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# Current Affairs Today – January 26, 2026

26 January 2026

**SUBJECTS COVERED****POLITY****SECURITY & DEFENCE****HISTORY & CULTURE****IR****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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## WHY IN NEWS

India celebrated its 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, at Kartavya Path, New Delhi — with the European Union as collective chief guest for the first time, debuting the Phased Battle Array combat formation and unveiling the Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM).

## 77TH REPUBLIC DAY — MAIN CEREMONY

India's 77th Republic Day was held at **Kartavya Path** (formerly Rajpath), New Delhi, on January 26, 2026.

### Key ceremony facts:

**President Droupadi Murmu** unfurled the National Flag and took the salute

**PM Narendra Modi** paid tribute at the **National War Memorial** before the parade

**Parade Commander:** Lt. General Bhavnish Kumar (General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area)

**Theme:** “150 Years of Vande Mataram” with sub-themes “Swatantrata ka Mantra – Vande Mataram” and “Samridhi ka Mantra – Atmanirbhar Bharat”

**Total Tableaux:** 30 (from States, UTs, and Central Ministries)

**Guests:** Approximately 10,000 special invitees; 2,500 performing artists

**Constitutional background:** The Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on **November 26, 1949** (observed as Constitution Day / Samvidhan Divas). It came into force on **January 26, 1950**, replacing the Government of India Act, 1935. The date January 26 was chosen to commemorate the **Purna Swaraj Declaration** of January 26, 1930 — when the Indian National Congress, at the Lahore Session (December 1929) under President Jawaharlal Nehru, declared complete independence as India's goal.

## EU AS COLLECTIVE CHIEF GUEST — A HISTORIC FIRST

For the **first time in the history of India's Republic Day**, the **European Union** was invited as a collective chief guest — represented by two heads:

Guest	Designation	Background
<b>António Costa</b>	President, European Council	Former PM of Portugal (2015–2024); European Council President since December 2024
<b>Ursula von der Leyen</b>	President, European Commission	Re-elected for second term July 2024 (term to 2029)

### European Council vs European Commission distinction:

**European Council:** Meets quarterly; comprises heads of state/government of all 27 EU member states + its President; sets EU political direction; does NOT legislate

**European Commission:** EU’s executive body; proposes legislation; implements EU budget; composed of 27 Commissioners (one per member state) + President

**Strategic context:** The EU dual representation as Republic Day chief guests was diplomatically timed — the **16th India-EU Summit** was held the very next day (January 27, 2026), and the **India-EU FTA** concluded on January 28, 2026. It was also the first time a **European Union military contingent** marched at a Republic Day parade outside Europe.

## PHASED BATTLE ARRAY — NEW DOCTRINAL DISPLAY FORMAT

For the first time, military assets were arranged in “**Phased Battle Array**” — a tactical combat formation sequence:

Phase	Assets	Role
Phase 1	Reconnaissance drones	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR)
Phase 2	Shaktibaan Artillery Regiments	Drone + loitering munition warfare
Phase 3	Divyastra Batteries	Precision artillery + guided drones
Phase 4	Bhairav Light Commando Battalions	Fast-attack infantry

This replaced the traditional category-by-category (infantry, artillery, armour) format with an **effects-based integrated warfare** sequence reflecting India’s modern doctrine, as demonstrated in the Ukraine-Russia and Gaza conflicts (2022–2026).

## BHAIRAV LIGHT COMMANDO BATTALION — PARADE DEBUT

The **Bhairav Light Commando Battalion** made its **first-ever Republic Day appearance** in 2026. It represents India’s newly raised fast-attack infantry — a light, highly mobile assault force designed for drone-era integrated warfare, operating alongside unmanned systems in a networked battlefield.

## LR-ASHM — HYPERSONIC MISSILE'S FIRST PUBLIC DISPLAY

**Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LR-AShM)** was showcased publicly for the first time at Republic Day 2026:

Specification	Detail
Speed	Mach 10 (initial boost); Mach 5+ (sustained glide)
Range	~1,500 km (standard); future variants up to 3,500 km
Propulsion	Two-stage solid rocket motor + hypersonic glide phase
Role	Naval coastal defense; sea-denial in Indian Ocean Region
Developer	DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation)

**Hypersonic threshold:** Speed exceeding Mach 5 ( $5 \times$  the speed of sound =  $\sim 6,174$  km/h at sea level). Hypersonic weapons are harder to intercept than conventional missiles due to speed + manoeuvrability of the glide phase. Nations with operational hypersonic systems: USA, Russia, China, India (developing).

## SWARM DRONES AND ROBOTIC DOGS — FIRST PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

**Swarm drones:** India's **first-ever public display** of coordinated swarm drone warfare; 100+ autonomous drones communicating and self-assigning tasks using AI

**Robotic surveillance dogs: First Republic Day appearance;** equipped with multi-spectral sensors, AI navigation; used for perimeter surveillance, EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), CASEVAC (Casualty Evacuation), and tunnel operations

Both developed under iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence, 2018) + DRDO's Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS)

## GALLANTRY AWARDS 2026

Award	Recipient	Service	Notes
<b>Ashoka Chakra</b>	Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla	Indian Air Force	For Axiom-4 ISS mission preparation; first Indian ISRO astronaut-designate to receive highest peacetime gallantry
<b>Kirti Chakra</b>	Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair	Indian Army	Counter-insurgency operations
<b>Shaurya Chakra</b>	Lt Cdr Dilna K.	Indian Navy	<b>First woman naval officer</b> to receive Shaurya Chakra
<b>Shaurya Chakra</b>	Lt Cdr Roopa A.	Indian Navy	<b>First woman naval officer</b> to receive Shaurya Chakra

**Total 2026:** 70 Armed Forces gallantry medals (6 posthumous); 301 defence decorations; 982 police/fire/home guard/correctional services personnel honoured.

**Gallantry award precedence (peacetime, highest to lowest):** Ashoka Chakra → Kirti Chakra → Shaurya Chakra

## REPUBLIC DAY TABLEAU WINNERS 2026

Category	Winner	Theme
<b>Best State/UT – 1st</b>	Maharashtra	“Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta”
<b>Best State/UT – 2nd</b>	Jammu & Kashmir	Rich handicrafts and folk dances
<b>Best State/UT – 3rd</b>	Kerala	Kochi Water Metro + 100% Digital Literacy
<b>Best Ministry Tableau</b>	Ministry of Culture	“Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation”
<b>Popular Choice</b>	Dept. of School Education & Literacy	National Education Policy 2020
<b>Best March (Armed Forces)</b>	Indian Navy	—
<b>Best March (CAPFs)</b>	Delhi Police	—

Other notable tableaux: Gujarat (Evolution of Indian National Flag 1906–1947; tribute to Madam Bhikaji Cama), West Bengal (Origins of Vande Mataram; Subhas Chandra Bose, Matangini Hazra), Punjab (Guru Tegh Bahadur’s 350th martyrdom anniversary), Assam (Asharikandi terracotta traditions).

## VANDE MATARAM — 150 YEARS (1876–2026)

The 2026 Republic Day theme “150 Years of Vande Mataram” marked:

**1876:** Composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** (Chattopadhyay) in Bengali/Sanskrit

**1882:** Published in his novel *Anandmath* (a novel about the Sannyasi Rebellion against the British)

**1896:** First sung publicly at an **Indian National Congress session** by **Rabindranath Tagore**

**January 26, 1950:** India became a republic; Vande Mataram recognised as national song (unofficial, unlike Jana Gana Mana which is the national anthem under Article 51A)

**Controversy:** Vande Mataram’s references to Bharat Mata as a goddess figure (associated with Durga) led some communities to object to it as idol worship. The Constituent Assembly, after debate, adopted Jana Gana Mana as the national anthem and Vande Mataram as the national song — with only the first two stanzas considered free of devotional controversy.

### Persons in News:

**Bhikaji Cama (1861–1936):** Featured in Gujarat’s tableau for designing the first version of India’s national flag — unfurled at the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress, Germany, in **1907** — making her the first person to hoist an Indian flag on foreign soil. She used the flag to demand Indian independence before an international audience.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### 77TH REPUBLIC DAY 2026 — CORE FACTS:

Date: **January 26, 2026**

Venue: Kartavya Path (formerly Rajpath), New Delhi

Theme: **“150 Years of Vande Mataram”**

Sub-themes: “Swatantrata ka Mantra – Vande Mataram” + “Samridhhi ka Mantra – Atmanirbhar Bharat”

Tableaux: **30** total (states + UTs + ministries)

### CHIEF GUESTS — EU (FIRST TIME AS COLLECTIVE CHIEF GUEST):

António Costa — President, European Council (former PM of Portugal 2015–2024)

Ursula von der Leyen — President, European Commission (re-elected July 2024)

First time EU military contingent participated in Republic Day outside Europe

### CONSTITUTIONAL DATES:

Constitution adopted: **November 26, 1949** (Constitution Day)

Constitution came into force: **January 26, 1950** (Republic Day)

Why Jan 26? Tribute to Purna Swaraj Day: **January 26, 1930** (first Independence pledge-taking day; Lahore INC session December 1929; Nehru presiding)

Replaced: Government of India Act, **1935**

First President of Republic of India: **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**

### LR-ASHM:

Full form: Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (hypersonic)

Speed: Mach 10 initial; Mach 5 sustained

Range: ~1,500 km (up to 3,500 km future)

Propulsion: Two-stage solid rocket + hypersonic glide phase

Developer: DRDO

### GALLANTRY AWARDS 2026:

Ashoka Chakra: Group Captain **Shubhanshu Shukla** (IAF; Axiom-4 mission)

Kirti Chakra: **Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair**

Shaurya Chakra: Lt Cdr **Dilna K.** + Lt Cdr **Roopa A.** (first women naval officers)

Total: 70 Armed Forces medals (6 posthumous) + 982 police/civil services

### TABLEAU WINNERS 2026:

1st: **Maharashtra** (Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta)

2nd: Jammu & Kashmir

3rd: **Kerala** (Water Metro + Digital Literacy)

Best Ministry: **Ministry of Culture** (Vande Mataram)

Best March Armed Forces: **Indian Navy**

Best March CAPFs: **Delhi Police**

### VANDE MATARAM:

Composed: **1876** by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

Published in novel: **Anandmath (1882)**

First sung at INC: **1896** (by Rabindranath Tagore)

National Song (not national anthem; only first two stanzas used)

National Anthem: Jana Gana Mana (Article 51A — fundamental duty to abide by)

#### **BHIKAJI CAMA:**

Unfurled first Indian national flag at Stuttgart, Germany: **1907**

Featured in Gujarat tableau 2026

#### **MILITARY FIRSTS AT 2026 PARADE:**

Phased Battle Array format: **First time 2026**

Bhairav Light Commando Battalion: **First parade appearance**

LR-AShM hypersonic missile: **First public display**

Swarm drones: **First public demonstration**

Robotic dogs: **First Republic Day appearance**

iDEX: Innovations for Defence Excellence (2018) | DRDO CABS: Centre for Airborne Systems

#### **OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

Loitering munition (kamikaze drone): Flies until it finds target, then detonates; extensively used in Ukraine-Russia war (Lancet, Shahed-136)

Ashoka Chakra precedence: Highest peacetime gallantry (equivalent of PVC for wartime)

Article 51A: Fundamental Duties; 51A(a) — to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals + national flag + national anthem

Kochi Water Metro: World's largest inland water transport network (78 km, 15 routes; KMRL + KfW Germany)

Sources: PIB, DD News, The Hindu, Indian Express

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