the CSIR-CRRI auditorium in **New Delhi**.

SATELLITE-TAGGED TURTLE

The **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** has released the **first satellite-tagged Ganges Softshell Turtle (Nilssonina gangetica)** in the country at the **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve** in **Assam**.

The project was executed in collaboration with the **Assam Forest Department** and **Kaziranga park authorities**, with funding provided by the **National Geographic Society**. The adult turtle was fitted with a **transmitter** under strict veterinary supervision and released along the **northern bank** of the **Brahmaputra River**.

AI PLANT GENOME EDITING PLATFORM

Scientists at the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)–Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI)** in **Cuttack, Odisha**, led by **Kutubuddin Ali Molla**, have developed and validated a platform named “**Plant-OpenCRISPR1**” (**POC1**).

This represents the **first AI-designed genome-editing platform in the world for plants**, developed utilizing **rice as a model crop**. The POC1 platform facilitates advanced **gene knockout, base editing, and prime editing** in rice crops using **AI-designed enzymes**, surpassing conventional **Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR)** technologies.

STATE

NAGALAND COFFEE MISSION

Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia has virtually launched the ‘**Coffee of Nagaland**’ mission worth **₹175 crore** at Sanchar Bhavan, New Delhi, to **promote coffee cultivation** and strengthen the livelihoods of farmers.

Under the initiative, two pilot coffee clusters have been identified: **Tuophema village** in Kohima district (for **Arabica coffee**) and **Ghotovi village** in Niuland district (for **Robusta coffee**).

APPOINTMENTS

NEW APPOINTMENT IN NCLT

The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** has approved the appointment of **Justice (Retd.) Anupinder Singh Grewal** as the **President** of the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** for a period of **5 years**. He succeeds **Justice (Retd.) Ramalingam Sudhakar**.

NEW APPOINTMENTS IN DEFENCE

Lieutenant General NS Raja Subramani (Retd) has been appointed as the **3rd Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** of India. He succeeds **General Anil Chauhan**, whose extended tenure ends on **30 May 2026**.

Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is appointed as the next **Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS)** and will assume command on **31 May 2026**. He succeeds **Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi**.

NEW CHAIRPERSON FOR CBFC

Shashi Shekhar Vempati has been appointed as the **Chairperson** of the **Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)** for a period of **3 years**. He succeeds **Prasoon Joshi**.

NEW APPOINTMENT IN SAIL

Ashok Kumar Panda has been appointed as the **CMD** of the **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)**. He succeeds **Krishna Kumar Singh**.

NEW APPOINTMENTS IN CII

R Mukundan has been elected as the **President** of the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** for the **2026–27 term**. He succeeds **Rajiv Memani**.

It is to be noted that the newly constituted **National Council** of the CII has also appointed **Suchitra Ella** as the **President-Designate** and **Shashwat Goenka** as the **Vice President** for the same term.

NEW CEO FOR UIDAI

Saurabh Vijay has been appointed as the **CEO** of the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**. He succeeds **Bhuvnesh Kumar**.

TENURE EXTENSION

The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** has extended the tenure of **Anurag Garg** as the **Director General (DG)** of the **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** until **July 2027**.

NEW VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF

Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar has been appointed as the **48th Vice Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS)** of the **Indian Navy**. He succeeds **Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan**.

Prior to this, he served as the **Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command**. He was awarded the **Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) in 2022** and the **Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) in 2026**.

AWARDS

PULITZER PRIZE 2026

The winners of the **110th edition of the Pulitzer Prizes (2026)** have been announced across **23 categories**. Administered by **Columbia University**, the awards carry a certificate and a **cash prize of \$15,000** for each winner.

In the Journalism section, **The Washington Post** won the award for **Public Service**, while the staff of **The New York Times** received the prize for **Investigative Reporting**. The **Associated Press (AP)** team, which included **Aniruddha Ghosal**, was honoured in the **International Reporting** category.

NATIONAL PANCHAYAT AWARDS 2025

The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR)** has announced the winners of the **National Panchayat Awards 2025 (NPA-2025)**, recognizing **42 Panchayats** for excellence in rural governance and sustainable development. **Karnataka** secured the **highest number of awards** with 6 honors, followed by **Odisha** and **Andhra Pradesh** with 5 awards each.

Under the **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (DDUPSVP)** category, 34 Gram Panchayats (GP) were selected based on the scores of the **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0**. The **Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (NDSPSVP-2025)** recognized 8 winners, comprising 3 District Panchayats, 2 Block Panchayats, and 3 GPs.

NEW HONOUR FOR ISRO SCIENTIST

Kuljeet Kaur Marhas, a scientist at the **ISRO**, has been elected as a **Fellow of the Meteoritical Society** for 2026. She becomes the **first Indian woman** to receive this distinction.

It is to be noted that the fellowship is considered one of the most prestigious international honours in the fields of **meteoritics and planetary science**. She is the **third Indian scientist** to receive this honour, following **Devendra Lal** and **JN Goswami**.

NEW HONOUR FOR KULJEET KAUR MARHAS

Professor Kuljeet Kaur Marhas has been elected as a **Fellow of The Meteoritical Society**, becoming the **first Indian woman** to receive this distinction.

She is the **third Indian scientist** to be awarded this international honour, following space scientists **Devendra Lal** and **JN Goswami**.

INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE 2026

The book **"Taiwan Travelogue"**, written by Taiwanese author **Yang Shuang-zi** and translated by **Lin King**, has won the **International Booker Prize 2026**. It is the **first book originally written in Mandarin Chinese** to win this prestigious award.

The prize carries a **cash reward of £50,000**, which is split equally between the author and the translator. The story revolves around **Aoyama Chizuko**, a Japanese novelist who embarks on a culinary exploration of the island during a government-sponsored tour instead of performing her official duties.

FAO AGRICOLA MEDAL FOR PM MODI

PM Narendra Modi has been conferred the prestigious **FAO Agricola Medal** by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**. The award recognises his contributions to **food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development**.

It is **one of the highest honours** given by the FAO to individuals for their role in advancing **global food security, improved nutrition, and agricultural development**.

GODDARD ASTRONAUTICS AWARD

The **Chandrayaan-3 mission** of the **ISRO** has received the **2026 Goddard Astronautics Award** from the **American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)**.

The award was presented at the **Accelerating Space Commerce, Exploration, and New Discovery (ASCEND) 2026 Conference** held in **Washington DC, USA**. **Vinay Kwatra**, the **Ambassador of India to the USA**, accepted the award on behalf of ISRO.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION FOR BWSSB

The **Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB)** has secured a position among the **top five global water utilities** across three major categories at the **2026 Global Water Awards**. The awards were presented during the **Global Water Summit 2026** in **Madrid, Spain**.

It is to be noted that BWSSB is the **sole Indian water utility** to achieve top-five global recognition in three distinct categories, namely **"Utility of the Year 2026"**, **"Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG-6) Champion of the year 2026"**, and **"Water Project of the Year 2026"**.

SOUTH AFRICAN HONOUR

Cyril Ramaphosa, the **President of South Africa**, has conferred the **Order of Mapungubwe**, the **highest civilian honour of the nation**, on **Indian-origin professors**.

Salim Abdool Karim received the award under the **Gold category**, while **Keertan Dheda** was awarded under the **Silver category**. The honours were given recognising their exceptional contributions to the fields of **medical science, epidemiology, and health policy**.

KK VENUGOPAL ELECTED SETP FELLOW

Group Captain KK Venugopal (Retired) from the Executive Group of **Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)** has become the **first Indian test pilot** to be elected as a **Fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots (SETP)** in the **United States of America (USA)**.

It is to be noted that he was previously decorated with the **Vayu Sena Medal (VSM)** in **2004**.

UNESCO WOMEN IN SCIENCE AWARDS

Five outstanding female scientists have been honoured with the **"UNESCO-L'Oréal International Awards for Women in Science 2026"**, presented jointly by the **UNESCO** and the **Fondation L'Oréal**.

The laureates for 2026 include **Professor Liesl Zühlke** from **South Africa**, **Professor Felice Jacka** from **Australia**, **Professor Sarah A Teichmann** from the **UK**, **Professor Raquel Chan** from **Argentina**, and **Professor Gordana Novakovic** from the **United States (US)**.

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2026

The **79th edition of the annual Cannes International Film Festival 2026** was hosted in **Cannes, France**. The **Palme d'Or**, the highest award, was won by **Romanian director Cristian Mungiu** for his drama **'Fjord'**, marking his second win. The **Grand Prix** was awarded to **Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev** for his political thriller **'Minotaur'**.

The **Jury Prize** was conferred upon **'The Dreamed Adventure'** by **Valeska Grisebach** (Germany). The **Best Director award** was jointly presented to **Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi** (Spain) for **'La Bola Negra'** and **Paweł Pawlikowski** (Poland) for **'Fatherland'**.

NEW FELLOWS OF ROYAL SOCIETY

Professor Manindra Agrawal, the **Director of the IIT Kanpur**, and **Dr. Soumya Swaminathan**, the **former Chief Scientist of the WHO**, have been elected as **Fellows of the Royal Society (FRS)**. The **Royal Society** is one of the oldest and most prestigious scientific academies in the world.

SPORTS

YOUNGEST SWIMMER TO CROSS PALK STRAIT

Ishank Singh, a **7-year-old** from **Ranchi (Jharkhand)**, has established a **world record** by swimming approximately **29 km** across the **Palk Strait**. He completed the journey from **Talaimannar (Sri Lanka) to Dhanushkodi (Tamil Nadu)** in **9 hours 50 minutes**.

The **Universal Records Forum (URF)** has officially recognized him as the **youngest and fastest** individual to complete this route. It is to be noted that he surpassed the **previous record of 10 hours 30 minutes** set by **Jay Jashwanth** in 2019.

CCA CHAIRMAN

Bharat Singh Chauhan has been re-elected as the **Chairman of the Commonwealth Chess Association (CCA)** for the **2026-2030 term**. The re-election took place during the Annual General Body Meeting of the organization held in **Wasakaduwa, Sri Lanka**.

It is to be noted that the CCA has announced the launch of a new tournament, the **"Commonwealth School Chess Championship"**, with its inaugural edition scheduled to be hosted in **Malaysia in October 2026**.

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#1.8

Issue
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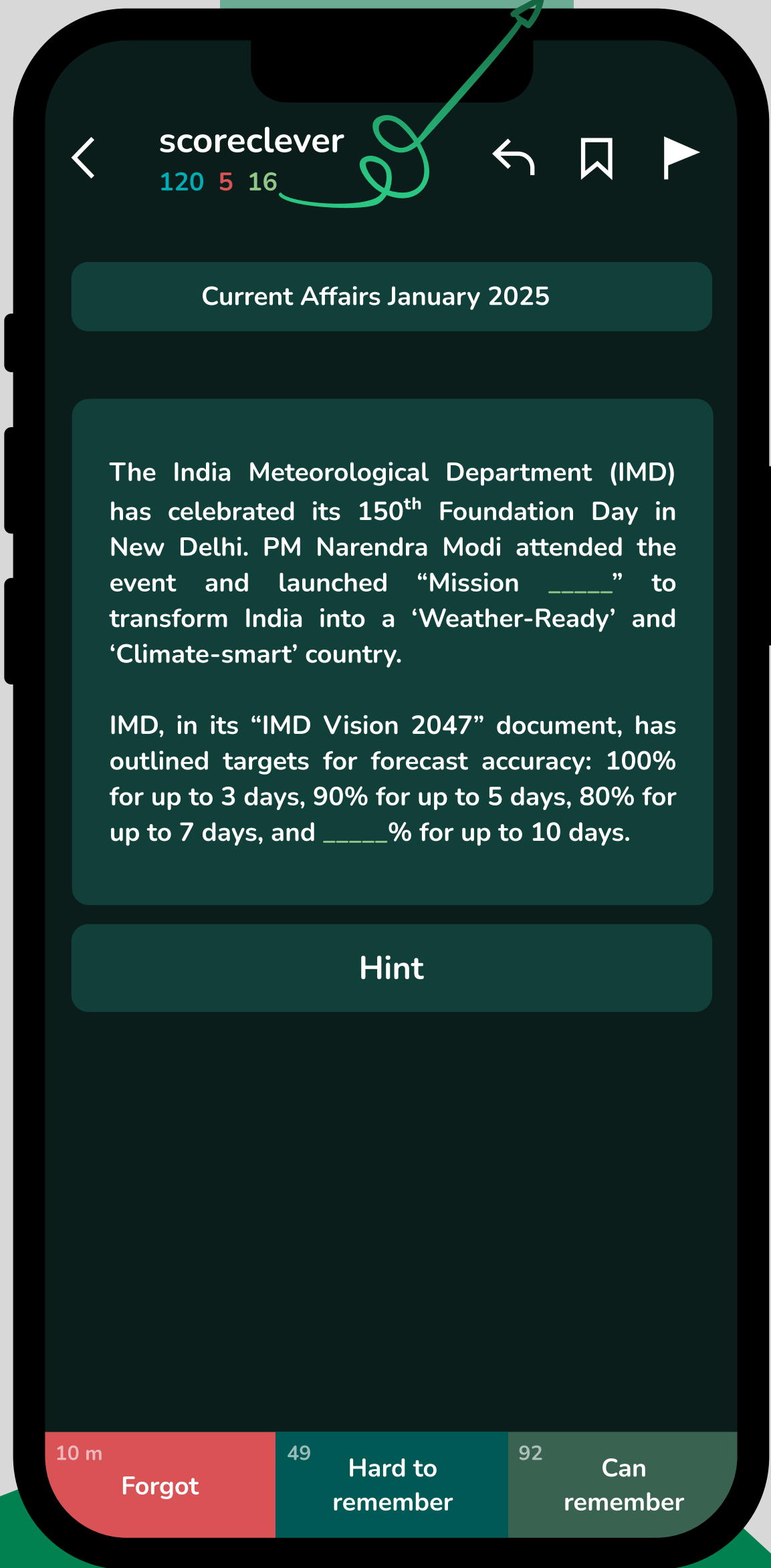
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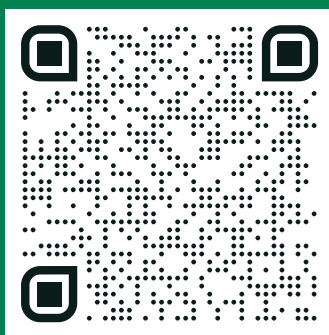
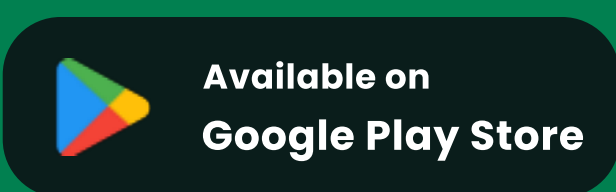
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