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INDIA'S POVERTY DECLINE IS AMONG THE FASTEST GLOBALLY

Context

- A World Bank report titled **India Poverty and Equity Brief: October 2026**, India has achieved one of the fastest poverty declines in the world.

India's Progress in Poverty Reduction

- **Decline in extreme poverty:** The proportion of the population living below the international extreme poverty line of **\$3 per person per day** (measured in 2021 purchasing power parity) declined from **27.1% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2023**.
- **Poverty measured against the Lower Middle-Income Country** poverty line of \$4.20 per person per day declined from 57.7% to 16.1% between 2011 and 2023, lifting an estimated 496 million people out of poverty.
 - ♦ It expects poverty (measured against the \$4.20-a-day threshold) to decline further—from 14.2% in 2026 to **12.1% by 2028**.

What is a poverty line?

- A poverty line is a **threshold level of income or consumption** used to determine whether an individual or household is poor.
- Anyone living below this threshold is considered unable to afford basic necessities such as **food, shelter, clothing, education, and healthcare**.
- It helps the government;
 - ♦ to gauge the extent of poverty and **shape welfare policies** for the poor.
 - ♦ to **understand whether a set of policies has actually worked** over time to reduce poverty and improve wellbeing.

Key Drivers of Poverty Reduction

- **Expansion of employment:** Employment increased by approximately **134 million people** between 2017 and 2023, nearly twice the growth in the working-age population.
- **Greater participation of women:** Increased participation of rural women in paid employment has raised household earnings and the number of income earners per family.
- **Expansion of social protection:** Food subsidies and other government transfers helped protect vulnerable households from economic shocks and improve their consumption levels.

- **Greater access to essential facilities** such as electricity, sanitation, drinking water and housing has contributed to reducing non-monetary deprivation.

Initiatives Taken by the Government

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** The scheme aims to provide industry-relevant skill training to youth in order to improve employability and enhance job opportunities.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** It gives legal entitlement to **67%** of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas) to receive highly subsidized foodgrains.
- **Ayushman Bharat scheme:** It offers health insurance coverage of up to **₹5 lakh** per family per year to shield beneficiaries from the financial burden of expensive medical treatments.
- **Right to Education Act (RTE):** The RTE Act, enacted in 2009, provides free and compulsory education for children between **6 and 14 years**.
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM):** It aims to reduce poverty by enabling the poor household to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.

Persistent Challenges Despite Poverty Reduction

- **Regional concentration:** Poverty is increasingly concentrated geographically, with states in the contiguous belt stretching from **Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal** accounting for approximately **57%** of India's poor population.
- **Widening wage disparities:** Median earnings among the top **10%** of workers were approximately **13 times** those of the **bottom 10% in 2023**.
 - ♦ This indicates that employment growth has not necessarily translated into equitable income distribution.
- **Youth unemployment** increased from 14.6% to **15.9%** between the first quarters of FY2026 and FY2027.
- **Low-productivity employment:** Much of the employment growth was concentrated in relatively low-productivity activities, limiting improvements in household income and living standards.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen labour-intensive sectors** such as textiles, food processing, tourism and construction to generate productive and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

- **Address structural inequalities:** Reduce regional disparities through targeted investments in infrastructure, human capital and industrial development in poverty-concentrated regions.
- **Strengthen regular household consumption surveys** and multidimensional poverty assessments to identify emerging vulnerabilities and improve policy targeting.

Committees for Poverty Estimation

Lakdawala Committee (1993)

- It was constituted in 1993 and made the following suggestions:
 - ♦ Consumption expenditure should be calculated based on calorie consumption,
 - ♦ State-specific poverty lines should be constructed, and these should be updated using the **Consumer Price Index of Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)** in urban areas and the **Consumer Price Index of Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL)** in rural areas.

Tendulkar Committee (2009)

- It was constituted in 2005 and submitted its report in 2009.
- The Committee recommended a shift away from calorie consumption based poverty estimation. It incorporated private expenditure on health and education.
- Consumption expenditure was broken up into per person per day consumption, resulting in the figures of **Rs 32** and **Rs 26** a day for urban and rural areas.
- **The national poverty line for 2011-12** was estimated at **Rs. 816** per capita per month for rural areas and **Rs. 1,000** per capita per month for urban areas.

Rangarajan Committee (2014)

- It was constituted in 2012 and submitted its report in 2014.
- The Committee recommended separate consumption baskets for rural and urban areas.
 - ♦ The Rangarajan Committee set the rural poverty line at **₹972 per month (₹32 per day)**.
 - ♦ The urban poverty line was set at **₹1,407 per month (₹47 per day)**.
- These estimates pegged **29.5 percent** of the Indian population as poor in 2011-12.

- The government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee, therefore, poverty is measured using the **Tendulkar poverty line**.

Source: TH

NEW RESEARCH IN RAJASTHAN CONNECTS TRIBAL ASTRONOMY WITH INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

Context

- Researchers from IIT Jodhpur have **documented the astronomical knowledge of tribal communities in western Rajasthan** and explored its connection with the **Indian Knowledge System (IKS)**.

About Tribal Astronomy

- It refers to the **indigenous knowledge of celestial bodies, stars, planets, seasons and natural cycles** developed by tribal communities through observation over the generations.
- Tribal communities interpret **celestial objects through cultural beliefs, folklore and ecological knowledge**.
 - ♦ Comets are considered to be heavenly mops that clean up the rubbish, meteors are considered the souls of ancestors.
- **The study covered six tribal communities:** Bhil, Meena, Banjara, Gond, Kolam and Korku.

Key Elements of Tribal Astronomical Knowledge

- **Time Reckoning:** Tribal communities use lunar cycles to calculate time and identify seasonal changes.
- **Seasonal Prediction:** They observe stars that help in predicting seasonal transitions and weather patterns.
- **Agricultural Practices:** Sowing and harvesting activities are aligned with celestial cycles.
- **Ritual Practices:** Eclipses and other celestial phenomena are associated with specific rituals and cultural beliefs.
- **Ecological Knowledge:** Tribal communities integrate knowledge of celestial movements with local terrain, vegetation and natural cycles.

Connection with Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

- The research highlights **similarities between tribal astronomical traditions and classical Sanskrit astronomical traditions**.

- ♦ **Classical Sanskrit astronomy** uses **mathematical calculations**, geometry and formalisation, **tribal astronomy** relies primarily on **systematic observation and environmental understanding**.
- The study helps in the **cross-cultural comparison** between indigenous knowledge systems and traditional computational astronomy.

Nakshatra Vatika Initiative

- IIT Jodhpur researchers collaborated with residents of Nandiya Kalan village in Rajasthan to develop a Nakshatra Vatika on degraded community land.
- Around 1,000 trees have been planted with community participation.
- The initiative associates plants such as **jamun, gular, peepal, khejri, jasmine and banyan** with Nakshatras and zodiac signs.
- It aims to **conserve medicinal plants, protect biodiversity and restore fragile ecosystems**.

Significance of the Tribal Astronomy

- **Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge:** It helps in documenting the tribal oral histories, rituals, astronomical observations, and ecological beliefs.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** The documented traditional knowledge of seasonal cycles can complement modern scientific approaches to understand environmental changes in a holistic way.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** The knowledge of indigenous understanding of natural cycles can contribute to locally adapted agricultural practices, helping in the efforts towards sustainable agriculture.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Initiatives such as Nakshatra Vatika promote conservation of native and medicinal plant species.
- **Community Participation:** Recognising the knowledge of tribal communities in developing sustainable solutions enhances the community participation and inclusion in nation building.

Challenges

- **Modernisation and socio-cultural changes** may lead to the **gradual erosion of traditional knowledge**.
- Much of tribal astronomical knowledge is **transmitted orally and lacks systematic documentation**.

- Limited integration of indigenous knowledge with formal scientific research may **restrict its wider application**.

Way Forward

- There is a need to **systematically document indigenous astronomical knowledge**, oral histories and traditional ecological practices.
 - ♦ This can be done through **promoting collaboration** between tribal communities, researchers and scientific institutions.
- This knowledge can be integrated into **biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture**.
- There should be a mechanism for ensuring **that the tribal communities receive recognition and participate in decisions** concerning the use of their traditional knowledge.

Source: TH

OIL SPILL OFF THE UAE COAST AFFECTS DESALINATION PLANTS

Context

- An oil spill off the United Arab Emirates has raised concerns over the risk of **environmental contamination and questions about the potential impact on desalination plants**.

What are Desalination plants?

- Desalination plants **convert seawater into fresh drinking water** by removing salt and other minerals.
- The most widely used method is a process called **Reverse osmosis**, which pushes seawater through **ultra-fine membranes** that filter out salt.
- The freshwater produced is used to **supply households, industry, hotels and some agriculture across the region**.

Why are they so important to the Gulf?

- **Many Gulf countries depend heavily on desalinated water** because they lack natural freshwater resources such as rivers or large lakes.
- **In the UAE**, desalinated water accounts for **more than 80% of potable water**. Major plants include those at Dubai's Jebel Ali industrial port, and at Taweelah between Abu Dhabi and Dubai.
- Such plants meet **90% of Kuwait's needs, 86% of Oman's, and 70% of Saudi Arabia's**.
- According to the IFRI report, **desalination capacity in West Asia would almost double by 2030**.

Do you Know?

- A major spill in **1991 during the Gulf War** ended up being **one of the largest in history**, leading to several desalination plant shutdowns in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and causing extensive shoreline contamination.

Challenges/Risks with Desalination Plants

- **Marine Pollution:** Crude oil is a natural product and will break down in the marine environment, when it hits the marine environment it has a potential to cause more damage.
- Plants need to be shut down as soon as oil gets anywhere near them to avoid contamination.
- **Disabling of Desalination Plants:** Experts say major cities could lose most of their drinking water within days if key desalination plants were disabled.
 - ♦ A 2010 analysis by the Central Intelligence Agency warned that attacks on desalination facilities could trigger national crises in several Gulf states.
 - ♦ More than 90% of the region's desalinated water comes from just 56 plants, making them highly vulnerable to sabotage or military action.
- **Climate Change:** Beyond war, climate change is also increasing risks to desalination infrastructure.
 - ♦ Rising ocean temperatures and stronger cyclones in the Arabian Sea could threaten coastal facilities, while storm surges and extreme rainfall could damage plants or overwhelm drainage systems.
- **Emissions and Pollution:** Desalination is also energy-intensive, with plants worldwide producing between 500 million and 850 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

- ♦ The process also produces highly concentrated brine, which is often discharged back into the ocean and can harm marine ecosystems such as coral reefs.

Prevention and Mitigation

- For the current incident, the priorities should be to **prevent oil from reaching desalination intakes, protect treatment equipment, and maintain a safe and reliable drinking-water supply.**
- **The most effective strategy** is to establish several layers of protection **rather than rely on a single intervention.**

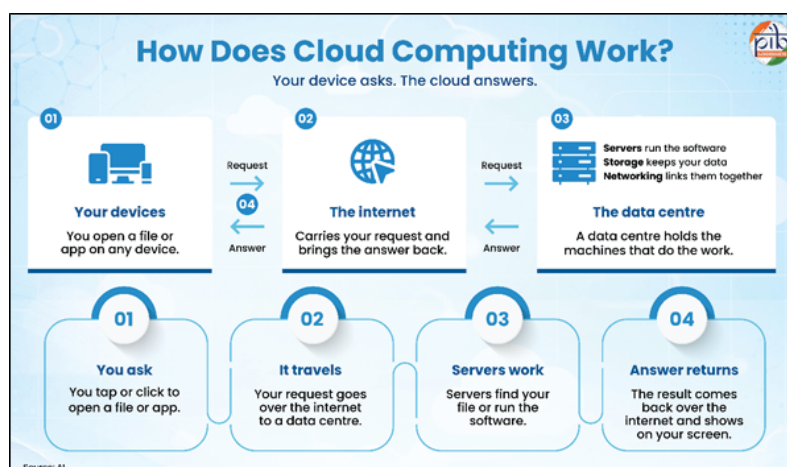
Source: DD

CLOUD ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA**Context**

- Growing digital adoption in India is driving demand for reliable data infrastructure, making cloud computing central to storing data and supporting digital services.

What is cloud computing?

- Cloud computing enables users to access computing resources, including **data storage, servers, software and processing capabilities, over the internet.**
 - ♦ Instead of purchasing and maintaining their own servers, organisations can use these resources as needed.
 - ♦ **For example, Google Drive** allows users to store documents online and access them across multiple devices.
- **Cloud computing depends on physical infrastructure.** Data centres house the servers, storage systems and networking equipment that make these services possible.
 - ♦ **A server room** is a dedicated space housing computers that store data and run digital services.



Types of Cloud Models

- A **public cloud** uses infrastructure provided by a third-party provider and shared among multiple customers.
 - ♦ For example, a business/video-streaming company serves millions of viewers from shared servers.
- A **private cloud** dedicates its infrastructure to a single organisation.
 - ♦ For example, a state treasury office keeps payment and accounts data on a private cloud to manage sensitive administrative records with greater control over security.
- A **hybrid cloud** combines public and private cloud environments.
 - ♦ For example, a municipal corporation keeps its property-tax payment portal on a public cloud and citizens' records on a private one.

Types of Cloud Services

- **Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)** allows users to rent computing resources such as virtual servers, storage and networks instead of buying physical equipment.
 - ♦ For instance, an **online retailer can lease cloud servers to host its website and scale computing capacity** to accommodate surges in traffic during festive sales.
- **Platform as a Service (PaaS)** enables developers with tools to build, test and launch applications without managing the underlying infrastructure.
 - ♦ For example, a team developing a mobile banking application can use a cloud platform to build and test its software.
- **Software as a Service (SaaS)** delivers ready-to-use software over the internet, with the provider managing updates and maintenance.
 - ♦ **Examples:** Zoom for video conferencing.
- **Serverless computing** allows developers to run specific tasks without managing servers directly.
 - ♦ The cloud provider manages the infrastructure and allocates resources when required.
 - ♦ **For example,** an online shopping platform can automatically process an order when a customer completes a purchase.

Why does India need more cloud infrastructure?

- India's expanding digital activity is generating large volumes of information that need to be stored, processed and protected.

- The country's **internet subscriber base reached 1,092.79 million** in March 2026.
 - ♦ Average wireless **data consumption stood at 25.51 GB per subscriber per month**, while total wireless data usage reached **285,376 petabytes** during 2025–26.
- **Cloud infrastructure helps meet these requirements** by allowing organisations to expand their computing capacity as demand rises.
 - ♦ **Example:** An examination portal, for instance, can increase resources during registration periods and reduce them afterwards.
- **Cloud services in India:** As of September 2026, India had empanelled **30 cloud service providers**.
 - ♦ **Indian providers** include Jio Platforms, Tata Consultancy Services, BSNL, ITI, RailTel, AdaniConneX and Yotta Data Services. International providers include Google Cloud India, Oracle India, Microsoft Corporation India and Amazon Web Services India.
- **Data Centres as a Pillar of India's Cloud System:** Data centres house the servers and storage systems that power cloud computing.
 - ♦ As of August 2026, India's data centre capacity had reached **1.57 GW** and is projected to grow to nearly 8 GW by 2030.

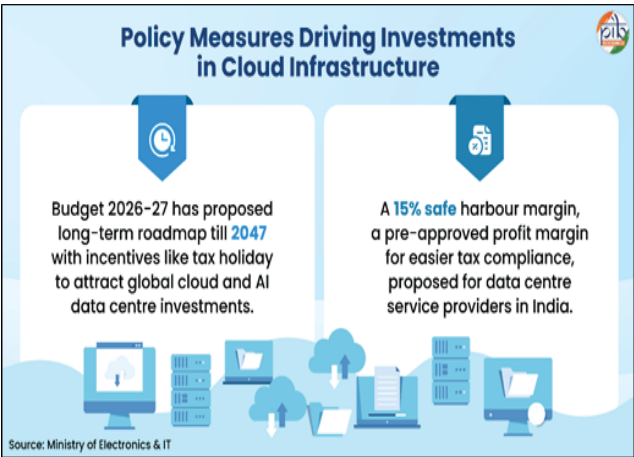
What is MeghRaj?

- **MeghRaj**, the Government of India's Cloud Ecosystem, was launched in **2014** by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** to accelerate e-governance and optimize public ICT spending.
- **MeghRaj 2.0** represents the second-generation iteration of this National Cloud Computing Initiative.

Initiatives taken by India

- In March 2026, MeitY issued a **Cloud Selection Framework** which provides structured guidance to Ministries and Departments for selecting cloud infrastructure based on data sensitivity and criticality.
- **The FutureSkills PRIME Programme**, launched in **2021** by **MeitY–NASSCOM**, promotes emerging-technology skills.
 - ♦ It ranked 3rd globally in the European Commission's Pact for Skills Report 2024 for industry-focused training in AI, cloud computing and data analytics.

- ♦ Complementing this initiative, the **National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT)** operates 56 centres, 750 affiliated institutes and over 9,000 facilitation centres, training professionals in cloud computing, AI, cybersecurity, blockchain and IoT.



Way Ahead

- India's cloud ecosystem is witnessing rapid expansion, with the country's cloud data capacity projected to grow nearly **4–5 times by 2030**.
- Investments in data centres are augmenting domestic capacity, while targeted skill-development initiatives are cultivating a workforce equipped for cloud-based technologies.
- Together, these measures are fostering innovation and positioning cloud computing as a cornerstone of India's long-term digital transformation.

Source: PIB

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHOLA-ERA IDOLS UNEARTHED IN T.N

In News

- Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) has unearthed bronze alloy idols of **Lord Nataraja and Goddess Sivagami**, along with their respective pedestals, during the ongoing excavations at Nagapattinam.

Cholas

- They were a **dominant power in peninsular India** in the 10th and 13th centuries, under rulers like Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and Rajadhiraja I, who expanded their authority by military victories in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

- The control they had over the fertile Kaveri delta, which allowed agriculture, trade, and urban growth, was partially the basis of their economic prosperity.
- The **Chola economy** was founded on commercial towns known as nagaram, which linked merchant groups with religious establishments.
- Temples, **especially Brahmanical temples**, stimulated regional and international trade through the demand they created for ritual and luxury goods.
- Temple urbanisation is the close relationship between temples, trade and the growth of towns.

Recently Discovered Idols

- The idol of Lord Nataraja is depicted in the '**Ananda Tandava**' posture with four arms and measures 110 cm in height and 100 cm in width.
- The idol of Goddess Sivagami is depicted in the 'Tribhanga' posture with two arms and measures 82 cm in height and 23 cm in width.

Features

- The idols are estimated to date back to the 12th century AD based on their physical structure, iconographic features, ornamental designs, and the construction of the pedestals.
- The idols belong to the Chola period and were unearthed at a depth of one metre.

Importance of discoveries

- These discoveries provide crucial archaeological evidence for understanding the religious practices, art, and history of metal sculpture in Nagapattinam during the Chola period.

Source: TH

NATIONAL UNITY DAY

Context

- The Rashtriya Ekta Diwas, or National Unity Day, is observed annually on October 31.

About National Unity Day

- Introduced in **2014**, the day commemorates the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister.
- Patel, along with V.P. Menon, played a key role in integrating more than **560 princely states** into the Indian Union through diplomacy and negotiations.
- Theme 2026:** "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat", highlighting national integration and unity in diversity.

Do You Know?

- The **Sardar Patel National Unity Award** was instituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in **2019** to recognise outstanding contributions towards national unity and integrity.

Source: AIR

FISCAL DEFICIT

Context

- India's fiscal deficit widened** in the first six months of FY27, as capital spending and subsidy outlays continued to rise.

About

- The fiscal deficit stood at ₹7.14 trillion** at the end of September, this amounts to **42.1% of the full-year budget estimate**.
- The higher proportion of the budgeted fiscal deficit already incurred in the first half of FY27 **indicates mounting pressure on the government's fiscal balance**.
- The Centre has budgeted a **fiscal deficit of ₹16.96 trillion, or 4.3% of GDP, for FY27**.
 - It is relying on **robust tax collections and higher non-tax revenues** in the coming months to meet this target.

What is the fiscal deficit?

- Fiscal Deficit is defined as **excess of total budget expenditure** (revenue and capital) **over total budget receipts** (revenue and capital) **excluding borrowings during a fiscal year**.
- Fiscal Deficit** = Total Expenditure – (Revenue Receipts + Non-Debt Creating Capital Receipts).

Implications of fiscal deficit

- Inflationary Pressure:** Persistently high fiscal deficits lead to inflation as governments resort to central bank-issued money to finance the deficit.
- Crowding Out effect:** When the government borrows a large portion of available funds from financial markets to finance its deficit, it crowds out private investment with reduced access to credit for businesses and individuals.
- Reduced Fiscal Space:** A high fiscal deficit limits the government's ability to respond to economic shocks or crises.
- Difficulty in borrowing:** As a government's finances worsen, demand for the government's bonds begins to drop, forcing the government to offer to pay a higher interest rate to lenders.

Source: LM

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON BANKING FOR VIKSIT BHARAT

Context

- The Government of India has constituted a High-Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat, chaired by former Central Vigilance Commissioner Suresh N. Patel.

Terms of Reference of the Committee

- The committee will examine existing banking practices**, prudential norms and international best practices to develop a roadmap for creating globally competitive Indian banks.
- Develop a roadmap** to create Indian banks capable of competing with leading international banking institutions, with the aspiration of having at least one or two Indian banks among the world's top **20 by 2047**.
 - State Bank of India** is the only public sector bank in the top 100, with its rank falling to 45 in the latest list, down from 43.
 - HDFC Bank** is the only other Indian bank in the top 100, with its ranking falling from 73 to 76.
- The committee will prepare a roadmap for **adopting artificial intelligence and digital innovation** across banking institutions while recommending safeguards against cybersecurity risks.
- The panel will review the **existing Priority Sector Lending framework** and **Lead Bank Scheme** to assess their effectiveness in expanding access to credit.

Source: IE

DR HOMI JEHANGIR BHABHA

Context

- Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha is remembered as the father of India’s nuclear programme.

About

- Homi Jehangir Bhabha was born on October 30, 1909.
- He helped conceptualise **India’s Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme**.
- He presided over the **First United Nations International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, held in Geneva in 1955**.

Scientific Contributions

- He calculated the **probability of scattering** between electrons and positrons, a process known as **Bhabha scattering**, which became important in particle physics experiments.
- Along with Walter Heitler, he developed the **theory of cosmic ray showers**, explaining how high-energy cosmic particles produce cascades of secondary particles when they enter the Earth’s atmosphere.

Institutional Foundations of India’s Nuclear Programme

- **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR):** In 1945, with support from the Tata Trust, Bhabha helped establish the TIFR in Mumbai, becoming its first director.
- **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC):** Bhabha played a key role in establishing the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in **1948** and became its first chairman.
- **The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), 1954,** was established under the direct charge of the Prime Minister, with Bhabha as its first Secretary.
- **Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET):** Bhabha led the establishment of the Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay in Mumbai in 1954.
 - ♦ Later, in 1967, it was renamed the **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)** in his honour.

Awards & Honours

- He was awarded the **Adams Prize (1942)**.
- He was awarded **Padma Bhushan in 1954**, the third-highest civilian award in India.
- He was also **nominated for the Nobel Prize** for Physics in 1951 and 1953–1956.

Source: DD News

BIHAR MUSEUM IN WORLD TOP 10

Context

- **Patna’s Bihar Museum** has been ranked the **top museum in Asia and ninth globally** in a list of the **world’s 100 best museums** for 2026 by German travel guide and digital magazine.

About

- The ranking list covered **3,800 venues across 142 countries**.
- Eligible museums were required to have a **permanent collection or exhibition open to the public**.
- **Categories included** art museums, history and archaeology museums, science and natural history museums, technology and transport museums, and open-air museums.

Top 10 Museums in the World 2026

Rank	Museum	Country
1.	Museo Nacional de Antropología	Mexico
2.	Museo del Prado	Spain
3.	Louisiana Museum of Modern Art	Denmark
4.	State Hermitage Museum	Russia
5.	Kunsthistorisches Museum	Austria
6.	Şanlıurfa Archaeology Museum	Türkiye
7.	Museum of the Second World War	Poland
8.	National WWII Museum	United States
9.	Bihar Museum	India
10.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	NY, United States

About Bihar Museum

- The museum was inaugurated in **2015**, with its development continuing over the subsequent years.
- Its design was led by **Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki**, a recipient of the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize.
- **One of its most celebrated treasures is the Didarganj Yakshi**, a remarkable Mauryan-era sculpture known for its distinctive polished finish and intricate craftsmanship.
- **From the Mauryan, Gupta and Pala periods to Buddhist and Jain heritage**, its galleries preserve stories that have shaped India’s past.

Source: IE

