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Current Affairs Today — May 21, 2026

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ANTI-TERRORISM DAY 2026 — 35TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF RAJIV GANDHI AND INDIA'S COUNTER-TERROR LEGAL ARCHITECTURE

India observed **Anti-Terrorism Day on May 21, 2026** — the **35th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi**, who was assassinated by an **LTTE suicide bomber (Dhanu)** at **Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, on May 21, 1991** during an election rally. The day is observed annually to renew the national pledge against terrorism and to take stock of India's evolving **counter-terror legal architecture** — from **TADA (1985)** through **POTA (2002)** to the present **UAPA framework** and the **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008**.

Background

- The day was instituted by the Government of India in 1992 to commemorate Rajiv Gandhi's assassination and underline the human cost of terrorism.
- India's counter-terror legislative evolution: **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 (TADA)** — lapsed in 1995; **Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 (POTA)** — repealed in 2004; **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)** — amended in **2004, 2008, 2012, and 2019** to absorb counter-terror provisions.
- The **NIA Act, 2008** was enacted post-26/11 Mumbai attacks; NIA is India's federal counter-terror agency, headquartered in New Delhi.
- **Operation Sindoor (May 2025)** — India's targeted counter-terror response to the Pahalgam terror attack (April 22, 2025) — has reaffirmed terror as a primary national-security priority.

Key Facts

- **UAPA 2019 amendment:** Empowered the Central Government to designate **individuals (not just organisations)** as terrorists under the Fourth Schedule.
- **NIA Act 2008:** Confers jurisdiction over scheduled offences across states; NIA can take up a case suo motu with Central Government direction.
- **Watali judgment (NIA v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, 2019):** SC held that under UAPA Section 43-D(5), bail can be denied if a prima facie case exists; courts must accept prosecution material at face value at bail stage — a high **threshold** for the accused.
- **LTTE ban:** The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was banned in India under UAPA in 1992; ban extended periodically.

- **Sriperumbudur memorial:** Located ~40 km from Chennai; Rajiv Gandhi Memorial preserves the assassination site.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security):** Counter-terrorism legal framework, NIA functioning, UAPA amendments, designation of individual terrorists.
- **GS Paper 2 (Polity):** UAPA and civil liberties — Article 21 vs national security; Watali bail jurisprudence.
- **Prelims hooks:** Rajiv Gandhi assassination date (May 21, 1991), TADA lapsed (1995), POTA repealed (2004), UAPA enacted (1967), individual-designation amendment (2019), NIA Act (2008).
- **Mains angle:** “Has the UAPA framework struck the right balance between national security imperatives and constitutional safeguards? Discuss in light of recent jurisprudence.”

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act; principal anti-terror legislation post-POTA repeal; amended 2004, 2008, 2012, 2019. NIA: National Investigation Agency; established under NIA Act 2008; HQ New Delhi; federal counter-terror agency. TADA 1985: Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act; lapsed 1995. POTA 2002: Prevention of Terrorism Act; repealed 2004. LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam; Sri Lankan militant group; assassinated Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. Operation Sindoor: India's May 2025 counter-terror strikes after the Pahalgam attack.

INDIAN WAR MEMORIAL IN SEOUL — 75 YEARS OF KOREAN WAR AND THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Republic of Korea Defence Minister Kwon Oh-eul jointly inaugurated the Indian War Memorial at Imjingak Park, Paju (near the Demilitarised Zone), on May 21, 2026 — marking the 75th anniversary of the Korean War (1950–53). The memorial honours the 60 Parachute Field Ambulance of the Indian Army (under Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj), which treated ~222,000 patients during the war, and the Custodian Force of India led by General K.S. Thimayya, who chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), 1953.

Background

- The **Korean War (1950–53)** pitted UN-backed South Korea against North Korea (backed by China and the USSR); India remained neutral but contributed a medical unit under UN Command and chaired the post-armistice repatriation body.

- **60 Parachute Field Ambulance:** Indian Army medical unit deployed to Korea (Nov 1950 – May 1954); commanded by **Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj** (Maha Vir Chakra); served with the US 187th Airborne and the Commonwealth Division.
- **Custodian Force of India (CFI):** Provided 6,000 troops to oversee POW repatriation post-armistice (Panmunjom, July 27, 1953); commanded by **General K.S. Thimayya**, who chaired the NNRC comprising India, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.
- India–Republic of Korea (ROK) **bilateral** relationship was elevated to a **Special Strategic Partnership in 2015** (during PM Modi’s Seoul visit); **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement)** was signed in **2009**.

Key Facts

- **Memorial location:** Imjingak Park, Paju, ROK — near the DMZ that separates the two Koreas.
- **Korean War armistice:** Signed at **Panmunjom on July 27, 1953**; no formal peace treaty has been concluded — the two Koreas remain technically at war.
- **60 Para Field Ambulance:** Treated approximately **222,000 patients**; commanded by Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj (MVC); 627 personnel served in Korea.
- **NNRC:** Established under the Korean Armistice Agreement (1953); India provided the chair (Thimayya) and the largest troop contingent (CFI).
- **India–ROK defence cooperation:** Includes **K9 Vajra-T 155 mm/52-calibre self-propelled howitzer** (joint production by L&T and Hanwha Aerospace), the **KIND-X defence accelerator**, and the May 2026 **Defence Cyber MoU**.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 1 (History — Post-WWII order):** Korean War, division of Korea (38th Parallel), India’s role in the NNRC.
- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–ROK Special Strategic Partnership, Act East Policy, India’s UN peacekeeping legacy.
- **Prelims hooks:** Korean War years (1950–53), armistice (Panmunjom 1953), 60 Para Field Ambulance commander (Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj), NNRC chair (Gen K.S. Thimayya), CEPA year (2009), Special Strategic Partnership year (2015).
- **Mains angle:** “India’s diplomatic record during the Korean War and the Cold War reveals a consistent pattern of principled neutrality. Discuss with reference to the NNRC.”

1950–53; UN forces (led by US) vs North Korea + China + USSR; ended by armistice at Panmunjom (July 27, 1953); no peace treaty. **NNRC:** Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission; chaired by Gen K.S. Thimayya (India); members — India, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Czechoslovakia. **Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj:** Maha Vir Chakra; commanded 60 Para Field Ambulance in Korea. **Special Strategic Partnership:** India–ROK; upgraded 2015 (Modi visit). **CEPA:** Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement; India–ROK; signed 2009. **K9 Vajra-T:** 155 mm SPH co-produced by L&T (Hazira) and Hanwha Aerospace.

RAINMUMBAI — INDIA'S FIRST SEBI-APPROVED WEATHER DERIVATIVE ON NCDEX

The **National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX)** announced on **May 21, 2026** the launch of **RAINMUMBAI**, India's **first SEBI-approved parametric weather derivative**, with trading to commence from **May 29, 2026**. The underlying is the cumulative **June–September monsoon rainfall at Mumbai (Santacruz)** as recorded by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**. **IIT Bombay** is the technical knowledge partner.

Background

- **Weather derivatives** are financial instruments that allow hedging against weather variability (rainfall, temperature, wind speed). They are **parametric** — pay-outs are triggered by objective weather measurements, not actual loss assessment as in **indemnity insurance**.
- India's commodity derivatives market is governed by the **Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956** and **SEBI Act, 1992**; the **Forward Markets Commission (FMC)** was merged with **SEBI on September 28, 2015**, bringing commodities under unified regulation.
- **NCDEX:** Established 2003; major agri-commodity derivatives exchange; headquartered in Mumbai.
- Weather risk affects agriculture (~45% of India's workforce), insurance, infrastructure, energy, and tourism — making weather derivatives a long-awaited risk-management tool.

Key Facts

- **Product name:** RAINMUMBAI; **underlying:** cumulative IMD Mumbai Santacruz rainfall, June 1 – September 30.
- **Tick size:** 1 mm; **lot size:** ₹50 per mm of rainfall index.
- **Settlement:** Cash-settled; based on IMD official rainfall data.
- **Knowledge partner:** IIT Bombay (technical design and modelling).
- **Parametric vs indemnity:** Parametric triggers pay-out automatically on a measured weather parameter; indemnity insurance pays after loss assessment — parametric is faster and less litigated.
- **Regulator:** SEBI; legal basis SC@A 1956 + SEBI Act 1992.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Commodity derivatives, weather risk management, SEBI's evolving mandate post-FMC merger.
- **GS Paper 3 (Disaster Management / Agriculture):** Climate-risk financial instruments; PMFBY complement; farmer income stability.
- **Prelims hooks:** NCDEX year (2003), FMC merged with SEBI (Sept 28, 2015), parametric vs indemnity distinction, RAINMUMBAI underlying (IMD Santacruz Jun–Sep), SEBI Act 1992.
- **Mains angle:** “Weather derivatives can complement insurance in India’s climate-risk management toolkit. Examine the institutional and regulatory pre-requisites for their successful adoption.”

*National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited; established 2003; HQ Mumbai. **SEBI:** Securities and Exchange Board of India; statutory body under SEBI Act 1992; absorbed FMC in 2015. **Parametric instrument:** Pay-out triggered by an objective measurement — automatic and rule-based. **Indemnity instrument:** Pay-out after assessed actual loss — slower, more contested. **IMD:** India Meteorological Department; under Ministry of Earth Sciences; official weather data provider; Santacruz observatory is Mumbai’s reference station.*

INDIA–AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT IV POSTPONED — BUNDIBUGYO EBOLA OUTBREAK IN DRC AND UGANDA

*The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** and the **African Union (AU) Commission** issued a joint statement on **May 21, 2026** postponing the **Fourth India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV)**, originally scheduled for **May 28–31, 2026 in New Delhi**, citing the ongoing **Bundibugyo ebolavirus (BDBV) outbreak in DRC and Uganda** declared a **PHEIC by WHO** on **May 17, 2026**. A new date will be announced after consultations with all 55 AU member states.*

Background

- **IAFS history:** IAFS-I (2008, New Delhi); IAFS-II (2011, Addis Ababa); IAFS-III (October 2015, New Delhi) — the largest, with 41 Heads of State/Government and credentials from all 54 AU members; IAFS-IV scheduled for May 2026.
- The **African Union became a permanent member of the G20 in September 2023** at the New Delhi G20 Summit during India’s presidency — a major Indian diplomatic achievement.
- India–Africa trade has crossed **~USD 100 billion (2024–25)**; India is among Africa’s top 5 trading partners.
- **Vaccine Maitri (2021–)** delivered **~67 million COVID-19 vaccine doses** to African countries — a major soft-power vector.

Key Facts

- **PHEIC reason:** WHO declared the Bundibugyo Ebola PHEIC on May 17, 2026 — the **9th PHEIC** in WHO history and the **3rd BDBV outbreak** ever (first 2007 Uganda, second 2012 DRC).
- **Critical minerals dimension:** Africa hosts ~30% of the world's known critical minerals; **DRC produces ~70% of global cobalt**; India's **KABIL** (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) — a JV of NALCO, HCL and MECL — pursues overseas mineral assets.
- **Pan-African e-Network:** Launched 2009; first major India-Africa tele-medicine/tele-education project; succeeded by **e-VidyaBharti** and **e-AarogyaBharti**.
- **Lines of credit:** India has extended **>USD 12 billion** in **concessional** lines of credit to African countries.
- **AU expansion at G20:** Decided at New Delhi G20 (Sept 2023); first AU participation as full member.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–Africa partnership, AU at G20, IAFS framework, soft-power diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 3 (Health / Critical minerals):** PHEIC implications, supply-chain risk, KABIL strategy.
- **Prelims hooks:** IAFS-I (2008), IAFS-III (2015 New Delhi, 41 HoS), AU joined G20 (Sept 2023), DRC cobalt share (~70%), KABIL JV partners (NALCO + HCL + MECL).
- **Mains angle:** “Africa is central to India’s vision of a multipolar Global South. Critically evaluate India’s economic and diplomatic engagement with the continent.”

*India–Africa Forum Summit; quadrilateral I-2008, II-2011, III-2015, IV-postponed 2026. **AU:** African Union; 55 member states; joined G20 as full member September 2023 (New Delhi). **KABIL:** Khanij Bidesh India Ltd; JV of NALCO + HCL + MECL; under Ministry of Mines. **Critical minerals:** Cobalt (DRC ~70%), lithium (Zimbabwe), rare earths. **Vaccine Maitri:** India’s COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy (2021–); ~67 million doses to African countries.*

CHENAB HYDROPOWER PUSH AND THE INDUS WATERS TREATY IN ABEYANCE

India has begun **groundwork on two new hydropower projects on the Chenab in Jammu & Kashmir**, with combined investment of **~₹2,600 crore**, while the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), 1960** remains **in abeyance since April 23, 2025** — India's response to the **Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, 2025**. Separately, on **May 15, 2026**, the **Court of Arbitration (CoA) at The Hague** issued a partial award on the **Kishanganga–Ratle pondage dispute**; India has reiterated that it does not recognise the CoA's jurisdiction in the present circumstances.

Background

- The **Indus Waters Treaty, 1960** was signed at Karachi on **September 19, 1960** by PM Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ayub Khan, brokered by the **World Bank**.
- **River allocation:** Eastern rivers — **Ravi, Beas, Sutlej** — for unrestricted use by India; Western rivers — **Indus, Jhelum, Chenab** — for Pakistan, with India permitted limited non-consumptive use (hydropower, agriculture, navigation).
- **Three-tier dispute resolution mechanism:** (1) **Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)**; (2) **Neutral Expert**; (3) **Court of Arbitration**. India has consistently held that the Neutral Expert (active on Kishanganga–Ratle) and the CoA cannot work in parallel on the same issue.
- **Abeyance trigger:** After 26 civilians were killed in the Pahalgam terror attack (April 22, 2025), India placed the IWT in abeyance on April 23, 2025 — invoking material breach principles (VCLT 1969).

Key Facts

- **New Chenab projects (May 2026):** Two run-of-river hydroelectric projects in J&K; combined capacity and cost **~₹2,600 crore**; groundwork begun under NHPC/JKSPDC.
- **Existing Chenab projects:** Salal (690 MW), Dul Hasti (390 MW), Baglihar (900 MW), Ratle (850 MW under construction).
- **CoA award (May 15, 2026):** Partial award on Kishanganga–Ratle pondage and design parameters; India reiterated non-recognition.
- **VCLT 1969 — Articles 60–62:** Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties; govern material breach (Art 60), supervening impossibility (Art 61), and fundamental change of circumstances (Art 62).
- **Permanent Indus Commission:** Created under Article VIII of the IWT; comprises one Commissioner from each side.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–Pakistan relations, treaty diplomacy, VCLT 1969 framework.

- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security / Infrastructure):** Counter-terror coercive diplomacy, hydropower in J&K, water as strategic leverage.
- **Prelims hooks:** IWT year and place (1960 Karachi), Eastern rivers (Ravi/Beas/Sutlej — India), Western rivers (Indus/Jhelum/Chenab — Pakistan), 3-tier dispute resolution, abeyance date (April 23, 2025), VCLT 1969.
- **Mains angle:** “India’s placing the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance marks a strategic departure. Examine the legal, diplomatic, and humanitarian implications.”

*Indus Waters Treaty; signed at Karachi (Sept 19, 1960); brokered by the World Bank. **Eastern rivers (India):** Ravi, Beas, Sutlej. **Western rivers (Pakistan):** Indus, Jhelum, Chenab — India has limited non-consumptive rights. **Permanent Indus Commission:** Bilateral body under Article VIII. **VCLT 1969:** Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties; Articles 60–62 govern treaty suspension/termination. **Pahalgam attack:** April 22, 2025; trigger for IWT abeyance.*

DRDO UPLGM-V3 — INDIGENOUS UAV-LAUNCHED PRECISION GUIDED MISSILE

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) completed development trials of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Launched Precision Guided Missile (UPLGM)-V3 on May 18–19, 2026 at Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, in both air-to-ground (A2G) and air-to-air (A2A) configurations. The UAV integrator is Newspace Research & Technologies, Bengaluru; series production will be led by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and Adani Defence.

Background

- **UPLGM (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Launched Precision Guided Missile):** A family of light, multi-role missiles launched from medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) UAVs; intended to give Indian UAVs an offensive strike capability.
- **Operation Sindoor (May 2025)** demonstrated India’s reliance on UAV-based ISR and strike — accelerating doctrinal demand for indigenous loitering munitions and UAV-launched missiles.
- The **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020** prioritises **Buy (Indian – Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) — Buy IDDM** as the highest acquisition category.
- **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence):** Launched 2018 under MoD; runs Defence India Startup Challenges (DISC); funds DPSU–startup partnerships.

Key Facts

- **Test details:** Two test sites at Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh); both A2G (ground target) and A2A (aerial target) modes successfully validated.

- **UAV integrator:** Newspace Research & Technologies, Bengaluru.
- **Production agencies:** BDL (Hyderabad) — DPSU; Adani Defence — private sector partner.
- **DRDO:** Established **1958**; HQ DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi; ~52 laboratories.
- **BDL:** Bharat Dynamics Limited; DPSU under MoD; missile-systems manufacturer; established 1970, Hyderabad.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Defence / S&T):** Indigenous missile development, UAV warfare doctrine, defence-industrial base, Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Defence corridors (UP and TN), DPSU-private partnerships.
- **Prelims hooks:** DRDO year (1958), BDL HQ (Hyderabad), DAP 2020 top category (Buy IDDM), iDEX launch (2018).
- **Mains angle:** “UAV-launched precision munitions are reshaping land warfare. Discuss the implications for India’s force structure and defence-industrial strategy.”

*Defence Research and Development Organisation; founded 1958; under MoD; ~52 labs nationwide. **BDL:** Bharat Dynamics Limited; DPSU; missile manufacturer; Hyderabad; established 1970. **DAP 2020:** Defence Acquisition Procedure; highest priority category is Buy (Indian – IDDM). **iDEX:** Innovations for Defence Excellence; launched 2018; under MoD; supports defence startups. **Newspace Research & Technologies:** Bengaluru-based UAV/loitering-munition startup; iDEX awardee.*

INDIA CHAIRS THE COMMON CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT BOARD, 2026–28

*India assumed the **Chair of the Common Criteria Development Board (CCDB)** — the technical arm of the **Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA)** — for a two-year term (**April 2026 – April 2028**). Confirmation was at the **1st Quarter CCRA meeting in Tokyo (April 14–16, 2026)**. India joined CCRA on **September 16, 2013** as a **Certificate Authorizing Nation**. The nodal body is the **Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate** under **MeitY**.*

Background

- **Common Criteria for Information Technology Security Evaluation (CC):** International standard for IT product security certification; codified as **ISO/IEC 15408**; evaluation methodology as **ISO/IEC 18045 (CEM)**.
- **Evaluation Assurance Levels (EAL1–EAL7):** Graded confidence in IT product security; EAL4 is typically the highest mutually recognised among CCRA members.

- **CCRA member categories:** Certificate Authorizing Nations (issue and accept CC certificates) and Certificate Consuming Nations (only accept).
- India joined CCRA in **2013** as a Certificate Authorizing Nation — one of around 20 such nations globally; total CCRA membership is approximately 38 nations (20 Authorising + 18 Consuming).

Key Facts

- **Chairmanship term:** April 2026 – April 2028; India’s first time chairing the CCDB.
- **Confirmed at:** 1st Quarter CCRA meeting, **Tokyo, April 14–16, 2026.**
- **India’s nodal body:** **STQC Directorate** under MeitY; runs the **Indian Common Criteria Certification Scheme (IC3S)** at **STQC IT Centre, Kolkata.**
- **Strategic context:** Positions India alongside the USA, UK, Germany, Japan, and Canada in cyber-security standards leadership.
- **Indo-US iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies):** Launched in **2022**; cyber-security and standards interoperability is a pillar.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Cyber security / S&T):** International cyber standards, ISO/IEC framework, India’s standards diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India’s leadership in technical multilateral bodies.
- **Prelims hooks:** India joined CCRA (Sept 16, 2013), CC standard (ISO/IEC 15408), CEM standard (ISO/IEC 18045), EAL levels (1–7), STQC parent ministry (MeitY), iCET year (2022).
- **Mains angle:** “Cyber-security standards are emerging as a domain of geo-economic competition. Examine India’s strategic interests in chairing the CCDB.”

*Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement; mutual recognition of IT security certifications across signatory states. **CCDB:** Common Criteria Development Board; technical arm of CCRA. **ISO/IEC 15408:** Common Criteria standard. **ISO/IEC 18045:** Common Evaluation Methodology (CEM). **EAL:** Evaluation Assurance Level 1–7. **STQC:** Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification Directorate; under **MeitY**; nodal body for CC certification in India.*

AYUSH ANUDAN PORTAL — PAPERLESS GRANT MANAGEMENT LAUNCHED

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH, Shri Prataprao Jadhav, launched the **Ayush Anudan Portal** — a paperless, end-to-end digital grant-management system — at **Kartavya Bhawan, New Delhi, on May 21, 2026**. The portal is part of **Ayush Grid**, integrated with **NGO Darpan (NITI Aayog)** and the **MAISP (Ministry of AYUSH Integrated Single-Window Portal)**.

Background

- The **Ministry of AYUSH** was carved out as a full-fledged ministry on **November 9, 2014** (previously a Department under the Ministry of Health since 1995); covers **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy**.
- **Ayush Grid** is a national digital backbone launched in 2018 to integrate AYUSH research, education, hospital management (e.g., **AHMIS**), pharmacovigilance and grant disbursal.
- **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM)** was inaugurated at **Jamnagar, Gujarat (April 2022)** — the first such WHO centre globally.

Key Facts

- **Coverage:** Grants in Aid to AYUSH NGOs, research bodies, and education institutions — fully online application, evaluation, sanction and disbursal.
- **Integration:** NGO Darpan (NITI Aayog), MAISP, PFMS (Public Financial Management System).
- **AYUSH systems:** Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, **Sowa-Rigpa** (added in 2010), Homoeopathy.
- **Sectoral data:** India's AYUSH market projected to cross **USD 23 billion** by 2026.
- **National AYUSH Mission (NAM):** Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched 2014; supports AYUSH dispensaries, drug quality, and medicinal plants.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance / Health):** Digital governance, transparency in grant disbursal, integration of traditional medicine.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** AYUSH sector growth, exports, employment.
- **Prelims hooks:** Ministry of AYUSH formation (Nov 9, 2014), Sowa-Rigpa added (2010), WHO GCTM Jamnagar (2022), NAM launch year (2014).
- **Mains angle:** “Evaluate the role of digital tools and integration of traditional medicine in India’s universal health-care strategy.”

*Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, Homoeopathy. **Ministry of AYUSH:** Set up Nov 9, 2014. **Ayush Grid:** Digital backbone for the AYUSH sector. **NGO Darpan:** NITI Aayog portal for NGO registration. **WHO GCTM:** Global Centre for Traditional Medicine; Jamnagar, Gujarat; inaugurated April 2022.*

INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY 2026 — INDIA'S POSITION AND PRODUCTION CHALLENGES

The world observed **International Tea Day on May 21, 2026** — instituted by **UN General Assembly Resolution 74/241 (December 2019)** following an Indian-led proposal. The **FAO theme for 2026** is **“Sustaining Tea, Supporting Communities.”** India is the **world's second-largest tea producer (after China)** and the **largest producer of black tea**. However, **Q1 2026 production fell over 11% due to rainfall deficits in Assam (97% deficit) and West Bengal (87% deficit)**.

Background

- **Tea Board of India:** Constituted under the **Tea Act, 1953**; under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**; HQ Kolkata.
- India's tea industry is one of the world's oldest organised plantation sectors; commercial cultivation began in **Assam (1830s)** under the British.
- **GI tags: Darjeeling Tea (first Indian GI, 2004)**, Assam Orthodox, Nilgiri (Orthodox), Kangra.

Key Facts

- **Global rank:** India 2nd producer (~19% of global output); China 1st; India largest producer of black tea and largest consumer.
- **2025 production:** 1,369.98 million kg (record).
- **2025 exports:** 280.40 million kg / **₹8,488 crore** — a record.
- **Q1 2026:** Production fell over 11% due to rainfall deficits — Assam 97%, West Bengal 87% deficit.
- **Major producing states:** Assam (~50%), West Bengal (~21%), Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka.
- **GIs:** Darjeeling (2004), Assam Orthodox, Nilgiri Orthodox, Kangra.
- **UN designation:** May 21; UNGA Resolution 74/241 (December 2019).

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture / Economy):** Plantation crops, GI tags, climate impact on agriculture, export performance.
- **GS Paper 1 (Geography):** Tea-producing regions and agro-climatic requirements.
- **Prelims hooks:** International Tea Day date (May 21), UNGA Resolution (74/241, Dec 2019), Tea Board parent Act (Tea Act 1953), first Indian GI (Darjeeling 2004), India's global rank (2nd producer).
- **Mains angle:** “Climate variability threatens India's plantation crops. Suggest adaptive measures for the tea industry with reference to recent production declines.”

May 21; UNGA Resolution 74/241 (Dec 2019); FAO leads observance. **Tea Board:** Tea Act 1953; under Ministry of Commerce and Industry; HQ Kolkata. **GI tags:** Darjeeling (first GI, 2004), Assam Orthodox, Nilgiri Orthodox, Kangra. **India rank:** 2nd producer globally; largest black-tea producer and largest tea consumer.

AMD'S USD 10 BILLION TAIWAN INVESTMENT — IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION

Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) announced an investment of over USD 10 billion across Taiwan's semiconductor ecosystem (May 21, 2026) to expand AI-infrastructure manufacturing. Partners include ASE Technology, Powertech Technology, Sanmina, and Inventec, covering advanced packaging (CoWoS, FOPLP) and server assembly. The move underlines India's structural challenge in scaling up the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) worth ₹76,000 crore.

Background

- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** Approved December 2021 with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore; administered by MeitY.
- **Approved Indian projects:** Tata Electronics–PSMC fab at Dholera (Gujarat) — India's first commercial fab; Tata OSAT at Jagiroad (Assam); Micron OSAT at Sanand (Gujarat).
- **India–Taiwan:** No formal diplomatic ties; commercial and cultural relations channelled through the **India-Taipei Association** (since 1995); bilateral trade ~USD 10 billion.
- **Indo-US iCET (2022):** Pillar on semiconductors and chip-design ecosystem.

Key Facts

- **AMD investment:** Over USD 10 billion across Taiwan; AI accelerators and advanced packaging.
- **CoWoS (Chip-on-Wafer-on-Substrate) and FOPLP (Fan-Out Panel-Level Packaging):** Advanced packaging technologies critical for AI chips.
- **TSMC dominance:** Taiwan accounts for ~60% of global foundry capacity and ~90% of leading-edge logic chips.
- **ISM corpus:** ₹76,000 crore; first approved fab: **Tata-PSMC, Dholera.**
- **OSAT:** Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test — packaging, testing and final-stage value addition.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy / S&T):** Semiconductor value chains, ISM, advanced packaging, supply-chain resilience.

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India-Taiwan engagement, iCET, semiconductor diplomacy.
- **Prelims hooks:** ISM corpus (₹76,000 crore), first approved fab (Tata-PSMC Dholera), Micron OSAT (Sanand), Tata OSAT (Jagiroad), iCET (2022), India-Taipei Association (1995).
- **Mains angle:** “India’s semiconductor strategy must balance fabrication ambitions with the lower-hanging fruit of packaging and design. Discuss.”

India Semiconductor Mission; corpus ₹76,000 crore; under MeitY; approved Dec 2021. OSAT: Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test. Tata-PSMC Dholera: India’s first commercial fab. Tata OSAT: Jagiroad, Assam. Micron OSAT: Sanand, Gujarat. iCET: Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies; India-US; launched 2022.

WEST BENGAL EXTENDS VANDE MATARAM MANDATE TO MADRASAS — CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS REVISITED

*The Government of West Bengal, through a notification dated May 19, 2026 from Bikash Bhavan, extended its May 13, 2026 mandate on the singing of Vande Mataram to all recognised madrasas — Government Madrasahs (English Medium), recognised aided madrasahs, Madrasah Shiksha Kendras (MSKs), Shishu Shiksha Kendras (SSKs), and recognised unaided madrasahs. The notification revives long-standing constitutional debates anchored in the **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)** judgment.*

Background

- **Vande Mataram** was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1875**; published in his Bengali novel **Anandamath (1882)**; first sung by **Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Calcutta Session of the INC**.
- **National Song status:** Adopted by the **Constituent Assembly on January 24, 1950** — a day before adoption of the Constitution; given **equal status with the National Anthem** but **distinct legal protection**.
- **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986):** Three Jehovah’s Witness students were expelled from a Kerala school for not singing the National Anthem; **SC reinstated them**, holding that **Article 25 (freedom of religion)** and **Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression — including the right to remain silent)** protected their stand.

Key Facts

- **Notification date:** May 19, 2026; issuing authority — Bikash Bhavan (WB School Education Department).

- **Earlier order:** May 13, 2026; extended now to madrasas.
- **Covered institutions:** Government Madrasahs (English Medium), aided madrasahs, MSKs, SSKs, recognised unaided madrasahs.
- **Constitutional articles in tension:** Art 25 (freedom of conscience), Art 28 (religious instruction in state institutions), Art 30 (minority rights to administer educational institutions), Art 19(1)(a) (right to silence).
- **Vande Mataram:** Composed 1875; published in Anandamath 1882; adopted as National Song January 24, 1950.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 2 (Polity):** Article 25, Article 19(1)(a), Article 30, minority rights, Bijoe Emmanuel precedent.
- **GS Paper 1 (History / Culture):** Vande Mataram in the freedom movement; debates at the Constituent Assembly.
- **Prelims hooks:** Composer (Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay), novel (Anandamath 1882), National Song adoption (Jan 24, 1950), Bijoe Emmanuel year (1986).
- **Mains angle:** “Compulsory singing of patriotic songs in educational institutions raises constitutional questions of conscience and identity. Discuss with reference to Bijoe Emmanuel.”

*Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1875); novel Anandamath (1882); adopted as National Song January 24, 1950. **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986):** SC upheld right to remain silent under Art 19(1)(a) read with Art 25. **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion. **Article 30:** Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.*

WORLD DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY FOR DIALOGUE AND DEVELOPMENT — INDIA'S ICH STORY

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was observed on **May 21, 2026** — established by **UNGA Resolution 57/249 (December 2002)** following the **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)**. The 2026 theme is “**Dialogue Builds Bridges, Diversity Builds the World.**” India, a State Party to the **UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** since **2005**, has **16 ICH inscriptions** on the **Representative List**.

Background

- **UNESCO 2001 Declaration:** Cultural diversity recognised as the “common heritage of humanity” — a foundational soft-law text.

- **UNGA Resolution 57/249 (Dec 2002):** Designated May 21 as the annual observance.
- **UNESCO 2003 Convention:** Established the framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage — oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, knowledge of nature, traditional craftsmanship.
- India ratified the 2003 Convention in **2005**; the **Ministry of Culture** is the nodal body; **IGNCA**, **ASI**, **Sangeet Natak Akademi** are key institutions.

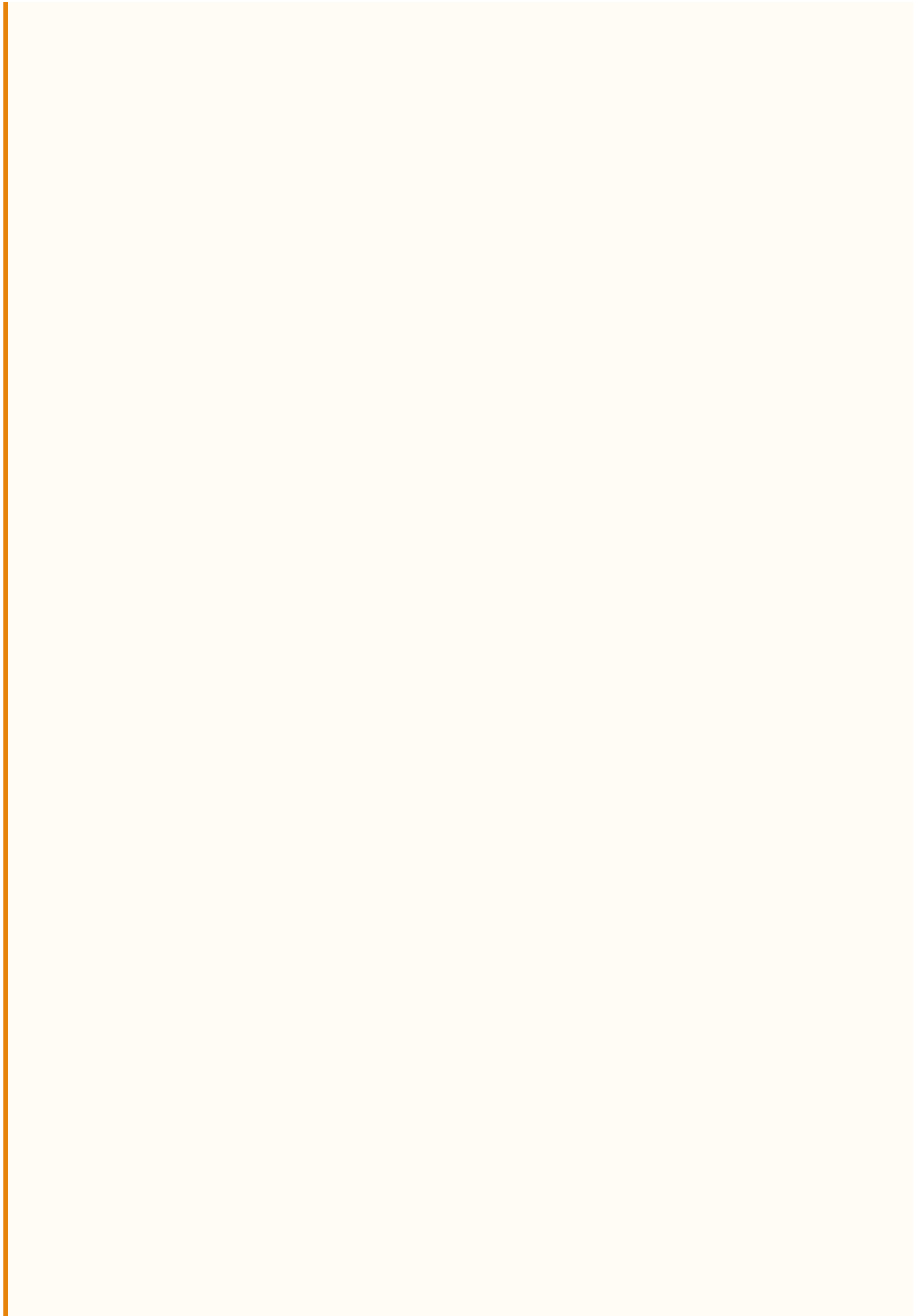
Key Facts

- **India's ICH inscriptions (16):** Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre (**2008** — first), Vedic Chanting, Ramlila (2008), Ramman of Garhwal (2009), Mudi yettu (2010), Kalbelia (2010), Chhau dance (2010), Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012), Sankirtana of Manipur (2013), Traditional brass and copper craft of Punjab (2014), **Yoga (2016)**, Nawrouz (2016), Kumbh Mela (**2017**), Durga Puja of Kolkata (**2021**), **Garba of Gujarat (2023)**, **Deepavali (2025)** — latest.
- **2026 theme:** “Dialogue Builds Bridges, Diversity Builds the World.”
- **Designating resolution:** UNGA Resolution 57/249 (December 2002).
- **Indian institutions:** IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts), ASI (Archaeological Survey of India), Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, Sahitya Akademi.

UPSC Angle

- **GS Paper 1 (Art & Culture):** ICH list, key Indian inscriptions, UNESCO conventions.
- **GS Paper 2 (International Organisations):** UNESCO mandate, UN resolutions, India's cultural diplomacy.
- **Prelims hooks:** Day date (May 21), UNGA Resolution (57/249, 2002), UNESCO 2001 Declaration, UNESCO 2003 ICH Convention, first Indian ICH (Kutiyattam 2008), Yoga ICH (2016), latest Indian ICH (Deepavali, December 2025) — total 16.
- **Mains angle:** “Cultural heritage is a strategic asset in India's soft-power outreach. Examine how the UNESCO ICH framework can be leveraged.”

May 21; UNGA Resolution 57/249 (Dec 2002). UNESCO 2001 Declaration on Cultural Diversity: Foundational soft-law instrument. UNESCO 2003 ICH Convention: Framework for intangible heritage safeguarding; India ratified 2005. First Indian ICH: Kutiyattam (2008). Latest Indian ICH: Deepavali (December 2025). Total Indian ICH inscriptions: 16.



TOPIC	KEY FACT
Anti-Terrorism Day	May 21; 35th death anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi (assassinated May 21, 1991, Sriperumbudur by LTTE); UAPA 1967 (amended 2004/2008/2019 for individual designation); NIA Act 2008; Watali (2019) bail jurisprudence; Operation Sindoor (May 2025)
Indian War Memorial Seoul	Inaugurated May 21, 2026, Imjingak Park, Paju; 75 years of Korean War (1950–53); 60 Para Field Ambulance (~222,000 patients) under Lt Col A.G. Rangaraj; Custodian Force under Gen K.S. Thimayya (chaired NNRC 1953); Special Strategic Partnership 2015; CEPA 2009
RAINMUMBAI / NCDEX	India's first SEBI-approved parametric weather derivative; trading from May 29, 2026; underlying IMD Mumbai Santacruz Jun–Sep rainfall; tick 1 mm; lot ₹50/mm; IIT Bombay knowledge partner; cash-settled
India-Africa Summit IV	Postponed May 21, 2026, due to BDBV Ebola PHEIC; IAFS-IV was to be May 28–31, 2026, New Delhi; IAFS-III in 2015 (41 HoS); AU joined G20 in Sept 2023 (New Delhi); India-Africa trade ~USD 100B; DRC = ~70% global cobalt
Chenab Hydropower + IWT	Two new Chenab projects ~₹2,600 cr; IWT 1960 (Karachi, World Bank brokered) in abeyance since April 23, 2025 after Pahalgam (April 22, 2025); CoA at The Hague award May 15, 2026 — India rejects; Eastern (Ravi/Beas/Sutlej — India), Western (Indus/Jhelum/Chenab — Pakistan)
DRDO ULPGM-V3	Trials May 18–19, 2026, Kurnool; A2G + A2A modes; UAV integrator Newspace Research & Technologies; production BDL + Adani Defence; DRDO 1958; DAP 2020 Buy IDDM; iDEX 2018
India Chairs CCDB	April 2026 – April 2028; confirmed at 1st Quarter CCRA meet, Tokyo (April 14–16, 2026); India joined CCRA Sept 16, 2013; nodal STQC under MeitY; standards ISO/IEC 15408 + ISO/IEC 18045; EAL 1–7
Ayush Anudan Portal	Launched May 21, 2026, Kartavya Bhawan by MoS (IC) Ayush Prataprao Jadhav; paperless grant management; integrated with NGO Darpan + MAISP; AYUSH ministry from Nov 9, 2014; WHO GCTM Jamnagar (2022)
International Tea Day	May 21; UNGA Res 74/241 (Dec 2019, India-led); FAO 2026 theme “Sustaining Tea, Supporting Communities”; India 2nd producer; 2025 record exports 280.40 mn kg/₹8,488 cr; Q1 2026 down >11%; Tea Act 1953; Darjeeling first Indian GI (2004)
AMD Taiwan / ISM	AMD >USD 10B across Taiwan ecosystem; partners ASE/PowerTech/Sanmina/Inventec; CoWoS + FOPLP packaging; ISM corpus ₹76,000 cr; Tata-PSMC Dholera fab; Tata OSAT Jagiroad; Micron OSAT Sanand; iCET 2022
WB Vande Mataram Mandate	May 19, 2026 notification (Bikash Bhavan) extending May 13 order to recognised madrasas; Vande Mataram by Bankim Chandra (1875); Anandamath 1882; National Song from Jan 24, 1950; Bijoe Emmanuel v Kerala (1986) — Art 25 + 19(1)(a) right to silence

TOPIC	KEY FACT
Cultural Diversity Day	May 21; UNGA Res 57/249 (Dec 2002); UNESCO 2001 Declaration; UNESCO 2003 ICH Convention (India ratified 2005); 16 Indian ICH inscriptions — Kutiyattam (2008, first), Yoga (2016), Kumbh Mela (2017), Durga Puja (2021), Garba (2023), Deepavali (Dec 2025, latest)

Sources: [The Hindu](#), [Indian Express](#), [PIB](#)

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