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Current Affairs Today — April 26, 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

Sunday, April 26, 2026 is defined by a nuclear landmark recalled in Mann Ki Baat — the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam achieving first criticality on April 6, marking India's entry into Stage 2 of its three-stage nuclear programme. Alongside, Gujarat held polls for 393 local bodies, Tamil Nadu's landmark 85.15% turnout election awaits counting on May 4, the State of India's Environment 2026 report sounded climate alarm bells, and Thrissur Pooram 2026 was held in a subdued, fireworks-free format.

TOP STORIES

1. PFBR Kalpakkam — India Enters Stage 2 of Nuclear Programme

The 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu achieved **first criticality on April 6, 2026** — the first time a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was achieved in the reactor. PM Modi highlighted this as a “historic milestone” in today's Mann Ki Baat. The PFBR, indigenously designed by IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research) and built by BHAVINI (Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited), uses Uranium-Plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel with a blanket of U-238 that breeds additional Plutonium-239 — enabling the reactor to produce more fissile material than it consumes. This unlocks India's path to Stage 3 (thorium-based reactors). The PFBR was originally expected to be commissioned by 2010 but faced 15+ years of delays. Grid connection and commercial operations will follow after safety testing.

Why it matters: India becomes one of only a handful of nations globally with an operational Fast Breeder Reactor, alongside Russia (BN-800). The PFBR is the gateway to India's vast thorium reserves (world's second-largest, ~25% of global reserves) and makes the 100 GW nuclear target by 2047 credible.

2. Mann Ki Baat 133rd Episode — Buddha Purnima, Census 2027, Nuclear Milestone

PM Narendra Modi addressed the 133rd episode of Mann Ki Baat on Sunday, April 26 at 11 AM. Key highlights:

- Extended advance greetings for **Buddha Purnima** (May 1, 2026), noting Lord Buddha's message of inner peace is especially relevant amid global conflicts
- Highlighted the **PFBR Kalpakkam first criticality** as a “historic milestone” for India's indigenous nuclear technology

- Urged citizens to participate in **Census 2027** self-enumeration — the first fully digital census exercise — noting that citizens can enter data 15 days before enumerator visits
- Mentioned a Buddhist institution in Chile (run by Drubpon Otzer Rinpoche from Ladakh) and Karma Monastery in Karnataka as examples of India's global spiritual influence

3. Gujarat Local Body Elections 2026 — Polling Day

Gujarat held polling today (April 26) for **393 civic bodies** — comprising 15 municipal corporations, 84 municipalities, 34 district panchayats, and 260 Taluka Panchayats. A total of **9,262 seats** are being contested by **25,537 candidates**. Voter turnout showed 17% by 11 AM across municipal corporations, with Morbi municipality recording the highest (26%) and Ahmedabad the lowest (13%). Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel both voted in Ahmedabad. For the first time, **7 posts of District Panchayat President are reserved for OBC candidates**. Counting is scheduled for April 28.

4. State of India's Environment 2026 (CSE/Down to Earth)

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down to Earth released the **State of India's Environment (SOE) 2026** report. Key findings:

- **7 of 9 planetary boundaries have been breached** — the 7th being ocean acidification (added this year). Breached: climate change, biosphere integrity, land system change, freshwater depletion, biogeochemical flows, novel entities, and ocean acidification
- **India saw extreme weather on 331 of 334 days in 2025** — 99% of days had at least one extreme event
- **At least 4,419 people died** due to extreme weather in 2025 — sharp increase over previous years
- **17.4 million hectares of cropped land** were affected by climate shocks
- Only **15% of India's population** lives within 10 km of a continuous air quality monitor; 1.2 billion Indians breathe unmonitored air

5. Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections 2026 — Post-Poll

Polling for all 234 Tamil Nadu Assembly constituencies concluded on April 23 with a **historic voter turnout of 85.15%** — the highest ever in a TN assembly election. The main contest is between the ruling **DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance** (Chief Minister M.K. Stalin from Kolathur) and the **AIADMK-led NDA** (EPS from Edappadi). **TVK (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam)** — actor-politician Vijay's party — is contesting all 234 seats as a third force. Udhayanidhi Stalin is contesting from Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni. Counting of votes is on **May 4, 2026**.

6. Thrissur Pooram 2026 — Held Without Fireworks

Kerala’s grandest temple festival, Thrissur Pooram 2026, was held today (April 26) in a subdued format following the April 21 Mundathikode fireworks explosion that killed 15 people. The government banned all fireworks; public entry was prohibited; key rituals like Kudamattam, Ilanjithara Melam, and Madathil Varavu were conducted in symbolic, restricted form. The Chamaya Pradarsanam (tiger imagery exhibition) was scaled down to a single day. The Thiruvambadi Devaswom maintained a mourning period until April 24. This marks the first Thrissur Pooram in living memory without the traditional fireworks display — the festival’s most spectacular element.

7. Census 2027 — Digital Enumeration Phase Underway

India’s **Census 2027** — the country’s first fully digital census — is currently in Phase 1 (House Listing and Housing Census), running from April to September 2026. For the first time, citizens can **self-enumerate** via a secure online portal available in **16 languages**, generating a unique Self-Enumeration ID before the enumerator visits. Over **3 million enumerators and officials** are collecting data via mobile applications with geo-referenced jurisdictions. The total outlay approved is **₹11,718.24 crore**. The Census Management & Monitoring System (CMMS) provides near real-time tracking of enumeration progress.

QUICK BITES

STORY	KEY FACT
India-Japan AI Strategic Dialogue	First-ever bilateral AI strategic dialogue launched; to enhance cooperation in AI governance and applications
SEBI regulatory simplification	Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey announced SEBI will focus on ease of doing business for all market participants
Rupee at 94.25/USD	Rupee logged steepest weekly loss since September 2022; pressured by oil surge (\$106/bbl Brent) and Iran conflict
Sensex down ~1.3%	Third day of losses; IT sector fell 5%+ (Infosys -7.1%, HCLTech -5.8%) after guidance cuts
JP Morgan downgrade	JP Morgan downgraded Indian equities to ‘neutral’; cites high valuations and energy shock headwinds

FACTS CORNER

ITEM	FACT
PFBR capacity	500 MWe; sodium-cooled; pool-type fast breeder reactor
PFBR first criticality date	April 6, 2026 at 08:25 PM IST
PFBR operator	BHAVINI (Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited)
PFBR designer	IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research), DAE
Gujarat elections — seats	9,262 seats; 393 civic bodies; 25,537 candidates
Gujarat election results	April 28, 2026
Tamil Nadu voter turnout	85.15% (historic high); polling April 23
TN counting date	May 4, 2026
SOE 2026 — planetary boundaries	7 of 9 breached
SOE 2026 — extreme weather days	331 out of 334 days in 2025
Census 2027 outlay	₹11,718.24 crore
Census self-enumeration languages	16 languages
Brent crude (April 25)	\$106.20/barrel

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PFBR Kalpakkam — India Enters Stage 2 of Its Three-Stage...

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