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Padma Awards 2026 – Complete Analysis: 131 Awards, Notable Recipients, and the Selection Framework

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Padma Awards 2026 — Complete Analysis: 131 Awards, Notable Recipients, and the Selection Framework

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WHY IN NEWS

The Government of India announced 131 Padma Awards 2026 on January 25, 2026 (Republic Day eve) — including Padma Vibhushan posthumously for veteran actor Dharmendra and former Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan, and Padma Bhushan for playback singer Alka Yagnik and actor Mammooty.

WHAT ARE THE PADMA AWARDS?

The **Padma Awards** are India's second-highest civilian honours (after the Bharat Ratna). Instituted in **1954**, they recognise distinguished service and exceptional contributions in fields including arts, literature, education, science, sports, medicine, social work, public affairs, industry, civil service, and public service.

Three categories:

Padma Vibhushan (PV) — Exceptional and distinguished service

Padma Bhushan (PB) — Distinguished service of a high order

Padma Shri (PS) — Distinguished service

PADMA AWARDS 2026 — STATISTICS

Total: 131 Awards

Category	Number
Padma Vibhushan	5
Padma Bhushan	13
Padma Shri	113
Total	131

Special categories within the total:

Category	Number
Posthumous awards	16
Women recipients	19
Foreign nationals/NRI/PIO/OCI	6

State/UT-wise distribution (top):

State/UT	Awards
Maharashtra	15
Tamil Nadu	13
Uttar Pradesh	11
West Bengal	11
Kerala	8

PADMA VIBHUSHAN 2026 — ALL 5 RECIPIENTS

Recipient	Field/Domain	State	Notes
Dharmendra Singh Deol	Arts/Cinema	Rajasthan/Hindi Belt	Posthumous; veteran Bollywood actor; “He-Man of Bollywood”; films: <i>Sholay</i> (1975), <i>Yaadon Ki Baaraat</i> , <i>Chupke Chupke</i> ; also served as Member of Parliament (2004–2009, Bikaner)
V.S. Achuthanandan	Public Affairs	Kerala	Posthumous; Chief Minister of Kerala 2006–2011; veteran CPM leader; known for Munnar plantation worker protests; founder member of CPI(M)

Note: Remaining 3 Padma Vibhushan recipients per official gazette — full list in public domain.

PADMA BHUSHAN 2026 — KEY RECIPIENTS

Recipient	Field	Notes
Mammootty	Arts/Malayalam Cinema	Full name: Mohammed Ali; 3 National Film Awards (Best Actor); Malayalam film icon for 5 decades; films: <i>Mathilukal</i> , <i>Vidheyan</i> , <i>Perumazhakkalam</i>
Alka Yagnik	Arts/Playback Singing	One of the most prolific Bollywood playback singers; became most-streamed female artist globally on Spotify (2023); 3 National Film Awards; 7 Filmfare Awards
Uday Kotak	Trade and Industry/Banking	Founder and former MD & CEO of Kotak Mahindra Bank; one of India's largest private banks

PADMA SHRI 2026 — KEY RECIPIENTS ACROSS FIELDS

Sports

Recipient	Sport	Achievement
Rohit Sharma	Cricket	Captain, Indian men's team (ODI + Test); 5-time IPL champion with Mumbai Indians; 3 ODI double centuries
Harmanpreet Kaur	Cricket	Captain, Indian women's team; first Indian woman to score 200+ in ODIs (213* vs NZ, 2017 CWC)
Praveen Kumar	Para-Athletics	Gold medal, 2024 Paris Paralympics, High Jump T64 category; World record holder
Savita Punia	Hockey	Indian women's hockey goalkeeper; captain during 2020 Tokyo Olympics campaign (4th place)

Arts and Cinema

Recipient	Field	Notes
R. Madhavan	Film	<i>3 Idiots</i> , <i>Rang De Basanti</i> , <i>Rocketry: The Nambi Effect</i> (2022, which he also directed — won National Award)

Science and Technology

Multiple recipients in space science, traditional medicine, agricultural science recognised in 2026 Padma Shri.

UNDERSTANDING THE PADMA AWARDS FRAMEWORK

History and Interruptions

Timeline:

1954: Padma Awards established along with Bharat Ratna

1978–79: Suspended by the Janata Party government (Prime Minister Morarji Desai) — objection to what was seen as politicisation

1993–97: Suspended by Congress government (Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao) — reconsidering criteria

1998 onwards: Restored and maintained continuously

Maximum annual awards: 120 per year, **excluding:**

Posthumous awards (no limit)

Foreign nationals, NRI, PIO, OCI recipients (no limit from the 120 cap)

Selection Process

Step 1: Recommendations received

Any citizen or organization can recommend a name through the online nominations portal

Central Ministries, State Governments, autonomous bodies, and NGOs also nominate

The portal is open throughout the year

Step 2: Padma Awards Committee

Constituted each year by the Prime Minister

Chaired by: **Cabinet Secretary**

Includes Secretaries of Home, DARPG, and other relevant Ministries

Evaluates nominations based on: eminence, contribution's national/international significance, longevity of service, impact

Step 3: PM's Office Review

Committee's shortlist reviewed by PM's Office

Step 4: Home Ministry

Home Minister reviews the final list

Step 5: President

President of India approves all Padma Awards — announced on Republic Day eve; presented in March/April at Rashtrapati Bhavan

Constitutional Status — Are Padma Awards “Titles”?

UPSC RELEVANCE

“No title, not being a military or academic distinction, shall be conferred by the State.”

The Supreme Court has clarified that **Padma Awards are NOT “titles”** under Article 18 because:

They are not hereditary distinctions

They cannot be used as suffixes to legal names in official documents (only honorific, not legal)

They are awards/decorations recognising contribution — not a rank or position

They do not confer any privileges, rights, or legal status

Therefore, the constitutional prohibition on titles (which was aimed at preventing aristocracy and feudal hierarchies) does not apply to Padma Awards.

GENDER AND REPRESENTATION ANALYSIS

Criticism of Padma Awards (recurring):

Women remain under-represented (19 out of 131 = ~14.5% in 2026)

Rural contributors, artisans, and grassroots workers (often the “unsung heroes” category) receive fewer Padma Shris than celebrities

Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan tend to cluster around political figures, established cinema personalities, and sportspersons — less around scientists, social workers, and educators

Positive trends (recent years):

Posthumous awards have recognised overlooked freedom fighters and cultural figures

“Unsung heroes” category promoted by government — tribal artisans, traditional knowledge holders

Transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals receiving Padma Shri in recent editions

International recognition: Foreign nationals’ contributions to India (classical music, yoga, Sanskrit scholarship)

BHARAT RATNA VS PADMA AWARDS — HIERARCHY

Award	Rank	Constitutional basis	About
Bharat Ratna	1st civilian award	—	Highest; typically for lifetime achievement of rare distinction; maximum 3/year; no field restriction since 2011 (earlier: arts, literature, science, or public service only)
Padma Vibhushan	2nd	—	Exceptional and distinguished service; 2026: 5 awarded
Padma Bhushan	3rd	—	Distinguished service of a high order; 2026: 13 awarded
Padma Shri	4th	—	Distinguished service; 2026: 113 awarded

Note: Bharat Ratna was awarded to posthumous recipients: Subhas Chandra Bose (1992, withdrawn after controversy), Madan Mohan Malaviya (2014, posthumous), Atal Bihari Vajpayee (2015), and others.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Padma Awards instituted: 1954; Suspended: 1978–79 and 1993–97; PV: exceptional service; PB: distinguished high order; PS: distinguished service; Max/year: 120 (excl. posthumous + foreign); Selection: Padma Awards Committee (Cabinet Secretary) → PM → Home Minister → President; Not “titles” under Article 18 (SC); Padma Vibhushan 2026 posthumous: Dharmendra Singh Deol + V.S. Achuthanandan; Padma Bhushan: Mammooty (Malayalam cinema) + Alka Yagnik (playback singing); Padma Shri: Rohit Sharma, Harmanpreet Kaur, Praveen Kumar (2024 Paralympics gold, HJ T64).

National honours and their democratic purpose; Article 18 — abolition of titles; Padma Awards vs Bharat Ratna — institutional framework; gender and regional representation in national honours; political neutrality in award selection — controversies and reforms.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEEDIA

PADMA AWARDS 2026 — NUMBERS:

Total: **131** | PV: **5** | PB: **13** | PS: **113**

Posthumous: **16** | Women: **19** | Foreign/NRI: **6**

State leaders: **Maharashtra 15**, Tamil Nadu 13, UP 11, WB 11

PADMA AWARDS — INSTITUTIONAL:

Instituted: **1954** (with Bharat Ratna)

Suspensions: **1978–79** (Morarji Desai govt) + **1993–97** (PV Narasimha Rao govt)

Max per year: **120** (excluding posthumous and foreign nationals)

Chairman of Selection Committee: **Cabinet Secretary**

Final approval: **President of India**

Presentation: **Rashtrapati Bhavan** (typically March-April)

Not “titles” under **Article 18** (Supreme Court ruling)

NOTABLE 2026 RECIPIENTS:

PV Posthumous: Dharmendra Singh Deol (cinema) + V.S. Achuthanandan (Kerala CM, CPM)

PB: Mammooty (Malayalam cinema, 3 National Awards) + Alka Yagnik (playback; most-streamed female globally 2023 Spotify) + Uday Kotak (Kotak Mahindra Bank)

PS Sports: Rohit Sharma (cricket, captain) + Harmanpreet Kaur (cricket, captain; 213* first Indian woman 200+ ODI 2017) + Praveen Kumar (2024 Paralympics gold, HJ T64) + Savita Punia (hockey)

PS Cinema: R. Madhavan (Rocketry: Nambi Effect, 2022)

AWARD HIERARCHY:

1st: **Bharat Ratna** (max 3/year; no field restriction since 2011)

2nd: **Padma Vibhushan** | 3rd: **Padma Bhushan** | 4th: **Padma Shri**

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Article 18 (Constitution): Prohibits State from conferring titles (except military/academic); Padma = NOT a title per SC

Bharat Ratna: Also not a “title” — Supreme Court ruling

Padma Awards portal: Open throughout year for nominations (any citizen can nominate)

Dharmendra: *Sholay* (1975), Member of Parliament (Bikaner, 2004–2009), age 89 at death

V.S. Achuthanandan: Founded CPI(M) 1964; Kerala CM 2006–2011; Munnar plantation workers campaign

Alka Yagnik: 2023 diagnosed with sudden sensorineural hearing loss — continued to advocate for aural health

Praveen Kumar: High Jump T64 (amputee category); 2024 Paris Paralympics gold; World record

Sources: Ministry of Home Affairs, PIB, The Hindu

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