

## Current Affairs - 28 September 2026



### TRAVEL & TOURISM DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2026

- It is published **biennially** by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- It has evolved from the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), published biennially from 2007 to 2019 by the WEF.
- Relunched in 2022 in its current form, it reflects a broader focus on sustainable and resilient development, beyond competitiveness alone.
- **TTDI 2026 Highlights:**
  - It was published by WEF in **collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group**.
  - It ranked 110 economies on the factors and conditions that support the development of travel and tourism.
  - **Being high on the TTDI does not necessarily mean a country receives the most tourists.** The index is designed to measure how well economies are positioned to support **sustainable and resilient tourism development**.
  - **India Rankings:**
    - India is ranked **31st**, moving **up from 39th** place in 2024, helped by its **low travel costs, cultural resources, and natural attractions**.
    - India also ranks among the **top 10 economies** for the **number of World Heritage cultural sites**, along with China and Mexico.
    - The report also pointed to some **challenges** for India. **Workforce skills, environmental sustainability, and tourism infrastructure** remain areas that need improvement.
  - **Tourism conditions improve worldwide:**
    - Tourism conditions **improved across most economies** between 2024 and 2026.
    - International tourist arrivals reached 1.5 billion in 2025, with arrivals 4.4% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

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- 101 of the 110 economies covered by the index improved their scores during the period.
- The average score rose 2.1%, the fastest growth since 2019.
- China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Türkiye, Mexico, and Brazil, the 10 largest non-high-income travel and tourism economies account for more than 28% of global direct travel and tourism GDP, with their share projected to rise to 35% by 2035.

### LIVESTOCK INSURANCE PORTAL



- It will provide a single, integrated digital platform for livestock insurance.
- It is aimed at making livestock insurance services more transparent, efficient, accessible and technology-driven.
- It will strengthen risk protection for livestock farmers and supporting the sustainability of their livelihoods.
- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- Features
  - It enables streamlined policy issuance, claim processing, monitoring and reporting, in case of animals insured under the Livestock Insurance Scheme of the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying.
  - The Portal will also be available in 11 regional languages apart from Hindi and English, enabling livestock farmers to access information and services in languages familiar to them.
  - It will also facilitate better coordination, real-time monitoring and data-driven management of livestock insurance programmes, contributing to improved service delivery across the country.

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### MUSK DEER

- Musk deer (Moschidae) are small deer-like animals that belong to the **family Moschidae**.
- **Appearance:** Its coat is dark brown, mottled with paler, greyer hair underneath. It has whitish markings on its chin and ears.
- **Habitat:** They typically inhabit **forests and brushlands** at intermediate elevations and rocky slopes at altitudes between 2,600 and 3,000 meters.
- **Distribution:** They live in highland areas in central and **northeastern Asia, particularly in western China, Myanmar and the Himalayas**.
- **Characteristics:**
  - They are **shy, usually feeding at night**, and tend to live alone, occasionally in pairs but never in herds.
  - Musk deer **lacks antlers**.
  - The animal has **well-developed side toes** that give it a sure-footedness and allow to scamper around rocks in the snow and even climb trees.
  - **Diet:** Their diet **includes both browse and graze**, and they also consume some mosses and lichens
  - A musk deer pod is a **specialised scent gland** found in the abdomen of a **male musk deer**.
    - It produces a **strong-smelling, reddish-brown secretion** used in traditional perfumes and medicines.
  - A musk gland in males produces a strong scent used for **communication/territorial marking**.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN:** Endangered
  - **CITES:** Appendix I
  - **The Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972:** Schedule I

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### WHAT UNDERWATER EXCAVATIONS REVEAL ABOUT TAMIL LINKS TO WEST ASIA

Fresh underwater excavations off Poompuhar, the **ancient Chola port city** in Tamil Nadu, have found new evidence of its maritime connections. The 18-day exploration was carried out by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) with the Indian Maritime University.

Key findings include: A fragment of a **West Asian torpedo jar**; **Four terracotta ring wells**; More than 250 ceramic fragments. Much of the ancient settlement is believed to lie beneath the sea today.

#### About Poompuhar

- Poompuhar, also called Kaveripoompattinam, lies in present-day Mayiladuthurai district.
- It sits at the mouth of the 800-km-long **Cauvery river**, where the river empties into the Bay of Bengal.
- It is believed to have been the **capital of the early Cholas** and features prominently in Sangam and post-Sangam literature.
- A 2011 archaeology report says the city existed from the 5th–4th century BCE, based on the carbon dating of a wooden log recovered there.
- The city is said to have had **three major divisions**:
  - **Maruvurppakkam** — along the seashore.
  - **Pattinappakkam** — to the west.
  - **Nalangadi** — between the two.

#### A Busy Trading Port

- The port was thronged during the Chola period. Exports were stamped with a **tiger symbol**, the Chola customs seal, marking their origin.
- Merchants from across India and Southeast Asia came seeking markets.
- Imports included articles from the Ganges region, food products from Ceylon, and spices from Java.
- Earlier research supports this picture:

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- The 1996 paper notes that ships from **Tamralipti** (West Bengal) and **Palur** (Odisha) visited Poompuhar. From there, sea-going vessels sailed to Southeast Asia, Arabia and Rome.
- Sreelata Menon's *In Search of Lost Cities* (2025) describes ships from Rome, Egypt, China and Arabia docking round the clock, with cargo, including horses, stamped with the tiger seal.

### Significance of the Torpedo Jar

- The recovered fragment is of fine ceramic, with an estimated diameter of 30–35 cm.
- Torpedo jars were historically used to carry liquid cargo such as wine and olive oil across ocean routes. This is proof of Poompuhar's links with West Asia and the Mediterranean world. The discovery is not entirely new, but it adds to evidence already gathered by earlier studies.

### The Lost City: How Poompuhar Went Under

- **Natural Explanations** - Catastrophic floods are believed to have hit the coast around the 4th or 5th century CE, swallowing large parts of the city.
  - Studies also suggest a major tsunami around the 3rd century CE may have contributed to its submergence.
- **Legend** - According to analysts, the port's king, grieving his son's death, failed to celebrate Indra Vizha, a festival honouring Indra (Vendhan) as ruler of rain, thunder and lightning. Enraged, the goddess of Poompuhar made the sea swallow the city.
- **Scholarly View** - Scholars differ. Either the entire city was submerged and rebuilt after the sea receded, or only part of it was engulfed.

### Conclusion

Poompuhar shows that Tamil coastal trade was global long before the modern era. Ships from Rome, Arabia and Southeast Asia met here, and a single jar fragment now confirms that link once more.

Much of the city still lies underwater, so the seabed remains one of India's richest unread archives of maritime history.

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### RIGHT TO VOTE IN INDIA - CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL STATUS

- India adopted **universal adult suffrage** from the beginning of the Republic, granting adult citizens the right to participate in elections without restrictions based on gender, caste, religion, education or property.
- In the United States, although the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments extended voting rights to African Americans in 1870 and women in 1920, systemic barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests continued to disenfranchise many for decades.
- India chose immediate, universal inclusion, ensuring democratic equality from the outset and bypassing the prolonged struggles seen elsewhere.
- **Article 326** granted every adult citizen the right to vote regardless of gender, caste, religion, education or property.

#### What Is the Legal Status of the Right to Vote?

- The distinction between a **fundamental right, constitutional right and statutory right** is important because each category carries different levels of legal protection.
- The Constituent Assembly considered whether voting should form part of the Fundamental Rights chapter. However, the proposal was not adopted.
- In **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India (2006)**, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held that the “**right to elect**” is a **statutory right**, deriving from Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, rather than a fundamental or constitutional right.

#### Why Are Electoral Rolls Important?

- The right to participate in elections depends in practice on an accurate electoral roll.
- The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** provides the statutory framework for preparation and revision of electoral rolls.
- Section 19 provides that a citizen who is at least 18 years old, ordinarily resident in a constituency and not otherwise disqualified is entitled to registration.

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- Under **Section 21**, the Election Commission is empowered to direct the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. Errors such as:
  - omission of eligible voters,
  - inclusion of ineligible persons,
  - duplicate entries, and
  - incorrect voter details
  - can affect electoral integrity and the principle of “**one person, one vote.**”
- The challenge becomes more complex when electoral administration increasingly depends on digital systems.

### The Case for Greater Protection

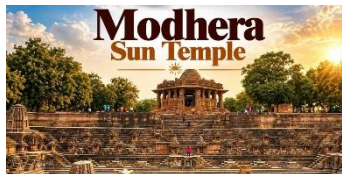
- The debate over making voting a fundamental right centres on the level of constitutional protection that should accompany the franchise.
- Supporters of greater constitutional protection argue that voting is closely connected with democratic participation and that restrictions affecting the franchise should receive stronger judicial scrutiny.
- At the same time, the existing legal framework gives Parliament the authority to regulate electoral participation through legislation, while the Election Commission exercises constitutional powers under **Article 324** relating to the superintendence, direction and control of elections.
- The issue therefore involves balancing **electoral integrity, administrative regulation and individual participation.**

### Conclusion

- India's system combines universal adult suffrage under **Article 326** with statutory regulation through the Representation of the People Acts and constitutional supervision by the Election Commission.
- The continuing debate over the legal status of the right to vote highlights a broader constitutional question: how should electoral administration protect both the accuracy of electoral rolls and the individual's ability to participate in the democratic process?

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### MODHERA SUN TEMPLE



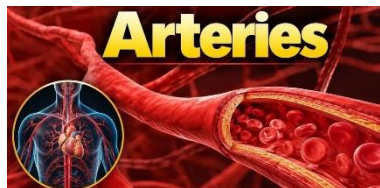
- It is a **Hindu temple** dedicated to the **solar deity Surya** located at Modhera village of the Mehsana district, **Gujarat**.
- It is situated on the **bank of the river Pushpavati**.
- It was **built** after **1026-27 CE** during the reign of **King Bhima I** of the **Chaulukya** dynasty.
- **No worship is offered now** and is a protected monument **maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- It entered the list of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** in the year 2014.

#### Architecture:

- The temple complex is built in **Maru-Gurjara style (Chaulukya style)**.
- The temple complex has **three components: Gudhamandapa, the shrine hall; Sabhamandapa, the assembly hall; and Kunda, the reservoir**.
- Each part is **aligned along an east-west axis**, reinforcing the **temple's connection to the sun's movement**.
- The halls have intricately carved exterior and pillars.
- **Sabha Mandap** standing on **52 pillars, depicting the 52 weeks in a year**. The intricate carvings on the pillars depict scenes from ancient Indian epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and scenes from the life of Lord Krishna.
- The reservoir has steps to reach the bottom and numerous small shrines.
- **On equinoxes**, with the perfect planning and precision of the architecture, **sun rays enter the main sanctum**.
- In those days light was used to further reflect to other idols from the correctly placed diamond on the head of Sun God.
- The **exterior walls** are engraved with beautiful **intricate carvings**.

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### WHAT ARE ARTERIES?



- Arteries are the **blood vessels that bring oxygen-rich blood from heart to all of the body's cells.**
- Arteries make up a major part of the circulatory system, with the veins and heart being the other main components.
- They play a crucial role in **distributing oxygen, nutrients, and hormones throughout the body.**
- The **heart pumps oxygen-rich blood into the biggest artery in the body, the aorta.**
- **This branches off into parts that feed smaller and smaller arteries, eventually reaching the entire body.**
- Arteries keep the body alive and healthy by delivering what the cells and tissues need.
- Roughly **10% of the body's blood is in the arteries at any point in time.**
  - **Peripheral artery disease (PAD):** A common condition in which narrowed arteries **reduce blood flow to the arms or legs.**

### How are arteries different from veins?

- **Arteries:**
  - **Take oxygen-rich blood away from heart** and distribute it to whole body.
  - **Have strong, muscular walls** that can handle the high pressure of blood the heart pumps out with each heartbeat.
- **Veins:**
  - **Bring blood back to the heart** after body's cells and tissues have taken the oxygen out of it. This is known as **oxygen-poor blood or deoxygenated blood.**
  - **Have thinner walls** because the **pressure inside them isn't as high as it is in arteries.**
  - **Have valves inside them** to keep blood from moving in the wrong direction.