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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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Current Affairs Today — May 26, 2026

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Current Affairs Today — May 26, 2026

A consolidated UPSC-grade brief on the ten most exam-relevant developments of the day — from the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting in Delhi to a 188-year-old plant rediscovered in Arunachal, a galactic protocluster named after Loktak Lake, South Korea’s Jangbogo-N nuclear submarine project, SEBI’s bond-market reforms, and Kerala’s Project Zero on bribery.

1. 11TH QUAD FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING — DELHI OUTCOMES

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar hosted his counterparts — US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australia’s Penny Wong and Japan’s Toshimitsu Motegi — at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on May 26, 2026 for the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, the first hosted under the 2026 Indian presidency.

Background

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, born of tsunami-relief coordination in 2004, was revived in **November 2017** at the ASEAN sidelines in Manila. It rose to the leaders’ level with the **first virtual Quad Leaders’ Summit on March 12, 2021**. India hosted the Foreign Ministers’ Meet last in 2023 and now holds the rotating chair for 2026.

Key Facts

- **Four outcome documents released:** Joint Statement; Fact Sheet; **Indo-Pacific Energy Security Statement**; and the **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework** with an indicative corpus of **USD 20 billion**.
- **New initiative — IPMSC (Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration):** the Quad’s first asset-pooling arrangement, succeeding/augmenting **IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness)** launched at the Tokyo Summit on **May 24, 2022**.
- **Quad Fuel Security Forum** to be hosted by the United States later in 2026.
- **Ports of the Future Partnership:** Fiji named as the first partner.
- The Joint Statement explicitly named the **Pahalgam terror attack (April 22, 2025)** and the **Bondi Beach attack (December 14, 2025)**, reaffirming “zero tolerance for terrorism.”
- Reaffirmed **ASEAN centrality** and the **AOIP (ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific)**.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 2 — India and its neighbourhood; bilateral, regional and global groupings. The Quad’s evolution from a consultative dialogue to an asset-pooling framework (IPMSC) is a case study in minilateralism. The **Critical Minerals Initiative** is the most concrete economic deliverable yet and dovetails with India’s National Critical Mineral Mission.

★ FACTS CORNER — QUAD AT A GLANCE

Quad 1.0: 2007 (PM Shinzo Abe’s “Confluence of Two Seas” speech, August 2007)

Quad 2.0 revival: November 2017, Manila

First Leaders’ Summit: March 12, 2021 (virtual)

First in-person Leaders’ Summit: September 24, 2021 (Washington)

IPMDA launched: Tokyo, May 24, 2022

11th FMM: New Delhi, May 26, 2026

2. MODI BILATERALS WITH WONG AND MOTEGI ON QUAD MARGINS

*Prime Minister Narendra Modi held back-to-back bilaterals with Australian Foreign Minister **Penny Wong** and Japanese Foreign Minister **Toshimitsu Motegi** at **7, Lok Kalyan Marg** on the margins of the Quad FMM.*

Background

The Prime Minister’s official residence on Race Course Road was **renamed 7, Lok Kalyan Marg in October 2016**. India’s strategic ties with both Quad partners pre-date the grouping: the **India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership** was elevated by Modi and Shinzo Abe in **September 2014 (Tokyo Declaration)**, while the **India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** was sealed on **June 4, 2020** at the virtual Modi-Morrison summit.

Key Facts

- **India-Australia ECTA** (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement) signed **April 2, 2022**; in force **December 29, 2022**.
- **CECA** (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement) — full FTA still under negotiation.
- **SCRI** (Supply Chain Resilience Initiative): India-Japan-Australia trilateral, launched April 2021, formalised September 2021.
- **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (Bullet Train)**: ₹1.08 lakh crore project using Japan’s **Shinkansen E5 technology**; JICA financing on soft-loan terms (0.1% interest, 50-year tenor).

- Australia accounts for ~**52% of global lithium supply** – central to Quad Critical Minerals Initiative.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 2 – Bilateral relations. Note how the Quad acts as a force-multiplier for India’s bilateral architecture: the SCRI is essentially the economic spine of what the Critical Minerals Initiative now operationalises. India’s “Special Strategic” tier (only Japan) and “Comprehensive Strategic” tier (Australia, France, UAE, others) reveal the hierarchy of India’s partnerships.

★ FACTS CORNER — INDIA’S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TIERS

Special Strategic & Global Partnership: Japan (2014)

Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership: USA (2020), UK (2021)

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Australia (2020), France (1998 upgraded 2018), UAE

PM’s residence: 7, Lok Kalyan Marg (renamed October 2016)

3. VACCINIUM PILIFERUM REDISCOVERED IN ARUNACHAL AFTER 188 YEARS

Researchers from the **State Forest Research Institute (Itanagar)** and **CSIR-NEIST (Jorhat)** announced the rediscovery of **Vaccinium piliferum** – a member of the **blueberry family Ericaceae** – in **Vijoynagar, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, after 188 years.**

Background

The species was first described by British botanist **William Griffith in 1836** during his Mishmi Hills expedition. It then disappeared from scientific record until this rediscovery near tributaries of the **Noa-Dihing River** inside the buffer of **Namdapha National Park**.

Key Facts

- Only **16 individual plants** found; assessed **Endangered** on IUCN Red List.
- **Family Ericaceae** – heaths and heathers, includes blueberry, cranberry, rhododendron.
- **Namdapha National Park**: area **1,985 km²**, notified **1983**, the **only protected area in the world hosting all four big cats** – Bengal tiger, common leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard.
- India is **one of 17 megadiverse countries** and home to **4 of the world’s 36 biodiversity hotspots**: Himalayas, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats-Sri Lanka, Sundaland (Nicobar Islands).
- Rediscovery technique: combined herbarium re-examination with field surveys using historical Griffith notes.

UPSC Angle

★ FACTS CORNER — ERICACEAE & NAMDAPHA

Family Ericaceae: blueberry, cranberry, rhododendron, azalea

Rhododendron — state flower of Himachal Pradesh; Nagaland; national flower of Nepal & Sikkim's state tree

Namdapha: 1,985 km², notified 1983, all 4 big cats

Noa-Dihing River — tributary of the Brahmaputra system

4. LOKTAK PROTOCLUSTER — A “CITY OF GALAXIES” NAMED AFTER MANIPUR’S LAKE

Dr. Ronaldo Laishram, an India-born astrophysicist at the **National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ)**, announced the discovery of a **12.6-billion-year-old protocluster of galaxies** which he has named the “**Loktak Protocluster**” after his home lake in Manipur.

Background

Dr. Laishram is originally from **Khangabok, Thoubal district, Manipur**. The discovery was made using the **Subaru Telescope** — NAOJ's 8.2-m optical-infrared telescope on **Mauna Kea, Hawaii** — observing light emitted during “**cosmic noon**” when the universe was only ~1.2 billion years old (redshift $z \approx 5.2$).

Key Facts

- A **protocluster** is the ancestor of present-day galaxy clusters — galaxies still in the process of gravitational binding.
- The Loktak Protocluster contains dozens of star-forming galaxies in a region only a few comoving megaparsecs across.
- **Loktak Lake**: largest freshwater lake in North-East India; **Ramsar site since March 23, 1990**; famous for floating **phumdis** (biomass islands).
- **Keibul Lamjao National Park**: notified 1977; **only floating national park in the world**; sole habitat of the endangered **Sangai (Manipur brow-antlered deer)** — Manipur's state animal, ~260 individuals (2016 census).

UPSC Angle

★ FACTS CORNER — LOKTAK & SANGAI

Loktak Lake: Ramsar site March 23, 1990

Keibul Lamjao NP: notified 1977; world's only floating NP

Sangai: *Cervus eldii eldii*; Manipur state animal; ~260 individuals (2016 census)

Subaru Telescope: NAOJ, Mauna Kea, Hawaii, 8.2-m mirror

Cosmic noon: ~10 billion years ago, peak of star formation

5. SOUTH KOREA UNVEILS JANGBOGO-N NUCLEAR SUBMARINE PROJECT

The **Ministry of National Defence (MND), Republic of Korea** formally unveiled the **Jangbogo-N nuclear-powered submarine project** on **May 26, 2026**, named after the **9th-century Korean naval commander Jang Bogo**.

Background

South Korea's pursuit of nuclear propulsion has long been constrained by the **US-ROK 123 Agreement (renewed 2015)** which restricts uranium enrichment above 20%. With renewed concern over North Korean SLBM advances, the project was greenlit; the **United States agreed in October 2025** to permit fuel-cycle cooperation.

Key Facts

- Displacement: **~5,000 tonnes**; powered by a **Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) reactor** (<20% U-235).
- Timeline: launch **mid-2030s**, commissioning **late 2030s**.
- South Korea becomes the **7th nation** with nuclear-powered submarines — after **USA, Russia, UK, France, China and India**.
- India's SSN programme: **CCS approved 2 hulls, ₹40,000 crore, October 2024**.
- India's SSBN fleet: **INS Arihant (commissioned August 2016), INS Arighaat (August 29, 2024), INS Aridhaman (fitting-out)**.
- **AUKUS pact**: AUS-UK-US trilateral signed **September 15, 2021** — Australia to acquire SSNs.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 2/3 — India and neighbourhood; Defence technology. Two distinctions matter: **SSN** (nuclear-powered attack sub, conventional weapons) vs **SSBN** (nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed ballistic-missile sub). India's nuclear doctrine of **No First Use (NFU)**, **Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD)**, and **massive retaliation** (formalised January 4, 2003) rests on a sea-based deterrent — the SSBN leg of the triad.

★ FACTS CORNER — NUCLEAR SUBMARINE POWERS

First nuclear sub: USS Nautilus (USA, commissioned September 30, 1954)

Six existing operators: USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India

South Korea joining (Jangbogo-N) → 7th

AUKUS: September 15, 2021

India SSN approval: CCS October 2024

6. SEBI ANNOUNCES BOND ETFs, CORPORATE BOND INDEX DERIVATIVES & DLT PILOT

SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey (in office since **March 1, 2025**) announced a triad of capital-market deepening measures on May 26, 2026: expansion of **bond ETFs**, introduction of **corporate bond index derivatives** for the first time, and a **6-9 month pilot on Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) tokenisation**.

Background

India's **corporate bond market is shallow** at only **~18% of GDP**, compared with **~120%** in the United States and **~80%** in South Korea. Successive committees — **Patil (2005)**, **Khan (2016)**, **HR Khan (2016)** — have urged deepening. SEBI was set up under the **SEBI Act, 1992**; the underlying market law is the **Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956**. The **Forward Markets Commission (FMC)** was merged with SEBI on **September 28, 2015**.

Key Facts

- **Bharat Bond ETF**: launched **December 2019** — India's first corporate-bond ETF; manager Edelweiss AMC.
- **Privately placed bond minimum ticket**: ₹10,000 (reduced from ₹1 lakh in October 2024).
- **Corporate Bond Index Derivatives**: first-of-its-kind in India; allow hedging of duration risk.
- **DLT pilot**: explores tokenisation of fixed-income instruments to enable fractional ownership and instant settlement.

UPSC Angle

★ FACTS CORNER — SEBI TIMELINE

- SEBI established: April 12, 1988 (non-statutory)
- SEBI Act: 1992 (statutory)
- FMC merged with SEBI: September 28, 2015
- Bharat Bond ETF: December 2019
- Current Chairman: Tuhin Kanta Pandey (took charge March 1, 2025)

7. KERALA LAUNCHES PROJECT ZERO — CITIZENS TO BE PAID FOR BRIBERY EVIDENCE

Kerala Home Minister announced **Project Zero** on May 26, 2026 — citizens producing **verified video evidence of bribery** will be rewarded with **₹5,000** by the **Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB)**.

Background

Kerala's existing **Vigilance Manual dates from 1969** and is being revised in tandem. The legal scaffolding is built around the **Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) 1988** — amended in **2018** to criminalise even the giving of a bribe (Section 8). At the central level, the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** was established **1964** on the recommendation of the **Santhanam Committee (1962)** and made statutory via the **CVC Act, 2003**.

Key Facts

- Reward amount: **₹5,000** per verified video.
- **PCA 1988**: Section 7 (public servant taking bribe) and Section 8 (bribe-giver) — both attract up to 7 years' imprisonment post-2018 amendment.
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** — provides ombudsman at Centre and states.
- **India CPI 2024**: Rank **96 of 180**, score **38 of 100** (Transparency International).
- International parallels: **Hong Kong ICAC (1974)** and **Singapore CPIB (1952)** — both reward-and-protection models.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 2 — Governance, transparency and accountability; statutory bodies. Project Zero is a state-level innovation that converts every smartphone-equipped citizen into a vigilance auditor — an evolution of **crowd-sourced governance**. The model bears comparison with Karnataka's "I Paid A Bribe" portal

(ipaidabribe.com).

★ FACTS CORNER — ANTI-CORRUPTION ARCHITECTURE

PCA: 1988 (amended 2018)

CVC: 1964 (statutory under CVC Act 2003)

Santhanam Committee: 1962

Lokpal & Lokayuktas Act: 2013

India CPI 2024: 96/180, score 38/100

Hong Kong ICAC: 1974; Singapore CPIB: 1952

8. QUAD CRITICAL MINERALS INITIATIVE — INDIA'S STAKES AND STRATEGY

*Embedded within the 11th Quad FMM Joint Statement, the **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework** announced an indicative **USD 20 billion** corpus to de-risk supply chains for lithium, cobalt, nickel, rare earths and graphite.*

Background

China currently processes **85-90% of global rare earth elements (REE)** and dominates lithium refining. India launched its **National Critical Mineral Mission with an outlay of ₹16,300 crore in January 2025**, following the release of the **30-mineral Critical List by the Ministry of Mines in 2023**.

Key Facts

- **KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd):** JV of NALCO + HCL + MECL to acquire overseas critical-mineral assets — incorporated August 2019.
- **Reasi (J&K) lithium reserves: 5.9 million tonnes inferred** (GSI 2023).
- Australia holds ~52% of global lithium supply share; Japan and the US bring refining and battery-tech know-how.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 3 — Resources; energy security. The 30-mineral Critical List includes lithium, cobalt, nickel, niobium, beryllium and the entire REE basket. India's import dependence is structural — domestic production accounts for less than 1% of global supply for most.

9. DRDO ULPGM-V3 CLEARS FINAL MASS-PRODUCTION TRIALS

DRDO completed final deliverable-configuration trials of the UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM-V3) at Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh — clearing the path for mass production by industry partners.

Background

The ULPGM family was first tested in dual-mode (air-to-ground and air-to-air) configuration in **May 19-21, 2026**. Mass-production trials concluded today.

Key Facts

- **Production partners: Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** — a Defence PSU under Ministry of Defence, headquartered in **Hyderabad** (founded 1970) — and **Adani Defence & Aerospace**.
- **UAV integrator: Newspace Research and Technologies, Bengaluru.**
- DRDO founded: **1958**.
- Funded under the **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** ecosystem — launched **April 2018**.
- Procurement fits the **Buy {Indian-IDDM}** category — the highest-priority slot under **DAP 2020**.

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 3 — Defence indigenisation; Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The ULPGM-V3 typifies India's move from licensed assembly to genuine IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) capability.

10. FRB 20240304B — MOST DISTANT FAST RADIO BURST EVER DETECTED

An international team using South Africa's **MeerKAT** radio telescope reported detection of **FRB 20240304B**, a fast radio burst whose light travelled **~10 billion years** before reaching Earth — making it the most distant FRB on record.

Background

Fast Radio Bursts are millisecond pulses of radio emission first detected in 2007 by Duncan Lorimer's team — the so-called "**Lorimer Burst**". Their origins remain debated; magnetars are the leading candidate.

Key Facts

- **Redshift $z \approx 2.148$** — emitted near **cosmic noon**, when the universe was only ~3 billion years old.
- **MeerKAT**: 64-dish array in the Karoo desert, South Africa; an **SKA (Square Kilometre Array)** precursor.

- **India's role: GMRT (Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope) at Khodad, Pune, operated by NCRA-TIFR; India became a full member of the SKA Observatory in 2024.**

UPSC Angle

GS Paper 3 — Awareness in space. FRBs are a probe of the intergalactic medium and may help measure cosmological parameters. India's GMRT has independently detected FRBs and characterised dispersion measures.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA (MASTER SET)

11th Quad FMM: Hyderabad House, New Delhi, May 26, 2026

Quad Critical Minerals Initiative: USD 20 billion indicative corpus

IPMSC: new Quad asset-pooling initiative; complements IPMDA (May 24, 2022)

India-Japan Special Strategic & Global Partnership: 2014 (Modi-Abe Tokyo Declaration)

India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: June 4, 2020

India-Australia ECTA: signed April 2, 2022; in force December 29, 2022

SCRI: India-Japan-Australia trilateral, 2021

Vaccinium piliferum: family Ericaceae; rediscovered after 188 years (first 1836 by William Griffith)

Namdapha NP: 1,985 km², notified 1983; only park in the world with all 4 big cats

India biodiversity: 1 of 17 megadiverse countries; 4 of 36 biodiversity hotspots

Loktak Lake: Ramsar site since March 23, 1990

Keibul Lamjao NP: notified 1977; only floating NP in world; habitat of Sangai (~260, 2016 census)

Subaru Telescope: NAOJ, Mauna Kea, Hawaii, 8.2-m

Jangbogo-N: South Korean nuclear sub, ~5,000 t LEU reactor; mid-2030s launch

Nuclear-sub powers (existing): USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India; ROK = 7th

AUKUS: September 15, 2021

India SSN: CCS-approved October 2024, 2 hulls, ₹40,000 crore

INS Arihant: commissioned August 2016; INS Arighaat August 29, 2024

SEBI Act: 1992; FMC merged with SEBI: September 28, 2015

Bharat Bond ETF: December 2019; India corporate bond market ~18% of GDP

SEBI Chairman: Tuhin Kanta Pandey (took charge March 1, 2025)

PCA: 1988 (amended 2018); Lokpal & Lokayuktas Act: 2013

CVC: established 1964 (Santhanam Committee 1962); statutory under CVC Act 2003

India CPI 2024: 96/180, score 38/100

Hong Kong ICAC: 1974; Singapore CPIB: 1952

KABIL: NALCO + HCL + MECL; National Critical Mineral Mission: January 2025, ₹16,300 crore

Critical Minerals List: 30 minerals, 2023; Reasi lithium: 5.9 million tonnes (GSI 2023)

China REE processing share: 85-90%

BDL: DPSU under MoD, Hyderabad (founded 1970); DRDO: 1958; iDEX: April 2018

FRBs: first detected 2007 (Lorimer Burst)

GMRT: Khodad, Pune; NCRA-TIFR; India SKA full membership: 2024

MeerKAT: Karoo, South Africa; SKA precursor

UPSC Relevance — Quick Mapping

GS PAPER	TOPICS TODAY
GS 2	Quad FMM, Modi bilaterals, Kerala Project Zero (governance), India-Australia ECTA
GS 3	Critical Minerals, SEBI bond market, biodiversity (Vaccinium), Loktak Protocluster (S&T), Jangbogo-N (defence), DRDO ULPGM-V3, FRB 20240304B
GS 1	Namdapha geography, Loktak/Manipur geography, Korean naval history (Jang Bogo)

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

OLDER ARTICLE →

**11th Quad FM Meeting Delhi: USD 20 Billion
Critical Minerals...**

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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