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Hindi Journalism Day — Bicentenary of Udant Martand (1826-2026)

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WHY IN NEWS:

May 30, 2026 marks the 200th anniversary (bicentenary) of Hindi journalism in India. India's **first Hindi-language newspaper, *Udant Martand*** (literally “**The Rising Sun**”), was launched on **May 30, 1826** in **Calcutta** by **Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla**. Published weekly on Tuesdays, the newspaper printed approximately **79 issues** before folding in **December 1827** due to lack of patronage — the **British administration funded Bengali, Urdu, and Persian newspapers but withheld support from Hindi**. Despite its short life, *Udant Martand* established Hindi as a vehicle for modern public discourse and ignited a tradition of Indian-language journalism that became central to the freedom movement and to India's post-Independence linguistic politics. **May 30 is annually observed as Hindi Journalism Day (Hindi Patrakarita Diwas).**

UDANT MARTAND — FOUNDATION OF HINDI JOURNALISM

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Newspaper	<i>Udant Martand</i> (उदन्त मार्तण्ड) — “The Rising Sun” / “Marvellous Source of News”
Founder + Editor	Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla (originally from Kanpur, United Provinces)
Launch date	May 30, 1826
Place of publication	Calcutta (then capital of British India)
Frequency	Weekly — published every Tuesday
Pages	4 pages per issue
Circulation	~500 copies per issue (modest, partly due to limited Hindi-literate readership in Calcutta)
Closure	December 1827 — after ~79 issues
Cause of closure	Lack of subscribers; high postal costs; British administration's refusal of patronage (printing concessions/government adverts went to Bengali, Urdu, Persian papers)

THE PRESS IN EARLY-19TH-CENTURY INDIA — CONTEXT

When *Udant Martand* launched, the **Indian press was barely 50 years old**:

YEAR	NEWSPAPER	FOUNDER	LANGUAGE
1780	Bengal Gazette / Hicky's Gazette — first newspaper in India	James Augustus Hicky	English
1818	Samachar Darpan — first Indian-language newspaper	Serampore Mission (William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward)	Bengali
1822	Mirat-ul-Akhbar — Raja Ram Mohan Roy's reformist paper	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Persian
1822	Bombay Samachar (Mumbai Samachar) — oldest continuously published newspaper in India (still active)	Fardunjee Marzban	Gujarati
1826	Udant Martand — first Hindi newspaper	Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla	Hindi

WHY DID THE BRITISH NOT SUPPORT HINDI?

The colonial administration's preference for **Bengali, Urdu, and Persian** over Hindi reflected three logics:

- Administrative convenience** — Persian was the language of Mughal courts and continued in revenue administration into the 1830s; Urdu was used in police and lower courts in the North-Western Provinces; Bengali was the language of the Calcutta bureaucracy.
- Class of intended readership** — British policy targeted the **professional and clerical classes** (lawyers, traders, government clerks) who used Urdu/Persian in commerce and law.
- Cultural perception** — Hindi was seen as a “vernacular of the rural masses” and not a language of governance — a colonial framing that **deepened the Hindi-Urdu divide** by the late 19th century.

This refusal of patronage **forced Hindi journalism into a self-funded, subscription-driven, often nationalist model** from its very inception — a defining feature of its later political character.

AFTER UDANT MARTAND — THE GROWTH OF HINDI PRESS

YEAR	NEWSPAPER	FOUNDER/EDITOR	SIGNIFICANCE
1850	<i>Banaras Akhbar</i>	Raja Shiv Prasad Sitar-e-Hind	First Hindi paper from Varanasi
1854	<i>Samachar Sudha Varshan</i>	Shyam Sunder Sen	First Hindi daily
1873	<i>Hindi Pradeep</i>	Bal Krishna Bhatt	Influential reformist Hindi journal
1885	<i>Bharat Mitra</i>	Various editors	Influential Calcutta Hindi paper
1900	<i>Saraswati</i>	Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (from 1903)	Foundational literary monthly; codified modern Hindi prose (“Dwivedi Yug”)
1907	<i>Karmavir</i>	Makhanlal Chaturvedi	Nationalist Hindi paper from Khandwa
1910	<i>Pratap</i>	Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi	Kanpur — strongly nationalist; Vidyarthi killed in communal riot 1931
1920	<i>Aaj</i>	Shiv Prasad Gupta	Varanasi — major nationalist Hindi daily
1930s	<i>Hindustan, Navbharat Times</i>	—	Modern Hindi dailies emerge

By independence (1947), Hindi journalism was a **central organ of the nationalist movement** — Tilak’s *Kesari* (Marathi), Vidyarthi’s *Pratap* (Hindi), Surendranath Banerjee’s *Bengalee* (English/Bengali), and Madan Mohan Malaviya’s *Abhyudaya* (Hindi) all wove the press into freedom-movement organising.

THE PRESS AND THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT — PRESS LAWS

The colonial state responded to nationalist journalism with a **sequence of repressive press laws**:

YEAR	ACT	PROVISION
1799	Censorship of Press Act (Wellesley)	Pre-publication censorship during the Napoleonic Wars
1823	Licensing Regulations (John Adam)	Required licence for newspapers; targeted Raja Ram Mohan Roy's <i>Mirat-ul-Akhbar</i> (which he shut in protest)
1835	Press Act of Metcalfe (Sir Charles Metcalfe)	“ Liberator of the Indian Press ” — repealed licensing
1857	Licensing Act	Reimposed after the Revolt
1867	Press and Registration of Books Act	Required registration of presses and copies; still in force (PRB Act, 1867)
1878	Vernacular Press Act (Lytton)	Gagging Act — discriminated against Indian-language newspapers; repealed 1882 by Ripon
1908	Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act	Powers to confiscate presses of “seditious” papers
1910	Indian Press Act	Requirement to deposit security; suppressed nationalist papers
1931	Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act	Civil Disobedience Movement context — wide powers to suspend papers

Many of these acts **specifically targeted Indian-language newspapers** — the **Vernacular Press Act, 1878** is the textbook example.

THE PRESS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

YEAR	MILESTONE
1947-48	Press Laws Enquiry Committee (1947)
1956	First Press Commission (Justice G.S. Rajadhyaksha)
1965	Press Council Act — established Press Council of India (PCI) as statutory body
1976	Press Council dissolved during Emergency
1978	Press Council re-established (Press Council Act, 1978)
1995	Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act
2023	Press and Registration of Periodicals Act, 2023 — replaced the 1867 Act; digital-first registration
2023	Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023
2023	Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023 — debate ongoing

CONSTITUTIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Article 19(1)(a) — Right to freedom of speech and expression — has been judicially read to include **freedom of the press** since *Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras* (1950) and *Sakal Papers v. Union of India* (1962).

Reasonable restrictions under **Article 19(2)** — sovereignty and integrity, security of state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, incitement to offence.

BODY	ROLE
Press Council of India (PCI)	Statutory body under Press Council Act 1978; mandated to preserve press freedom and maintain standards
Press Information Bureau (PIB)	Government's nodal agency for communication; fact-check unit added 2019
News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA)	Self-regulatory body for TV news
Editor's Guild of India	Press-freedom advocacy
Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index	India's rank: hovers around 150s/180 in recent years

HINDI JOURNALISM TODAY

- Largest readership of any Indian language: **~30 crore Hindi newspaper readers** (IRS estimates).
- Major Hindi dailies: ***Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Dainik Bhaskar, Amar Ujala, Punjab Kesari, Rajasthan Patrika, Navbharat Times.***
- The Hindi press is **the largest-circulation language press in India**, surpassing English papers in absolute readership since the 1990s.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	RELEVANCE
GS1	Modern Indian history, freedom movement, Indian press, social reform, language politics
GS2	Press freedom (Art 19), media regulation, statutory bodies (PCI), PR&P Act 2023
Mains	"The Indian press in the colonial era was both a target of repression and a tool of nationalism. Discuss with reference to the role of Indian-language newspapers."
Prelims	<i>Udant Martand</i> (May 30, 1826, Kolkata, Pt. Jugal Kishore Shukla), Hicky's Bengal Gazette (1780), Samachar Darpan (1818, Bengali, Serampore), Bombay Samachar (1822, Gujarati, oldest continuously published), Vernacular Press Act (1878, Lytton, repealed 1882 by Ripon), Press Council Act (1978), PR&P Act 2023, Article 19(1)(a)

FACTS CORNER

UDANT MARTAND — THE FIRST HINDI NEWSPAPER:

Launched: May 30, 1826 in Calcutta

Founder + Editor: Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla

Frequency: Weekly (Tuesdays); 4 pages

Lifespan: ~79 issues; folded December 1827

Cause: No British patronage (favoured Bengali, Urdu, Persian)

MAY 30 = HINDI JOURNALISM DAY (HINDI PATRAKARITA DIWAS) — OBSERVED ANNUALLY

FOUNDATIONAL INDIAN NEWSPAPERS:

1780 — Hicky's Bengal Gazette (English) — first in India

1818 — Samachar Darpan (Bengali, Serampore)

1822 — Mirat-ul-Akhbar (Persian, Raja Ram Mohan Roy)

1822 — Bombay Samachar (Gujarati) — oldest continuously published

1826 — Udant Martand (Hindi)

1854 — Samachar Sudha Varshan (first Hindi daily)

1900 — Saraswati (Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi — “Dwivedi Yug” in Hindi literature)

1910 — Pratap (Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Kanpur)

1920 — Aaj (Varanasi)

COLONIAL PRESS LAWS (KEY):

1799 — Censorship Act (Wellesley)

1823 — Licensing Regulations (John Adam)

1835 — Metcalfe Act (liberalising)

1867 — Press and Registration of Books Act

1878 — Vernacular Press Act (Lytton; repealed 1882 Ripon)

1908 — Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act

1910 — Indian Press Act

1931 — Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act

POST-INDEPENDENCE:

1956 — First Press Commission (Rajadhyaksha)

1965 — Press Council Act (statutory PCI)

1978 — Press Council Act (re-established post-Emergency)

2023 — Press and Registration of Periodicals (PR&P) Act, 2023 — replaced 1867 Act

HINDI PRESS TODAY:

~30 crore readers — largest Indian-language readership

Major dailies: Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Dainik Bhaskar, Amar Ujala, Punjab Kesari, Rajasthan Patrika

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

Article 19(1)(a) — freedom of speech and expression (includes press)

Article 19(2) — reasonable restrictions (sovereignty, public order, etc.)

Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras (1950); *Sakal Papers v. Union of India (1962)* — foundational press-freedom cases

Source: Hindi Journalism Day — Bicentenary of Udant Martand (1826-2026) — Ujjari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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