

Highlights of 19 September 2026 Current Affairs

- World Bank Group President Ajay Banga has announced the appointment of Nobel laureate **Michael Kremer** as the organization's next **Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics**. Kremer will officially assume office on **October 1, 2026**, succeeding Indermit Gill.
 - Kremer is the **first economist to join the World Bank as Chief Economist with a Nobel Prize already in hand**. (Past Nobel-winning chief economists, such as Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Romer, received the honor *after* completing their tenures at the bank).
- NITI Aayog, in collaboration with WRI India, has released the second edition of the **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025**. The index evaluates all 36 states and Union Territories on their transition toward electric mobility and EV adoption.
- Academic Freedom Index 2026: India Placed in "Severely Restricted" Category
 - India has been categorized under the **"Severely Restricted"** bracket in the *Free to Think 2026* report released by **Scholars at Risk (SAR)**, an international network monitoring higher education freedom worldwide.
 - India's Academic Freedom Index score fell significantly from **0.38 in 2022 to 0.14**.
 - India is grouped alongside Hong Kong, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ukraine, and the West Bank in the "severely restricted" tier. Below this sits the "completely restricted" category, which includes nations like China, Afghanistan, Iran, and Russia.
 - The report documented hundreds of global attacks on higher education communities, noting that India accounted for a significant portion of reported incidents involving campus expression limitations, event cancellations, and administrative pressures on faculty.
- The World Economic Forum (WEF) released its annual **Global Gender Gap Report**, marking the 20th anniversary edition of the index.
 - India retained its **131st position out of 145 countries** on the index.
 - India achieved an overall score of **64.5%**, showing a gradual long-term improvement (up 4.3 percentage points since the index's inception in 2006). However, it continues to trail the global average of **69.2%**.
 - Within South Asia, India ranks behind countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the fifth edition of **SEMICON India 2026** at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in New Delhi. The premier three-day conference and exhibition brings together global industry leaders, policymakers, investors, and academic institutions to cement India's expanding role in the global semiconductor landscape.
- **Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan** is a distinguished Chennai-born computer scientist, engineer, and prominent science policy expert. He has made history as the **first Indian American** to be named the recipient of the National Academy of Engineering's (NAE) prestigious **Arthur M. Bueche Award** for 2026.
 - Born in Chennai in 1961, Panchanathan earned a BSc in Physics from the University of Madras (1981), a BE in Electronics and Communication

Engineering from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc, 1984), and an MTech in Electrical Engineering from IIT Madras (1986). He later obtained his PhD from the University of Ottawa, Canada.

- The board of **Tata Sons** has approved a fresh **five-year term** for **N Chandrasekaran** as Executive Chairman, extending his leadership upon the completion of his current tenure on **February 20, 2027**.
 - In August 2026, Chandrasekaran announced he would not seek another term following a lack of unanimous backing during earlier board considerations. However, following a unanimous request from the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) on September 3, 2026, to reconsider in the "larger interests of the Tata Group," he agreed to stay on.
- Opening batter **Abhishek Sharma** delivered a historic power-hitting masterclass during the third and final T20I against Afghanistan at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, rewriting multiple national and global records. He reached his century in just **30 balls**, shattering Rohit Sharma's long-standing Indian record of a 35-ball hundred set against Sri Lanka in Indore in 2017. His breathtaking knock also marked the **fastest T20I century by a batter from a Full Member (Test-playing) nation**, eclipsing the previous joint-benchmark of 33 balls held by Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza and New Zealand's Finn Allen.
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board has officially appointed **Tavengwa Mukuhleri** as its new **Deputy Chairperson** for a term running until **November 2027**.
 - Mukuhleri—who serves as the Chairman of Zimbabwe Cricket and represents the board on the ICC—makes history by becoming the **first Zimbabwean** to ever hold the position of ICC Deputy Chair.
 - He succeeds Singapore's **Imran Khwaja**, following Khwaja's departure from the ICC Board.
 - Alongside his new leadership post, Mukuhleri maintains active roles across key internal pillars, chairing the **HR and Remuneration Committee** while serving on the **Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) Committee** and the **Nominations Committee**.
- Moody's Ratings has sharply revised its real GDP growth projection for India for the fiscal year 2026–27 (FY27), raising it to **7% from its previous estimate of 6%**. The upgrade comes as part of Moody's periodic review, underscoring the Indian economy's robust ability to absorb external shocks.
- In a significant policy shift away from decades of ultra-loose monetary policy, the **Bank of Japan (BOJ)** has raised its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to **1.25%**. This marks the highest interest rate level in Japan since **1995** (a 31-year high), underscoring the central bank's growing resolve to combat persistent inflationary pressures. The BOJ bumped its key short-term policy rate from 1% to 1.25%, executing a move that had been widely anticipated by financial markets.
- **International Red Panda Day (IRPD)** is an annual global event dedicated to celebrating the charismatic red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and raising awareness about the urgent conservation needs of the species and its shrinking natural habitat.
 - **When is it observed?** The event is held annually on the **third Saturday of September**.
 - **Date for 2026:** It falls on **Saturday, September 19, 2026**.
 - **History & Origin**

- **Inception:** International Red Panda Day was launched by the **Red Panda Network (RPN)**—a global non-profit organization dedicated to red panda conservation—along with various international zoos, wildlife organizations, and academic institutions.
- **Purpose of Creation:** While giant pandas historically captured the bulk of global conservation attention, red pandas faced compounding pressures that were largely overlooked by the general public. The day was established to bring worldwide focus to their declining numbers and to rally community-led conservation.