

UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 30-09-2026

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History, Art and Culture

GI tag For Mandar

Jharkhand's traditional tribal musical instrument, the Mandar, was officially awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in September 2026.

About the Instrument

- **Type** - A centuries-old, double-headed barrel or cylindrical folk drum.
- **Materials** - Crafted using locally sourced red clay and indigenous manufacturing methods.
- **Cultural Importance** - Deeply tied to tribal life, folk music, dance forms, and major festivals like Sarhul and Karam across Jharkhand.



Egypt's Dakhla Oasis

Egypt's Dakhla Oasis is a lush, historically rich depression in the Western Desert where archaeologists recently discovered a 1,700-year-old Roman-era pyramid tomb at Bir Al-Shaghala.

- **Overview of Dakhla Oasis**

- **Location** – Situated in Egypt's New Valley Governorate, about 350 km west of the Nile River and roughly 465 miles southwest of Cairo.

- **Geography** – Spans roughly 80 km east-to-west and 25 km north-to-south in the deep desert, featuring fertile soil, therapeutic hot springs, and prehistoric petroglyphs.

- **History** – Continuously inhabited for over 2,000 years, serving as a vital agricultural hub and a caravan crossroads connecting Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, and Islamic civilizations.

- **The 1,700-Year-Old Pyramid Tomb Discovery**

- **The Monument** – Uncovered by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in September 2026, this small, mud-brick and limestone pyramid structure dates to the late 3rd or early 4th century AD during Roman control.

- **Occupants** – Built as a joint final resting place for a man named Pisechtes and his wife.

- **Cultural Blend** – The tomb uniquely merges three ancient traditions:

- **Egyptian** – Features a 14-step staircase leading to a sandstone door carved with protective hieroglyphic spells, a winged sun disk, and a scene from the Amduat (an ancient book of the afterlife).

- **Greek** – Includes a stone plaque bearing a 19-line elegiac poem written by a son named Sarapion, mourning and praising his father's wisdom and kindness.

- **Roman** – Yielded artifacts including pottery and a bronze coin stamped with the image of Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.



Geography

PRAGATI-50 Initiative

The PRAGATI-50 Initiative was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0 to develop 50 model cities across 24 States demonstrating high standards of urban cleanliness and sanitation.

- **Key Features**

- **Integrated city-wide planning** covering solid waste, used water management, public toilets and citizen participation.
- **Digital monitoring** through a PRAGATI-style dashboard on the Swachhatam Portal with regular reviews.
- **Technology support** via the **CSIR-CMERI Test Bed and Innovation Centre** at Durgapur.
- **Startup promotion**, with 75 sanitation startups onboarded under SBM-U.
- **Citizen engagement** through WhatsApp grievance systems and the **Swachhata Behaviour Change Digital Kosh**.

- **Aim**

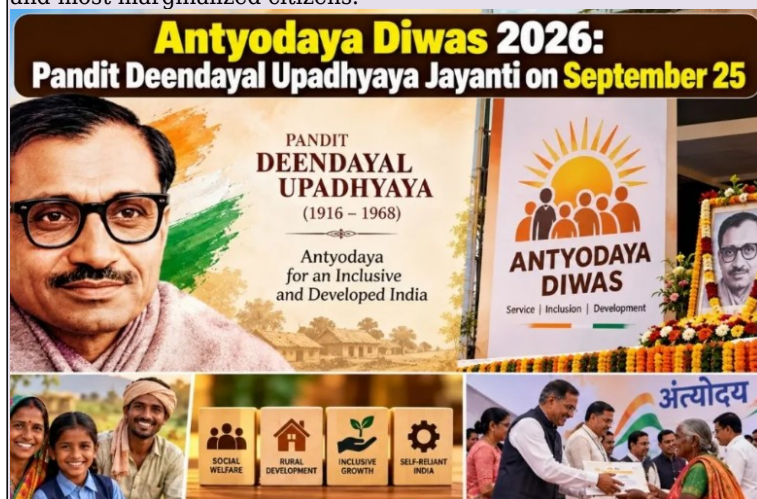
- To create replicable models for sustainable urban sanitation, scientific waste processing and behavioural change.



Antyodaya Diwas

Antyodaya Diwas is observed annually across India to mark the birth anniversary of the visionary thinker, philosopher, and social reformer Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

- **Date** - September 25 (marking Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's 110th birth anniversary in 2026, having been born in 1916).
- **Established** - Declared officially by the Government of India in 2014.
- **Meaning of Antyodaya** - Derived from Sanskrit (*antya* meaning last/poorest and *udaya* meaning rise), it translates to the "upliftment of the last person" in the socio-economic queue.
- **Core Philosophy** - Promotes Integral Humanism (*Ekatma Manavavad*), a holistic development model balancing human needs with society and nature, prioritizing the poorest and most marginalized citizens.



International Relations and Issues

Trump administration's mass voter verification system

Supreme Court restores Trump administration's mass voter verification database.

- The Trump administration's mass voter verification system relies on an expanded version of the federal SAVE Program (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements) to check the citizenship status of registered voters.
- **What the System Does?**
- **Database Expansion** - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) redesigned SAVE—originally built to verify eligibility for federal benefits—to link with Social Security Administration data.
- **Bulk Searches** - The overhaul allows state and local officials to upload entire voter lists and run mass, bulk searches using Social Security numbers rather than checking individuals one by one.
- **Flagging Noncitizens** - Republican-led states have used the system to compare voter rolls against federal immigration and citizenship records to identify potential noncitizens

Supreme Court restores Trump's mass voter verification system

Justices blocked a lower-court order stopping states from using the revamped SAVE database for bulk citizenship checks of voter rolls ahead of the midterms.

Economy

Ladakh's First Lilium Consignment

On **29 September 2026**, Ladakh dispatched its first consignment of **15,000 A-grade Lilium stems** to major flower markets in India.

- The consignment was flagged off from **KBR Airport, Leh**.
- It included **red, pink, white, yellow and orange** varieties grown at **Choglamsar, Leh**.

Lilium as a Cut Flower

- **Lilium** is a **bulbous flowering plant** widely cultivated as a premium cut flower.
- The Ladakh stems had **4-5 buds** and a **shelf life of 5-7 days**.
- Cut flowers are generally graded based on **stem length, number of buds, flower size and shelf life**.
- Premium Lilium stems can fetch around **₹150-₹200 per stem** in Indian retail markets.

High-Altitude Floriculture

- The Choglamsar flower field is located at **10,600 feet (3,265 metres)**.
- It was inaugurated on **17 September 2026** and contains more than **25 lakh Lilium plants**.
- The project uses **solar-powered irrigation**.
- Cultivation is reported to be carried out **without pesticides and chemical fertilisers**.
- Ladakh's **cold desert climate, strong sunlight and low humidity** provide distinctive conditions for high-altitude floriculture.

Livelihood Generation

- The project was completed in just **60 days**, from foundation laying on **22 June 2026**.
- It has created employment for **15 local women** involved in cutting, sorting and packaging.
- Each worker receives a daily wage of **₹900**.

Expansion Plan

- The administration plans to expand high-value flower cultivation to **Kargil, Drass, Sham, Changthang and Zaskar**.
- Deputy Commissioners have been asked to identify **at least 20 acres each**.
- The target is to reach **200 acres of cultivation by 2027**.



GPT 6.1 Sol and Dots AI agents

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman unveiled GPT-6.1 Sol at DevDay in San Francisco on 29 September 2026.

- It is positioned as a **lower-cost, high-capability model** for coding, development and AI-agent workloads.
- OpenAI describes it as offering **near-Astra-level intelligence at around one-fifth of the price**.
- Altman said Sol could be “**smarter than Astra in some ways**” and become a **daily workhorse**.
- **Cost and Technical Specifications**
- **Input** - \$2 per million tokens.
- **Output** - \$10 per million tokens.
- **Context window** - 1.05 million tokens.
- **Maximum output** - 128,000 tokens.
- Supports reasoning levels ranging from **low to maximum**.
- The lower cost is intended to make it easier for AI agents to reuse context and work through longer tasks.
- **Tools and API Support** - GPT-6.1 Sol supports, Web search, File search, Code interpretation, Hosted shell, Computer use, Image generation, Skills, Model Context Protocol (**MCP**), Function calling, and Structured outputs.
- It is available through the **OpenAI Responses API**.
- **UltraFast** - OpenAI also introduced **UltraFast** across its API, ChatGPT and Codex.
- It can reportedly reach **300 tokens per second**.
- OpenAI says it provides around **8× the speed** of the standard offering at about **6× the price**.
- Initially available with **Astra**, with Sol support planned soon.
- **‘Dots’ AI Agents** - OpenAI showcased **Dots**, described as **always-on AI agents powered by GPT-6 Astra**.
- Dots have their own **cloud computers**.
- They can connect to **4,000+ applications**.
- They can work across multiple projects without requiring users to provide instructions at every step.
- Access is planned through **ChatGPT, Slack and Microsoft Teams**.
- **Enterprise AI Agents** - OpenAI is beginning **enterprise pilots** of specialised Dots.
- These agents can have their own, Identities, Credentials, Access permissions, Defined responsibilities.
- OpenAI is working with **Microsoft** to integrate these agents with governance and security controls through **Agent 365**.
- **GPT-6.1 Astra Release Shelved** - OpenAI reportedly **shelved the planned October release of GPT-6.1 Astra**.
- Internal testing reportedly identified issues related to, Staying within authorised scope, Accurately communicating actions to users, Safety and alignment and OpenAI confirmed the decision.



One Crore Mark - FASTag Annual Pass Crosses One Crore Mark

FASTag is an electronic toll collection system in India that lets drivers pay highway tolls automatically without stopping.

- **RFID Technology** - A small sticker with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip and antenna goes on your car's front windshield.
- **Automatic Deduction** - Toll plaza readers scan the tag as you drive through a dedicated lane.
- **Linked Accounts** - The system takes the toll money directly from your linked prepaid wallet, savings, or bank account.
- **Notifications** - You get an instant text message on your phone every time money leaves your account.



Chinese AUV Swarm Sets World Record

On 29 August 2026, a Chinese team set a Guinness World Record by operating 116 TH-618 autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) simultaneously.

- The vehicles performed autonomous formation navigation for 34 minutes over 500 metres, without human intervention.

- **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles**

- AUVs are unmanned submersible systems capable of operating independently using onboard sensors, navigation software and power systems.

- They are used for oceanographic research, underwater mapping, inspection and surveillance.

- **Technology and Institutions**

- The trial was conducted in a 50 m × 20 m swimming pool under controlled conditions.

Researchers from Northwestern Polytechnical University and Xian Tianhe Maritime Technologies participated.

- **Significance**

- The achievement demonstrates advances in swarm robotics, autonomous navigation and coordinated underwater operations, with potential applications in research, maritime monitoring and defence.



Bodhana Sivanandan Makes Chess History

Bodhana Sivanandan, an 11-year-old Indian-origin chess prodigy representing England, has become the youngest Woman Grandmaster (WGM).

- She achieved the milestone at the **46th Chess Olympiad** held in **Samarkand, Uzbekistan**.
- **Performance at Chess Olympiad**
 - Bodhana played **all 11 rounds on England's top board**.
 - She scored **8 points** in the tournament.
 - Her performance also earned her a **second International Master (IM) norm**.
- **Journey in Chess** - Bodhana discovered chess during the **COVID-19 lockdown**.
- Since then, she has established several records in the sport.
- In **August 2026**, she became **Britain's youngest-ever Women's Chess Champion** at the **2026 British Chess Championships**.
- **Future Ambition** - Bodhana intends to continue competing at the highest level and **set further records in chess**.
- Her achievement highlights the growing prominence of **young talent in international chess**.

