

# IACE

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## Indian-Origin NASA Astronaut Sunita Williams Retires After 27 Years of Service



- On January 21, 2026, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that Indian-origin astronaut **Sunita Lyn Williams** retired from service effective December 27, 2025, marking the end of a 27-year illustrious career in human space exploration.
- In **2008**, she was conferred with the **Padma Bhushan**, the third highest civilian award, in the field of Science and Engineering.

### About Sunita Williams:

- **Profile:** She was born on September 19, 1965, in Ohio, the United States of America (USA). She is a former Navy officer of the USA, who became one of NASA's most experienced and accomplished space explorers.

- **Space Career:** In 1998, She was selected by NASA as an astronaut candidate. She trained in spacecraft systems, robotics, T-38 jet flight, survival training, and Russian space operations, preparing for long-duration missions to the International Space Station (ISS). She trained in Russia on the ISS program and worked on the station's robotic arms.
- **Space Expeditions:** She completed three space missions during her 27-year career: Expedition 14/15, Expedition 32/33 aboard the International Space Station (ISS), and the Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test mission.

#### Achievements & Records:

- **Time in Space:** She has logged 608 days in space across her three missions, making her second on NASA's list for cumulative time in orbit.
- She is jointly ranked sixth for the longest single spaceflight by an American, alongside NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore, with both spending 286 days in space during the Boeing Starliner and SpaceX Crew-9 missions.
- **Spacewalks:** She performed nine spacewalks totaling 62 hours and 6 minutes, the most spacewalk time by a woman and fourth overall in NASA history.
- **First Marathon in Space:** During her first mission, she ran the first marathon ever in space on a treadmill aboard the ISS, completing the Boston Marathon distance of 42.195 kilometers (kms).
- **About National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA):**
- **Administrator** – Jared Isaacman
- **Headquarters** – Washington DC, the United States of America(USA)
- **Established** – 1958

# India AI Impact Summit 2026: Shaping Inclusive and Responsible AI for the World

- India will host the India AI Impact Summit 2026 from 16 to 20 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- The summit is anchored by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and supported by the IndiaAI Mission, Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), and the Digital India Initiative.
- This five-day global event will bring together policymakers, researchers, industry leaders, startups, and civil society. The summit highlights India's development-focused approach to Artificial Intelligence and positions the country as a key global voice on inclusive, ethical, and people-centric AI.

## The India-AI Impact Summit 2026:

- The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 is a flagship international platform focused on using Artificial Intelligence for social welfare, sustainable development, and economic progress.
- It will be organized at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, as a comprehensive five day programme covering policy dialogue, research discussions, industry showcases, and public engagement.
- The summit reflects India's belief that AI should serve society at scale rather than remain limited to elite technological use.



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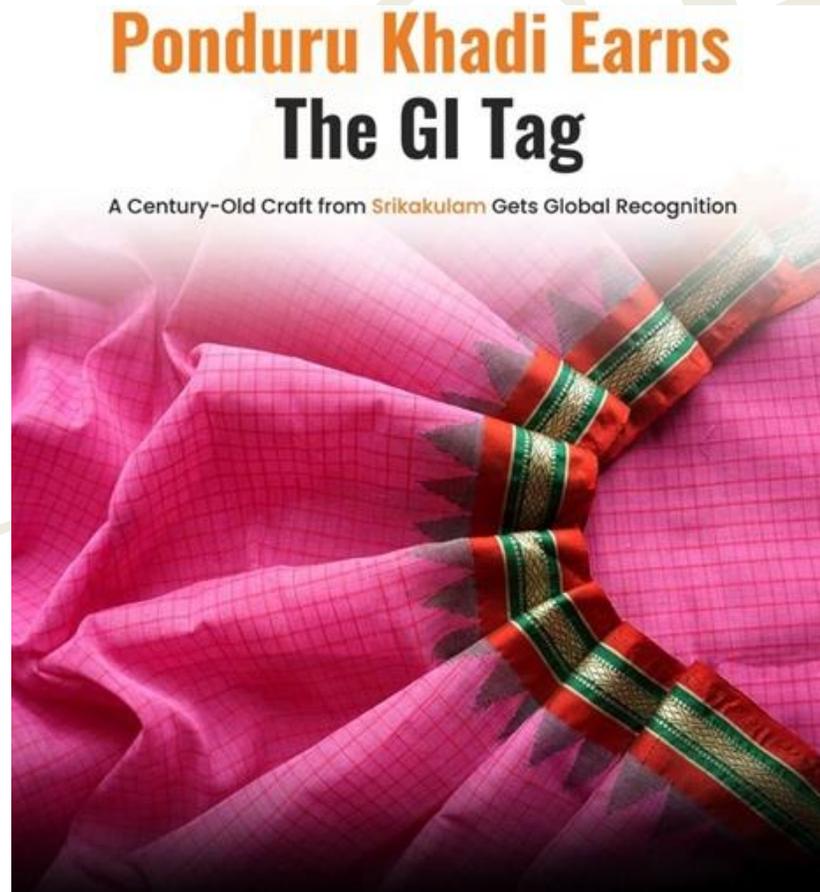
- By hosting the summit, India aims to amplify the voice of developing nations in global AI governance while showcasing its own digital public infrastructure and AI use cases.
- **Foundational Pillars:** Sutras and Chakras
- **The Summit is guided by three Sutras (principles):** People, Planet, and Progress, operationalized through seven Chakras—key areas of AI impact and multilateral collaboration.

### **The Seven Chakras:**

- **Human Capital** – Building equitable AI reskilling and workforce readiness.
- **Inclusion for Social Empowerment** – Enabling last-mile citizen-centric AI solutions.
- **Safe and Trusted AI** – Implementing responsible AI governance frameworks.
- **Resilience, Innovation, and Efficiency** – Promoting sustainable and equitable AI adoption.
- **Science** – Accelerating research and innovation while addressing inequities in data and compute access.
- **Democratizing AI Resources** – Ensuring affordable and equitable access to AI infrastructure.
- **AI for Economic Growth & Social Good** – Highlighting AI applications with societal and economic impact.
- The summit includes pre-summit consultations, regional AI conferences across eight Indian states, and the main summit sessions aligned with the seven Chakras.
- A key highlight is the India AI Impact Expo 2026, featuring over 400 exhibitors, seven thematic pavilions, and more than 1.5 lakh visitors.
- Flagship challenges such as AI for ALL, AI by HER, and YUVAi promote startups, women-led innovation, and youth participation.
- The AI Compendium, released on 17 February 2026, will document real-world AI use cases across priority sectors.

## **Ponduru Khadi from Andhra Pradesh Receives GI Tag**

- Ponduru Khadi, a rare hand-woven cotton fabric from Andhra Pradesh, has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, enhancing global visibility, legal protection, and market opportunities for artisans of this traditional craft.
- The GI registration, awarded to the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, legally safeguards Ponduru Khadi—produced exclusively in Ponduru village, Srikakulam district—against imitation and certifies its geographical origin.



## **PM Modi inaugurated the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project**

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project (4-Laning of Kaliabor-Numaligarh section of NH-715), worth over Rs. 6,950 Crore in Kaliabor, Assam.
- Under this, a 90-kms corridor from Kaliabor to Numaligarh is being developed at a cost of about Rs. 7,000 crore, including a 35-kilometre elevated wildlife corridor.
- It will feature 35 km of Elevated Wildlife Corridor that will pass through Kaziranga National Park, 21 km Bypass section and 30 km widening of the existing highway section of NH-715 from two to four lanes.
- The project will pass through Nagaon, Karbi Anglong and Golaghat districts and will significantly improve connectivity to Upper Assam, particularly Dibrugarh and Tinsukia.
- As part of the project, Bypasses will be developed at Jakhalabandha and Bokakhat that will help to decongest towns, improve urban mobility and enhance the quality of life for local residents.



## **Finke River Recognised as World's Oldest Flowing River**

- The Finke River in central Australia, also known as Larapinta by the Arrernte people, is believed to be the world's oldest river still flowing today, dating back 300–400 million years.
- Stretching over 640 kilometres across the Northern Territory and South Australia, the river cuts through some of Australia's most ancient landscapes, long predating the age of dinosaurs.
- Unlike typical rivers, the Finke flows intermittently, appearing as isolated waterholes for most of the year, connecting briefly only after heavy rainfall, yet forming a continuous ancient river system.



# Milma Partners with National Dairy Development Board to Set Up Food-Testing Laboratory in Kochi

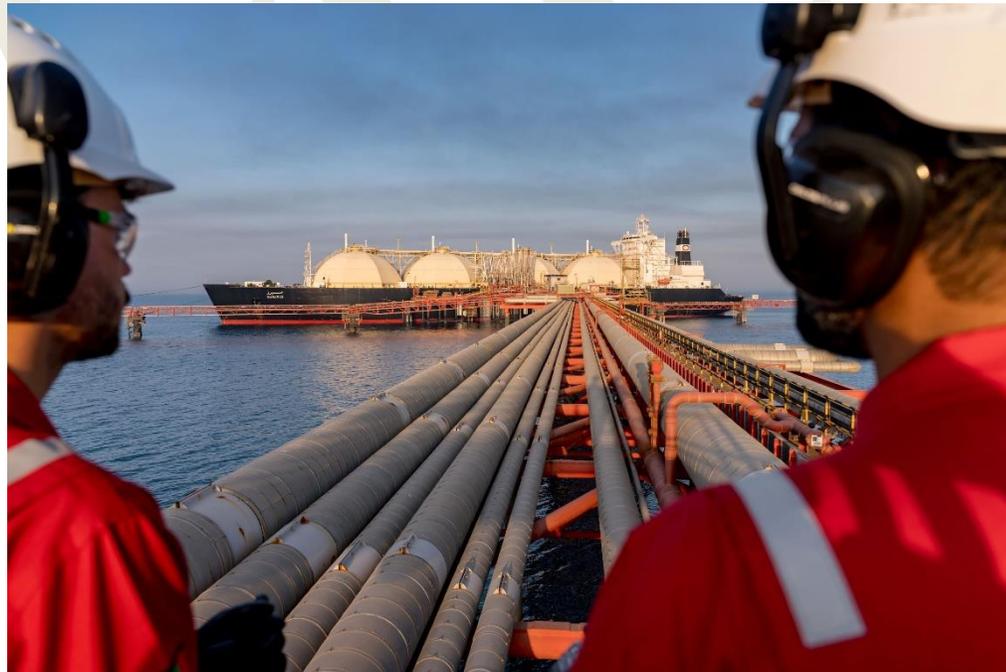


- Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) has partnered with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) to operationalise a food-testing laboratory in Kochi.
- The laboratory, named NDDB CALF (Centre for Analysis and Learning in Livestock and Food) Laboratory, will function as a branch of NDDB CALF Limited.
- The laboratory will be inaugurated by Union Minister of State George Kurian, highlighting government support for dairy and food safety initiatives.
- In its initial phase, the laboratory will cater to quality and safety testing of milk and milk products, serving Kerala and neighbouring states.
- The laboratory is NABL-accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories, ensuring adherence to stringent national quality standards.

- Facilities have been established for comprehensive testing of milk and milk products, with plans to expand services to include food and agricultural commodities such as spices, fruits, vegetables, bakery products, ready-to-eat foods, and fish and allied products.
- The laboratory's state-of-the-art instrumentation and modern infrastructure will support state government departments and food safety authorities in mitigating food safety risks through advanced testing services.
- NDDB CALF Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NDDB, headquartered in Anand, Gujarat, with over 17 years of experience providing analytical testing and research services to the dairy, food, and agricultural sectors, as well as regulatory authorities.
- This partnership strengthens Kerala's food safety ecosystem and enhances regional capacity for scientific quality assurance in the dairy and food sectors.

## **A 10-year liquefied natural gas sales and purchase agreement has been signed by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Gas (ADNOC Gas) and its subsidiaries with HPCL**

- The agreement signed with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited is valued between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion.
- The agreement was announced during UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to India.
- Dr Sultan bin Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and managing director and group chief executive of ADNOC, and Vikas Kaushal, chairman and managing director of HPCL exchanged the contract.
- Under the agreement, ADNOC Gas will supply 0.5 million tonnes per annum LNG to HPCL.
- The source of supply will be ADNOC Gas' Das Island liquefaction facility. This facility has a production capacity of up to 6 mtpa.
- The deal supports India aims to raise the share of natural gas in its energy mix to 15% by 2030.



## BCCI Signs ₹270 Crore Gemini Sponsorship Deal Ahead of IPL 2026



- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has secured a major commercial boost ahead of the IPL 2026 season. Google's AI platform Gemini has signed a high-value sponsorship deal, underlining the Indian Premier League's unmatched commercial appeal and the growing involvement of artificial intelligence companies in Indian sports.

### **Gemini-BCCI Sponsorship Deal:**

- The newly signed sponsorship agreement is a significant addition to IPL's commercial portfolio.
- The deal is valued at ₹270 crore.
- It is a three-year agreement, covering multiple IPL seasons.
- The partnership reinforces the global brand value of IPL.
- According to BCCI officials, the agreement reflects the league's strong pull for global technology brands and its position as the world's most-watched T20 cricket tournament.
- The deal highlights rising AI interest in Indian cricket, with Tata Group as title sponsor and Apollo Tyres as jersey sponsor after the gaming ban.
- ChatGPT, a rival AI platform, is already sponsoring the Women's Premier League.

- AI brands view cricket as a powerful medium to reach millions of users.
- Such partnerships blend technology, fan engagement, and sports marketing.
- This shift marks a new phase where digital and AI-driven companies are becoming key stakeholders in sports sponsorship.

### **IPL 2026 Season Window:**

- The schedule for the upcoming IPL season has also been confirmed.
- IPL 2026 will be played from March 26 to May 31, 2026.
- It will feature top international and Indian cricketers.
- The league remains the most valuable T20 competition globally.
- The new sponsorship deals strengthen financial stability ahead of the season.

## **Abu Dhabi Ranked World's Safest City for 10th Consecutive Year**

- Abu Dhabi has been ranked the world's safest city for the 10th consecutive year, according to Numbeo's global safety index.
- The ranking highlights the city's strong law enforcement, low crime rate, advanced infrastructure, and high quality of life, reinforcing its global reputation for security and Global safety rankings once again place Abu Dhabi at the top.
- The capital city of the United Arab Emirates has retained its position as the world's safest city for the tenth consecutive year, reflecting consistent efforts in public safety, urban planning and governance.
- The recognition highlights how long-term policy focus can create a secure and stable living environment.

### **About the Global Safety Ranking:**

- The ranking has been released by Numbeo, a well-known global database that compares cities based on crime rates, public safety perception, law enforcement efficiency, and overall quality of life.
- Abu Dhabi has topped this index continuously since 2017. The ranking is based on user-contributed data and surveys, combined with crime statistics.
- Maintaining the top position for a decade reflects sustained governance, strong institutions, and effective implementation of public safety measures.



## **Padma Awardee Saina Nehwal Announced Retirement from Competitive Badminton**

- In January 2026, Indian Olympic medallist, Padma Awardee and former world No.1 Badminton player Saina Nehwal announced her retirement from competitive badminton, concluding a 21-year career.
- She was honored with **Padma Shri** in **2010** and Padma Bhushan in 2016 for her contribution in the field of Sports.

### **Achievements:**

- **Olympics:** She clinched the bronze medal in women's singles at the 2012 London Olympics in London, United Kingdom(UK), becoming the first Indian badminton player to win an Olympic medal.
- **World Ranking:** Became the first Indian woman to achieve World No. 1 ranking in singles in 2015.
- **BWF Superseries:** Won her first Badminton World Federation (BWF) Superseries title at the Indonesia Open in 2009 (Jakarta, Indonesia), the first for an Indian, and accumulated 10 Superseries titles including Singapore, Hong Kong, Denmark, Australia, China, and India Opens.
- **Junior Titles:** Won the World Junior Badminton Championships in 2008 and the Commonwealth Youth Games girls' singles gold in 2008 in Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Commonwealth Games:** Secured gold in women's singles at the 2010 New Delhi (Delhi) and 2018 Gold Coast editions in Australia.
- **BWF GP Titles:** Claimed 10 BWF Grand Prix (GP) titles including Philippines, Chinese Taipei, India, Swiss, Thailand, Syed Modi, and Malaysia Masters.
- **Awards:** **Padma Bhushan (2016), Padma Shri (2010), Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (2009)**



## **Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan Releases Book 'Chalice of Ambrosia: Ram Janmabhoomi- Challenge and Response'**

➤ On 20 January 2026, Vice President (VP) C.P. Radhakrishnan released a book titled 'Chalice of Ambrosia : Ram Janmabhoomi- Challenge and Response', authored by Dr. Surendra Kumar Pachauri, former Secretary to the Government of India (GoI), at the VP's Enclave in New Delhi, Delhi.

**The book was published by Har-Anand Publications.**

### **Key Details:**

- **Book Overview:** It chronicles the long and complex Ram Janmabhoomi movement, a campaign to reclaim and build a temple at the birthplace of Lord Ram, a Hindu god, in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- It blends historical context with legal developments, cultural context and contemporary politics to provide a comprehensive narrative in modern Indian history.
- **About Surendra Kumar Pachauri:** He is a retired 1968-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from Andhra Pradesh (AP) cadre. He served as the Secretary of the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Inquiry, which examined the events surrounding the Babar Masjid demolition and its consequences.



# Overview of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Visit to India on January 19, 2026



- On January 19, 2026, the President of United Arab Emirates (UAE) **Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan** undertook a one-day visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi.
- The visit marks his third visit as UAE President and fifth visit overall to India.
- **Highlights of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Visit to India:**
- **Bilateral Meeting:** PM Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed held bilateral meetings, with a focus on trade expansion, and reviewed and strengthened the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

## Key Outcomes:

- During UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit, India and the UAE announced several initiatives in trade, technology, energy, digital cooperation, culture, and people-to-people ties to strengthen long-term bilateral relations and economic integration.

- India and the UAE agreed to expand their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), aiming to double bilateral trade to over USD 200 billion by 2032.
- They also announced a collaboration between Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and G-42 to establish a supercomputing cluster, agreed to partner in advanced nuclear technologies including large reactors and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and planned to promote trade and investment with the First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and DP World operating from GIFT City, Gujarat.

### **Key Agreements Signed:**

- A Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed for the development of Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) in Gujarat.
- Another LoI between Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) and the UAE Space Agency aims to develop joint space infrastructure, including launch facilities, tech zones, start-up incubation, training institutes.
- A Defence LoI was signed to create a Strategic Defence Partnership focusing on industry, technology, training, education, special operations, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism.
- In energy, a 10-year Sales & Purchase Agreement (SPA) enables HPCL to import 0.5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from ADNOC Gas starting 2028.
- Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between APEDA (MoC&I) and the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment seeks to enhance food sector trade.