

NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY - 2026: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

- **Date:** Observed every year on **April 24**.
- **Historical Context:** The **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act** of 1992 came into force on April 24, 1993. This granted constitutional status to Panchayats.
- **Constitutional Position: Part IX** of the Indian Constitution details the provisions related to Panchayats.
- **PAI – 2.0:** On this occasion, the 'Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0' was launched.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

- **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957):** Recommended the three-tier Panchayati Raj structure.
- **First State:** Rajasthan was the first state to implement this system in 1959.
- **Three Tiers:**
 1. **Gram Panchayat:** Village level.
 2. **Block (Mandal) Panchayat:** Intermediate level.
 3. **Zilla (District) Panchayat:** District level.
- **Gram Sabha:** A permanent body consisting of all registered voters. It is the foundation of direct democracy.

3. DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INITIATIVES

Key portals introduced by the government for transparency:

- **SVAMITVA:** Mapping village land using drones and issuing **Property Cards** to rural households.
- **SabhaSaar:** An **AI-powered tool** that creates minutes for Gram Sabha meetings. It supports 23 regional languages.
- **eGramSwaraj:** A portal for planning, accounting, and fund transfer (integrated with PFMS) for Panchayats.
- **Gram Urja Swaraj:** A dashboard to monitor renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and biogas at the village level.
- **Meri Panchayat App:** An m-governance platform to increase citizen participation.

4. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- **Representation:** Currently, **49.75%** of Panchayat representatives in India are women.
- **Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat (MWFGP):** Developing one Panchayat in each district as a women-friendly model (aligned with SDG Theme 9).
- **Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan:** A training program to enhance leadership skills among women representatives.
- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):** A centrally sponsored scheme to improve the administrative capacity of Panchayats.

5. PESA ACT (1996) - TRIBAL AREAS

- **PESA Act:** Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act.
- **Scope:** Applies to 77,564 villages across 10 states (including Andhra Pradesh and Telangana).
- **Implementation:** 9 out of 10 states have notified PESA rules, with Odisha being the exception.
- **PESA in Action:** Success stories have been published in various tribal languages.

6. FINANCIAL DECENTRALIZATION

- **15th Finance Commission (2021-26):** Allocated ₹2.36 lakh crore.
- **16th Finance Commission (2026-31):** Increased allocations to **₹4.35 lakh crore**.
- **Budget Growth:** Rural development funds have increased by 211% over the last decade (₹2.73 lakh crore in the 2026-27 budget).

QUICK REVISION POINTS:

- **Leadership Training:** Sashakt Panchayat – Netri Abhiyan.
- **Youth Participation:** Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS).
- **AI Tool:** SabhaSaar.
- **Local Heritage:** Released monographs on the rural heritage of Tripura, Tirupati, and Uttarkashi.

NASHA MukT BHARAT ABHIYAAN (NMBA) & APP 2.0

1. SCHEME BACKGROUND

- **Launch Date:** August 15, 2020.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Objective:** To spread awareness about substance use and create a drug-free India.
- **Expansion:** Initially launched in 272 most vulnerable districts; extended to **all districts** across the country from August 15, 2023.
- **NAPDDR:** The Abhiyaan operates under the **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)**.

2. NMBA APP 2.0 - KEY FEATURES

The government launched the upgraded version 2.0 to strengthen the monitoring framework:

- **Citizen Participation:** Now accessible to the general public. Features include taking an **e-Pledge**, accessing awareness materials (IEC), and helpline support.
- **Real-time Monitoring:** States, Districts, and Grant-in-Aid Institutions (GIAs) can upload and track activities with near real-time visibility.
- **Anudan (Grant) Status:** Integrated feature to track the real-time status of grants for GIA institutions, ensuring transparency and accountability in fund utilization.
- **Nearest De-addiction Centre:** A dedicated feature that allows users to identify and locate the nearest treatment services for quicker referrals.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Enables the public to share direct feedback for continuous improvement of the mission.

3. KEY STATISTICS (ACHIEVEMENTS)

- **Total Outreach:** 26+ crore people sensitized.
- **Youth Participation:** 9.5+ crore youth.
- **Women Participation:** 6.47+ crore women.
- **Master Volunteers:** 28,000+ (Known as '**Nasha Mukti Mitras**').
- **Activities:** Over 8.3 lakh activities conducted, with a significant focus on educational institutions.

4. SUPPORT HELPLINES

Key helplines often asked in competitive exams:

- **De-addiction Helpline:** For support regarding drug demand reduction and treatment.
- **MANAS Helpline:** For mental health and wellness support.

QUICK CHECK: EXAM-ORIENTED POINTS

1. **Nasha Mukti Mitras:** The specific designation given to the master volunteers working under NMBA.
2. **NAPDDR:** The national umbrella plan aimed at reducing the demand for drugs through a multi-pronged strategy.
3. **NMBA 2.0:** Serves as a centralized digital tool for **data-driven governance**, transparency, and institutional coordination.
4. **Milestone:** August 15, 2020 (Launch) → August 15, 2023 (Pan-India expansion).

INDIA-NETHERLANDS RELATIONS: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. CONTEXT

- **Event:** Celebration of the Netherlands' National Day, "**King's Day**," at the Dutch Embassy in New Delhi.
- **Chief Guest:** Union Minister of State for Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh.
- **Core Message:** The relationship between India and the Netherlands is steadily progressing towards a **Stronger Strategic Partnership**.

2. AREAS OF COLLABORATION

Deep cooperation exists between the two nations primarily in the following sectors:

- **Water Management:** Dutch technology is vital for India's water resource conservation and management.
- **Agriculture:** Focus on sustainable agriculture and global food security.
- **High Technology:** Collaboration in semiconductors and innovation-driven sectors.
- **Climate Resilience:** Joint efforts to address climate change and environmental challenges.

3. ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL TIES

- **Philips:** The Minister noted that "Philips," the famous Dutch multinational, has more consumers in India than in the Netherlands itself.
- **Investments:** Growing economic engagement and significant bilateral investments between the two countries.
- **Global Supply Chains:** Both nations are working together to strengthen and diversify global supply chains.

4. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES

- **Indian Diaspora:** Although relatively small in number, the active Indian community in the Netherlands plays a crucial role in strengthening bilateral ties.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS (EXAM POINTS):

1. **King's Day:** It is the official National Day of the Netherlands.
2. **Semiconductor Sector:** India and the Netherlands are increasingly collaborating in semiconductor manufacturing and supply chain resilience.

3. **Strategic Partnership:** Mutual trust is driving a strategic bond in economic, technological, and sustainable development sectors.
4. **Marisa Gerards:** Current Ambassador of the Netherlands to India.

SARAS AAJEEVIKA MELA 2026-27: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. BACKGROUND (CONTEXT)

- **Nodal Ministry:** Union Ministry of Rural Development.
- **Objective:** To enhance rural livelihoods, promote women entrepreneurship, and preserve traditional crafts.
- **Flagship Program:** These are prestigious events organized under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.

2. 2026-27 SCHEDULE (MAJOR EVENTS)

Three major SARAS events have been finalized for the National Capital Region (NCR):

1. **SARAS Aajeevika Mela 2026 (Gurugram):** October 22 to November 6, 2026 (at Leisure Valley Park).
2. **SARAS Food Festival 2026 (New Delhi):** November 21 to December 8, 2026 (at Sunder Nursery).
3. **SARAS Aajeevika Mela 2027 (New Delhi):** February 1 to February 28, 2027 (at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium).

3. CORE OBJECTIVES

- **Platform for SHGs:** To provide a national-level platform for members of **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** and rural artisans to sell their products directly to urban consumers.
- **Women Empowerment:** To strengthen women-led enterprises and increase their income opportunities.
- **Market Linkages:** Supporting capacity building in packaging, branding, and marketing to provide better market access for rural products.
- **Government Initiatives:** Promoting the visions of '**Vocal for Local**' and '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**'.

4. KEY FEATURES & EXHIBITS

- Handlooms, handicrafts, natural and organic products showcased from various states.
- Regional cuisines and traditional art forms that reflect India's rich cultural diversity.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS (EXAM POINTS):

1. **DAY-NRLM Integration:** SARAS Melas are an integral part of this mission, which is the Central Government's largest scheme for rural poverty alleviation.
2. **Direct Market Access:** A unique feature where rural women entrepreneurs are directly connected with the urban market, eliminating middlemen.
3. **Cultural Significance:** Beyond commerce, these melas play a vital role in preserving India's **Indigenous Crafts**.
4. **Prime Locations:** For the 2026-27 cycle, Gurugram and New Delhi serve as the primary hubs.

Quick Revision: SARAS Aajeevika Mela = **DAY-NRLM + Women SHGs + Direct Market Access**.

SILICON PHOTONICS TECHNOLOGY LAUNCH (2026)

1. BACKGROUND (CONTEXT)

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- **Venue:** IIT Madras (CoE-CPPICS Center).
- **Launched By:** Shri S. Krishnan (Secretary, MeitY).
- **Significance:** A major milestone toward India's '**Technology Sovereignty**'.

2. LAUNCHED TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

Two primary solutions were launched to bolster the semiconductor ecosystem:

1. **Silicon Photonics Process Design Kit (PDK):** A comprehensive library with over 50 verified components for photonics chip manufacturing. It enables startups, industries, and defense R&D organizations to design advanced Photonic Integrated Circuits (ICs).
2. **Universal Programmable Photonic ICs Test Engine (PPIC):** A state-of-the-art automated characterization and testing platform used for verifying photonic and optoelectronic modules.

3. CORE OBJECTIVES & BENEFITS

- **National Facility:** It will serve as a '**Shared National Facility**' for the Indian photonics R&D community.
- **Semiconductor Mission:** Lays the foundation for establishing a **Silicon Photonics Fab** (Fabrication unit) under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).
- **Applications:** The technology is applicable in both **Classical and Quantum Computing** regimes.
- **ISM 2.0:** This technology is expected to be further supported and developed under the R&D vertical of the upcoming **ISM 2.0**.

4. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- **Developer:** CoE-CPPICS, IIT Madras.
- **Foundry Partner:** SilTerra, Malaysia.
- **Packaging Partner:** izmo Microsystems, Bengaluru.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS (EXAM POINTS):

1. **CoE-CPPICS:** Stands for *Center of Excellence in Cloud-Connected Photonic Integrated Circuits and Systems*.
2. **Silicon Photonics:** A technology that uses **Light (Photons)** instead of electrons to transfer data. It significantly increases data transfer speeds and reduces power consumption.
3. **PRDM Model:** The center operates on the **Product Research, Development, and Manufacturing** model.
4. **MPW Fabrication:** Multi-Project Wafer (MPW) fabrication runs for Silicon Photonics are scheduled to begin in **Q3 (Third Quarter)** of this financial year.

Quick Revision: Silicon Photonics Solutions = **IIT Madras + MeitY + Technology Sovereignty**.

PROJECT DANTAK (BRO): KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. CONTEXT

- **Raising Day:** April 24, 2026 (66th Anniversary).
- **Establishment:** April 1961.
- **Organization:** Border Roads Organisation (BRO), Ministry of Defence, Government of India.
- **Location:** Thimphu, Bhutan.

- **Significance:** A testament to the long-standing friendship and strategic partnership between India and Bhutan.

2. KEY INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRIBUTIONS

Project DANTAK has played a pivotal role in the socio-economic transformation of Bhutan:

- **Roads:** Constructed over **1,500 km** of roads, including Bhutan's first motorable road.
- **Strategic Highways:** The **East–West Highway** connecting Trashigang to Thimphu, and the Phuentsholing–Thimphu Highway.
- **Airports:** Development of **Paro International Airport** and Yongphula Airport.
- **Other Facilities:** Telecommunication networks, hydropower infrastructure, hospitals, schools, and institutional buildings.

3. RECENT PROJECTS & MODERNIZATION

- **Double Laning:** Expansion of critical stretches like Confluence–Haa (Phase I) and the 168 km Samdrup Jongkhar–Trashigang highway.
- **Strategic Connectivity:** Construction and upgradation of roads in the South-Eastern region (Nganglam–Dewathang, Khotakpa–Tshobaley).
- **Disaster Management:** Restoring connectivity in record time during natural calamities like landslides and road washouts.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS (EXAM POINTS):

1. **Project DANTAK:** A specialized BRO project initiated in 1961 specifically for the infrastructure development of Bhutan.
2. **India-Bhutan Relations:** During PM Narendra Modi's visit in November 2025, both nations reaffirmed their commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation.
3. **Role of BRO:** BRO is the lead agency in creating strategic infrastructure in border areas and friendly neighboring countries like Bhutan.
4. **Economic Backbone:** Critical routes like the Damchu–Chukha axis and the East-West Highway are considered the lifelines of the Bhutanese economy.

Quick Revision: Project DANTAK = **BRO + Bhutan's Development + 65 Years of Friendship.**