UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 28 April 2026

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History, Art and Culture

13th Sur Jyotsna Awards

The 13th Sur Jyotsna National Music Awards took place in New Delhi, honoring veteran Hindustani vocalists **Sumitra Guha** and **Pandit Laxman Krishnarao Pandit** for their lifelong contributions.

• **Purpose and Legacy -** Established in memory of Jyotsna Darda, these awards support both young talent and masters to preserve India's rich classical music heritage.

• **Key Cultural Facts -** The ceremony highlighted the difference between Hindustani (North) and Carnatic (South) traditions, which are vital to India's cultural identity.

Key Facts

• **Sumitra Guha -** A renowned exponent of Hindustani classical music, she is celebrated for her soulful Khyal and Bhajan performances. A Padma Shri awardee, she expertly blends the Gwalior and Kirana Gharana traditions.

• **Pandit Laxman Krishnarao Pandit -** A legendary vocalist of the Gwalior Gharana, he represents a rich lineage of classical mastery. Known for his technical precision, he is a dedicated teacher and preserver of traditional compositions.

Understanding DNT Communities

Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) are groups once unfairly labeled as "criminal" by British colonial laws. Today, they still struggle for social acceptance and official recognition across India.

• **Colonial History and Stigma -** In 1871, the British branded these tribes as hereditary criminals. Although this law was repealed in 1952, the social stigma remains, and local authorities often still treat these groups with suspicion.

• **Identification and Certification -** A major crisis exists as only seven states currently issue **DNT community certificates**. Without these documents, people cannot access essential government help for housing, education, or healthcare.

• **Challenges with Government Schemes -** The **SEED scheme**, designed for their upliftment, remains largely unused. Because many tribes are not properly identified or classified, the funds meant for their development are not reaching those in need.

• **Issues of Misclassification -** There are nearly 1,200 such communities, yet **268 groups** remain unclassified. Others are lumped into generic SC/ST/OBC categories, which often ignores their unique cultural identities and specific economic needs.

• **Importance of the Census -** Experts warn that failing to accurately count these groups in the next Census could ignore over **10 crore people**. Community leaders emphasize their history as brave resistance fighters against colonial rule.

The Patron of Goa

St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) is the patron saint of Goa, known locally as Goencho Saib. He was a famous Catholic missionary and a co-founder of the Jesuit order.

• **Early Life and Studies** - Born into Spanish nobility, he studied and taught philosophy in Paris. There, he met Ignatius of Loyola, who inspired him to leave his worldly life to serve God.

• **Founding the Jesuits** - In 1534, Francis and six others took vows of poverty. This group became the Society of Jesus, which received official approval from the Pope in 1540.

• **Mission to the East** - Francis arrived in Goa in 1542. He spent years traveling across Asia, including Japan and Malaysia, spreading Christian values and teaching children and the sick.

• **Incorruptible Remains** - He died in 1552 while trying to reach China. His body remained miraculously preserved and was eventually brought back to Goa, where it is still kept today.

• **Legacy in Old Goa** - His remains are housed in a silver casket at the Basilica of Bom Jesus. Every ten years, his body is displayed for millions of pilgrims to see.

Geography

Mahanadi Water Dispute

Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal has given Odisha and Chhattisgarh a final warning to settle their water-sharing disagreement. This "Great River" is vital to the economy and survival of both states.

• **Geography and Flow -** Stretching nearly **900 km**, the Mahanadi originates in the Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh. it flows through East Central India before emptying into the Bay of Bengal through a massive delta.

• **Major Tributaries -** The river is fed by several large streams. Its Left Bank includes the Shivnath and Hasdeo, while the Right Bank is joined by the Jonk, Ong, and Tel rivers.

• **Engineering Marvels -** The basin is home to the Hirakud Dam, the longest earthen dam in the world. It also features the Hirakud Reservoir, which is the largest artificial lake in Asia.

• **Natural Landscapes -** The river carves through the Eastern Ghats at the **Satkosia Gorge**, a 64-km stretch of forest. During monsoons, its water flow can rival that of the mighty Ganges.

• **Economic Importance -** The Mahanadi supports farming across 80,000 square kilometers of fertile land. It also holds massive potential for hydropower, estimated at 627 MW, making it a key energy resource.

Hijacking of the Sward

Suspected pirates recently captured a cargo vessel named the *Sward* off the coast of Garacad. The ship is currently being forced toward the Somali coastline, highlighting renewed maritime security risks.

• **Geography of Somalia** - Located on the Horn of Africa, Somalia borders Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Its capital, Mogadishu, sits along the Indian Ocean, just north of the Equator.

• **Landscape and Climate** - The country is mostly made of flat plateaus and semideserts. The north features rugged mountains, including Surud Cad, while the south contains vast coastal sand dunes.

• **Vital Water Sources -** The Jubba and Shabeelle are Somalia's only permanent rivers. They flow from the Ethiopian highlands and provide essential water for farming in the southern plains.

• **Strategic Importance** - Somalia lies along a major global shipping route leading to the Suez Canal. Because of this location, its coastline is a critical area for international trade and safety.

• **Persistent Security Issues** - Decades of conflict have damaged the nation's infrastructure. Today, the return of piracy remains a major concern for global navies guarding the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

Security

India's 2025 Defence Ranking

India is now the world's fifth-largest military spender, reaching **$92.1 billion**. It follows the US, China, Russia, and Germany in global rankings.

• **Increased Strategic Spending -** Expenditure rose by **8.9%** due to border tensions and "Operation Sindoor." Funds focused on emergency equipment and air power modernization.

• **Comparison With Pakistan -** While Pakistan's budget rose to **$11.9 billion**, India spends nearly eight times more to maintain its regional edge.

• **Record Global Trends -** Worldwide military spending hit **$2.887 trillion**. Conflicts in Europe and NATO rearmament drove the sharpest increases.

• **Changing Arms Suppliers -** India is reducing its reliance on Russian weapons, shifting toward partnerships with France, Israel, and the United States.

• **Future Budget Focus -** The 2026–27 budget allocates **Rs 7.85 lakh crore**, prioritizing advanced fighter jets, submarines, and smart weapon systems.

New 16th Bhairav Battalion

The Indian Army recently raised its 16th 'Bhairav' Battalion at the Maratha Light Infantry Regimental Centre in Belagavi, Karnataka, to bolster infantry capabilities.

• **What is Bhairav? -** Known as **Light Commando Battalions**, these specialized formations bridge the gap between standard infantry and elite Special Forces for rapid-response missions.

• **Structure and Size -** Each unit consists of roughly **250 highly trained soldiers**. They focus on reconnaissance, surprise raids, and high-intensity operations in difficult terrain.

• **Role in Modern Warfare -** These lean, mobile forces handle tactical precision tasks, reducing the operational load on Special Forces while maintaining high combat readiness.

• **Commissioning Ceremony -** Formally commissioned on April 25, the unit received its battalion flag from Brigadier Joydeep Mukherjee, marking a commitment to modernization.

• **Strategic Importance -** As security challenges evolve, these light units provide essential agility for quick responses across India's mountainous and high-risk border zones.

Science

Atlas system

China has unveiled the **Atlas system**, a mobile military unit capable of launching and managing nearly 100 drones simultaneously. Developed by CETC, it acts as a high-tech battlefield network.

• **System Structure -** The setup uses three vehicles: a **Swarm-2** launcher, a command center, and a support unit. This mobile design allows the system to operate from remote or difficult terrain.

• **Rapid Launch Capabilities -** The system can launch up to **96 drones** in just five minutes. With less than three seconds between launches, it quickly fills the sky with a coordinated robotic force.

• **Advanced AI Intelligence -** A single operator controls the entire swarm. The drones use autonomous algorithms to communicate, identify targets, and change flight formations without constant human help.

• **Versatile Mission Roles -**These drones are multi-purpose. They can perform scouting, carry out precision strikes, or act as decoys to confuse and overwhelm an enemy's expensive air defense systems.

• **Strategic Military Impact -** Deploying these swarms near borders creates significant challenges. They can be easily hidden and used to target infrastructure, potentially isolating an opponent's forward positions during a conflict.

Miscellaneous

F1 Sim Racing India Open 2026

India has launched its first official Formula 1 Sim Racing Championship. Partnering with Mumbai Falcons, this initiative connects virtual esports with professional motorsport to find new racing talent.

• **Exclusive National Program -** This is Formula 1's first dedicated national program for India. It features online qualifiers and city rounds, leading to a grand national final held in Mumbai.

• **Virtual to Real Pathway -** The championship creates an affordable bridge to professional racing. Simulators help young drivers learn race strategy and technical skills without the high costs of traditional cars.

• **Rising Popularity -** Formula 1 interest is surging among Indian youth. This digital expansion supports the growing momentum to eventually bring physical Grand Prix racing back to the country.

• **Legal Esports Recognition -** Following the **Online Gaming Act of 2025**, esports is now officially recognized in India. This legal framework provides a secure environment for professional competitive gaming careers.

• **Future of Indian Motorsport -** By utilizing digital platforms, India is strengthening its presence in global motorsport. This program aims to build a modern racing culture and nurture future international champions.

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