



**BANKING
WALLAH**



3-MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPILATION

DECEMBER 2024 – FEBRUARY 2025



**FOR SBI CLERK MAINS & OTHER
BANKING EXAMS | BANKING WALLAH**



COMPREHENSIVE CA COVERAGE

BANKING & FINANCIAL AWARENESS

STATIC GK & IMPORTANT EVENTS

RBI & GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

COMPILED BY ME : BANKING WALLAH

DATE OF RELEASE: MARCH 2025

Sabhi **Bank Exams** Ki Preparation Ka **Ek Subscription**

BANK MAHAPACK

PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW

IBPS PO, CLERK & SO | SBI PO & CLERK | RRB PO & CLERK | RBI ASSISTANT & GRADE B | LIC, NIACL, IDBI, FCI, & MANY MORE

18+
Exams
Covered

100+
Batches
(Live & Recorded)

2000+
Live
Classes

2000+
Mocks, Quizzes
& Notes

24X7
Doubt
Support



Join Now

Sabhi **Bank Exams** Ki Preparation Ka **Ek Subscription**

BANK MAHAPACK

PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW

IBPS PO, CLERK & SO | SBI PO & CLERK | RRB PO & CLERK | RBI ASSISTANT & GRADE B | LIC, NIACL, IDBI, FCI, & MANY MORE

18+
Exams
Covered

100+
Batches
(Live & Recorded)

2000+
Live
Classes

2000+
Mocks, Quizzes
& Notes

24X7
Doubt
Support

1-YEAR

Subscription At Just

~~₹ 11,999/-~~

₹ 2,999 /-

2-YEAR

Subscription At Just

~~₹ 19,999/-~~

₹ 3,999 /-



Join Now



TG Community Link:- <https://tinyurl.com/BankingwallahCommunity>

Banking Wallah Channel :- <https://tinyurl.com/BankingWallahChannel>

Banking Current Affairs:- <https://tinyurl.com/BankingCurrentAffairs>

IG link :- <https://www.instagram.com/bankingwallah?igsh=bG5oZ3JqeXh1ZmE=>

YT link: - <https://www.youtube.com/@BankingWallah>

Telegram link: - <https://telegram.me/pwbankingwallah>

Faculty Telegram link: - <https://t.me/CAbysushmitamam>



**BANKING
WALLAH**

Sabhi **Bank Exams** Ki Preparation Ka **Ek Subscription**

BANK MAHAPACK

PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW

IBPS PO, CLERK & SO | SBI PO & CLERK | RRB PO & CLERK | RBI ASSISTANT &
GRADE B | LIC, NIACL, IDBI, FCI, & MANY MORE

18+

Exams
Covered

100+

Batches
(Live & Recorded)

2000+

Live
Classes

2000+

Mocks, Quizzes
& Notes

24X7

Doubt
Support

1-YEAR

Subscription At Just

~~₹ 11,999/-~~

₹ 2,799 /-

2-YEAR

Subscription At Just

~~₹ 19,999/-~~

₹ 3,999 /-



**BANKING
WALLAH**

BEST BOOKS For **BANKING Exams** **Banking Drona Modules Combo Set of 6 Books**

- Detailed Theory
- Solved Examples
- Problem-Solving Techniques
- Topic-Wise Exercises
- Previous Year Questions

Available in English & Hindi

— At just —
~~₹3,200/-~~

₹1,299/-

Get it on PW Store



Index

1. News Related to RBI.....	1
2. Banking and Finance.....	8
3. Business and Economy.....	21
4. National Affairs.....	29
5. International Affairs.....	49
6. State News.....	56
7. Awards and Honours.....	61
8. Appointment and Resignation.....	66
9. Science and Technology.....	76
10. Defence News.....	80
11. Reports, Ranking and Index.....	85
12. Sports News.....	93
13. Govt Scheme.....	102
14. Agreement and MoU.....	108
15. Summit and Conference.....	119

GA Capsule for SBI Clerk Mains 2025

News Related to RBI

India's RBI imposes ₹76.6 lakh fine on four NBFCs over compliance issues in lending platform

- ❖ The Reserve Bank imposed a total penalty of ₹76.6 lakh on four non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) for non-compliance with peer-to-peer lending regulations.
- ❖ Fairassets Technologies India was fined ₹40 lakh.
- ❖ Bridge Fintech Solutions and Rang De P2P Financial Services were each fined ₹10 lakh.
- ❖ Visionary Financepeer was fined ₹16.6 lakh.
- ❖ The penalties relate to non-compliance with the 'Non-Banking Financial Company – Peer-to-Peer Lending Platform (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2017'.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank clarified that the penalties are based on regulatory compliance deficiencies and do not comment on the validity of transactions or agreements between the companies and their customers.

RBI Inaugurated Digital Payments Awareness Week 2025

- ❖ The RBI governor Sanjay Malhotra inaugurated the 5th Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2025.
- ❖ The 5th Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) is being observed from March 10 to 16, 2025, under the theme "India Pays Digitally," aimed at promoting the importance and safe usage of digital payments.
- ❖ DPAW is an initiative to highlight the impact and importance of digital payments and to create awareness about safe usage of digital payment products.
- ❖ Governor Sanjay Malhotra emphasized that both the RBI and various stakeholders, including the government and payment operators, are actively working to improve digital payment adoption.
- ❖ Three key focus areas were outlined: promoting soft-touch regulations for innovation, increasing awareness of digital payments, and improving efficiency in cross-border transactions.
- ❖ The RBI aims to maintain a balance between encouraging innovation and ensuring safety within regulatory guardrails.
- ❖ India holds a significant 48.5% share in global real-time payments by volume, primarily due to UPI's success in domestic transactions.
- ❖ In 2024, India is projected to receive approximately USD 130 billion in remittances, highlighting the need

for more efficient cross-border payment solutions.

- ❖ 3. RBI and National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) have Launched Nationwide Campaigns to Boost Financial Literacy
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) have launched nationwide campaigns to enhance financial literacy in India.
- ❖ Guidelines have been established for setting up Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs) by Lead Banks to conduct special camps targeting various groups.
- ❖ The "RBI Kehta Hai" public awareness campaign is multi-media and multilingual, aimed at educating the public on safe banking practices.
- ❖ Mass media campaigns are organized to spread essential financial awareness messages to all age groups.
- ❖ The Financial Awareness Messages (FAME) booklet has been developed to provide standardized content for different audience segments, including senior citizens.
- ❖ NCFE, in collaboration with the Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL), conducts Financial Education (FE) programmes targeting individuals under 18 years and over 60 years.
- ❖ NCFE is implementing the National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE) in consultation with financial sector regulators to empower the population with necessary financial management skills.
- ❖ In the last three years, NCFE has conducted 54 Financial Literacy programmes in the North Eastern States, with positive feedback indicating improved understanding of financial concepts and fraud prevention.

RBI unveils framework for recognising SROs for account aggregator ecosystem

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced a framework for recognizing Self-Regulatory Organizations (SROs) for the Account Aggregator (AA) ecosystem and invited applications for SRO-AAs.
- ❖ Non-banking financial companies (NBFC) acting as Account Aggregators (AAs) will collect and present financial information from Financial Information Providers (FIPs) to Financial Information Users (FI-Us).
- ❖ SRO-AAs must be established as not-for-profit companies under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- ❖ Applicants need to achieve a minimum net worth of

₹2 crore within one year after recognition or before starting operations, maintaining it thereafter.

- ❖ The shareholding of SRO-AAs should be diversified, with no entity holding 10% or more of paid-up share capital.
- ❖ SRO-AAs must maintain at least 25 unique entities from both FIPs and FI-Us as members at all times.
- ❖ The framework mandates that SRO-AAs possess robust IT capabilities and the ability to deploy technological solutions efficiently.
- ❖ SRO-AAs are required to operate under RBI oversight, promoting the sustainable development of the AA ecosystem.
- ❖ Independence and impartiality are essential for SRO-AAs to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain credibility.
- ❖ SRO-AAs should act as neutral representatives of the industry, ensuring fair treatment for all members and gaining the trust of financial sector regulators.

Reserve Bank appoints Ajit Ratnakar Joshi as new executive director

- ❖ Dr. Ajit Ratnakar Joshi has been appointed as the Executive Director of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), effective March 3, 2025.
- ❖ Prior to this promotion, he served as Principal Adviser in the Department of Statistics and Information Management (DSIM).
- ❖ In his role as Executive Director, he will oversee both the Department of Statistics and Information Management and the Financial Stability Department.
- ❖ His responsibilities include ensuring the accuracy and reliability of statistical data used for policy formulation and overseeing measures critical for financial stability in the banking sector.
- ❖ Dr. Joshi has over three decades of experience in statistics, information technology, and cyber risk management.
- ❖ He has been a faculty member at the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT) in Hyderabad and has contributed to various committees and working groups on macroeconomic statistics and policy issues.

RBI raises ceiling on small value loans for Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the ceiling on small-value loans for urban cooperative banks (UCBs) to provide greater flexibility.
- ❖ UCBs are now required to have at least 50% of their

aggregate loans consisting of small-value loans by March 31, 2026.

- ❖ Small-value loans are defined as not exceeding ₹25 lakh or 0.4% of UCBs' Tier-I capital, up to a maximum of ₹3 crore per borrower.
- ❖ UCBs can exceed the previous 10% ceiling on aggregate exposure to housing, real estate, and commercial loans by an additional 5% for housing loans classified under priority sector.
- ❖ Revised prudential limits on housing loans for UCBs allow:
 - ❖ Tier-I UCBs: up to ₹60 lakh per dwelling unit
 - ❖ Tier-II UCBs: up to ₹1.40 crore per dwelling unit
 - ❖ Tier-III UCBs: up to ₹2 crore per dwelling unit
 - ❖ Tier-IV UCBs: up to ₹3 crore per dwelling unit.
- ❖ The aggregate exposure of a UCB to residential mortgages (excluding priority sector loans) is capped at 25% of total loans and advances.
- ❖ The cap for exposure to the real estate sector (excluding housing loans) is set at 5% of total loans and advances.

RBI launches Financial Literacy Week 2025 with a focus on women's prosperity

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the tenth edition of Financial Literacy Week (FLW) 2025 with the theme "Financial Literacy: Women's Prosperity."
- ❖ FLW 2025 will be observed from February 24 to 28, 2025.
- ❖ The launch ceremony was attended by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, RBI top management, regional heads, NABARD executives, and select commercial bank representatives.
- ❖ Governor Malhotra emphasized empowering women to enhance their role in driving inclusive and sustained economic growth.
- ❖ The initiative aims to promote financial literacy, especially among women, through multimedia campaigns and awareness activities.
- ❖ Banks are encouraged to share information and conduct outreach efforts to engage customers in financial literacy.
- ❖ This initiative reflects RBI's commitment to financial inclusion and gender equality in financial participation for a balanced and prosperous economy.

RBI reduces risk weights on bank loans to NBFCs, MFIs

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced risk weights on bank loans to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by 25 percentage points, depending on ratings, in a move to boost credit availability.

- ❖ This decision aims to improve credit flow to NBFCs, enhancing lending to the retail segment and supporting economic growth.
- ❖ The reduction in risk weights comes after a period of very low bank credit to NBFCs, which dropped to a four-year low of 6.7% in 2024 due to previously increased risk weights and tighter credit conditions.
- ❖ Lower risk weights mean banks need to set aside less capital, which can lead to lower interest rates for borrowers, making loans less expensive.
- ❖ By restoring previous risk weight standards, the RBI is signaling an effort to encourage banks to lend more to NBFCs, facilitating credit flow to underserved segments.

RBI Imposes restrictions on New India Co-operative Bank on Supervisory concern

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a notice imposing restrictions on Mumbai-based New India Co-operative Bank due to supervisory concerns.
- ❖ The bank is prohibited from issuing new loans, renewing existing loans, accepting fresh deposits, and allowing withdrawals from deposit accounts for six months.
- ❖ The bank cannot disburse any payments or dispose of any properties without prior RBI approval.
- ❖ Eligible depositors are entitled to deposit insurance claims up to ₹5,00,000 from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) based on verification.
- ❖ The RBI appointed Shreekant, a former chief general manager of the State Bank of India (SBI), as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs. Additionally, a committee of advisors has been formed to assist him, comprising Ravindra Sapra (former general manager, SBI) and Abhijeet Deshmukh (chartered accountant).

RBI extends Vakrangee's authorisation to operate White Label ATMs until March 2026

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has renewed authorisation to set up, own, and operate White Label ATMs (WLAs) across India to Mumbai-based technology company Vakrangee Ltd.
- ❖ The extension is valid until March 31, 2026.
- ❖ Vakrangee currently has 6,035 White Label ATMs (as of January 31, 2025) with 76% of these outlets are in Tier 4 and 6 locations, further strengthening financial accessibility in the unserved & underserved areas.
- ❖ Vakrangee currently has 22,395 Vakrangee Kendra Outlets and 81% of these outlets are in Tier 4 and 6 locations.

- ❖ Vakrangee Kendras exclusively offer a comprehensive range of products and services across banking, insurance, ATM, Financial Services and Assisted E-Commerce services.

RBI Launches 'RBIDATA' App for Seamless Access to Economic and Financial Data

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched RBIDATA, a mobile app for accessing macroeconomic and financial statistics.
- ❖ The app aims to enhance data transparency and accessibility for researchers, policymakers, financial professionals, and the public.
- ❖ RBIDATA contains over 11,000 economic data series related to the Indian economy.
- ❖ Users can explore data through interactive graphs/charts and download datasets for detailed analysis.
- ❖ Each dataset includes source information, units of measurement, update frequency, and explanatory notes for better clarity.
- ❖ Features a Popular Reports section for frequently accessed economic reports and enhanced search functionality for easy data location.
- ❖ Includes a Banking Outlet locator to find banking facilities within a 20 km radius.

RBI Prohibits Lenders from Imposing Foreclosure Charges on Floating Rate Loans for Customers and MSEs

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a draft circular allowing foreclosure or prepayment of all floating rate loans for individuals (not business-related) without fees or penalties.
- ❖ For business-related floating rate loans to individuals and micro and small enterprises (MSEs), lenders (excluding Tier-I and Tier-II urban co-operative banks and base layer non-banking financial companies) are also prohibited from imposing charges or penalties on foreclosure or prepayment.
- ❖ The threshold for MSE borrowers is set at Rs 7.5 crore.
- ❖ Any foreclosure charges or prepayment penalties imposed must adhere to a board-approved policy.
- ❖ Charges must be based on the outstanding amount for term loans and the sanctioned limit for cash credit or overdraft facilities.

RBI imposes penalty on Citibank, Asirvad Micro Finance, JM Fin Home Loans

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalties on three firms: Citibank, Asirvad Micro Finance, and JM Financial Home Loans for regulatory violations.

- ❖ Citibank was fined Rs 39 lakh for delays in reporting breaches of 'Large Exposures' limits and for not uploading corrected data within seven days after receiving rejection reports from Credit Information Companies (CICs).
- ❖ Asirvad Micro Finance was penalized Rs 6.20 lakh for multiple deficiencies, including failing to report the household income of some borrowers, not providing factsheets to gold loan customers, and not having an auto-escalation system for complaints.
- ❖ JM Financial Home Loans was fined Rs 1.50 lakh for not disclosing its risk gradation approach and rationale for charging different interest rates to borrowers, which was not communicated in application forms or sanction letters.
- ❖ These penalties were based on supervisory findings following statutory inspections of the firms' financial positions as of March 31, 2023, and earlier assessments for JM Financial as of March 31, 2022.

Reserve Bank of India issues norms for forward contracts in G-secs

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released norms for forward contracts in government securities (G-secs) to aid long-term investors in managing cash flows and interest rate risk.
- ❖ These directions for bond forwards will come into effect on May 2, 2025.
- ❖ The finalization follows a draft notification issued in December 2023 as part of an ongoing expansion of interest rate derivative products.
- ❖ A bond forward entails a rupee interest rate derivative where a buyer agrees to purchase a specific government security from a seller, at a predetermined price and future date.
- ❖ Both residents and non-residents eligible under the Foreign Exchange Management (Debt Instruments) Regulations, 2019, can participate.
- ❖ Only entities classified as non-retail users are eligible for transactions in bond forwards.
- ❖ Scheduled commercial banks and standalone primary dealers are designated as market makers, while small finance banks, payment banks, local area banks, and regional rural banks are excluded from this role.
- ❖ Market makers can hold unlimited long positions and covered short positions; they can also take uncovered short positions if the underlying government security is eligible for short sale.
- ❖ At least one party in a bond forward transaction must be either a market maker or an authorized central counterparty.

RBI considering hiking ATM cash transaction, interchange fees

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is considering increasing the maximum fees that banks can charge for cash withdrawals from ATMs beyond the free transaction limits.
- ❖ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) recommends raising the cash transaction maximum fee from ₹21 to ₹22 for transactions exceeding free limits.
- ❖ NPCI also suggests increasing the ATM interchange fee from ₹17 to ₹19 for cash transactions and from ₹6 to ₹7 for non-cash transactions.
- ❖ Interchange fees apply when a bank's customer uses an ATM of another bank, requiring the former bank to pay a fee to the latter.
- ❖ Industry players propose increasing interchange fees to ₹21 for cash transactions and ₹7 for non-cash transactions in non-metro areas.
- ❖ Currently, customers are allowed five free transactions in non-metro areas and three in metro locations (Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi).

6th Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy 2025: RBI cuts lending rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% 4

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has announced the 6th and last bi-monetary policy for the financial year 2024-25. And this is the first Monetary policy by the Governor Sanjay Malhotra.
- ❖ The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously decided to reduce the policy rate by 25 basis points, bringing it down to 6.25% from 6.5%. This marks the first interest rate reduction in nearly five years.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India estimated that real GDP growth for FY26 will come at 6.7%
- ❖ Core inflation is expected to rise but remain moderate, RBI Governor said while estimating the FY26 inflation to come at 4.2%.
- ❖ The current account deficit in FY25 to remain well under control and the RBI's interventions in forex market will focus on smoothening excessive and disruptive volatility
- ❖ The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate is set at 6%.
- ❖ The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate are held at 6.50%

RBI Approves Voluntary Amalgamation of two Urban Co-operative Banks

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the voluntary amalgamation of two urban cooperative banks (UCBs).

- ❖ The first merger involves the Citizen Cooperative Bank (CCB) from Goa merging with TJSB Sahakari Bank from Thane, Maharashtra.
- ❖ The second merger is between Pune Commercial Cooperative Bank (PCC Bank) from Satara and Pimpri Chinchwad Sahakari Bank (PCS Bank) from Pune.
- ❖ Both amalgamations are sanctioned under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ❖ These mergers will take effect on February 10, 2025.
- ❖ Following the mergers, all branches of CCB will operate as branches of TJSB, and PCC Bank branches will function as branches of PCS Bank.
- ❖ These actions are part of RBI's efforts to strengthen and consolidate the urban cooperative banking sector.

RBI Imposes Rs35.60 Lakh Penalty on Federal Bank and Karur Vysya Bank for Non-compliance with Directions

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a total penalty of Rs35.60 lakh on Federal Bank Ltd and Karur Vysya Bank Ltd for non-compliance with regulatory directions.
- ❖ Federal Bank received the highest penalty of Rs27.30 lakh for non-compliance related to interest rates on deposits.
- ❖ A statutory inspection revealed that Federal Bank had opened savings deposit accounts for ineligible entities.
- ❖ Karur Vysya Bank was fined Rs8.30 lakh for failing to adhere to specific RBI directions concerning the loan system for delivering bank credit.
- ❖ The non-compliance involved not ensuring the outstanding loan amount met the required percentage of the sanctioned working capital limit for certain borrowers.
- ❖ RBI determined that the penalties were warranted based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance, and the rulings do not reflect on the validity of any transactions or agreements with customers.

RBI forms Working Group to review trading and settlement timings of financial markets

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established a 9-member Working Group to conduct a comprehensive review of the trading and settlement timings for financial markets.
- ❖ The group will assess recent developments such as increased electrification of trading and the availability of Forex and interest rate derivatives on a 24x5 basis.
- ❖ It aims to synchronize market and settlement timings across different financial segments to enhance price discovery and liquidity optimization.

- ❖ Radha Shyam Ratho, Executive Director at RBI, will chair the Working Group, which includes members from various financial institutions.
- ❖ The group's primary objectives are to review current trading and settlement timings, analyze challenges, and examine international practices related to market timings.

RBI allows pre-approved credit lines on UPI from small finance banks

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has expanded Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions by allowing small finance banks (SFBs) to offer pre-sanctioned credit lines.
- ❖ This update follows RBI's introduction of credit lines on UPI in September 2023 for banks and third-party apps.
- ❖ UPI facilitates transactions through linked savings accounts, overdraft accounts, prepaid wallets, and credit cards; pre-sanctioned credit lines will be an additional funding source.
- ❖ Users must provide explicit consent to use these pre-sanctioned credit lines.
- ❖ Payments via UPI can be made using pre-sanctioned credit lines from scheduled commercial banks with prior consent from customers.

RBI lifts restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank, allowing it to issue new credit cards and onboard customers after nearly 10 months of an embargo.
- ❖ The restrictions were imposed due to deficiencies in the bank's IT management, including issues with inventory management, data security, and compliance.
- ❖ Kotak Mahindra Bank undertook remedial measures and underwent an external audit by Grant Thornton Bharat to address the issues before the restrictions were lifted.
- ❖ The bank's new CEO, Ashok Vaswani, took charge in January 2024 and has focused on improving core banking resilience and digital transformation.

RBI to inject Rs 2.5 lakh crore to enhance liquidity in banking system

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was all set to inject Rs 2,50,000 crore through its Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction to enhance liquidity in the banking system.
- ❖ The amount for the auction is determined based on current liquidity assessments.

- ❖ Daily VRR auctions will be conducted on all working days in Mumbai, with reversals occurring the next working day, until further notice.
- ❖ RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra emphasized the commitment to provide durable liquidity and support the economy after the recent monetary policy meeting.
- ❖ The RBI is closely monitoring the rupee and aims to maintain its stability amid market fluctuations.
- ❖ A report by Morgan Stanley suggests that the RBI may implement additional liquidity measures, such as Open Market Operations (OMO) purchases and foreign exchange swaps, as liquidity deficits are expected to increase towards the end of March.
- ❖ Governor Malhotra announced a one-year deferment for the implementation of the proposed Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and project financing norms, now set to begin no earlier than March 31, 2026, to prevent disruptions in the financial system.

RBI Introduces Name Lookup for NEFT and RTGS

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a name lookup facility for Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) systems, aiming to reduce fraud and errors.
- ❖ This feature, similar to what Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) offer, will allow remitters to verify the beneficiary's name before initiating transactions.
- ❖ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will develop the system, and banks must implement it by April 1, 2025. The facility will be free for users and accessible via internet banking, mobile banking, and bank branches.

RBI Approves Merger of National and Cosmos Co-operative Banks

- ❖ The merger will officially come into effect on January 6, 2025, with all branches of The National Co-operative Bank Ltd. becoming part of Cosmos Co-operative Bank Limited.
- ❖ The merger aims to simplify operations and improve service delivery for customers of both banks.

RBI releases master direction on reporting of customers credit information

- ❖ The RBI on January 5, 2025 came out with a master direction consolidating various instructions issued to banks and other financial institutions on reporting of the credit information of their customers.
- ❖ As per the master direction, credit information companies (CICs) will have to send alerts through

SMS/ email to customers when their Credit Information Report (CIR) is accessed by the specified users (SUs).

- ❖ “The alerts shall be sent by CICs only when the CIR enquiry reflects in the CIR of the customer,” said the Master Direction Reserve Bank of India (Credit Information Reporting) Directions, 2025.

RBI lifts restrictions imposed on Asirvad Microfinance and DMI Finance

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on January 8, 2025 lifted restrictions imposed on Chennai based Asirvad Micro Finance and Delhi based DMI Finance, with immediate effect, after being satisfied with the actions taken by these companies to adhere to regulatory guidelines.

RBI to conduct daily VRR auctions from Friday to infuse liquidity

- ❖ Firstly, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will conduct daily variable rate repo (VRR) auctions on all working days in Mumbai, until further notice.
- ❖ The daily auctions, aimed at easing the current liquidity tightness in the banking system, will begin on Friday, with a notified amount of Rs 50,000 crore.

Outward remittances under LRS increase 3.6% in November: RBI data

- ❖ Outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rose 3.6 per cent in November 2024 to \$1.95 billion from \$1.87 billion in the year-ago period as growth in overseas investment balanced the degrowth in remittances under international travel, as per RBI's latest data.
- ❖ During September-November 2024, Indians remitted \$7.1 billion overseas, as compared to \$7.5 billion in the same period of 2023.

Net FDI inflow slowed to \$0.5 billion in April-November: RBI data

- ❖ The net foreign direct investment (FDI) in India -- inflows minus outflows -- dropped to \$ 0.5 billion during April-November 2024 from \$8.5 billion in the same period in 2023, reflecting the rise in repatriation and overseas investments by Indian firms.
- ❖ Gross inward FDI during April-November 2024 increased to \$ 55.6 billion from \$ 47.2 billion a year ago, according to the Reserve Bank of India's data (January 2025 bulletin).

RBI sold record \$20.2 billion in November to back rupee amid FPI outflows

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) sold a record \$20.2 billion in the foreign exchange market in November to

contain rupee volatility against the greenback, pushing its net short position in the forward market to \$58.9 billion by the month's end, according to the central bank's latest monthly bulletin. By comparison, the RBI's net forward sales position at the end of October stood at \$49.18 billion.

- ❖ In November, the central bank bought \$30.8 billion and sold \$51.1 billion of foreign currency in the spot market, marking aggressive intervention. The rupee depreciated by 0.48 per cent during the month.

RBI Constitutes New Advisory Committee for Bank Licensing

- ❖ On January 20, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) formed a new Standing External Advisory Committee (SEAC) to assess applications for Universal Banks and Small Finance Banks (SFBs).
- ❖ Led by former RBI Deputy Governor M. K. Jain, the committee consists of five members.

RBI Fines Canara, BOI, and J&K Bank for Non-Compliance

- ❖ Penalties Imposed by RBI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed penalties on several banks for non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir Bank: Penalized Rs 3.31 crore. Violations related to financial inclusion (BSBDA), Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, and Loans and Advances.
- ❖ Bank of India: Penalized Rs 1 crore. Violation of provisions under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ❖ Canara Bank: Penalized Rs 1.63 crore. Non-compliance with directions on priority sector lending, interest rate on deposits, and financial inclusion (BSBDA).
- ❖ Datson Exports, West Bengal: Penalized Rs 1 lakh. Non-compliance with RBI's directions on Managing Risks and Code of Conduct in Outsourcing of Financial Services by NBFCs.

32.81% Surge in Complaints to RBI Ombudsman

- ❖ The Reserve Bank's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme saw a staggering 32.81 per cent surge in complaints from banking customers, reaching 9.34 lakh during the year ended March 2024. This significant increase suggests a decline in customer service standards within the banking sector, highlighting the need for improvement.
- ❖ These complaints were registered with 24 Offices of the RBI Ombudsman (ORBIOS) and Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre (CRPC) of the RBI.

RBI aligns HFCs' NCD private placement rules with NBFC regulations

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday announced that the regulations for the private placement of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) by housing finance companies (HFCs) will be aligned with those applicable to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
- ❖ According to a notification by the RBI, the revised guidelines will apply to all new private placements of NCDs with maturities exceeding one year by HFCs, effective immediately.
- ❖ The minimum subscription per investor shall be Rs 20,000. The private placement of NCDs will be categorised into two segments:
- ❖ NCDs with a maximum subscription of less than Rs 1 crore per investor
- ❖ NCDs with a minimum subscription of Rs 1 crore and above

RBI partially devolves 10-yr green bond; \$/rupee swap attracts 5 times bids

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) partially devolved Rs 3,945 crore worth of 10-year sovereign green bonds to primary dealers as it sought to sell the bonds at a premium, according to dealers.
- ❖ The RBI accepted Rs 1,054 crore worth of green bonds at the auction, against the notified amount of Rs 5,000 crore.

RBI fines Equitas SFB, India Post Payments Bank for compliance lapses

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed penalties on Equitas Small Finance Bank and India Post Payments Bank for deficiencies in regulatory compliances.
- ❖ In a statement, the RBI said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 65 lakh on Equitas Small Finance Bank for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Levy of Foreclosure Charges/Pre-payment Penalty on Floating Rate Term Loans' and 'Credit Flow to Agriculture -- Collateral free agricultural loans'.
- ❖ A penalty of Rs 26.70 lakh has been imposed on India Post Payments Bank Ltd for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Customer Service in Banks'.

RBI Increases UPI Lite Wallet and Transaction Limits

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has increased the wallet limit for UPI Lite from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000.
- ❖ Additionally, the new rules raise the upper transaction limit for UPI Lite under the offline framework from ₹500 to ₹1,000 per transaction.

RBI keeps policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50% for 11th time

- ❖ The RBI, in its December MPC meeting (Dec 4–6), kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50% for the 11th consecutive time.
- ❖ The SDF rate stays at 6.25%, and the MSF and Bank Rate at 6.75%.
- ❖ The MPC unanimously retained a neutral outlook, prioritizing inflation alignment with targets while supporting growth.

RBI Introduces Podcast Facility for Public Communication

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has introduced podcasts as part of its efforts to improve communication and share information of public interest.
- ❖ Over time, the RBI has broadened its communication methods to increase transparency and strengthen its connection with the public.

RBI increases collateral-free agricultural loan limit from Rs 1.6 to Rs 2 lakh

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has raised the limit for collateral-free agricultural loans from ₹1.6 lakh to ₹2 lakh, effective January 1 next year.
- ❖ This decision aims to address the impact of inflation and rising agricultural input costs.
- ❖ The Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry emphasized that banks will promote this initiative widely to increase awareness among farmers.
- ❖ This move will improve financial access, particularly for small and marginal farmers, by reducing borrowing costs and removing collateral requirements.
- ❖ It will also encourage the uptake of Kisan Credit Card loans, supporting agricultural investment and farmer livelihoods.

RBI Introduces Name Lookup for NEFT and RTGS

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a name lookup facility for Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) systems, aiming to reduce fraud and errors.
- ❖ This feature, similar to what Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) offer, will allow remitters to verify the beneficiary's name before initiating transactions.

- ❖ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) will develop the system, and banks must implement it by April 1, 2025. The facility will be free for users and accessible via internet banking, mobile banking, and bank branches.

Raise awareness about cyber frauds, identify mule accounts: RBI report

- ❖ A Reserve Bank report stressed increasing awareness about cyber frauds and efforts to identify mule accounts amid rising digital transactions.
- ❖ With the rise in digital transactions, the incidents of cyber frauds using novel modus operandi have increased in recent times, the December edition of the Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the RBI said.

Banking and Finance

SBI launches collateral free digital SME loan for women entrepreneurs



- ❖ State Bank of India (SBI) introduced a collateral-free digital SME loan product, 'SBI Asmita', specifically for women entrepreneurs to aid in business expansion.
- ❖ The product utilizes a robust ecosystem of APIs to streamline the lending process by fetching and verifying borrower data like GSTIN, bank statements, and credit information without the need for physical documents.
- ❖ SBI Asmita plans to identify top women entrepreneurs among its borrowers and provide them with entrepreneurial and management training.
- ❖ SBI launched the 'Nari Shakti' platinum debit card, exclusively for women, made from 100% recycled plastic, offering benefits across various segments including shopping, entertainment, travel, and insurance.

- ❖ Meanwhile, Bank of Baroda launched products for women NRIs, including the “bob Global Women NRE & NRO Savings Account,” which features competitive interest rates and various benefits like free insurance and debit card perks.

India's industrial production growth likely at 3.7% in January: Union Bank of India



- ❖ India's industrial production likely surged to 3.7% year-on-year in January 2025, up from 3.2% in December 2024.
- ❖ Despite the monthly increase, January 2025's growth is lower than the 4.2% recorded in January 2024, indicating a year-on-year decline.
- ❖ The improvement in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is attributed to an overall rise in industrial activity.
- ❖ High-frequency indicators show broad-based optimism across various sectors.
- ❖ Merchandise exports contracted by 2.4% year-on-year in January 2025, while merchandise imports grew by 10.3%, indicating robust domestic demand.
- ❖ E-way bill generation rose by 23.1% compared to the same period last year, reflecting increased movement of goods.
- ❖ Toll collections grew significantly in both volume and value, showing heightened economic activity.
- ❖ The automobile sector experienced a recovery, with wholesale automobile sales up by 2.5% year-on-year, alongside a rebound in the two-wheeler segment and double-digit growth in tractor sales.
- ❖ Petroleum consumption increased by 3.1%, suggesting higher demand attributed to enhanced transportation and manufacturing activities.

- ❖ Overall, despite lower year-on-year growth, positive economic indicators suggest strengthening industrial momentum ahead.

LIC Ranked World's 3rd Strongest Insurance Brand



- ❖ The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has been ranked third strongest insurance brand globally.
- ❖ LIC achieved a Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 88 out of 100, as per the Brand Finance Insurance 100 (2025) report.
- ❖ Poland-based PZU is ranked first with a BSI score of 94.4.
- ❖ China Life Insurance holds the second position with a BSI score of 93.5.
- ❖ In terms of brand value, LIC is ranked 12th among global insurers.
- ❖ SBI Life ranks 76th, making LIC and SBI Life the only two Indian insurers in the top 100.

HDFC Bank, Indian Army and CSC Academy revive MoU to expand Project NAMAN



- ❖ HDFC Bank has renewed its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army and CSC e-Governance to expand Project NAMAN.
- ❖ Project NAMAN supports Army veterans, their families, and next of kin, providing various services.

- ❖ The project will now be implemented at 26 Directorates of Indian Army Veterans (DIAV) locations.
- ❖ CSC centers, operated by Army veterans or their families, will offer pension-related services, Government-to-Citizen (G2C), and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) services.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by key officials from HDFC Bank, CSC Academy, and the Indian Army.
- ❖ The second phase expands to DIAV locations across multiple states including Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Jammu & Kashmir.
- ❖ The first phase started in September 2023 with 14 DIAV locations.
- ❖ New centers will provide skill development and training in financial products and services to promote financial independence for veterans and their families.
- ❖ Individuals managing the CSCs will receive a monetary grant for the first 12 months.

Bank of Baroda launches first savings account for women NRIs



- ❖ Bank of Baroda has launched the 'bob Global Women NRE & NRO Savings Account', a specialized savings account tailored exclusively for Non-Resident Indian (NRI) women.
- ❖ This initiative positions Bank of Baroda as the first Indian public sector bank to offer such a product, aiming to cater to the evolving financial aspirations of global Indian women.

Key Features and Benefits:

1. Auto-Sweep Facility: Maximizes interest earnings by automatically transferring surplus funds into fixed deposits.
2. Concessional Loan Rates: Offers reduced interest rates and processing fees on home and auto loans, making asset acquisition more affordable.

3. Locker Rent Waiver: Provides a 100% waiver on locker rent, ensuring secure storage of valuables at no additional cost.
 4. Customized Debit Card: Includes a personalized debit card with complimentary access to domestic and international airport lounges, enhancing travel convenience.
 5. Insurance Coverage: Extends free personal and air accident insurance coverage, offering financial protection against unforeseen events.
- ❖ In addition to this women-centric offering, Bank of Baroda has enhanced its 'bob Premium NRE & NRO Savings Account'.
 - ❖ The upgraded account now features a customized debit card with higher transaction limits, free airport lounge access, complimentary safe deposit locker, and concessional loan rates, providing a more rewarding and seamless banking experience for NRI customers.

NaBFID in talks with ADB, WB for counter-guarantees to infra projects



- ❖ The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) is in advanced talks with the World Bank to reduce costs related to financing infrastructure projects.
- ❖ The partnership will involve sharing credit risk and enhancing ratings of corporate bond offerings through credit enhancement facilities.
- ❖ NaBFID has the mandate to guarantee up to 20% of corporate bonds, which will facilitate mobilizing funds at reduced costs for infrastructure development.
- ❖ The FY26 Union budget allows NaBFID to provide Partial Credit Enhancement (PCE) facilities to corporate entities and special purpose vehicles (SPVs) involved in infrastructure projects.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to improve the credit ratings of infrastructure bonds by one or two notches, enhancing their attractiveness to investors.

- ❖ The backing from the World Bank will further strengthen NaBFID's capital allocation, allowing for competitive pricing of PCE products and reducing guarantee fees.

NHB released Reports on Trends and progress of Housing in India



- ❖ The National Housing Bank (NHB) released the Report on Trends and Progress of Housing in India, 2024 in March 2025, providing a detailed analysis of the housing sector as per Section 42 of the NHB Act, 1987.
- ❖ As of September 30, 2024, individual housing loans reached ₹33.53 lakh crore, showing a growth of 14% compared to the previous year.
- ❖ Loan distribution by income groups:
 - ❑ Middle-Income Group (MIG): 44%
 - ❑ Economically Weaker Section & Lower Income Group (EWS & LIG): 39%
 - ❑ Higher Income Group (HIG): 17%
- ❖ Regional distribution of loans: Southern (35%), Western (30%), Northern (28%), Eastern (5.4%), North Eastern States (0.68%).
- ❖ Banks provide 81% of housing loans, while Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) account for 19%.
- ❖ Individual housing loan disbursements during the first half of FY25 totaled ₹4.10 lakh crore, and for FY24 were ₹9.07 lakh crore.
- ❖ The NHB-RESIDEX housing price index recorded a Year-on-Year growth of 6.8%, up from 4.9% the previous year.
- ❖ Housing loans as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 6.60% in 2011-12 to 11.29% in 2023-24.
- ❖ Only 5% of buildings are classified as green according to the report.
- ❖ Key government initiatives highlighted include:

- ❑ Pradhan Awas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G)
- ❑ PMAY-Urban (PMAY-U)
- ❑ Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF)
- ❑ Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) scheme.
- ❖ The report addresses regional disparities and climate-related risks as major challenges, while emphasizing technological advancements and digitization of land records as growth opportunities for the sector.

Paytm launches UPI trading blocks for seamless stock trading experience



- ❖ Paytm (One 97 Communications Limited) launched UPI Trading Blocks to enhance the stock trading experience.
- ❖ This feature allows automatic payment deductions directly from users' bank accounts for trades on equity broking applications.
- ❖ It eliminates the need for traders to pre-transfer large sums into trading accounts, allowing funds to remain in users' bank accounts, earning interest until needed.
- ❖ Currently available for UPI handles from Axis Bank and Yes Bank, with plans to support State Bank of India and HDFC Bank soon.
- ❖ Users need to log into their brokerage accounts and select 'Single Block Multiple Debits' to set up the feature.
- ❖ Paytm recently introduced other features, including the 'Receive Money QR Widget' and real-time payment notifications.
- ❖ The company has expanded UPI payment support to multiple countries, including UAE, Singapore, France, Mauritius, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.
- ❖ Paytm aims to integrate half a billion Indians into the mainstream economy through innovative technologies.

Indian Overseas Bank to Offer Green Finance for IGBC-Certified Projects



- ❖ Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has signed an agreement with the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) to provide financial assistance for IGBC-certified green buildings, promoting sustainable construction.
- ❖ The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) allows IOB to offer preferential financing options for real estate projects that meet IGBC's green certification standards.
- ❖ Developers constructing IGBC-rated buildings and homebuyers purchasing units in these projects can receive financial assistance.
- ❖ The MoU includes new financing models for IGBC Green Affordable Housing, IGBC NEST, and NESTPLUS projects, aimed at economically weaker sections and lower-income groups.

NSDL, CDSL launch app with Sebi to help investors in managing portfolios

- ❖ The National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) and Central Depository Services Limited (CDSL), in collaboration with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), have launched the Unified Investor App (UIP).
- ❖ This platform integrates MyEasi by CDSL and SPEED-e by NSDL, providing investors with a consolidated view of their financial holdings.
- ❖ This platform provides investors with a consolidated view of their financial statements, shareholdings, and investments, and financial statements.
- ❖ A key benefit of this initiative is the ability to access a consolidated view of demat securities across both NSDL and CDSL accounts. Investors no longer need to juggle between different platforms to monitor their holdings.
- ❖ This not only simplifies portfolio management but also ensures greater transparency by providing a unified

dashboard for all securities. The platform further streamlines investment tracking by offering transaction cum holding statements in one place, reducing the hassle of maintaining multiple records.

Paytm Launched India's First Solar-Powered Soundbox for Merchants

- ❖ Paytm One97 Communications Limited has announced the launch of its 'Paytm Solar Soundbox' for merchants, a first-of-its-kind in India.
- ❖ This innovative device requires minimal sunlight for a quick charge that provides full-day power, enabling uninterrupted payments and reliable, consistent service for India's small shop owners and merchants.
- ❖ The device is designed to facilitate seamless transactions by utilizing solar energy, making it eco-friendly and cost-effective for small businesses, especially in rural areas.
- ❖ Features dual charging capabilities: one battery powered by solar energy and another by electricity.
- ❖ A 2-3 hour charge of sunlight allows for full-day operation; the electricity-powered battery can last up to 10 days without recharging.
- ❖ Equipped with a 3-watt speaker that provides real-time audio confirmations in 11 languages, assisting merchants in managing payments in noisy environments.
- ❖ Integrates Paytm's QR code technology, enabling easy UPI and RuPay Credit Card payments for customers.
- ❖ Specifically targets hawkers, street vendors, artisans, and small shop owners; the device is also connected via 4G.

PNB Signs MoU with ITBP to Offer Exclusive Banking Benefits to Personnel and their Families

- ❖ Punjab National Bank (PNB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- ❖ The MoU aims to provide exclusive financial benefits and insurance for ITBP personnel, pensioners, and their families.
- ❖ The agreement was signed by S.P. Singh (PNB General Manager) and S.C. Mamgain (ITBP Inspector General) in New Delhi.
- ❖ Key benefits for ITBP personnel include:
 1. Personal Accidental Insurance (PAI) of Rs. 100 lakh
 2. Air Accidental Insurance (AAI) of Rs. 150 lakh
 3. Permanent/Partial Disability Coverage of Rs. 100 lakh
 4. Additional cover for death during operations of Rs.

10,00,000

5. Cost of imported medicines (including transportation) up to Rs. 10,00,000

6. Air ambulance cost coverage of up to Rs. 10,00,000

- ❖ PNB aims to support India's armed forces, especially the ITBP personnel (referred to as 'Himveers'), through customized financial products and services.

IndusInd Bank partners with Professional Golf Tour of India as its Official Banking Partner

- ❖ IndusInd Bank partners with the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) as its official Banking Partner.
- ❖ The partnership focused on Ultra High Net worth Individuals (UHNIs) and High Net worth Individuals (HNIs) through its PIONEER banking program.
- ❖ IndusInd Bank will support PGTI events, enhancing the reach and development of professional golf in India.
- ❖ PGTI features over 20 tournaments annually under the leadership of Kapil Dev and Amandeep Johl.
- ❖ PIONEER customers can participate in various activities across tournament cities.
- ❖ Offers investment products like Mutual Funds, Alternate products, Sovereign Gold bonds, and legacy planning.
- ❖ IndusInd Bank, with 30 years of experience, serves 42 million customers through a vast branch and ATM network, leveraging technology for enhanced banking services.

HDFC Bank launches India's first salary account with cyber fraud protection for PSU employees

- ❖ HDFC Bank introduced the 'Anmol Savings Account,' India's first salary account for Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) employees that includes integrated cyber fraud protection.
- ❖ Key features of the Anmol Savings Account include:
 1. Cyber Fraud Protection: Coverage up to ₹25,000 to safeguard against cyber fraud incidents.
 2. Family Benefits: Zero balance salary accounts for up to five family members, along with complimentary locker benefits for the first year.
 3. Insurance Coverage: Comprehensive health insurance with outpatient department (OPD) coverage, top-up plans up to ₹30 lakh, and accident insurance over ₹15 lakh.
 4. Exclusive Offers: A free Platinum Debit Card offering exclusive deals and up to eight complimentary domestic airport lounge accesses annually.

5. Home Loan Benefits: Supplementary home loans beyond company limits for Maharatna PSU employees.

6. This initiative is part of HDFC Bank's 'Speciale' suite of savings accounts, tailored for diverse customer segments.

UPI transactions in January reach all time high of 16.99 billion: Finance Ministry

- ❖ UPI transactions in January 2025 surpassed 16.99 billion, with a transaction value exceeding ₹23.48 lakh crore, marking the highest monthly volume recorded.
- ❖ For the financial year 2023-24, the total number of UPI transactions exceeded 131 billion, with a total value over ₹200 lakh crore.
- ❖ UPI accounts for 80% of retail payments in India, solidifying its role as the cornerstone of the digital payment ecosystem.
- ❖ The UPI system is supported by over 80 UPI apps and 641 banks as of January 2025.
- ❖ In FY 2024-25 (up to January), Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions contributed 62.35% of the overall UPI volume, while Person-to-Person (P2P) transactions accounted for 37.65%.
- ❖ Notably, 86% of P2M transactions were for amounts up to ₹500, reflecting the trust citizens place in UPI for low-value payments.
- ❖ Bank of Baroda Pilots Industry-First "Merchant Loyalty/ Cashback Programme"
- ❖ Bank of Baroda has launched a pilot "Merchant Loyalty/ Cashback Programme" utilizing the programmability of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in collaboration with a fintech company.
- ❖ This program allows small and medium merchants to design and launch their own loyalty and cashback schemes via the Bank of Baroda's "bob Merchant App", a feature previously accessible mainly to large brands.
- ❖ Eligible merchants include local retail shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies that are Bank of Baroda account holders and registered on the app.
- ❖ The program is aimed at boosting CBDC adoption, making digital payments more appealing, and fostering customer loyalty.
- ❖ Customers, who are currently limited to Bank of Baroda account holders, will receive cashback in the form of programmable CBDC (PCBDC) when they make purchases via the bob World Digital Rupee app.
- ❖ These PCBDCs can only be redeemed at the respective merchant outlet until they expire.

Yes Bank tops S&P Global's sustainability rankings, only Indian Bank in yearbook 2025

- ❖ Yes Bank has been recognized as India's highest-rated bank in sustainability for the third consecutive year, according to the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) 2024 and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP).
- ❖ The bank achieved a CSA score of 72 out of 100.
- ❖ Yes Bank is the only Indian lender included in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025, which features the top 15% of global banking leaders based on ESG performance.
- ❖ The CSA evaluates up to 1,000 ESG indicators, including climate strategy, financial inclusion, human capital development, and corporate governance.
- ❖ Yes Bank retained its A- (Leadership Band) rating from CDP, indicating strong climate risk management and disclosure practices.
- ❖ Out of 7,690 global firms assessed, only 780 were included in the Sustainability Yearbook 2025, with Yes Bank being the only Indian bank listed.
- ❖ Yes Bank aims to achieve net-zero emissions for Scope 1 and Scope 2 by 2030 and has disclosed financed emissions for electricity generation loans, aligning with international decarbonization benchmarks.

SIDBI signs MoU with Tata Capital to strengthen financing avenues for MSMEs

- ❖ The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Tata Capital Limited (TCL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance financing options for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- ❖ The partnership focuses on strengthening the MSME ecosystem by providing funding for:
 1. Machinery and equipment financing
 2. Working capital
 3. Business loans
 4. Loans against property
- ❖ The collaboration will also explore:
 1. Risk-sharing
 2. Co-lending
- ❖ Joint financing to improve credit access for MSMEs.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by Shri Vivek Kumar Malhotra from SIDBI and Shri Vivek Chopra from TCL, in the presence of senior officials from both organizations.
- ❖ On the same day, Tata Capital announced its board's approval for an IPO and a Rs 1,504 crore rights issue.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank applies for universal banking licence

- ❖ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) has applied to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a universal banking licence to enhance its services and market position.
- ❖ It is the second small finance bank, after AU SFB, to pursue this transition.
- ❖ The application is part of Ujjivan's strategy to expand its financial offerings and support financial inclusion across its diverse customer base.
- ❖ As of December 31, 2024, Ujjivan SFB has a gross loan book of ₹30,466 crore and deposits of ₹34,494 crore.
- ❖ The bank operates with approximately 9.3 million customers through 753 branches in 26 states and union territories.
- ❖ 39% of Ujjivan's loan book is from secured loans, indicating diversification.

Eligibility Criteria

- ❖ Banks must meet the following RBI requirements to be eligible for conversion into a universal bank:
 - ❑ Minimum net worth of ₹1,000 crore.
 - ❑ Hold scheduled bank status.
 - ❑ A satisfactory track record of at least five years.
 - ❑ Maintain a gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio of 3% or less.
 - ❑ Maintain a net NPA ratio of 1% or less over the past two financial years.
 - ❑ Only listed small finance banks are eligible for this conversion.

Airtel Payments Bank Partners with Karnataka Bulldozers for CCL 2025

- ❖ Airtel Payments Bank has partnered with the Karnataka Bulldozers for the Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) 2025.
- ❖ The partnership includes co-sponsoring the team and promoting safe digital banking solutions to fans.
- ❖ It reflects Airtel Payments Bank's focus on providing simple, safe, and rewarding banking services.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to connect with millions of cricket fans and reinforce the bank's reputation in digital banking.
- ❖ The CCL 2025 starts on February 8, 2025.
- ❖ Shilpi Kapoor, CMO of Airtel Payments Bank, highlighted the engagement with cricket and entertainment fans through this partnership.
- ❖ Mayukha Devangi, COO of Karnataka Bulldozers,

expressed excitement about the collaboration and its alignment with the team's ethos.

L&T Finance Launches AI-based Virtual Home Loan Advisor 'KAI'

- ❖ L & T Finance Limited (LTF) has introduced KAI, an AI-powered virtual advisor, on its redesigned corporate website to enhance the home loan experience.
- ❖ KAI was initially unveiled at LTF's RAISE' 24 event.
- ❖ KAI aims to simplify the home loan process, addressing issues like complex terminology and lengthy applications.
- ❖ It specifically caters to first-time homebuyers by offering personalized guidance and support.
- ❖ KAI uses advanced AI technology, including a Large Language Model (LLM), to understand user needs.

Features of KAI:

- ❑ Provides instant EMI calculations and loan estimates.
- ❑ Delivers expert answers to home loan queries.
- ❑ Offers conversational and easy-to-understand responses.
- ❑ Enables users to download EMI schedules and bookmark preferences.
- ❖ L & T Finance Limited (LTF) is a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) based in Mumbai, India, offering a range of financial products and services.
- ❖ LTF has a 'AAA' credit rating and has received positive leadership and ESG ratings. The company has been recognized as a Great Place to Work®.
- ❖ As part of its Lakshya 2026 plan, LTF aims to transition to a customer-focused approach and strengthen its retail finance portfolio with quality assets while maintaining a strong ESG commitment.

FIU-IND imposes monetary penalty of Rs. 9 crore 27 lakhs on Bybit Fintech Limited (Bybit)

- ❖ The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹9.27 crore (₹9,27,00,000) on Bybit Fintech Limited for violations related to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- ❖ The penalty was authorized under Section 13(2)(d) of the PMLA and concerns Bybit's obligations under PMLA and the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005.
- ❖ Bybit is classified as a Virtual Digital Asset Service Provider (VDA SP) and a 'reporting entity' under Section 2(1)(wa) of the PMLA.

- ❖ The company expanded its services in India without obtaining the necessary registration from FIU-IND.

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) show strong performance in the first three quarters of FY 2024-25

- ❖ According to the Ministry of Finance, Public Sector Banks (PSBs) reported a record net profit of ₹1,29,426 crore for the period of April-December 2024, marking a 31.3% year-on-year growth.
- ❖ The aggregate operating profit increased substantially, reaching ₹2,20,243 crore.
- ❖ PSBs achieved a historic low in the net non-performing assets (NPA) ratio, now at 0.59%, with a total net NPA of ₹61,252 crore, indicating improved asset quality.
- ❖ Aggregate business for PSBs grew by 11.0% year-on-year, totaling ₹242.27 lakh crore.
- ❖ Deposits increased by 9.8% year-on-year, contributing to a robust financial status.
- ❖ Credit growth was recorded at 12.4%, with significant expansions in retail credit (16.6%), agriculture credit (12.9%), and MSME credit (12.5%).
- ❖ The Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) stood at 14.83%, well above the 11.5% regulatory requirement, ensuring strong financial stability.

IDFC FIRST Bank launches special banking services for senior citizens

- ❖ IDFC FIRST Bank has launched exclusive banking products and services for senior citizens, focusing on security and convenience.
- ❖ Key offerings include the Senior Citizen Savings Account and Senior Citizen Fixed Deposits, providing tailored financial solutions.

Key Features:

- ❑ Additional Interest: 0.5% extra interest on Fixed Deposits.
- ❑ Flexible FD Closure: No penalty for premature closure of Fixed Deposits.
- ❑ Cyber Insurance: ₹2 lakh coverage against online fraud and threats.
- ❑ Health Benefits: One-year complimentary MediBuddy membership with unlimited doctor video consultations for up to four family members.
- ❑ Wellness Program: Includes a full-body health check-up with over 50 parameters and ₹500 wallet balance for health expenses, plus up to 15% discounts at network pharmacies.
- ❑ Mutual Fund Investments: Simplified mutual fund investment experience, adjustable based on individual risk profiles.

- ❑ Mobile Banking App: The 'Senior Citizen Specials' feature allows user-friendly banking access for services like bill payments, balance inquiries, and fund transfers.

- ❖ The program aims to empower senior citizens financially and improve their overall banking experience by removing over 30 common charges associated with savings accounts.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance launched 'HERizon Care' healthcover for Women

- ❖ Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has launched HERizon Care, a health insurance policy focusing on women's healthcare needs.
- ❖ The policy covers critical illnesses, reproductive health, and wellness services.
- ❖ Key component, Vita Shield, provides coverage for 34 critical illnesses, both general and female-specific.
- ❖ Policy extensions available include child education support, financial assistance for job loss due to illness, and coverage for incidental medical expenses (e.g., reconstructive surgery, physiotherapy, home nursing).
- ❖ Wellness services included are diet consultations, emotional wellness programs, teleconsultations, and preventive check-ups.
- ❖ Another component, Cradle Care, covers medical expenses for surrogate mothers and complications from oocyte retrieval.
- ❖ Optional covers include Nurture Nest Cover (infertility treatments, adoption expenses, egg-freezing), Motherhood Cover (assisted reproductive technologies), and Fetal Flourish Cover (prenatal techniques and related treatments).
- ❖ The plan also includes coverage for preventive mastectomy and hysterectomy under Prophylactic Surgeries Cover.
- ❖ Legal expense support is provided for cases involving sexual assault, kidnapping, and acid attacks.
- ❖ Elective procedures under this policy have a 24-month waiting period, with lower costs than other critical illness covers.

Angel One AMC launches maiden NFO on Nifty Total Market Index

- ❖ Angel One Asset Management Company has launched its first New Fund Offer (NFO) on the Nifty Total Market Index, introducing India's first exchange-traded fund (ETF) alongside an index fund.
- ❖ The fund comprises two passive investment options: the Angel One Nifty Total Market Index Fund and

the Angel One Nifty Total Market ETF, collectively covering approximately 750 stocks across 22 sectors.

- ❖ These funds represent about 93% of India's total market capitalization and aim to mirror the performance of the Nifty Total Market Total Return Index (TRI).
- ❖ The NFO is priced at Rs 10 per unit, with no exit load, and a minimum investment starting at Rs 1,000 in Re 1 multiples.
- ❖ Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) options are available on the index fund with various frequency choices (daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly).
- ❖ The initiative emphasizes simple passive investment strategies and is managed by Mehul Dama and Kewal Shah, aimed at reducing the complexities of stock and portfolio management for investors.
- ❖ Angel One AMC promotes passive investing as "Investment Without Guesswork," targeting efficient and cost-effective market return capture.

SIDBI, AFD Sign \$100M Deal to Boost Green Finance In MSMEs

- ❖ Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) and AFD, France have signed a USD 100 million credit facility agreement (CFA) to scale up Green Finance solutions for Indian micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- ❖ The partnership aims to support sustainable growth and drive the transition towards a low-carbon economy.
- ❖ The partnership aims to support sustainable growth and facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- ❖ The credit line provided by AFD will help SIDBI expand access to affordable financing for MSMEs investing in:
 - ❑ Energy-efficient technologies
 - ❑ Renewable energy solutions
 - ❑ Climate-friendly business practices
- ❖ The initiative aligns with the commitment of both institutions to foster sustainable economic development and increase climate resilience in emerging markets.
- ❖ Lise Breuil, AFD Country Director in India, highlighted the importance of empowering MSMEs to contribute to India's carbon neutrality goal by 2070.
- ❖ This partnership complements AFD's efforts on the Greening Indian Financial System (GIFS) Platform.

Axis Bank customers can now open an FD through UPI from non-Axis accounts

- ❖ Axis Bank has launched a feature that allows customers to open Fixed Deposits (FDs) directly from non-Axis Bank accounts.

- ❖ This initiative utilizes the Account Aggregator ecosystem, making Axis Bank the first private sector bank to offer such a process.
- ❖ Existing-To-Bank (ETB) customers can use UPI or Net Banking for funds transfer, streamlining the FD creation process on the Axis Bank mobile app.
- ❖ Customers no longer need to transfer funds to Axis Bank accounts beforehand, eliminating delays and complications.
- ❖ The new feature facilitates a quick FD opening experience with just a few clicks and automatic processing upon payment completion.
- ❖ The integration of the Account Aggregator framework is seen as a transformative step for hassle-free FD investments.
- ❖ UPI and the Account Aggregator ecosystem combine to enhance access to financial products, such as Fixed Deposits, without traditional barriers.

Easebuzz secures RBI nod to operate as online payment aggregator

- ❖ Easebuzz has received final authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator (PA) 1 .
- ❖ This approval allows Easebuzz to continue facilitating digital transactions for businesses and follows their announcement of integration support for third-party payment orchestrators 1 .
- ❖ The company processes an annualized Gross Transaction Value (GTV) of \$30 billion and serves over 200,000 businesses, including SMEs and startups 1 .
- ❖ Founded in 2014, Easebuzz provides a full-stack payment solution which includes payment collections, disbursements, automated reconciliation, vendor payments, and sub-merchant management through API-based solutions 1 .
- ❖ The company serves multiple sectors, including travel, education, retail, NBFCs, insurance, and government organizations 1 .
- ❖ Easebuzz's revenue grew by 23% to ₹290 crore in FY24 1 .
- ❖ Recently, the company expanded into the B2B payments space by launching an invoice management and payments platform in partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd.

Bank of Maharashtra gets RBI approval for opening GIFT City branch

- ❖ Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India to establish an International

Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Unit in GIFT City, Gandhinagar.

- ❖ This branch will be BoM's first international branch focused on offshore banking operations from India.
- ❖ MD & CEO Nidhu Saxena described this as a significant opportunity for the bank to expand its operations globally.
- ❖ The IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) will provide access to international financial markets and allow the bank to offer foreign currency funding products.
- ❖ BoM will be able to offer products such as External Commercial Borrowings and meet the funding needs of overseas entities related to domestic clients.
- ❖ The establishment of the unit will enhance the bank's capability to serve clients in India and participate in global syndications.
- ❖ GIFT City is a multi-services Special Economic Zone (SEZ) initiated by the Government of India to handle financial service transactions that currently occur outside India.

SEBI launches RPT portal to strengthen corporate governance and transparency

- ❖ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has launched a dedicated Related Party Transaction (RPT) portal to enhance transparency and governance in corporate India.
- ❖ This portal aims to bring greater transparency to corporate boardrooms.
- ❖ SEBI introduced this portal as a strategic move to track and analyse RPTs, a critical area where governance lapses often occur.
- ❖ To further enhance oversight, SEBI plans to integrate supply chain data into the portal, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of corporate transactions.
- ❖ The launch of the RPT portal marks a significant step toward corporate accountability, ensuring that transactions are conducted fairly and transparently.
- ❖ SEBI expects market participants to leverage the platform to reinforce governance norms and boost investor confidence.

PhonePe launches device tokenisation for credit and debit card transactions

- ❖ PhonePe has launched a device tokenisation solution for credit and debit cards.
- ❖ Users can tokenize their cards on the PhonePe application for seamless use across various services, including bill payments, recharges, and travel bookings.

- ❖ This rollout positions PhonePe as the first company to offer direct solutions without relying on third-party payment orchestration platforms.
- ❖ Tokenisation replaces sensitive card details with unique tokens, enhancing security by not sharing actual card details with merchants during transactions, as endorsed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ❖ The feature will support Visa credit and debit cards and is accessible to online merchants integrated with PhonePe's payment gateway.
- ❖ Users will no longer need to save card details on merchant platforms or enter CVV codes for each transaction, improving transaction success rates and reducing checkout drop-offs.
- ❖ Future plans include expanding the offering by integrating more card payment networks and increasing access to tokenised cards for all PhonePe PG merchants.
- ❖ PhonePe currently serves over 590 million registered customers and 40 million registered merchants.

Eurobank and LTIMindtree partner to launch global delivery centre in Pune

- ❖ Eurobank S.A., a leading Greek banking group, has partnered with LTIMindtree to establish a Global Delivery Centre in Pune, India, as part of a multi-year banking technology program.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to enhance customer experience through improved banking operations and innovative IT services, facilitated by Fairfax Digital Services.
- ❖ LTIMindtree will serve as the Services Partner for Eurobank Luxembourg's Temenos implementation program, providing maintenance, data migration, and support services.
- ❖ The partnership will modernize technology infrastructure across Eurobank's operations in Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Greece.
- ❖ Stavros Ioannou, Deputy CEO and Group COO of Eurobank Holdings, highlighted that this partnership is a significant milestone in the bank's digital transformation journey.
- ❖ The Pune center, along with LTIMindtree's office in Greece, will focus on technology modernization and maintaining critical banking applications.
- ❖ Eurobank Group has total assets of €99.6 billion and operates 604 branches across multiple countries.
- ❖ LTIMindtree serves over 700 clients globally and employs a workforce of 86,000 professionals.

Govt, Intel partner to launch AI for Entrepreneurship initiative for youth

- ❖ The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship

and Intel launched the 'AI for Entrepreneurship' micro-learning module.

- ❖ The initiative aims to skill 100,000 young innovators across India.
- ❖ The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is also involved in this program.
- ❖ The module focuses on demystifying artificial intelligence (AI) and promoting entrepreneurial thinking.
- ❖ Intel's President Gokul Subramaniam highlighted the collaborative effort to expand AI accessibility and impact.

Karnataka Bank launches 2 products to mark its founders' day

- ❖ Karnataka Bank launched two new products on its 101st founders' day: 'KBL Stri' and 'KBL One Family Banking Programme'.
- ❖ 'KBL Stri' is a savings account designed specifically for women, allowing them to define their own success as homemakers, professionals, or entrepreneurs.
- ❖ 'KBL One Family Banking Programme' connects family members under one ID, providing tailored benefits and shared privileges.
- ❖ The bank's Managing Director, Srikrishnan H, highlighted recent transformative steps taken to enhance technology and digital infrastructure over the last 24 months.
- ❖ There is an ongoing focus on improving processes, products, and service culture as part of the bank's journey.
- ❖ Chairman P Pradeep Kumar emphasized the significance of crossing the 100-year mark and the bank's commitment to not resting on its past achievements, aiming for a digital transformation.

NAV Capital launches India-focused AIF fund, aims to raise Rs 500 cr

- ❖ Dubai-based wealth management advisory firm NAV Capital on Wednesday announced the launch of its first India-focused close-ended AIF Fund (Category 2) and plans to raise Rs 500 crore in the first round.
- ❖ NAV Capital is a category 3A entity regulated by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA).
- ❖ The new fund will primarily look for investment opportunities in the pre-IPO stage of companies in the high-growth sectors and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with high-growth potential prospects.

Cred Becomes 1st Fintech Platform to Roll Out Access to CBDC e-Rupee

- ❖ Cred, a fintech platform backed by Tiger Global and Peak XV, has become the first fintech company to roll out access to India's central bank digital currency (CBDC), known as the e-rupee.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated a pilot for the e-rupee in December 2022, initially allowing only banks to offer access. However, in April 2024, the RBI expanded the pilot to include payment firms.
- ❖ Cred will initially roll out access to its e-rupee wallet to a select set of users, with the issuance of e-rupee tokens facilitated by YES Bank.

MobiKwik becomes first fintech to fully launch CBDC (e₹) with RBI for Android

- ❖ MobiKwik has become the first fintech in India to launch a full-scale Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) wallet, e-rupee (e₹), in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Yes Bank.
- ❖ The e₹ wallet, now available to all Android users of MobiKwik, enables peer-to-peer (P2P) and peer-to-merchant (P2M) transactions. Users can pay by scanning any UPI QR code using e₹, as the wallet is fully compatible with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

Starting February 1, 2025, these transactions via UPI apps will be declined

- ❖ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that UPI transactions containing special characters in their transaction ID will be declined starting February 1, 2025. This directive aims to enforce compliance with UPI technical specifications implemented back in March 2024.
- ❖ NPCI guidelines for UPI Transaction ID: In March 2024, NPCI issued a circular (OC 193) instructing all UPI participants to generate transaction IDs using only alphanumeric characters. This was introduced to align with technical standards and ensure uniformity in transaction processing.

SEBI launches portal to report tech-glitches for stock exchanges and other MIIs

- ❖ The market regulator has launched a portal for market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) such as stock exchanges and clearing corporations to report technical glitches. It is aimed at improving the data quality and traceability of submissions, among other things.
- ❖ The portal will be called iSPOT for Integrated SEBI Portal for Technical Glitches, and it will be integrated into the SEBI Intermediary (SI) portal for ease of access.

- ❖ In a circular issued on January 28, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said, "In order to streamline the reporting process of technical glitches across MIIs and creation of centralized repository of technical glitches, SEBI has developed a webbased portal, i.e. Integrated SEBI Portal for Technical Glitches (iSPOT), for submission of preliminary and final RCA reports of technical glitches by the MIIs."
- ❖ From February 3, 2025, when the directions in the present circular comes into force, the MIIs will need to make their submissions to the portal.

Irdai caps senior citizens' health premium increase at 10% per annum

- ❖ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) on Thursday issued a directive that mandates insurers to not revise health insurance premiums for senior citizens by more than 10 per cent annually, with immediate effect.
- ❖ If an insurer needs to increase premium by more than 10 per cent in a year, prior approval from the regulator would be required, Irdai said in a statement. Prior approval of the regulator would also be required in case of withdrawal of individual health insurance products offered to senior citizens.

HDFC Bank Secures RBI Approval to Acquire Stakes in Peer Banks

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted approval to HDFC Bank and its group companies to acquire up to a 9.5% stake in Kotak Mahindra Bank, AU Small Finance Bank, and Capital Small Finance Bank.
- ❖ This approval is valid for one year, until January 2, 2026.

Banking & Financial Affairs

BharatPe to Sell 25% Stake in Unity Small Finance Bank

- ❖ Resilient Innovations, the parent company of BharatPe, is seeking investors to sell up to 25% of its 49% stake in Unity Small Finance Bank (Unity SFB), aiming to raise approximately \$800 million, according to sources familiar with the matter.
- ❖ This move aligns with regulatory guidelines that require the company to reduce its stake in the bank to 10% by 2029, regardless of Unity SFB's listing status.

Exim Bank India raises \$1 billion from overseas via 10-year bonds

- ❖ EXIM Bank on January 7, 2025, said it has raised \$ 1 billion (about Rs 8,570 crore) through an overseas bond issuance at very competitive rates.

- ❖ The policy bank will be using the money to fund its ongoing and new initiatives across the world, according to a statement.
- ❖ Its managing director Harsha Bangari said the money has been raised at “the tightest spread ever achieved from India”.

SEBI modifies credit rating agency rules to enhance ease of doing business

- ❖ Capital markets regulator Sebi has revised timelines for credit rating agencies (CRAs) to enhance the ease of doing business by introducing the term “working days” instead of “days” for compliance deadlines.

Indian Overseas Bank to sell Rs 11,500 cr NPAs to boost asset quality

- ❖ State-run Indian Overseas Bank on January 8, 2025 said it is selling non-performing assets of Rs 11,500 crore to asset reconstruction companies.
- ❖ The Chennai-headquartered lender said it is selling 46 loan accounts and invited expressions of interest from the ARCs, according to an official statement.

Fintech Skydo receives in-principle approval to operate as PA-CB entity

- ❖ Cross-border payments firm Skydo on Tuesday received an in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB) entity.
- ❖ At present, only five entities have received final approval from the banking regulator to operate as PA-CB. These include Adyen India Technology Services, Amazon Pay (India), Cashfree Payments, Indialdeas.com, and Pay10 Services.
- ❖ About 11 existing cross-border payment companies can operate as PA-CB with their applications under process, according to the RBI website.

PFC to get Yen-denominated loan worth ₹6,500 crore from JBIC

- ❖ Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has signed a JPY 120 billion (approximately ₹6,500 crore) loan agreement with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for renewable energy projects.
- ❖ Under the agreement, JBIC will provide JPY 72 billion of the total loan amount, with the remaining financed by commercial banks.
- ❖ The funds are designated for financing renewable energy projects in India as part of JBIC’s initiative ‘Global action for Reconciling Economic growth and Environmental preservation’ (GREEN).

- ❖ This deal marks the largest green financing agreement ever executed by JBIC with an Indian company.
- ❖ The new credit line is four times larger than PFC’s previous credit line from JBIC and offers a longer tenor of up to 20 years.

The ePlane Company becomes first in India to secure DGCA type certification for eVTOL aircraft

- ❖ The ePlane Company, incubated at IIT Madras, is the first private Indian firm to receive Type Certification from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for its eVTOL aircraft, the e200X.
- ❖ The company aims to launch its eVTOL services by 2026 and targets moving over 500,000 people daily within three years.
- ❖ The e200X has been certified to meet safety and operational standards for commercial service.
- ❖ ePlane will collaborate with the DGCA on further aircraft design and operational aspects to enhance safety standards and scalability in electric aviation.

Outward foreign direct investment rises by 17% to \$37.68 billion in 2024

- ❖ According to the RBI data, Indian outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) increased by nearly 17% to 37.68 billion in 2024, up from 32.29 billion in 2023.
- ❖ The rise in OFDI reflects the growing aspirations of Indian companies to expand their global presence and diversify their investment portfolios, according to economist Madan Sabnavis.
- ❖ OFDI includes investments in unlisted equity, significant stakes in listed entities, or controlling stakes in foreign entities with minority ownership.
- ❖ Major countries receiving Indian OFDI include Singapore, the US, UK, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Malaysia.

BOBCARD Launches TIARA Credit Card

- ❖ The TIARA card was introduced at Pinkathon, a platform honoring women’s strength, resilience, and spirit, by Indian model and actor Milind Soman, Pinkathon founder, yoga practitioner Ankita Konwar, and Ravindra Rai, MD & CEO of BOBCARD Ltd.

Elon Musk Reaches \$400 Billion Milestone and Created History

- ❖ Elon Musk has reached a new milestone, with his net worth soaring to \$400 billion, according to Bloomberg, making him the first person to achieve this.
- ❖ This nearly \$20 billion increase in wealth was driven by a deal that boosted the valuation of Musk’s rocket

company, SpaceX, to around \$350 billion.

- ❖ SpaceX and its investors agreed to buy up to \$1.25 billion worth of insider shares.

Public Sector Banks Record Net Profit of Rs 85,520 Crore In First Half FY2024-25

- ❖ In the first half of FY 2024-25, Public Sector Banks (including SBI) reported a combined net profit of ₹85,520 crore, marking a strong 26% increase from ₹67,850 crore during the same period last year.

Indian banks' profitability improves for 6th consecutive year

- ❖ In 2023-24, Indian banks saw improved profitability for the sixth consecutive year, with non-performing assets (NPAs) dropping to a 13-year low of 2.7%.
- ❖ According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the financial position of banks remained strong, supported by steady loan and deposit growth.
- ❖ The gross NPA ratio fell to 2.5% by September 2024, and net bad loans dropped to 0.57%.
- ❖ Non-bank finance companies (NBFCs) also experienced growth in credit, asset quality, and profitability. The net profit of scheduled commercial banks rose by 32.8%, reaching ₹3.5 lakh crore.

NBFCs' loan growth moderates significantly to 6.5% in H1FY24: RBI report

- ❖ Following the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increasing risk weights on NBFC lending to certain consumer credit categories as well as on bank lending to NBFCs, loan growth of shadow banks moderated significantly during H1FY25 to 6.5 per cent on a half year – on – half year (H-O-H) basis in September 2024, RBI said in its Financial Stability Report.

SBI Introduces 'Har Ghar Lakhpati' and 'SBI Patrons' Deposit Schemes

- ❖ State Bank of India (SBI) has launched two new deposit schemes, Har Ghar Lakhpati and SBI Patrons, offering greater financial flexibility and value.
- ❖ Chairman C.S. Setty emphasized SBI's commitment to fostering financial inclusion, leveraging innovation, and empowering customers, aligning with India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

HDFC Bank secures RBI nod to acquire 9.5% stake in AU Small Finance Bank

- ❖ AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB) has secured approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for HDFC Bank and its group entities to acquire up to 9.5 per cent of its stake.

- ❖ The approval, granted in early January 2025, allows the acquisition to take place within one year, subject to compliance with regulatory requirements, including the Banking Regulation Act and RBI's guidelines on shareholding in banking companies.

Business and Economy

Sun Pharma to acquire Checkpoint Therapeutics Inc, for a consideration of upto \$355 million

- ❖ Sun Pharmaceutical Industries is acquiring Checkpoint Therapeutics Inc for up to \$355 million (₹3,088 crore).
- ❖ This marks Sun Pharma's second large acquisition in two years, following the \$576 million purchase of Concert Pharmaceuticals in 2023.
- ❖ Sun Pharma will pay an upfront cash of \$4.10 per Checkpoint share, representing a 66% premium over Checkpoint's last closing price before the announcement.
- ❖ The acquisition is expected to close in the second quarter of 2025, pending regulatory approvals.
- ❖ Checkpoint is a Nasdaq-listed company focused on novel cancer treatments, with an FDA-approved drug, Unloxyt, for specific types of skin cancer.
- ❖ The transaction aims to maximize shareholder value and provide quicker access to Unloxyt in various international markets.
- ❖ Stockholders of Checkpoint may receive an additional \$0.70 contingent on the approval of cosibelimab in specific regions.

CCI approves ONGC-NTPC Green's 100% acquisition of Ayana Renewable Power

- ❖ The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the acquisition of Ayana Renewable Power Private Limited by ONGC NTPC Green Private Limited.
- ❖ The acquisition involves the purchase of 100% equity share capital of Ayana by ONGC NTPC Green.
- ❖ ONGC NTPC Green is a joint venture between ONGC Green Limited and NTPC Green Energy Limited.
- ❖ ONGC Green Limited and NTPC Green Energy Limited are wholly owned subsidiaries of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited and NTPC Limited, respectively.
- ❖ Ayana Renewable Power and its affiliates operate in the power sector, focusing on power generation through renewable sources and power transmission in India.

Bharti Airtel transfers 69.94% stake in Airtel Payments bank to Airtel Ltd

- ❖ Bharti Airtel transferred its entire 69.94% stake in Airtel Payments Bank to its wholly-owned subsidiary, Airtel Limited.

- ❖ This transfer was confirmed through a regulatory filing and is an internal reorganization of shareholding.
- ❖ The ownership of Airtel Payments Bank remains unchanged as a result of this transaction.
- ❖ All necessary regulatory and corporate approvals for the transfer have been obtained by Bharti Airtel.
- ❖ Airtel Payments Bank reported a turnover of Rs 1,835.8 crore for the fiscal year 2023-24.
- ❖ The shareholding transfer qualifies as a related party transaction and will be conducted at arm's length.

India Becomes the Top Source of FDI into Dubai

- ❖ India's foreign direct investment (FDI) in Dubai reached 3.018 billion in 2024, a five fold increase from 589 million in 2023.
- ❖ India became the top investor in Dubai, accounting for 21.5% of total FDI, followed by the US (13.7%), France (11%), UK (10%), and Switzerland (6.9%).
- ❖ The proportion of Greenfield FDI projects remained stable at 73.5% in 2024, while reinvestment FDI projects rose to 3.3% from 1.2% in 2023.
- ❖ The number of announced Indian FDI projects increased to 275 in 2024, up from 249 in 2023, moving India from third to second place in project count.
- ❖ Key sectors for Indian investments included:
 - ❑ Business Services (26.9%)
 - ❑ Software & IT Services (23.6%)
 - ❑ Consumer Products (9.8%)
 - ❑ Food & Beverages (8.4%)
 - ❑ Real Estate (6.9%)
- ❖ Real estate comprised a significant portion of Dubai's FDI, with a 51.4% share, followed by Hotels and Tourism (9.5%) and Transportation and Warehousing (8.4%).
- ❖ Dubai ranked as the top global destination for Greenfield FDI for the fourth consecutive year, attracting AED 52.3 billion (\$14.24 billion) in total estimated FDI capital.
- ❖ The FDI capital in Dubai increased by 33.2% compared to AED 39.26 billion (\$10.69 billion) in 2023.
- ❖ Dubai also reported a historic total of 1,826 announced FDI projects in 2024, up from 1,650 projects in 2023.

India's economic growth to exceed 6.5% in FY26, says Moody's Ratings

- ❖ Moody's Ratings forecasts India's economic growth to exceed 6.5% in fiscal 2025-26, up from 6.3% in fiscal 2024-25, driven by increased government capital expenditure, tax cuts, and interest rate reductions.

- ❖ The banking sector's outlook remains stable; however, asset quality is expected to deteriorate moderately due to stress in unsecured retail loans, microfinance loans, and small business loans.
- ❖ Banks' profitability will remain adequate, with only marginal declines in net interest margins anticipated.
- ❖ India's economic growth is expected to reaccelerate after a temporary slowdown in mid-2024, indicating one of the fastest growth rates among large economies globally.
- ❖ The finance ministry projects GDP growth for the next fiscal year at 6.3-6.8%, with current fiscal year estimates at 6.5%.
- ❖ Average inflation is predicted to decline to 4.5% in fiscal 2025-26 from 4.8% the previous year.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has lowered its policy rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% in February 2025, with further cuts expected to be modest due to global uncertainties.
- ❖ System-wide loan growth is projected to slow to 11-13% in fiscal 2025-26, down from an average of 17% in the previous two years.

Amul ranked as 3rd most valued brand in India

- ❖ Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul) has been ranked as the third most valued brand in India in the YouGov India Value Rankings 2025.
- ❖ Amul is the only Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) brand in the top three, alongside Amazon and Flipkart.
- ❖ This ranking reflects Amul's cooperative model, ensuring fair pricing for farmers and affordability for consumers, making high-quality dairy products accessible.
- ❖ Amul is the leading brand in tier-2 cities and remains among the top three in tier-1 and tier-3 cities.
- ❖ The brand ranks third among male consumers and second among female consumers, highlighting its widespread trust and relevance.
- ❖ The rankings evaluated brands based on consumer insights from 130,000 urban Indians across various sectors for their value for money.

SEBI Launches Centralized Database for Corporate Bonds

- ❖ Markets regulator Sebi has launched a centralised database portal for corporate bonds in a bid to create a single, authentic source of information on such securities.
- ❖ The portal -- Bond Central-- has been developed by Online Bond Platform Providers Association (OBPP)

Association) in collaboration with Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) comprising stock exchanges and depositories.

- ❖ Accessible free of charge, it serves as an information repository for the public.
- ❖ The portal is designed to enhance transparency and facilitate informed decision-making among investors and market participants.
- ❖ Key features include a unified view of corporate bonds across exchanges, price comparisons with Government Securities (G-Secs), and detailed risk assessments.
- ❖ The platform reduces information asymmetry, improving market trust.
- ❖ The initial phase of Bond Central went live recently, with plans for ongoing feature updates based on stakeholder feedback.

Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) – January 2025 Report

- ❖ The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 4.6% in January 2025 compared to January 2024.
- ❖ Positive growth was recorded in the production of Cement, Refinery Products, Coal, Steel, Fertilizers, and Electricity in January 2025.
- ❖ The ICI measures the performance of eight core industries: Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, and Electricity.
- ❖ These eight core industries represent 40.27% of the weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- ❖ The final growth rate for the Index of Eight Core Industries in October 2024 was 3.8%.
- ❖ The cumulative growth rate of the ICI from April to January 2024-25 was 4.4% compared to the previous year.
- ❖ Specific production statistics for January 2025:
 - ❑ Coal production increased by 4.6% (weight: 10.33%).
 - ❑ Crude Oil production declined by 1.1% (weight: 8.98%).
 - ❑ Natural Gas production decreased by 1.5% (weight: 6.88%).
 - ❑ Petroleum Refinery production rose by 8.3% (weight: 28.04%).
 - ❑ Fertilizer production increased by 3.0% (weight: 2.63%).

- ❑ Steel production grew by 3.7% (weight: 17.92%).
- ❑ Cement production experienced a significant rise of 14.5% (weight: 5.37%).
- ❑ Electricity generation increased by 1.3% (weight: 19.85%).

Amazon Web Services commits to invest \$8.2 billion in Maharashtra by 2030

- ❖ Amazon Web Services (AWS) has committed to invest \$8.2 billion in Maharashtra over the coming years, specifically by 2029-30.
- ❖ The investment aims to deploy the latest technology and cloud management solutions in India.
- ❖ AWS plans to introduce advanced technologies, including the latest graphic processing units (GPUs), to enhance cloud services in the region.
- ❖ The investment is expected to lead to significant job creation in India as AWS expands its operations.
- ❖ The move is in response to the growing demand for cloud services driven by India's digital economy and increasing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) across various sectors.

Crisil projects FY26 GDP growth to be steady at 6.5%

- ❖ Crisil forecasts India's GDP growth for FY26 to be 6.5%, slower than the previous fiscal's 9.2%.
- ❖ This growth maintains India's status as the fastest-growing large economy, close to the pre-pandemic average of 6.6% from 2011 to 2020.
- ❖ Expectations for FY26 include a normal monsoon and soft commodity prices, boosting private consumption recovery.
- ❖ Investment growth is reliant on an increase in private capital expenditure (capex).
- ❖ A mild pickup in growth is anticipated due to lower fiscal impulse and risks from potential US tariff hikes.
- ❖ Private consumption is projected to improve due to healthy agricultural production and easing food inflation, which could enhance discretionary spending.
- ❖ Tax benefits from the Union Budget 2025-2026 and increased allocations for employment-generating schemes are expected to further support consumption.
- ❖ Easing monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to facilitate discretionary consumption through liquidity measures and relaxed regulations for non-banking financial companies.
- ❖ Sustained growth in investment is dependent on a pick-up in private corporate investment, as the government normalizes its capex to meet fiscal deficit targets.

IRCTC, IRFC get 'navratna' status

- ❖ The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) were granted 'Navratna' status by the Government of India on March 3, 2025, becoming the 25th and 26th Navratnas among Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- ❖ IRCTC has an annual turnover of ₹4,270.18 crore, a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹1,111.26 crore, and a net worth of ₹3,229.97 crore for FY 2023-24.
- ❖ IRFC reports an annual turnover of ₹26,644 crore, a PAT of ₹6,412 crore, and a net worth of ₹49,178 crore for FY 2023-24.
- ❖ 'Navratna' status is awarded to public sector undertakings demonstrating outstanding financial and market performance.
- ❖ This status enhances financial autonomy, allowing companies to invest up to ₹1,000 crore or 15% of net worth in a single project without central government approval.
- ❖ Companies can independently establish partnerships, create subsidiaries, and enter into joint ventures.
- ❖ The designation aims to improve the competitiveness and self-sufficiency of public sector enterprises.

Coal Production from Captive and Commercial Mines Grows 32.53% YoY to 167.36 MT

- ❖ Total coal production from captive and commercial mines for FY 2024-25 has reached 167.36 million tonnes (MT) as of February 2025, marking a 32.53% year-on-year increase compared to 126.28 MT produced by February 28, 2024.
- ❖ Coal dispatch has significantly surged to 170.66 MT for the financial year, surpassing the 128.45 MT recorded in the previous year, reflecting a 32.86% year-on-year growth.
- ❖ The increase in production and dispatch ensures a stable and uninterrupted coal supply to critical sectors, including power, steel, and cement.
- ❖ The Bhaskarpara Coal mine of M/s Prakash Industries Limited commenced production on February 15, 2025, with a Peak Rated Capacity (PRC) of 15 MT.
- ❖ The Ministry of Coal is committed to fostering a sustainable and efficient coal sector, contributing to national growth aligned with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision for a developed India by 2047, emphasizing energy security and economic progress.

CCI approves proposed acquisition of 100% shareholding in KSK Mahanadi Power Company

Limited by JSW Energy Limited

- ❖ The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the acquisition of 100% shareholding in KSK Mahanadi Power Company Limited (KMPCL) by JSW Energy Limited (JSWEL).
- ❖ JSWEL is a publicly listed company with diversified assets in power generation, transmission, trading, coal mining, and power equipment manufacturing.
- ❖ JSW Thermal Energy One Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of JSWEL, was incorporated in October 2024 specifically for this acquisition and currently has no independent business activities.
- ❖ KMPCL, established in 2009, operates a thermal power plant with a capacity of 6 x 600 MW located in Janjgir-Champa District, Chhattisgarh, and is currently undergoing the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).
- ❖ The acquisition is structured as JSWEL, through JSW Thermal, acquiring the 100% shareholding in KMPCL, which is in the process of resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- ❖ A detailed order from the CCI outlining the specifics of the transaction is expected to follow.

CCI approves the proposed acquisition of up to 72.8% shareholding of Orient Cement Limited by Ambuja Cements Limited

- ❖ The Competition Commission of India has approved Ambuja Cements Limited's acquisition of up to 72.8% shareholding in Orient Cement Limited.
- ❖ Ambuja Cements is involved in the manufacture and sale of grey cement, including Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), Pozzolona Portland Cement (PPC), and Pozzolona Composite Cement (PCC).
- ❖ The company operates 22 integrated cement plants, 10 bulk cement terminals, and 21 grinding units across India.
- ❖ Orient Cement Limited manufactures grey cement, including PPC and OPC, with three manufacturing facilities located in Telangana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.
- ❖ The acquisition process consists of two main steps:
 1. Step 1 involves Ambuja Cements acquiring 46.80% of Orient Cement's issued share capital, which includes 37.90% from the current promoter and 8.90% from public shareholders.
 2. Step 2 requires Ambuja Cements to make an open offer for an additional 26% of the expanded share capital of Orient Cement as per SEBI regulations.
- ❖ If the open offer is fully accepted, Ambuja Cements' total shareholding in Orient Cement will reach 72.8%.

Schneider Electric plans to open three more plants in India

- ❖ Schneider Electric has announced plans to open three more manufacturing plants in India.
- ❖ The company currently has 31 manufacturing plants in the country. The three new plants will come up at Kolkata, Hyderabad and Ahmednagar.
- ❖ It was announced by Schneider Electric's CEO Olivier Blum at the inaugural session of Elecrama 2025 organised by industry body IEEMA in Greater Noida.
- ❖ Schneider has already announced investments of ₹3,200 crore to expand its industrial footprint in India and plans to add nearly 1.2 million square feet area by 2026.
- ❖ India is Schneider's third-largest market globally and one of the four global hubs.

SEBI slaps ₹10 lakh penalty on Axis Securities for violating stock brokers rules

- ❖ SEBI has imposed a penalty of ₹10 lakh on Axis Securities for flouting stock brokers rules as well as other regulatory norms.
- ❖ The penalty has to be paid by the brokerage firm within 45 days, the regulator said in an order on Friday.
- ❖ SEBI found that Axis Securities failed to follow regulatory procedures in several areas, including reporting discrepancies and improper handling of client funds.
- ❖ SEBI has also observed that Axis Securities did not settle clients' funds and securities as per preference obtained from the clients and failed to provide retention statements with account details.

NTPC, EDF India collaborate for PSP to explore avenues in distribution

- ❖ NTPC, a state-owned power giant in India, has partnered with EDF India, a subsidiary of Electricite de France, to establish pumped hydro storage and hydro projects combined with renewable energy initiatives.
- ❖ The two entities have signed a non-binding term sheet for developing, owning, operating, and maintaining pumped storage and hydro-power projects.
- ❖ They propose to form a joint venture company (JVC) with a 50:50 ownership structure, pending approval from the Government of India.
- ❖ The JVC will manage projects independently or in collaboration with other joint ventures and subsidiaries in India and neighboring countries.
- ❖ NTPC is the largest integrated power utility in India, contributing to one-fourth of the country's power needs, with an installed capacity exceeding 77 GW.

Flipkart-backed super.money acquires checkout financing platform BharatX

- ❖ Super.money, a fintech firm backed by Flipkart, has acquired BharatX, a checkout financing platform, in an all-cash deal.
- ❖ The financial details of the transaction have not been disclosed.
- ❖ The acquisition is intended to enhance Super.money's payment and credit offerings, focusing on checkout financing for direct-to-consumer (D2C) and e-commerce brands, starting with consumer durables.
- ❖ Plans include leveraging a credit line on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for products sold via Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs) and Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) options.
- ❖ Super.money currently ranks as the sixth largest third-party application provider on the UPI, with over 10 million users and various financial products such as fixed deposits and co-branded credit cards.
- ❖ BharatX was established in 2019 and has raised \$4.75 million in funding, specializing in embedded financing that allows consumers to make purchases in installments at the time of checkout.

SEBI imposes Rs 5.05 crore fine on ICCL for cyber security lapses

- ❖ SEBI imposed a penalty of Rs 5.05 crore on Indian Clearing Corporation (ICCL), a subsidiary of BSE, for non-compliance with cyber security and system audit rules.
- ❖ The inspection of ICCL took place between December 2022 and July 2023, with a show-cause notice issued in October 2024.
- ❖ Key violations identified included:
 1. ICCL submitted its network audit report without management or board comments.
 2. Failure to maintain an up-to-date inventory of IT assets, including software classifications.
 3. Issues raised in biannual cyber audits were not resolved in a timely manner.
 4. Non-compliance with SEBI guidelines regarding the disaster recovery system, failing to ensure a one-to-one match between the primary data centre and disaster recovery site.
- ❖ The penalty must be paid by ICCL within 45 days of the order.
- ❖ G Ramar, SEBI's Quasi-Judicial Authority, referenced the Dr Bimal Jalan Committee's 2010 report on market

infrastructure institutions when issuing the order, highlighting the systemic importance of such institutions for financial stability.

AMFI launches Chhoti SIP, Tarun Yojana, and MITRA

- ❖ The Association of Mutual Funds (AMFI) has launched three initiatives: Chhoti SIP, Tarun Yojna, and MITRA.
- ❖ Chhoti SIP: A systematic Investment Plan allowing investments from Rs 250, targeting first-time investors and underserved segments.
- ❖ Tarun Yojna: Focuses on integrating financial literacy into school curricula to educate young minds about finance early on.
- ❖ MITRA: A platform designed to identify and recover inactive mutual fund holdings, ensuring rightful asset ownership.
- ❖ AMFI aims to enhance financial inclusion and investor awareness while simplifying mutual fund investment tracking.
- ❖ India's mutual fund industry has grown significantly, with AUM exceeding Rs 65 lakh crore, yet many still face investment barriers due to low awareness.
- ❖ AMFI's initiatives are intended to make mutual fund investments more accessible, secure, and transparent.

ADB commits \$200-million loan to expand urban services in Kolkata

- ❖ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$200 million loan for the development of climate- and disaster-resilient sewerage and drainage infrastructure in Kolkata.
- ❖ This initiative aims to improve the city's livability and is part of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Sustainability, Hygiene, and Resilience (Sector) Project.
- ❖ The project focuses on enhancing living conditions and health outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and children.
- ❖ The project will include the construction of:
 1. 84 kilometers (km) of combined trunk and secondary sewerage and drainage pipelines.
 2. 176 km of combined lateral sewerage and drainage pipelines up to customer connections.
 3. 50,000 household sewer connections.
 4. One sewage treatment plant.
 5. Five pumping stations.
- ❖ The initiative is expected to benefit over 277,000 residents in Kolkata.

Government raised FDI Limit for Insurance from 74% to 100%

- ❖ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limits for the insurance sector from 74% to 100% in Budget 2025.
- ❖ The increase in FDI aims to attract more foreign capital to the sector.
- ❖ There are restrictions associated with the 100% FDI limit.
- ❖ The enhanced limit will only apply to insurance companies that invest the entire premium collected in India.
- ❖ Since 2000, the FDI limit in insurance has increased from 26% to 74%, and now to 100%.
- ❖ The insurance industry has expanded from 7 state-owned entities to over 60 companies today.
- ❖ The increase in FDI limit has attracted interest from global insurers, anticipating higher foreign investment.

SEBI Proposes Unique UPI IDs for Market Intermediaries

- ❖ SEBI has proposed creating unique UPI addresses for market intermediaries to help investors identify legitimate SEBI-registered entities.
- ❖ The proposed UPI handle will consist of an alphanumeric ID for the intermediary's username, followed by a segment abbreviation (e.g., "abc.bkr" for brokerage), and a unique identifier linked to the intermediary's bank.
- ❖ SEBI introduced UPI as a payment method in the securities market in 2019 as an alternative for purchasing shares in IPOs.
- ❖ SEBI proposes increasing the daily transaction limit through UPI for capital market transactions from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh, based on an analysis of transaction patterns and trends.
- ❖ The new limit will be periodically evaluated in consultation with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

SEBI launches MITRA to help investors track unclaimed mutual funds folios

- ❖ SEBI launched a new digital platform called MITRA (Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant) to help investors track and reclaim inactive or unclaimed mutual fund folios.
- ❖ It will be managed by two Qualified RTAs: Computer Age Management Services Limited (CAMS) and KFIN Technologies Limited, acting as agents of Asset Management Companies (AMCs)

- ❖ The platform aims to encourage investors to search for forgotten investments and update their KYC information in compliance with current norms.
- ❖ MITRA provides a searchable database of inactive and unclaimed mutual fund folios at an industry level.
- ❖ The platform helps investors identify overlooked investments, including those made by others for which they may be rightful claimants.
- ❖ MITRA also aims to reduce the number of non-KYC compliant folios and unclaimed mutual fund folios.

TCS partners with Finland's UPM to modernise its IT landscape

- ❖ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has signed a partnership agreement with UPM to drive end-to-end IT transformation, focusing on adopting an AI-first operating model.
- ❖ The partnership reinforces TCS's leadership in Finland, where it has been active for over 25 years.
- ❖ TCS will implement its AI-powered autonomous enterprise platform, ignio TM, to enhance operational efficiency.
- ❖ The services provided will include service desk support, workspace and onsite services, business and platform application services, network and connectivity solutions, hybrid cloud services, and Service Integration and Management (SIAM).
- ❖ UPM, headquartered in Finland, specializes in producing recyclable products from responsibly sourced materials and has a turnover of EUR 10.3 billion, operating production facilities in 11 countries.
- ❖ The partnership will help UPM transition from traditional outcome measurement of digital transformation to a more experience-based approach.

Meta introduces subsea internet cable Project Waterworth to cross over 50,000 km,

- ❖ Meta introduced its internet subsea cable Project Waterworth, which will cross 50,000 km in length, the longest subsea cable project globally.
- ❖ It aims to enhance connectivity for the U.S., India, Brazil, South Africa, and other regions.
- ❖ The investment involves billions of dollars and is set to span across years, in a bid to bring AI access to users all around the world.
- ❖ As part of Project Waterworth, more cables are set to be laid at depths of up to 7,000 metres.
- ❖ Measures will be taken to protect cables in high-risk areas where they are more prone to damage.

- ❖ Subsea cables projects, such as Project Waterworth, are the backbone of global digital infrastructure, accounting for more than 95% of intercontinental traffic across the world's oceans to seamlessly enable digital communication, video experiences, online transactions, and more.

India's ePlane secures \$1 billion deal to supply 788 eVTOL air ambulances

- ❖ The ePlane Company, an Indian electric aircraft startup, has secured a deal valued at over \$1 billion to supply 788 air ambulances.
- ❖ The agreement is non-binding and involves supplying electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft to ICATT, an air ambulance service provider, for deployment across all districts in India.
- ❖ This initiative responds to the challenge of worsening traffic congestion in busy Indian cities.
- ❖ eVTOLs aim to revolutionize urban travel with battery-powered aircraft capable of vertical takeoff and landing, helping commuters avoid traffic jams.
- ❖ ePlane plans to start commercial operations in the latter half of 2026, with an initial production target of 100 units per year.
- ❖ The aircraft will initially have a range of about 110 kilometers (68.4 miles), which may be extended to over 200 kilometers.
- ❖ The company is beginning with three prototypes of the ambulances designed to accommodate a pilot, a paramedic, and a patient with a stretcher.
- ❖ An additional \$100 million is needed for further prototype development, achieving type certification, and commencing production.

India's top 500 private sector companies valued at Rs 324 lakh crore

- ❖ The 2024 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 report reveals that India's top 500 private sector companies have a cumulative value of \$3.8 trillion, surpassing India's GDP and the combined GDPs of the UAE, Indonesia, and Spain.
- ❖ These companies collectively added nearly 1.4 million jobs in 2024, raising their total workforce to 8.4 million, which is about 16% of India's total workforce.
- ❖ The Tata Group leads the rankings with 15 companies, contributing 10% of the total cumulative value, while the Adani Group added a new company for a total of 9.
- ❖ Haryana advanced to join the top three states in representation, while major cities like Mumbai and Bangalore saw declines in company numbers.

- ❖ The list features only companies headquartered in India, with all valued at over \$1 billion for the first time, despite a depreciating rupee.

India's first road train unveiled by Volvo Trucks

- ❖ Volvo Trucks introduced India's first road train, transforming long-distance transportation.
- ❖ The project was launched by Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, in Nagpur.
- ❖ Developed in collaboration with Delhivery Ltd, it aims to enhance the logistics industry.
- ❖ Road Train concept allows vehicle lengths up to 25.25 meters, incorporated into Indian regulations in 2020.
- ❖ The setup uses a tractor unit to tow multiple trailers, significantly increasing cargo capacity.
- ❖ Volvo's Road Train comprises a Volvo FM 420 4×2 tractor, a 24-foot containerized intermediate trailer, and a 44-foot semi-trailer.
- ❖ It has a cargo capacity of 144 cubic meters, which is 50% more than traditional semi-trailers.
- ❖ The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) certified the road train after extensive testing.
- ❖ Equipped with advanced safety features including Electronic Braking System (EBS), Electronic Stability Program (ESP), 360-degree camera system, self-steerable axle, dashboard load monitor, downhill cruise control, and stretch brake for improved stability and control.

Google unveils 'Ananta,' its largest campus in India

- ❖ Google unveiled Ananta, its largest campus in India, located in Mahadevapura, Bengaluru.
- ❖ The name "Ananta" means "infinite" or "limitless" in Sanskrit.
- ❖ The campus can accommodate over 5,000 employees and is designed with accessibility in mind.
- ❖ Materials used for construction are predominantly sourced locally.
- ❖ Ananta represents Google's commitment to innovation and aims to drive advancements in AI.
- ❖ The campus includes sustainability features such as water waste recycling, on-site rainwater harvesting, and smart photochromic glass to reduce energy consumption.
- ❖ India's environment is seen as conducive to solving complex challenges that can benefit global users.
- ❖ Ananta aims to produce world-class products and tackle complex user-facing challenges.
- ❖ Google employs over 10,000 people, with a presence in various cities including Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Gurugram.

- ❖ The workplace is designed to foster collaboration and rejuvenation, featuring amenities like a gym, daycare facilities, a cafeteria, and a mini forest named Aranya.

Amazon Boosts AI with Nova Foundation Models

- ❖ Amazon's Nova Foundation Models represent cutting-edge AI technology, engineered to handle vast amounts of data with unmatched efficiency.
- ❖ Leveraging extensive training datasets, these models can perform diverse tasks, such as natural language processing and advanced image recognition, without requiring task-specific fine-tuning.
- ❖ What distinguishes the Nova models is their flexibility and scalability, allowing them to integrate smoothly across Amazon's ecosystem, improving user experiences in areas like shopping recommendations and Alexa's conversational capabilities.

S&P Global Ratings predicts 3% global economic expansion in 2025

- ❖ S&P Global Ratings forecasts 3% global growth in 2025, with slower expansion in the U.S. and China, a Eurozone recovery, and emerging market stability.
- ❖ India's economy, supported by infrastructure initiatives, easing inflation, and financial inclusivity, remains strong, with growth projected at 6.8% this fiscal year.
- ❖ Despite geopolitical risks and regional disparities, easing inflation, policy rate cuts, and resilient consumer spending are expected to improve global credit conditions.

Google to Launch Safety Engineering Centre in Hyderabad

- ❖ Google and the Telangana government have partnered to set up a Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) in Hyderabad, marking the second in the Asia Pacific region and the fifth globally, after Tokyo, Dublin, Munich, and Malaga.

Morgan Stanley Cuts India's FY25 GDP Growth to 6.3%

- ❖ Morgan Stanley has lowered India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal year to 6.3%, down from 6.7%, after a seven-quarter low in Q2 GDP growth.
- ❖ However, the firm remains optimistic about a recovery in the second half of FY25, predicting an average growth rate of 6.6%.

Tesla aims to launch robotaxi with teleoperator backup, Deutsche Bank says

- ❖ Tesla aims to start its robotaxi service with a company-owned fleet backed up by human teleoperators for

safety, Deutsche Bank said in a note after a meeting with the company's head of investor relations.

- ❖ The electric vehicle maker still is shooting for a launch of its cheaper vehicle in the first half of next year and other models later in the year, the bank said after the meeting with investor relations chief Travis Axelrod. It published the note on December 6, 2024.
- ❖ Tesla plans to launch robotaxi service in California and Texas next year, Deutsche Bank said. Tesla had set that goal earlier this year.

FDI equity flows up 45% at \$29.8 billion in H1FY25, shows govt data

- ❖ Foreign direct equity investment witnessed a 45 per cent jump at \$29.8 billion in the first six months of the current financial year, according to data of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- ❖ The rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows comes after a contraction in inflows for three consecutive financial years: FY22, FY23, FY24.
- ❖ Gross foreign direct investment, which includes equity capital of unincorporated bodies, reinvest earnings and other capital, saw 29 per cent rise at \$42.3 billion during April-September.

India Emerges as 3rd Largest Exporter in Smartphone Market

- ❖ India's rise from 23rd in global smartphone exports in 2019 to 3rd in 2024 is a remarkable achievement.
- ❖ With smartphone exports exceeding ₹20,000 crore in November 2024, this growth reflects India's effective use of government initiatives and a strong domestic production base.

ADB to Lend USD \$500 Million to India for Sustainable Infrastructure

- ❖ On December 20, 2024, India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$500 million loan to fund sustainable infrastructure projects that align with India's climate objectives.
- ❖ The loan, channeled through the IIFCL, will target sectors such as energy, urban development, and healthcare.

Blinkit Launches 10-Minute Ambulance Service in Gurgaon

- ❖ Blinkit CEO Albinder Dhindsa announced the launch of a 10-minute ambulance service in Gurugram, with plans to expand across India within two years.
- ❖ The ambulances will be equipped with medical gear, emergency medicines, and staffed by a paramedic, an assistant, and a trained driver.

National Affairs

Indian Railways Joins Mission Amrit Sarovar to Tackle Water Scarcity

- ❖ The Indian Railways has been integrated into the Mission Amrit Sarovar initiative to aid in water conservation by constructing and rejuvenating ponds across the country.
- ❖ The initiative involves constructing and rejuvenating ponds across India, particularly near railway lines.
- ❖ Tasks include desilting, excavating, or creating water bodies in collaboration with district authorities and the Ministry of Rural Development.
- ❖ Mission Amrit Sarovar was launched in April 2022 with the goal of constructing or rejuvenating 75 ponds per district.
- ❖ As of October 2024, over 68,000 ponds have been completed under the initiative.
- ❖ The mission promotes long-term water availability through community participation and aims for climate resilience to secure sustainable water resources.
- ❖ It is an initiative led by the Ministry of Rural Development, with technical support from the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N).
- ❖ Implementation involves collaboration with various schemes, including MGNREGA, 15th Finance Commission Grants, PMKSY, and state programs.

India generated \$143 mn launching foreign satellites since 2015

- ❖ India generated foreign exchange revenue of \$143 million from launching foreign satellites between 2015 and 2024, as reported by Union Minister Jitendra Singh.
- ❖ A total of 393 foreign satellites and three Indian customer satellites were launched commercially using ISRO's PSLV, LVM3, and SSLV launch vehicles during this period.
- ❖ The satellites launched were for 34 countries, including 232 for the US and 83 for the UK, among others.
- ❖ India has signed space cooperative documents with 61 countries and five multilateral organizations, covering areas such as satellite remote sensing and planetary exploration.
- ❖ Recent successes for India include the soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon and the successful launch of Aditya-L1, India's first solar mission.
- ❖ India is preparing for the Gaganyaan mission, which will demonstrate human spaceflight capabilities, with the launch scheduled for this year.

- ❖ The Gaganyaan astronauts were trained at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Russia.
- ❖ India aims to establish the 'Bharatiya Antariksha Station' by 2035 and send the first Indian to the Moon by 2040.

Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh becomes India's 58th Tiger Reserve

- ❖ Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh was declared India's 58th tiger reserve.
- ❖ This designation marks it as the ninth tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ The park covers over 37,000 hectares and is located between Panna and Ranthambore tiger reserves, enhancing the regional tiger corridor.
- ❖ Its proximity to Kuno National Park, where cheetahs were recently introduced, is expected to boost tourism and create jobs in the Gwalior-Shivpuri-Sheopur area.
- ❖ India has been at the forefront of global tiger conservation efforts through initiatives like Project Tiger, which was launched in 1973. With the addition of Madhav Tiger Reserve, India now has 58 tiger reserves under the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

Government Initiatives to promote Gas based Power Generation

- ❖ Gas-based power plants in India are operating at low Plant Load Factor (PLF).
- ❖ The government has classified Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) under the Open General License (OGL) category, allowing power plants to import LNG based on commercial terms with suppliers.
- ❖ From April to January 2024-25, approximately 9.58 million metric standard cubic meters per day (MMSCMD) of gas were imported by power plants.
- ❖ The government has implemented schemes for competitive procurement of power from gas-based plants during peak demand.
- ❖ Initiatives taken to increase the share of natural gas in the energy sector include:
 1. Expansion of the National Gas Grid Pipeline.
 2. Expansion of the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network.
 3. Establishment of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals.
 4. Priority allocation of domestic gas to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for transportation and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) for domestic use.

5. Marketing and pricing freedom for gas from high-pressure, high-temperature areas, deep water, ultra-deep water, and coal seams.
6. The SATAT initiative aimed at promoting Bio-CNG.

4 Indian cities among world's top 10 most polluted list

- ❖ Swiss air quality technology company IQAir has released the 'World Air Quality Report 2024'.
- ❖ The report by IQAir reveals that six of the ten most polluted cities globally are located in India, with New Delhi ranked as the most polluted capital city.
- ❖ Thirteen of the world's twenty most polluted cities are located in India, with Byrnihat in Assam ranking as the most polluted city globally.
- ❖ India is ranked as the fifth most polluted country in 2024, an improvement from third place in 2023.
- ❖ The country saw a 7% decline in PM2.5 concentrations, averaging 50.6 micrograms per cubic metre in 2024, down from 54.4 micrograms per cubic metre the previous year.
- ❖ Six of the top ten most polluted cities globally are situated in India, with Delhi's annual PM2.5 level at 91.6 micrograms per cubic metre, relatively stable from 92.7 in 2023.
- ❖ The 13 Indian cities noted among the top 20 most polluted include Byrnihat, Delhi, Mullanpur, Faridabad, Loni, New Delhi, Gurugram, Ganganagar, Greater Noida, Bhiwadi, Muzaffarnagar, Hanumangarh, and Noida.
- ❖ Chad holds the title for the worst air quality worldwide, with PM2.5 levels more than 18 times the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline.
- ❖ Bangladesh and Pakistan follow India as the second and third most polluted countries, respectively.
- ❖ In contrast, Oceania has the cleanest air, with 57% of its cities meeting WHO standards.

President of India Inaugurates Vividhta Ka Amrit Mahotsav at Rashtrapati Bhavan

- ❖ The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the second edition of 'Vividhta ka Amrit Mahotsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
- ❖ The second edition of Vividhta ka Amrit Mahotsav, people would get to know about the vibrant cultural heritage of five states - Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and two UTs - Lakshadweep and Puducherry.
- ❖ The 'Vividhta ka Amrit Mahotsav' is being organized at

Rashtrapati Bhavan to celebrate and showcase the rich diversity of India. This Mahotsav has been structured in the seven distinct editions dedicated to – North-East, South, North, East, West, Central region and Union Territories.

- ❖ The second edition of this celebration focuses on the Southern states. This Mahotsav presents before visitors the rich heritage and vibrant cultures of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.
- ❖ This festival will also provide a platform for artists, artisans, performers, writers and culinary experts from these states to showcase their talents through cultural performances, handicraft and handloom exhibitions, literary enclave, informative workshops, food courts, etc.

Govt Launches Aadhaar Good Governance Portal to Offer Step-by-Step Guide For Authentication Requests

- ❖ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the Aadhaar Good Governance portal to streamline the approval process for Aadhaar authentication requests, enhancing accessibility for the public.
- ❖ The portal operates under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, following its amendment in January 2025, which aims to improve transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes.
- ❖ Aadhaar is recognized as a highly trusted digital ID in India, having been used for authentication over 100 billion times by more than a billion users in the past decade.
- ❖ The portal serves as a comprehensive resource offering detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for entities seeking Aadhaar authentication, including guidance on application and onboarding processes.
- ❖ Future updates may include the integration of face authentication into apps used by private entities, allowing for accessible 24/7 verification.
- ❖ The initiative is part of a broader commitment by the Ministry to make Aadhaar more user-friendly and improve living conditions by increasing service accessibility.

India Extends \$1 Mn Grant to Lao PDR For Rice Fortification Project

- ❖ The Indian government has provided a grant of approximately USD 1 million to the Government of Lao PDR under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.

- ❖ This grant is designated for the project titled “Strengthening Large-Scale Food Fortification: The Case of Investing in Rice Fortification.”
- ❖ The project is implemented by the World Food Programme and aims to promote food fortification programs in Lao PDR.
- ❖ It focuses on long-term nutrition-specific strategies, strengthening food systems, increasing nutritional diversity, and overcoming micro-nutrient deficiencies in Lao PDR.
- ❖ The initiative reflects India’s strong ties with Lao PDR across various areas of cooperation.
- ❖ The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was established in June 2017 to support projects aiding the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries.
- ❖ The Fund emphasizes South-South cooperation, national ownership, sustainability, and local capacity development, with USD 150 million committed by the Government of India for various projects across 65 countries.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah to inaugurate “Workshop on Sustainability and Circularity in Dairy Sector” in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi on 3 March

- ❖ The Workshop on Sustainability and Circularity in Dairy Sector will be held on 3rd March 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ❖ It will be inaugurated by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah.
- ❖ Organized by the Ministry of Cooperation and the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying.
- ❖ The workshop aims to promote sustainable dairy farming with economic growth and environmental responsibility.
- ❖ Focus on circularity in the dairy sector, emphasizing reuse, regeneration, and recycling of resources.
- ❖ Discussion on eco-friendly practices, waste management, and sustainable livestock farming.
- ❖ The event aligns with India’s agricultural and environmental sustainability goals.

PM Modi visits Somnath temple, prays for health, prosperity of citizens

- ❖ PM Narendra Modi visited Somnath Temple in Gir Somnath district, Gujarat on Sunday.
- ❖ He prayed for the health and prosperity of the countrymen at the first of the 12 Jyotirlingas.

- ❖ He arrived in Jamnagar, Gujarat, on Saturday evening for a three-day state visit.
- ❖ His day started with a visit to Vantara, an animal rescue, conservation, and rehabilitation centre.
- ❖ After visiting Somnath Temple, he proceeded to Sasan in Junagadh district.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj to Launch “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan” in a National Workshop on 4th March 2025

- ❖ The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is organizing a National Workshop of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions wherein “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan” (सशक्त पंचायत-नेत्री अभियान) will be launched on 4th March 2025 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- ❖ The occasion will be graced by Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smt. Annpurna Devi, and others.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addresses the post-budget webinar on agriculture and rural prosperity

- ❖ The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the post-budget webinar on agriculture and rural prosperity today via video-conferencing.
- ❖ Emphasizing the importance of participation in the post-budget webinar, the Prime Minister thanked everyone for joining the program and highlighted that this year’s budget is the first full budget of the Government’s third term, showcasing continuity in policies and a new expansion of the vision for Viksit Bharat.

Shri Jayant Chaudhary launches Swavalambini, a Women Entrepreneurship Programme

- ❖ Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, launched Swavalambini— a Women Entrepreneurship Programme at Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, taking a significant step towards strengthening women entrepreneurship in India.
- ❖ This initiative empowers female students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by providing them with the necessary entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship to successfully build and scale their ventures.

India launches multi-nation alliance for collaboration on sustainable development

- ❖ India launched the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3), aimed at fostering city-to-city collaboration and partnerships for sustainable urban development.

- ❖ The initiative is designed for policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, and development partners to discuss sustainable solutions for waste management and resource efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the importance of the P (Pro-Planet People) approach and the role of the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) and circular economy principles in sustainable urban development.
- ❖ Modi proposed forming a working group of member nations to finalize the coalition’s structure and operational framework.
- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for CITIIS 2.0 was signed at the launch event in Jaipur, highlighting urban sustainability efforts.
- ❖ Agreements worth ₹1,800 crore will be signed under this initiative, benefiting 18 cities across 14 States, serving as lighthouse projects for other urban areas.

PM Modi Inaugurates Vantara Wildlife Centre in Gujarat

- ❖ PM Narendra Modi inaugurated and visited Vantara, a wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation center in Gujarat.
- ❖ Vantara is home to over 2,000 species and more than 1.5 lakh rescued, endangered, and threatened animals.
- ❖ The Prime Minister explored various facilities at the center, interacting closely with rehabilitated animal species.
- ❖ He visited the wildlife hospital, which is equipped with advanced veterinary facilities, including MRI, CT scans, and ICUs.
- ❖ Departments at the hospital include Wildlife Anesthesia, Cardiology, Nephrology, Endoscopy, Dentistry, and Internal Medicine.

Union Minister for Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri Manohar Lal inaugurates Prakriti 2025

- ❖ Prakriti (Promoting Resilience, Awareness, Knowledge, and Resources for Integrating Transformational Initiatives) 2025, an international conference on carbon markets, was held in New Delhi, focusing on promoting resilience, awareness, knowledge, and resources for climate initiatives.
- ❖ The event provided a high-level platform for experts, policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers to discuss global carbon market trends and challenges.
- ❖ Union Minister for Power and Housing, Shri Manohar Lal, inaugurated the conference and emphasized the importance of transitioning to renewable energy to

reduce fossil fuel dependence and meet emissions targets.

- ❖ Prakriti 2025 is viewed as a significant event in India's climate agenda, facilitating collaboration and innovative climate solutions.

Roots Foundation launches 'Project Parali' to tackle stubble burning

- ❖ Roots Foundation, one of India's leading non-governmental organisations, has launched "Project Parali" to tackle stubble burning, particularly in Haryana and has stopped the environmentally harmful practice on over 3 lakh hectares of land in the past 3 years.
- ❖ The foundation is the only organisation tackling this problem holistically.
- ❖ Roots has started training women from Haryana's local communities in making household products through the stubble, which will eventually be sold in these communities as well as to governments.
- ❖ For the foundation, agriculture is the largest vertical and within it focuses on the natural resource conservation programme (NRCP) to promote sustainable agriculture practices – use of less water (through direct seeded rice and alternate wetting and drying techniques), safe and judicious use (and spraying) of pesticides and other agro-chemicals and improved crop residue management practices.

President of India Inaugurates the National Tribal Festival 'Aadi Mahotsav'

- ❖ The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the National Tribal Festival 'Aadi Mahotsav' in New Delhi.
- ❖ Aadi Mahotsav is designed to highlight and promote tribal heritage and provides opportunities for tribal entrepreneurs, artisans, and artists to connect with the market.
- ❖ The crafts, food, dress, jewelry, medical practices, household equipment, and sports of tribal society are celebrated as precious heritage that harmonizes with nature and sustainable lifestyles.
- ❖ Over the past decade, significant steps have been taken for the overall development of tribal society:
 1. The Tribal Development Budget has increased five-fold, reaching approximately ₹1.25 lakh crore.
 2. The Tribal Welfare Budget Allocation has tripled to around ₹15,000 crore.
- ❖ Aadi Mahotsav is organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs from February 16 to 24, 2025, at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, showcasing the rich traditional culture of India's tribal communities.

India's solar share to soar, Renewables set to power 27% of energy mix by 2027: IEA

- ❖ India's renewable energy share is expected to increase from 21% in 2024 to 27% by 2027, with solar PV contributing significantly, projected to rise over 28% from 2025 to 2027.

Government Intervention

- ❖ The government launched the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana in February 2024 to provide rooftop solar systems, aiming for 300 kWh per month for 10 million households, which will add 30 GW of capacity.
- ❖ A total financial outlay of ₹700 billion is allocated for this scheme, offering up to 60% in capital subsidies and incentives for distribution companies.
- ❖ In 2024, amendments to the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules streamlined electricity connections and solar installations, exempting systems up to 10 kW from feasibility studies.
- ❖ The National Electricity Plan (Transmission) introduced in October 2024 aims to enable transmission of 500 GW of renewable capacity by 2030 and 600 GW by 2032, including provisions for battery storage and green hydrogen infrastructure.
- ❖ Wind energy is expected to grow at a rate of 11% from 2025 to 2027, with the government approving ₹74.5 billion for offshore wind projects of 1 GW capacity.
- ❖ Hydropower is projected to grow at 7% CAGR from 2025-2027, with significant financial allocations for infrastructure development.
- ❖ Nuclear power capacity is set to triple from 8.2 GW to 22.5 GW by 2032, with advancements in reactor technology.

India successfully sends first-ever sea shipments of pomegranates to Australia

- ❖ In a landmark achievement for India's agricultural exports, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has successfully facilitated the first-ever commercial sea shipments of Indian pomegranates to Australia.
- ❖ Collaborating with AgroStar and Kay Bee Exports, APEDA oversaw the export of premium Sangola and Bhagwa pomegranates, marking a significant expansion of market access for Indian fresh produce.
- ❖ The first air shipment of Indian pomegranates reached Australia in July 2024, helping to gauge market demand and set the stage for sea shipments.
- ❖ The first sea shipment departed from India on December 6, 2024, arriving in Sydney on January 13, 2025, with

5.7 metric tons of pomegranates from Maharashtra's Solapur region.

- ❖ A second shipment of the Bhagwa variety arrived in Brisbane on January 6, 2025.
- ❖ The shipments were packed in a total of 1,900 boxes for the first and 1,872 boxes for the second shipment, demonstrating India's capability to export high-quality fruit in bulk.
- ❖ Both shipments were integrated into India's traceability system, ANARNET, ensuring transparency and consumer confidence.
- ❖ The pomegranates received a positive response in Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne, leading to immediate requests for more shipments.
- ❖ The timing of the shipment coincided with Australia's non-producing season, optimizing market opportunities for Indian exporters.

Ministry of Labour & Employment inks MoU with APNA for more jobs

- ❖ The Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoLE) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with APNA, a leading job recruitment platform.
- ❖ The partnership aims to bring over 10 lakh job opportunities annually to the National Career Service (NCS) portal.
- ❖ This initiative is designed to enhance employment prospects for young job seekers and promote a dynamic job ecosystem.
- ❖ The MoU will provide broader employment options across metro and non-metro cities for job seekers.
- ❖ The collaboration will ensure equal opportunities for women and persons with disabilities, facilitating a fair recruitment process.
- ❖ APNA will access the NCS's extensive candidate database, while MoLE will assist in integrating their services through user-friendly online and offline interfaces.
- ❖ The NCS Portal has over 40 lakh registered employers and has mobilized 4.40 crore vacancies since its launch, with around 10 lakh vacancies available at any given time.

Reliance Enters Into Agreement for 10 GWh Battery Storage as Part of PLI Initiative

- ❖ The Ministry of Heavy Industries has signed a program agreement with Reliance New Energy Battery for a 10 GWh capacity under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Program for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC).
- ❖ This agreement contributes to a cumulative allocation of

40 GWh among four companies, out of a total planned capacity of 50 GWh.

- ❖ Initially, the PLI program awarded capacities of 50 GWh in March 2022 to various companies: Ola Electric Mobility (20 GWh), Hyundai Global Motors (20 GWh), Reliance New Energy (5 GWh), and Rajesh Exports (5 GWh).
- ❖ Hyundai Global Motors later withdrew their bid, leaving 20 GWh of capacity unallocated.
- ❖ Remaining winners signed their program agreement in August 2022.
- ❖ In April 2024, the Ministry issued a tender to allocate the remaining 10 GWh, attracting bids totaling 70 GWh from various firms including Reliance Industries and others.
- ❖ The budget for this capacity tender was ₹36.2 billion (~\$416.71 million).
- ❖ The technology-agnostic PLI program was approved in May 2021, with a total allocation of ₹181 billion (~\$2.08 billion) for establishing 50 GWh of ACC manufacturing capacity.
- ❖ Selected bidders must establish an ACC manufacturing facility with a minimum 25% value addition in 2 years and 60% in 5 years, along with setting up 5 to 10 GWh of manufacturing capacity within the same timeframe.
- ❖ Subsidy disbursements will begin upon achieving the committed capacity and value addition levels, with payments occurring quarterly over a five-year period as per the signed program agreement.

India's First "Open-Air Art Wall Museum" at Mausam Bhawan

- ❖ Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated India's first "Open Air Art Wall Museum" at Mausam Bhawan, celebrating 150 years of the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- ❖ The museum features 38 unique murals created in collaboration with Delhi Street Art, showcasing India's meteorological advancements and the impact of weather science.
- ❖ The artwork includes significant meteorological events, advancements in technology, and the IMD's role in providing early warnings for extreme weather conditions.
- ❖ The initiative aims to bridge science and creativity, enhancing public engagement and understanding of meteorology.
- ❖ The murals honor India's literary heritage, referencing Kalidasa's Meghaduta and Tansen's influence on

weather, while depicting diverse climatic zones and safety guidelines.

India becomes second country to introduce digital pilot licenses

- ❖ India has launched the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots, modernizing its civil aviation sector.
- ❖ Union Minister for Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu introduced the EPL, making India the second country globally to implement digital pilot licenses after ICAO approval.
- ❖ EPL will replace traditional physical licenses and be accessible via the eGCA Mobile Application, streamlining the licensing process while enhancing security and transparency.
- ❖ The initiative aligns with India's "Ease of Doing Business" and "Digital India" vision, aiming for a seamless experience for aviation professionals.
- ❖ EPL follows ICAO's Amendment 178, promoting electronic licensing for greater efficiency and security.
- ❖ India has taken a leading role in this transformation, with over 62,000 smart card licenses previously issued by the DGCA; reliance on physical licenses will be phased out.
- ❖ In 2024, almost 20,000 pilots required printed licenses, averaging 1,667 per month, which EPL will help reduce.
- ❖ EPL is part of a broader digital transformation in Indian aviation, including the eGCA platform, Digital Sky Platform for drones, and Electronic Flight Folder (EFF) for airline operations.

NITI Aayog forms panel to create a roadmap for transforming AIIMS

- ❖ NITI Aayog has established a committee to develop a roadmap for transforming AIIMS, New Delhi, into a leading medical research and practice institution.
- ❖ The committee, headed by V K Paul, will review current systems and propose significant reforms with specific implementation timelines.
- ❖ Key objectives include streamlining patient inflow, establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for clinical, academic, and research outcomes, and enhancing governance and financial sustainability at AIIMS.
- ❖ The committee will explore insights from countries with successful Universal Health Coverage (UHC) strategies to inform recommendations for India.
- ❖ A draft paper suggests multi-faceted financing approaches to improve healthcare delivery, accessibility, quality, and affordability.

- ❖ Extensive consultations with government and stakeholders will identify customized strategies for India.
- ❖ India's healthcare system has evolved to a comprehensive primary healthcare model, supported by the Ayushman Bharat scheme launched in 2018, which has reduced financial burdens on families.
- ❖ NITI Aayog is also addressing the need for affordable treatments for rare diseases, with four drugs already available at significantly reduced costs, and others pending regulatory approval, including a treatment for Sickle Cell Disease.

Aero India 2025: A Glimpse into the Future of Aerospace and Defence Innovation

- ❖ Aero India 2025, the 15th edition of Aero India, commenced from 10th to 14th February 2025 at Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.
- ❖ It is designed to be a landmark edition that leverages the successes of its predecessors while charting new territories in aerospace and defence technology.
- ❖ The first three days are dedicated to business visitors, while the last two days are open to the general public.
- ❖ The five-day event comprises a curtain raiser event, inaugural event, Defence Ministers' Conclave, CEOs' Round-Table, iDEX start-up event, breath-taking air shows, a large exhibition area comprising India Pavilion and a trade fair of aerospace companies.
- ❖ To facilitate dialogue towards strategic partnership with friendly countries, India will host the Defence Ministers' Conclave on the theme 'BRIDGE -Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement'.

About Aero India

- ❖ Aero India, Asia's Largest Air Show, is a biennial air show and aviation exhibition which is held in Bengaluru, organized by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence.
- ❖ Aero India is India's premier aerospace and defence exhibition where global aero vendors and the Indian Air Force (IAF) thrill the spectators with back-to-back aerobatic flying displays.
- ❖ It is a flagship event that brings together global industry leaders, government officials, technology experts, and defence strategists under one roof.
- ❖ The event not only showcases the nation's technological prowess and innovations but also provides a dynamic platform for international cooperation and strategic dialogue.

Fort William, Base of Army's Eastern Command, Renamed 'Vijay Durg'

- ❖ Fort William, the headquarters of the Indian Army's Eastern Command in Kolkata, has been renamed Vijay Durg.
- ❖ The decision was made in mid-December 2024, with internal military communications already using the new name pending an official announcement.
- ❖ Wing Commander Himanshu Tiwari confirmed the change, stating the order was issued in the second week of December.
- ❖ Fort William, constructed by the British in 1781 and named after King William III, has been renamed after Vijay Durg, a historic fort in Maharashtra associated with the Marathas under Chhatrapati Shivaji.
- ❖ This renaming reflects India's acknowledgment of its military heritage over colonial symbols.
- ❖ The change aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government efforts to decolonize names of landmarks and institutions, including renaming Rajpath to Kartavya Path.

India achieves milestone of 100 GW solar energy capacity

- ❖ India has successfully achieved its target of 100 GW solar energy production, marking a significant milestone in its renewable energy journey.
- ❖ The credit for this achievement goes to initiatives such as solar panels, solar parks, and rooftop solar projects, which have revolutionized the sector.
- ❖ India aims to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030.
- ❖ The country's solar power sector has witnessed an extraordinary 3,450 per cent increase in capacity over the past decade, rising from 2.82 GW in 2014 to 100 GW in 2025.
- ❖ As of January 31, 2025, the total installed solar capacity is 100.33 GW, with 84.10 GW under implementation and 47.49 GW under tendering 10 .
- ❖ Solar energy accounts for 47% of India's total renewable energy capacity 10 .
- ❖ In 2024, India added a record 24.5 GW of solar capacity, more than double that of 2023, including 18.5 GW of utility-scale solar 10 .
- ❖ Top-performing states for utility-scale solar installations include Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh 10 .
- ❖ The rooftop solar sector grew significantly in 2024, adding 4.59 GW of new capacity, a 53% increase from 2023.

Fourth India-UK Energy Dialogue-Advancing India's energy transition held in New Delhi

- ❖ The Fourth India-UK Energy Dialogue was held today in New Delhi.
- ❖ It was co-chaired by Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs of India, and Mr. Ed Miliband, Secretary for Energy Security and Net Zero for United Kingdom.
- ❖ The dialogue focused on reviewing progress made in the energy sectors of both nations, including power and renewable energy, and reaffirming the commitment to a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive energy future.
- ❖ The Ministers were pleased to announce the launch of Phase-2 of the India-UK bilateral Accelerating Smart Power & Renewable Energy in India (ASPIRE) programme.
- ❖ This phase will aim to provide technical support for ensuring round-the-clock power supply, expanding renewable energy initiatives, and accelerating industrial energy efficiency and de-carbonization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Power (MOP) and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- ❖ The establishment of a UK-India Offshore Wind Taskforce was announced to enhance offshore wind ecosystem and financing models.

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launched India's first indigenous Automated Bio Medical Waste Treatment Plant at AIIMS New Delhi

- ❖ Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launched India's first indigenous Automated Bio Medical Waste Treatment Plant named "S□janam" at AIIMS New Delhi.
- ❖ The technology, developed by CSIR-NIIST, aims to revolutionize biomedical waste management and promote sustainability.
- ❖ "S□janam" disinfects harmful biomedical waste without relying on incinerators and has a daily capacity of managing 400 kg of waste.
- ❖ The equipment is safe, minimizes human exposure to hazardous waste, and has been validated for its antimicrobial efficacy.
- ❖ The ceremony highlighted other technological advancements, including indigenous vaccines and breakthroughs in pharmaceuticals.
- ❖ Dr. Singh called for increased academic collaborations and outlined government funding priorities for science and technology.
- ❖ The initiative aligns with India's vision of becoming a global leader in environmental and healthcare solutions by 2047.

Ellie, Asia's first life-sized animatronic elephant, unveiled in Bengaluru

- ❖ Asia's first empathy-building animatronic elephant, Ellie, visited St Joseph's School in Bengaluru.
- ❖ The visit is part of a nationwide awareness tour by PETA India.
- ❖ Ellie is designed to help children understand that animals have emotions and deserve to live peacefully.
- ❖ Since May 2023, Ellie has reached over 165,000 students across various schools in India.
- ❖ During her Bengaluru visit, Ellie will also stop at several other schools, including National Public School (Indiranagar), One World International School (Whitefield), and more.

President Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates New Delhi World Book Fair 2025

- ❖ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the New Delhi World Book Fair 2025 on February 1, 2025.
- ❖ She emphasized that reading is a transformative experience that connects different cultures and communities.
- ❖ The Book Fair features stalls showcasing various Indian languages and languages from other countries.
- ❖ The President encouraged school children to read a variety of books beyond their syllabi to discover their potential.
- ❖ She highlighted the importance of creating and promoting children's literature.
- ❖ Murmu urged elders to foster a love for reading in children as an important duty.

MCA21 records 80.26 lakh form filings between April 2024 to January 2025

- ❖ The MCA21 platform recorded 80.26 lakh form filings from April 2024 to January 2025, an increase from 73.29 lakh filings in the same period the previous year, indicating a rise in corporate compliance and digital adoption.
- ❖ MCA21 Version 3 (V3) platform saw 53.08 lakh forms filed during this period, up from 47.72 lakh last year, showcasing improved efficiency and stakeholder confidence.
- ❖ MCA21 is the first Mission Mode e-Governance Project under National eGovernance Plan (NeGP).
- ❖ The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has been operating it from end-to-end for registry and incorporation related services of Companies & LLPs since 2006 and corporates have been making filings on this portal since then.

- ❖ The MCA21 V3 platform facilitates Ease of Doing Business, and has introduced web-based forms, enabling real-time validation of the data entered by stakeholders.
- ❖ Additionally, a user registration process has been implemented to enhance user identification and authentication.

Central Zoo Authority (CZA) Approved India's First White Tiger Breeding Centre in MP

- ❖ The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has approved India's first white tiger breeding centre in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ The project is located in Govindgarh, near the last known wild white tiger's habitat.
- ❖ Initial approval for the breeding centre was granted in 2011.
- ❖ The Mukundpur White Tiger Safari, the only one of its kind in the state, is situated 10 km away from the site.
- ❖ The breeding centre aims to enhance wildlife tourism and create job opportunities for the local community.
- ❖ This initiative is part of a revised masterplan for the Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo White Tiger Safari and Zoo in Mukundpur.
- ❖ The breeding programme has historical significance, tracing back to the discovery of a white tiger named Mohan in 1951 by the last maharaja of Rewa.

Union Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan launches a national level mass outreach campaign "Watershed Yatra"

- ❖ Union Minister of Rural Development Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched the "Watershed Yatra" campaign in hybrid mode to promote participation and awareness of Watershed Development activities.
- ❖ The event was attended by Union Ministers of State and senior officials, with simultaneous launches held in various states and UTs.
- ❖ Activities during the Yatra will include Bhoomi Poojan, Lokarpan, Watershed Mahotsav, Panchayat discussions, and recognition of Watershed Margdarshaks.
- ❖ Introduction of 'Watershed - Janbhagidari Pratiyogita' for 2025 & 2026 to promote community-led watershed management.
- ❖ An evaluation and reward system for projects showing excellence, with a total funding of Rs 70.80 crore to benefit 177 projects annually.
- ❖ The Yatra will last 60-90 days and cover 805 projects across 26 states and 2 UTs, engaging with 6673 Gram Panchayats.

- ❖ Educational talks on sustainable practices will be conducted, and around 8,000 individuals will be honored for their contributions.
- ❖ A Learning Management System (LMS) has been developed for watershed education, linked to the MY Bharat portal.
- ❖ A mega event on the MY Bharat portal aims to mobilize youth volunteers for Shramdaan activities to strengthen community participation in watershed projects.

India's first AI university to be set up in Maharashtra

- ❖ Maharashtra is set to become the first Indian state to establish an AI university.
- ❖ A dedicated task force has been formed to oversee the project, led by IT Minister Ashish Shelar.
- ❖ The task force includes experts from academia (IIT Mumbai, IIM Mumbai), industry (Google India, Mahindra Group, L&T), and government officials.
- ❖ The committee aims to enhance research innovation and foster industry partnerships.
- ❖ The initiative is meant to create a center of excellence for AI, promoting collaboration among industry, academia, and government.
- ❖ The task force has conducted two meetings and is working on finalizing the roadmap for the university's establishment.
- ❖ This decision reflects the government's commitment to making Maharashtra a hub for technology and innovation.
- ❖ Experts believe the AI university will position Maharashtra as a leader in technological progress.
- ❖ Similar AI education systems exist in countries like the US, UK, France, and China.

Indians receive 72.3% of all H1B visas issued by US for 2022-2023: Govt

- ❖ In a written response to the Rajya Sabha, the Indian government revealed that Indian nationals received a significant 72.3% of all H1B visas issued by the United States for the period between October 2022 and September 2023.
- ❖ This data was shared by Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, who cited figures from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

"Shatavari – For Better Health" a nationwide Species-Specific Campaign launched

- ❖ In a bid to raise awareness about the health benefits of medicinal plants, a species-specific campaign titled "Shatavari –For Better Health" was launched today by Shri Prataprao Jadhav, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Ayush.

- ❖ In his address, Shri Prataprao Jadhav highlighted the significant progress made by the Ministry of Ayush over the last decade and lauded the efforts of NMPB for launching this new initiative to promote awareness about Shatavari.
- ❖ The Minister also mentioned previous successful campaigns led by NMPB, including those for Amla, Moringa, Giloe, and Ashwagandha.
- ❖ These initiatives have contributed to spreading knowledge of the health benefits of medicinal plants across the country.

India's Coffee Exports Surge to Record High in FY24

- ❖ India's coffee exports hit a record \$1.14 billion from April to November in FY24, marking a 29% increase compared to the same period last year.
- ❖ This growth is fueled by the rising global demand for Robusta coffee and supply chain challenges in key coffee-producing countries such as Brazil.

2025: A Year of Defence Transformation As Per Defense Ministry

- ❖ In order to give impetus to the ongoing and future reforms, it was unanimously decided to observe 2025 as the 'Year of Reforms' in the MoD.
- ❖ This would aim at transforming the Armed Forces into a technologically-advanced combat-ready force capable of multi-domain integrated operations.

SAIL Earns Great Place to Work Recognition for Second Year

- ❖ Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been honored once again as a 'Great Place to Work' by the Great Place to Work Institute, India, for the period from January 2025 to January 2026.

HM Amit Shah chairs 7th meeting of Islands Development Agency

- ❖ Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the 7th Islands Development Agency (IDA) meeting in New Delhi, attended by Andaman and Nicobar LG Devendra Kumar Joshi, Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Patel, and senior officials.
- ❖ Established in 2017, the IDA focuses on the holistic development of India's islands.

Centre releases draft of Digital Personal Data Protection Rules 2025

- ❖ The Centre has released the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules 2025, inviting public consultation.

- ❖ Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the draft, following the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, which received presidential assent in August 2023.
- ❖ The rules propose mandatory parental consent for children to open social media accounts.

Govt Amends FTP to Require Stakeholder Consultations

- ❖ The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has amended the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023, introducing Para 1.07A and 1.07B, requiring consultations with stakeholders, including importers, exporters, and industry experts, before formulating or amending the policy.
- ❖ It also mandates providing reasons for not accepting stakeholder feedback.
- ❖ These changes aim to enhance the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) in India by promoting stakeholder participation in decision-making.

EPFO's Centralized Pension System

- ❖ The central ministry has stated that the Centralised Pension Payments System (CPPS) marks a significant shift from the current decentralized pension disbursement system.
- ❖ In the existing system, each of the EPFO's zonal or regional offices has separate agreements with only three or four banks.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurates and lays foundation stone of various railway projects

- ❖ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various railway projects on January 8, 2025, via video conferencing. The Prime Minister inaugurated the new Jammu Railway Division.
- ❖ He also laid the foundation stone of Rayagada Railway Division Building of East Coast Railway and inaugurated the Charlapalli New Terminal Station in Telangana.

Global Maha Kumbh 2025

- ❖ Prayagraj, the epicenter of Maha Kumbh, is a city steeped in history and spirituality. The city's significance as a pilgrimage site, aptly named 'Tirthraj' or the King of Pilgrimage Sites, is well documented in ancient texts and travelogues. The Chinese traveler Xuanzang, who visited India in the 7th century, described Prayagraj as a region of immense natural beauty, prosperity, and cultural depth.
- ❖ Kumbh Mela, in Hinduism, is a religious pilgrimage that is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years.

The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over four locations in India:

1. In Haridwar, Uttarakhand, on the banks of Ganges
2. In Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on the banks of Shipra
3. In Nashik, Maharashtra on the banks of Godavari
4. In Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical invisible Sarasvati.

Union Minister of Food Processing Industries to Inaugurate 8th Edition of the Indusfood 2025

- ❖ Shri Chirag Paswan, Union Minister of Food Processing Industries will inaugurate 8th Edition of the Indusfood 2025 at India Exposition Mart Ltd, Gautam Budh Nagar, Greater Noida on 8th January 2025.
- ❖ Indusfood is Asia's premier annual F&B trade exhibition organized by the Trade Promotion Council of India with the support of the Department of Commerce, Government of India is set to mark yet another milestone in 2025.

Modi lays foundation stone of NGEL's green hydrogen hub in Andhra Pradesh

- ❖ Prime minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, laid the foundation stone of NTPC Green Energy Ltd's (NGEL) green hydrogen hub at Pudimadaka near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, among several other infrastructure projects in the state.

Union Minister for Coal & Mines inaugurates '5G Use Case Test Lab' at CMPDI, Ranchi.

- ❖ Union Minister for Coal and Mines, Shri G. Kishan Reddy inaugurated the '5G Use Case Test Lab' today at the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) in Ranchi.
- ❖ This cutting-edge facility, aimed at advancing the coal sector's Digital Transformation and technological landscape. The 5G Use Case Test Lab serves as a testbed for the development, testing and adaptation of various 5G-based applications, tailored to meet the needs of the coal industry.
- ❖ The Ministry of Coal nominated CMPDI as the Centre of Excellence (COE) for establishing a 5G Use Case Test lab for the Coal Industry to leverage 5G technology effectively.

Delhi's per capita income hits ₹4,61,910 in 2023-24, third highest in India after Goa, Sikkim

- ❖ Delhi's per capita income in 2023-24 at ₹4,61,910 was the third highest after Goa and Sikkim in the country,

according to the latest statistical handbook.

- ❖ The document showed that the per capita income of the city was more than double the national level per capita income of ₹1,84,205.

Swiggy launches new standalone app Snacc for 15-minute food delivery

- ❖ Food and grocery delivery platform Swiggy has launched a new app, Snacc, for delivery of snacks, drinks and meals in 15 minutes.
- ❖ The launch comes at a time when the food delivery apps in India are racing to deliver everything from biryani to hot beverages to customers' doorsteps in under 10-15 minutes.

Bhashini-Enabled e-Shram Portal now available in all 22 Scheduled Languages

- ❖ Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, launched the multilingual functionality on e-Shram portal, during an event held in New Delhi today, on January 7, 2025.
- ❖ In line with the vision of making eShram a 'One-Stop-Solution', this portal will now be available in all 22 Scheduled Languages.

Govt approves 2 new payment methods for rooftop solar under PM Surya Ghar

- ❖ The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy introduces two new payment methods for rooftop solar system installation under PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.
- ❖ New payment methods include Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO) and utility-led aggregation models.
- ❖ Ensures payment security and subsidy grants for households adopting these models.
- ❖ Scheme guidelines notified for implementing 'Payment Security Mechanism' (PSM) and 'Central Financial Assistance' components.
- ❖ Rs 100 crore allocated for PSM to de-risk investments in RESCO-based rooftop solar models for residential sectors.

PM Modi commissions INS Surat, Nilgiri, Vaghsheer in big boost for Navy

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned three key naval combatants — INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer — at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai on Wednesday (January 15).
- ❖ The event marked a significant moment in India's maritime history and its commitment to self-reliance in defence.

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal launches Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform

- ❖ Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal unveiled the Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform, an initiative designed to enhance India's cleantech value chains in the solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage sectors on January 10, 2025, at the Bharat Climate Forum 2025 in New Delhi.
- ❖ During the address, Shri Goyal highlighted that the Product Linked Incentives (PLIs) and subsidies are detrimental to long-term growth and development of the clean energy sector.

Piyush Goyal launches National Turmeric Board to boost India's 'Golden Spice' industry

- ❖ In a move to enhance the production and export of turmeric, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, inaugurated the National Turmeric Board in New Delhi on January 14, 2025.
- ❖ Palle Ganga Reddy was appointed as the first Chairperson of the Board, which will be headquartered in Nizamabad, according to a press release from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

PM Modi okays constitution of 8th Pay Commission for central govt employees

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 16, 2025, approved the constitution of the eighth Pay Commission for the central government employees, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters during the cabinet briefing. This comes two weeks before the government presents the Union Budget for the financial year 2025-26.
- ❖ "The term of the last Pay Commission will end in 2026. Establishing the 8th Pay Commission well before 2025 will give us sufficient time to get the recommendations," Vaishnaw said.

Shri Piyush Goyal launches PRABHAV Factbook, Bharat Startup Challenge on 9th Foundation Day of Startup India

- ❖ Success of the Startup India mission must be attributed to the funding instruments like Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) administered by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and financed by the Government of India.
- ❖ This was stated by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal at the Celebration of 9 Years of Startup India today in New Delhi.
- ❖ He noted that the scheme acted like a transformative

tool to mobilise private capital particularly to support startups in Tier II and Tier III cities, empowering startups to scale their operations and contribute significantly to the nation's economy.

- ❖ He added that the Startup movement will gain momentum with more private funding in days to come. Shri Goyal launched the Bharat Startup Grand Challenge and Prabhaav factbook on the occasion.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurates Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025

- ❖ The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, the largest mobility expo in India, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on 17th January 2025.
- ❖ Addressing the gathering, he thanked the people for having their Government elected for the third consecutive time.
- ❖ He added that the scale of this year's expo had greatly expanded with the expo happening at two other venues in the National Capital Region, as compared to last year's numbers of 800 exhibitors, 2.5 lakh visitors.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Rs 2,700 crore Z-Morh tunnel in J&K

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the 6.5-kilometre-long Sonamarg tunnel, and said that several large road and rail projects like the upcoming Zojila tunnel and the Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) would make Jammu and Kashmir among the most well-connected regions in the country.
- ❖ Located on the strategic Srinagar-Leh National Highway, the Rs 2,700 crore Sonamarg tunnel (renamed from Z-Morh Tunnel) will be crucial in providing all-weather connectivity to the Ladakh region.
- ❖ It is a part of the 12-km-long tunnel project — which along with the upcoming Zoji La tunnel — will ensure round-the-clock connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh. Zoji La tunnel is expected to be completed in 2028.

Govt approves 56 new watershed development projects worth Rs 700 crore

- ❖ The Rural Development Ministry has approved 56 new Watershed Development Projects that will be undertaken at a cost of Rs 700 crores in the ten best-performing states, the government said on 13th January 2025.
- ❖ "Department of Land Resources announces sanction of 56 new Watershed Development Projects at a cost of Rs 700 crores under the ongoing scheme of PMKSY-WDC 2.0 in the 10 best-performing states...", the ministry said.

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Inaugurates 'The Art of India 2025', Showcasing the Brilliance of Indian Art

- ❖ Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Earth Sciences and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh, inaugurated "Art of India 2025" Exhibition at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre here. The Minister appreciated the symbiosis of traditional ethos with modern technology.
- ❖ The fourth edition of this celebrated event brought together over 250 exquisite artworks from some of India's most distinguished masters, emerging artists, and indigenous creators, offering a vivid portrayal of the country's artistic evolution.

National Broadband Mission 2.0, Sanchar Sathi app launched by DoT

- ❖ The government on Friday unveiled the vision document for the National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0, which will provide broadband internet connectivity to the remaining 170,000 villages across the country.
- ❖ While launching the scheme, Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said that NBM 2.0 builds on the success of NBM 1.0.
- ❖ Launched in 2019, the NBM had targeted broadband access to all villages by 2022 through the laying of an incremental 30 lakh km of optical fibre cable and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024.

DPIIT partners with ITC to bolster India's startup ecosystem, innovation

- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has formed a strategic partnership with ITC Ltd to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in India.
- ❖ This collaboration aims to accelerate startup growth and technological advancement while creating viable market opportunities nationwide.
- ❖ The memorandum of understanding (MoU) sets a foundation for a partnership where ITC's extensive experience and market network will support DPIIT's initiatives for startups.
- ❖ Key areas for deploying startup solutions include digital platforms for Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), renewable energy integration, and energy storage systems.
- ❖ The initiative aligns with the Government of India's

flagship programs like Startup India, Make in India, and AatmaNirbhar Bharat.

- ❖ It contributes to Vision 2047 by fostering inclusive and sustainable growth through innovation-driven entrepreneurship.

TRAI inaugurates the SATRC Workshop on Spectrum

- ❖ Chairman, TRAI Mr. Anil Kumar Lahoti, inaugurated the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC) Workshop on Spectrum, today in the presence of Mr Masanori Kondo, Secretary General of Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT).
- ❖ This three day workshop will be attended by delegates representing SATRC member countries, Working Group Members, Industry experts, delegates representing many government departments etc.
- ❖ The workshop is organized by Asia Pacific Telecommunity and hosted by Telecom Regulatory of India at Hotel Double Tree by Hilton, Goa, India. This workshop aims to address the critical importance of effective spectrum management in the rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape.

UNESCO and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) host stakeholder consultation on AI Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) in India

- ❖ The UNESCO Regional Office for South Asia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, and Ikigai Law as the implementing partner, organized a two-day stakeholder consultation on AI Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) in India.
- ❖ The event was held at IIIT Bangalore on the 16th and the Nasscom AI office on the 17th Jan 2025.

Target to register 10,000 GI products by 2030 from current 605: Goyal

- ❖ Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday set a target to register 10,000 GI (geographical indication) products by 2030 from the current 605.
- ❖ A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

Union cabinet extends National Health Mission for another 5 years

- ❖ The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the extension of the National Health Mission (NHM) for

another five years after reviewing its progress over the past three years.

- ❖ First launched in 2005 as the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the scheme has been extended multiple times, with the most recent extension granted in 2021 to run until 2026.
- ❖ Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, addressing a cabinet briefing, highlighted the NHM's significant impact on public health.

India on track to meet SDG health targets well ahead of 2030 deadline: Govt

- ❖ The Union Cabinet on Wednesday reviewed the progress under the National Health Mission (NHM) over the last three years and was informed that with significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is on track to meet its health targets well ahead of the 2030 deadline.

Union Minister, Shri Bhupender Yadav, chairs Parliamentary Consultative Committee Meeting of the MoEFCC, in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

- ❖ Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Shri Bhupender Yadav, chaired the meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry, in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), today. The meeting focused on the implementation of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).
- ❖ During the meeting, the committee members appreciated the efforts made under CAMPA to enhance forest cover and maintain ecological balance. They also provided valuable suggestions for further improvement in the implementation of CAMPA. A book titled 'Glimpses: Success Stories of CAMPA 2022-24', showcasing the works carried out by CAMPA between the year 2022 and 2024, was also released after the meeting.

Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh Inaugurates Dedicated Projects Worth Crores to Boost Livestock Sector in the North East Region (NER) in Shillong

- ❖ Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying & Panchayati Raj, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh inaugurated the "Conclave on Dialogue for Holistic Development of Livestock Sectors in the North-East Region" held in Shillong, on January 23, 2025.
- ❖ The programme was also graced by Minister of State, Shri George Kurian, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, in the presence of Ministers of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services from

North Eastern Region (NER) states, senior officials, industry representatives, entrepreneurs, and researchers and stakeholders.

GeM procurement crosses Rs 4 trillion during April-January period of FY25

- ❖ The procurement of goods and services through the government's portal GeM rose by about 50 per cent to over Rs 4 lakh crore during April-January this fiscal due to higher buying activities by various ministries and departments, an official statement said on Friday.
- ❖ The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all central government ministries and departments.

86th Meeting of Network Planning Group under PM GatiShakti evaluates four Rail and Road Projects for multimodal connectivity

- ❖ The 86th meeting of the Network Planning Group (NPG), chaired by Joint Secretary, Shri E. Srinivas, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), evaluated four projects (2 railways and 2 projects of highway development) for their conformity to principles of PM GatiShakti. The meeting was convened on 24th January 2025 to evaluate infrastructure projects in the Road and Rail sectors.
- ❖ The NPG NMP focuses on integrated development of multimodal infrastructure, last-mile connectivity to economic and social nodes, intermodal connectivity, and synchronized project implementation.

DGFT Launches Enhanced eCoO 2.0 System with Provisions for Back-to-Back Certificates of Origin

- ❖ The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has launched the enhanced Certificate of Origin (eCoO) 2.0 System, a significant upgrade designed to simplify the certification process for exporters and enhance trade efficiency.
- ❖ This upgraded platform offers several user-friendly features, such as multi-user access, which enables exporters to authorize multiple users under a single Importer Exporter Code (IEC).
- ❖ Additionally, the system now supports Aadhaar-based e-signing alongside digital signature tokens, providing greater flexibility.
- ❖ An integrated dashboard offers exporters seamless access to eCoO services, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) information, trade events, and other resources

NHPC, Andhra Pradesh govt partner for 6-8 Gw pumped storage projects

- ❖ India's largest state-owned hydropower producer, NHPC Limited, has partnered with the Andhra Pradesh government to build pumped storage projects (PSPs). NHPC, known for operating some of India's largest hydropower projects, is diversifying into PSPs to expand its geographical reach and broaden its energy portfolio, senior officials said. The total capacity of these projects could reach 6-8 Gw, officials said.
- ❖ The joint venture, named ANGEL (APGENCO NHPC Green Energy Company), has been assigned two PSPs by the Andhra Pradesh government with a total capacity of 2 GW.

Cabinet approves Rs 34,300 crore for National Critical Mineral Mission

- ❖ Aimed at encouraging the Indian government and private companies to acquire critical mineral assets abroad, enhance trade with resource-rich countries, and establish a stockpile at home, the Cabinet on Wednesday approved the National Critical Mineral Mission at a cost of Rs 34,000 crore.
- ❖ To be implemented by the Ministry of Mines over seven years until 2030-31 (FY31), the mission will have an outlay of Rs 16,300 crore, including Rs 2,600 crore as budgetary support. In addition, Rs 18,000 crore investment is expected from public sector undertakings (PSUs).

BIMTECH Launches BIMCOIN: India's First Campus Blockchain Currency

- ❖ Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), one of India's leading business schools, proudly introduces its futuristic blockchain-based digital currency, 'BIMCOIN.' Specifically designed for BIMTECH's ecosystem, BIMCOIN facilitates secure, transparent, and instant transactions among students, vendors, and administrators through a permissioned blockchain platform.
- ❖ Following IIT Madras, BIMTECH becomes India's first business management institute to launch BIMCOIN—ushering fintech innovation in education.
- ❖ BIMTECH and Kalp Decentra Foundation joined forces to launch a cutting-edge Blockchain Learning Centre on campus.

'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman' Portal

- ❖ The Department of Justice launched the year-long 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' campaign on January 24, 2024, marking 75 years of India as a Republic.
- ❖ Regional events in Bikaner, Prayagraj, and Guwahati

ensured decentralized outreach.

- ❖ The campaign promotes awareness of constitutional values, with the 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman Portal' (launched July 16, 2024) serving as a knowledge hub at hamarasamvidhan.gov.in.
- ❖ Online competitions with MyGov encourage citizens to understand their constitutional rights and duties.

France to Feature Prominently at 30th Kolkata International Film Festival

- ❖ The 30th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF), running from December 4 to 11, 2024, will feature 175 films from 41 countries, with a special focus on French cinema, including contemporary works by French filmmakers.

India Launches First 'Uber Shikara' Service in Srinagar

- ❖ Asia's first water transport service, "Uber Shikara," has been launched in Jammu and Kashmir's scenic Dal Lake.
- ❖ Uber has introduced shikara bookings on its app, offering tourists a seamless travel experience.
- ❖ This initiative blends technology with tradition, enabling travelers to pre-book shikara rides through the popular ride-hailing platform.
- ❖ The service was inaugurated by Prabhjeet Singh, President of Uber India and South Asia, who booked the first ride via the app.

Government Ends Windfall Tax on Crude Oil and Petroleum Exports

- ❖ The Indian government has removed the windfall profit tax on domestically-produced crude oil and fuel exports, providing relief to companies such as ONGC, Oil India Ltd, Reliance Industries Ltd, and Nayara Energy.

Centre Launches eMaap Portal for Fair Trade and Consumer Protection

- ❖ The Indian government is preparing to launch the National Legal Metrology Portal (eMaap) to support fair trade practices and improve consumer protection.
- ❖ This initiative is part of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs' efforts to ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to legal metrology standards.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to launch PM e-VIDYA DTH Channel for Indian Sign Language

- ❖ Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will launch PM e-VIDYA DTH Channel 31 for Indian Sign

Language (ISL) in New Delhi today, with Minister Jayant Chaudhary also attending.

- ❖ The channel aims to promote ISL as a language and school subject, providing learning content on career guidance, skill training, mental health, communication skills, and class-specific curricula for students, teachers, and educators.

National

Health Minister JP Nadda to launch 100-day intensified TB campaign in Haryana

- ❖ Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda will launch a 100-day campaign in Panchkula, Haryana, to tackle TB incidence and mortality nationwide.
- ❖ The initiative, covering 347 districts across 33 states and UTs, aligns with PM Modi's vision of a TB-free India from the 2018 End TB Summit.
- ❖ It focuses on improving diagnostics, targeted screening, care for high-risk groups, and nutritional support under the National TB Elimination Programme.
- ❖ Haryana CM and Health Minister Arti Singh Rao will attend, along with other officials and civil society representatives.

Top Indian grapplers to participate in Senior National Wrestling Championships 2024

- ❖ The Senior National Wrestling Championships 2024 begins today at Bengaluru's Koramangala Indoor Stadium, featuring top wrestlers from 24 states and UTs.
- ❖ With over 700 entries, Haryana leads with 28 wrestlers, while hosts Karnataka field 32. Key participants include U-23 Asian Champion Y Minakshi Devi from Manipur, Haryana's Cadet Asian medalist Jyoti, Arjuna Awardee Sunil Dabarpurya, and World Police Games gold medalist Sunny.

2nd Edition of Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam to take place from Dec 6

- ❖ The 2nd Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam, a three-day celebration of Carnatic music, crafts, and culinary heritage, begins tomorrow at Vijayawada's Tummalapalli Kshetrappa Kalakshetra Auditorium.
- ❖ Organized by the Ministries of Tourism, Culture, and Textiles with Andhra Pradesh Tourism, the festival features 35 performances by 140 artists, honoring Telugu composers and promoting Andhra Pradesh's cultural legacy. Union Minister Suresh Gopi will inaugurate the event.

Pralhad Joshi Launches 'Anna Chakra' and SCAN Portal

- ❖ Food Minister Pralhad Joshi launched 'Anna Chakra,' an advanced supply chain tool for the Public Distribution System (PDS), developed with the World Food Programme and IIT-Delhi.

- ❖ Covering 4.37 lakh Fair Price Shops and 6,700 warehouses, it aims to enhance foodgrain logistics for 81 crore beneficiaries.
- ❖ Integrated with Railways' Freight Operations and PM Gati Shakti, the tool is projected to save Rs 250 crore annually.

Google to Launch Safety Engineering Centre in Hyderabad

- ❖ Google and the Telangana government have partnered to set up a Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) in Hyderabad, marking the second in the Asia Pacific region and the fifth globally, after Tokyo, Dublin, Munich, and Malaga.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to attend 21st Inter-Governmental Commission meet in Russia

- ❖ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Russia for three days starting.
- ❖ He will co-chair the 21st India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation with his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov in Moscow, discussing defence ties and regional/global issues.
- ❖ On December 9, he will commission the Indian Navy's stealth frigate 'INS Tushil' in Kaliningrad, accompanied by Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi.
- ❖ During his visit, he will honor WWII Soviet soldiers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and engage with the Indian community.

National Mental Health Survey-2 officially launched in Puducherry's JIPMER

- ❖ The National Mental Health Survey-2 (NMHS-2), launched at JIPMER, Puducherry, aims to assess mental health conditions and treatment gaps across India.
- ❖ Inaugurated by Puducherry Health Director Dr. S. Sevvel, the survey, led by the Ministry of Health and NIMHANS, Bengaluru, covers all 28 states and 8 UTs.
- ❖ It focuses on issues like depression, suicide, and substance abuse, providing data to guide policies and improve care.
- ❖ In Puducherry, JIPMER and the State Health Mission will survey 1,530 households across four regions.
- ❖ The event also saw participation from JIPMER Dean Dr. D. M. Thappa and Psychiatrist Dr. Balan Ponmani Stephen.

India to Chair UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the first time

- ❖ India has been appointed Chair of the 68th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), with Ambassador Shambhu Kumaran assuming the role.
- ❖ This marks India's first time leading the CND, the UN's key body for drug policy.

- ❖ The position highlights India's growing global leadership and commitment to multilateralism.
- ❖ As Chair, India will represent the Global South, promote balanced drug policies, and enhance dialogue on global drug issues.

Pralhad Joshi Launches 'Anna Chakra' and SCAN Portal

- ❖ Union Minister Shri Pralhad Joshi launched 'Anna Chakra,' a PDS supply chain optimization tool, and the SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) portal.
- ❖ These initiatives aim to modernize the Public Distribution System and streamline states' subsidy claim processes.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launches LIC's Bima Sakhi Yojana

- ❖ The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today launched the 'Bima Sakhi Yojana' of Life Insurance Corporation, in line with his commitment to women empowerment and financial inclusion, in Panipat, Haryana.
- ❖ During the occasion, he also laid the foundation stone of the Main campus of Maharana Pratap Horticultural University, Karnal. Addressing the gathering, Shri Modi said that today India was taking another strong step towards women empowerment.
- ❖ He added that today being the 9th day of the month was special as number 9 was considered auspicious in our scriptures and was associated with the nine forms of Nav Durga, worshipped during the Navratri.
- ❖ He remarked that today is also a day of worship of Nari Shakti.

The Prime Minister of India is scheduled to interact with the participants of the Smart India Hackathon 2024 on 11th December 2024

- ❖ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will interact with young innovators at the Grand Finale of Smart India Hackathon 2024 on 11th December 2024, at around 4:30 PM, via video conferencing. Over 1300 student teams will participate at the Grand Finale. Prime Minister will also address the gathering on the occasion.
- ❖ The 7th edition of the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) will concurrently begin at 51 nodal centres nationwide on 11th December 2024. The Software Edition will run nonstop for 36 hours, while the Hardware Edition will continue from 11th to 15th December 2024.

National Affairs

India-Australia CCEA stocktake visit concludes in Delhi

- ❖ The 3-day stocktake visit for the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) concluded in New Delhi on 6th December, 2024.

- ❖ The meeting, held from December 4th to 6th, 2024, was a crucial step in strengthening the trade and strategic partnership between the two nations.
- ❖ The Indian delegation was headed by Additional Secretary and Chief Negotiator, Department of Commerce, Shri Rajesh Agrawal, and the Australian delegation was headed by First Assistant Secretary and Chief Negotiator, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Shri Ravi Kewalram.

ULIP launch simplifies industry access to data through API-based integration

- ❖ The government has rolled out a series of measures under the National Logistics Policy 2022 to address critical challenges and enhance logistics efficiency across the country.
- ❖ According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, these initiatives focus on the integrated development of the logistics sector, onboarding of States and Union Territories (UTs), standardization of assets, and process digitalization.
- ❖ As part of the policy, the Sectoral Plan for Efficient Logistics (SPEL) in the coal sector has been notified. Additionally, 26 States and UTs have formulated and notified their logistics policies, accessible at dpiit.gov.in.

Hamara Shauchalay: Hamara Samman” (HSHS) Campaign Concludes on 10th December on Human Rights Day.

- ❖ “Hamara Shauchalay: Hamara Samman” (HSHS) campaign, launched on World Toilet Day (November 19), concludes on 10th December 2024, aligning sanitation with dignity and human rights on Human Rights Day.
- ❖ Organized by the D/o Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, the three-week campaign mobilized communities across India, bringing sanitation into the spotlight as a matter of collective pride and responsibility.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh Addresses 16th Annual Convention of Central Information Commission

- ❖ The 16th Annual Convention of the Central Information Commission was inaugurated at Bharat Mandapam here today on 10 December 2024 by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh.

- ❖ Citing several instances of the Modi Govt’s transparent working, the Minister said, “Prime Minister Sh Narendra Modi’s Mantra of Minimum Government Maximum Governance essentially implies furtherance of transparency”.
- ❖ The theme of the Convention of the Central Information Commission was “Contribution of RTI in journey towards Viksit Bharat”.

7th Smart India Hackathon underway in Karnataka

- ❖ The 7th Smart India Hackathon is currently being held across nine institutions in Karnataka, featuring two segments: a 36-hour Software Edition and a five-day Hardware Edition, both set to conclude on December 15.
- ❖ In Bengaluru, three institutions are hosting the event, with 66 teams and a total of 428 students participating.
- ❖ Meanwhile, six other centers in Karnataka, located in Mysuru, Mangaluru, Belagavi, and Hubballi, are hosting 268 teams comprising 1,008 students for this prestigious competition.

7th Smart India Hackathon underway in Karnataka

- ❖ The 7th Smart India Hackathon is currently being held across nine institutions in Karnataka, featuring two segments: a 36-hour Software Edition and a five-day Hardware Edition, both set to conclude on December 15.
- ❖ In Bengaluru, three institutions are hosting the event, with 66 teams and a total of 428 students participating.
- ❖ Meanwhile, six other centers in Karnataka, located in Mysuru, Mangaluru, Belagavi, and Hubballi, are hosting 268 teams comprising 1,008 students for this prestigious competition.

Bhopal and Kurukshetra Set Historic Records on Gita Jayanti 2024

- ❖ On Gita Jayanti 2024, historic events unfolded in Bhopal and Kurukshetra. Bhopal achieved a Guinness World Record with over 5,000 Acharyas reciting ‘Karma Yog’ from the Bhagavad Gita.
- ❖ Meanwhile, in Kurukshetra, 18,000 children led a Gita chant, joined by 1.5 crore participants worldwide via an online platform.

Britain Becomes First European Nation to Join CPTPP

- ❖ Britain has become the first European nation to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), becoming its 12th member.

- ❖ The bloc, established in 2018, includes nations like Canada, Japan, and Australia, and represents over 15% of global GDP.
- ❖ Post-Brexit, the UK seeks new trade opportunities, gaining access to a market of 500+ million people while countering Chinese influence in the region.

India Launches First Diabetes Biobank in Chennai

- ❖ India's first diabetes biobank, set up by the ICMR in collaboration with the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF) in Chennai, will investigate the causes of diabetes and related health conditions.

Government Introduces 'Jalvahak' for Waterway Connectivity

- ❖ The Union government has launched the 'Jalvahak' scheme to boost cargo transport via inland waterways, promoting sustainable and cost-effective shipping on National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak).

Uttarakhand Unveils India's First Yoga Policy to Become Global Yoga Hub

- ❖ Uttarakhand, called Devbhoomi, is launching India's first Yoga Policy to become a global yoga hub. Led by CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, it aims to integrate Ayurveda and Yoga into healthcare, boost wellness tourism, and create jobs.

India Maritime Heritage Conclave 2024

- ❖ The 1st India Maritime Heritage Conclave (IMHC 2024), organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways on December 11-12, 2024, celebrated India's rich maritime legacy and its global impact on trade, culture, and innovation.

VIRAASAT Sari Festival 2024: Celebrating India's Handwoven Heritage

- ❖ The Ministry of Textiles is hosting the third edition of the "Viraasat Sari Festival 2024" from December 15-28, 2024, at Handloom Haat, New Delhi.
- ❖ Following the success of previous editions, the event will focus on handloom saris from across India, bringing together weavers, designers, and enthusiasts.
- ❖ It aims to celebrate India's handloom heritage, promote sari weaving traditions, and boost the earnings of the handloom community.

CBIC chairman launches four new initiatives to enhance taxpayer services

- ❖ CBIC Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal launched four citizen-focused initiatives, including a revised citizen's

charter, a revamped citizen's corner, an ease of doing business tab, and CBIC archives.

- ❖ He emphasized CBIC's dedication to simplifying tax processes, enhancing transparency, and empowering taxpayers.

Vice President Dhankhar Inaugurates GSI Geoscience Museum in Gwalior

- ❖ Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurated the Geological Survey of India's (GSI) advanced Geoscience Museum at the Victoria Market Building in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

VIRAASAT: Weaving the Legacy of Indian Saris

- ❖ The Ministry of Textiles is hosting the third "Viraasat Sari Festival 2024" from December 15-28 at Handloom Haat, Janpath, New Delhi.
- ❖ Building on the success of previous editions, the event will spotlight India's handloom saris, uniting weavers, designers, and sari enthusiasts to celebrate the nation's handloom heritage and boost the earnings of the weaving community.

Masali Village in Gujarat Becomes India's First Solar Border Village

- ❖ Masali village in Gujarat's Banaskantha district has become India's first fully solar-powered border village.
- ❖ Located 40 km from the Pakistan border and home to 800 residents, the village achieved 100% solar energy under the PM Suryaghar Yojana, with solar rooftops installed on 119 houses generating over 225 kilowatts.
- ❖ The district administration, led by Banaskantha collector Mihir Patel, plans to extend this initiative to 17 other villages in Vav and Suigam talukas under the Border Development Project.

India achieves milestone in Wildlife Conservation with first-ever Ganges River Dolphin tagging in Assam

- ❖ India conducted its first-ever Ganges river dolphin tagging in Assam, marking a historic milestone for wildlife conservation under Project Dolphin.
- ❖ The tagging aims to study the species' migratory patterns, habitat use, and distribution.
- ❖ Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav hailed the achievement as crucial for conserving India's National Aquatic Animal.

Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025: India's Automotive Milestone

- ❖ The Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, featuring

1,500 exhibitors and 500,000 visitors, will spotlight India's focus on the future of the automotive value chain, engineering excellence, and sustainable mobility solutions.

India's First Bio-Bitumen Stretch Inaugurated by Nitin Gadkari

- ❖ Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated a 1-km stretch of Asia's first highway featuring a bio-bitumen blended surface.
- ❖ The trial section is located near the Kamptee 22Km milestone on the Jabalpur-Nagpur route.

Centre Ends No Detention Rules In Schools

- ❖ The Central Government has decided to discontinue the 'no-detention policy' for students in Classes 5 and 8 in its schools.
- ❖ After the 2019 amendment to the Right to Education Act (RTE), at least 18 states and Union Territories have already abolished the policy for these classes.

Ex-IMF Chief Rato Faces New Prison Sentence For Corruption

- ❖ Former IMF Chief Rodrigo Rato has been sentenced to nearly five years in prison by a Madrid court on corruption charges.
- ❖ The 75-year-old, who was the IMF Chairman from 2004 to 2007 and served as Spain's Deputy Prime Minister under the People's Party (PP) government, has denied the allegations.

PM Modi Launches Ken-Betwa River-Linking Project

- ❖ PM Narendra Modi criticized Congress for overlooking BR Ambedkar's contributions to water resource development, alleging the truth was suppressed to credit one person.
- ❖ Modi highlighted Ambedkar's vision while laying the foundation for the Ken-Betwa river linking project, which was first planned during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure 23 years ago.

Defence Ministry Launches Rashtraparv Website & App on Good Governance Day

- ❖ On December 25, 2024, Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh launched the Rashtraparv Website and Mobile App on Good Governance Day, honoring former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary.
- ❖ The platform provides information on national events like Republic Day, Independence Day, and Beating Retreat, including live streaming, ticket sales, seating

arrangements, and route maps.

- ❖ It also features a Tableau Management Portal for designing and finalizing Republic Day tableaux. Developed through a consultative process, the website aims to enhance transparency and citizen-centric governance.

UP CM Inaugurates Atal Yuva Maha Kumbh

- ❖ On the occasion of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, attended various events, including the inauguration of a two-day Atal Health Fair in Lucknow and a Yuva Kumbh.
- ❖ The CM praised Vajpayee for transforming Indian politics from instability to stability and described him as the 'Ajatshatru' of Indian politics, highlighting his spontaneity and simplicity, which made him beloved across all sections of society.
- ❖ At the health fair, they launched and laid the foundation for 181 projects worth Rs 662 crore.

Country records highest-ever coal production in the year 2023-24.

- ❖ India achieved its highest-ever coal production in 2023-24, reaching 997.826 million tonnes (MT), an 11.71% growth from 893.191 MT in 2022-23.
- ❖ By mid-December, coal supply stood at 963.11 MT. Under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, domestic raw coking coal production is projected to reach 140 MT in five years, with 66.821 MT produced in 2023-24.

'Viksit Panchayat Karmayogi' Initiative

- ❖ On Good Governance Day, commemorating the 100th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, and Department of Space, launched the 'Viksit Panchayat Karmayogi' initiative.
- ❖ This initiative, part of the broader 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur' campaign, aims to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by providing elected representatives and officials with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective governance and participatory planning.

India to host World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit – WAVES for first time in 2025

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India will host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) for the first time in 2025, offering a platform to showcase India's creative talent.

- ❖ He highlighted the vital role of young creators in this initiative, underscoring their contribution to India's growing creator economy.
- ❖ The PM also paid tribute to the 100th birth anniversaries of cinema icons like Raj Kapoor, Mohammed Rafi, and Akkineni Nageswara Rao, acknowledging their lasting impact on Indian cinema and cultural heritage.

Sauraha Hosts 18th Elephant Festival

- ❖ The 18th Elephant and Tourism Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan, Nepal, has drawn both local and international visitors.
- ❖ Held at the Baghmara Intermediate Community Forest near Chitwan National Park, the five-day festival coincides with the New Year and Christmas celebrations.

India has clean energy capacity over 200 GW; investments to double in 2025: IEA

- ❖ As barren arid land gets covered with solar panels and giant windmills dot the coastline, India made it to the high table of clean energy superpowers with installed capacity crossing 200 gigawatts and projections of investment doubling to over \$32 billion in 2025.
- ❖ According to the International Energy Agency, India's annual renewable capacity additions through 2030 are expected to increase more quickly than any other major economy, including China. It seeks India's capacity addition more than quadrupling from 15 GW in 2023 to 62 GW in 2030. By the end of 2024, its installed capacity touched 205 GW.

National Affairs

Government extends deadline for direct tax Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme

- ❖ The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Monday announced an extension of the deadline for taxpayers participating in the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme.
- ❖ Initially set for December 31, 2024, the new deadline is now January 31, 2025.
- ❖ The CBDT stated that the extension allows taxpayers additional time to determine the amount payable as specified in column (3) of the relevant table in the scheme.

India Gets Its First Glass Bridge at Kanniyakumari

- ❖ India's first glass bridge has been inaugurated in Kanyakumari! Stretching 77 meters in length and 10 meters in width, this impressive bridge links the famous Vivekananda Rock Memorial and Thiruvalluvar Statue.
- ❖ It provides spectacular views of the surrounding sea and landscape and was officially opened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

Government extends deadline for direct tax Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme

- ❖ The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Monday announced an extension of the deadline for taxpayers participating in the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme.
- ❖ Initially set for December 31, 2024, the new deadline was January 31, 2025.
- ❖ The CBDT stated that the extension allows taxpayers additional time to determine the amount payable as specified in column (3) of the relevant table in the scheme.

India Achieves 36% Reduction in GDP Emission Intensity from 2005 to 2020

- ❖ India achieved a 36% reduction in the emission intensity of its GDP by 2020 compared to 2005 levels, marking substantial progress toward its climate targets.
- ❖ Additionally, the country reported significant growth in cumulative renewable energy capacity, with a goal of reaching 50% from non-fossil sources by 2030.

International Affairs

UN Launches UN80 Initiative Amid Financial Challenges and Global Uncertainty

- ❖ UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the "UN80 Initiative" to reform the organization as it nears its 80th anniversary.
- ❖ The initiative focuses on three key areas:
 1. Improving Operational Efficiency: Streamlining processes and optimizing resource utilization across UN agencies.
 2. Reviewing Mandates: Assessing and prioritizing mandates from the Security Council and General Assembly to align with current global challenges.
 3. Structural Reforms: Evaluating and implementing deeper structural changes for greater responsiveness and adaptability.
- ❖ An internal task force led by Under-Secretary-General Guy Ryder will oversee the initiative, including representatives from various UN offices and agencies.
- ❖ The UN faces financial challenges, including a liquidity crisis due to delayed payments from member states, leading to a regular budget of \$3.7 billion with spending cuts up to 20% and a hiring freeze.
- ❖ Guterres stated the initiative is a proactive measure, not a reaction to external pressures, emphasizing the importance of UN budgets for people worldwide.
- ❖ The initiative also aims to address geopolitical divisions and technological advancements to keep the UN relevant in the 21st century.

Japan and India renew Bilateral Swap Arrangement for up to \$75 billion

- ❖ Japan and India renewed the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) effective February 28, 2025.
- ❖ The agreement is for up to \$75 billion.
- ❖ The Bank of Japan and the Reserve Bank of India signed the second Amendment and Restatement Agreement.
- ❖ The BSA allows the two countries to swap their local currencies for US dollars.
- ❖ The size of the arrangement remains unchanged at up to \$75 billion.
- ❖ The BSA aims to strengthen financial safety nets and enhance cooperation between Japan and India.

EPIC World launches EHI Index, benchmarking companies solving for entrepreneurial households

- ❖ EPIC World launched the Entrepreneurial Households India Index (EHI Index) on February 25, 2025.
- ❖ The EHI Index tracks 34 publicly listed Indian companies focused on products and services for entrepreneurial households.
- ❖ The total market cap of the tracked companies is \$115 billion, indicating high growth potential in this sector.
- ❖ The index aims to highlight the economic contributions of entrepreneurial households, challenging the notion that only the top 10% in India drive spending.
- ❖ Key companies in the index include Bandhan Bank, Bajaj Finance, AU Small Finance Bank, and Muthoot Finance.
- ❖ EPIC World is the foundation of Elevar Equity, an impact investor across India and Latin America.
- ❖ The EHI Index shows businesses catering to entrepreneurial households have strong growth (22% 5-year revenue CAGR) and good shareholder value (16% 5-year RoE).
- ❖ Since its inception in January 2017, the EHI Index has outperformed the NIFTY 50 and NIFTY Financial Services Index.
- ❖ The companies in the index have raised over \$1.2 billion in public markets over the last two years.

Denmark announces Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) initiative

- ❖ Denmark has launched the Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) to enhance collaboration with India on sustainable energy and global carbon neutrality.
- ❖ The initiative is led by Denmark's Embassy and Consulate General in India and aims to promote sustainable energy growth through collaboration among

businesses, government, research, and financial sectors.

- ❖ Danish Ambassador to India, Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, emphasized the necessity of international cooperation for climate action and highlighted Danish companies' expertise and India's potential in sustainable energy.
- ❖ Strategic partners include the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), Indo-Danish Chamber of Commerce (IDCC), Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras Energy Consortium.
- ❖ The GTAI aligns with India's goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2070 and Denmark's goal of net zero by 2045, reflecting commitments made in the 2020 Green Strategic Partnership (GSP).
- ❖ It will serve as a platform for leading entities in the green transition, building on previous initiatives like the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) and Wind Alliance India (WAI).
- ❖ The alliance will have three Working Groups focused on Renewable Energy, Green Fuels, and Energy Efficiency.

Australia to invest \$16 mn in joint trade and investment fund with India

- ❖ Australia unveiled a comprehensive roadmap to enhance and diversify its trade and investment relationship with India. Central to this initiative is the establishment of the Australia-India Trade and Investment Accelerator Fund, backed by a \$16 million investment.
- ❖ This fund aims to assist Australian businesses in accessing new commercial opportunities within India's rapidly expanding market.
- ❖ The roadmap emphasizes four primary sectors, termed "superhighways of growth":
 1. Clean Energy: Collaborative efforts to promote sustainable energy solutions.
 2. Education and Skills: Initiatives to enhance educational exchanges and skill development programs.
 3. Agribusiness: Partnerships to advance agricultural technologies and trade.
 4. Tourism: Strategies to boost bilateral tourism and cultural exchanges.
- ❖ Additionally, the Australian government has allocated an extra \$4 million to the Maitri (meaning 'friendship') Grants program.
- ❖ This investment seeks to strengthen people-to-people connections, business collaborations, and cultural ties between the two nations.

Government to explore copper, cobalt block in Zambia

- ❖ The Indian government has secured 9,000 square kilometers of greenfield land in Zambia for copper and cobalt exploration under a government-to-government arrangement.
- ❖ The Ministry of Mines is working to acquire more critical mineral assets in other African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Rwanda, which are rich in key minerals like copper, cobalt, graphite, and nickel.
- ❖ The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has been selected to conduct the exploration, which is expected to take two to three years, after which mining rights may be acquired.
- ❖ The exploration area is in Zambia's Northwestern province and is approximately six times the size of Delhi; this region is significant given the presence of other copper operations, such as those by Vedanta Group.
- ❖ Other foreign investments in Zambia include Canadian and Chinese companies that are major copper producers.
- ❖ India is also active in securing mineral assets in South America and Australia, with investments in lithium exploration projects in Argentina and Chile through Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL).
- ❖ In Australia, KABIL is collaborating with the government's Critical Minerals Office to explore lithium and cobalt assets.

Brazil to join OPEC , group of major oil-exporting nations

- ❖ Brazil's government approved joining OPEC, marking a significant shift as it prepares for the UN climate summit in November 2025.
- ❖ The approval was granted by the National Council for Energy Policy in response to an official invitation received in 2023.
- ❖ President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who began his third term in 2023, supports oil production to finance the transition to green energy while advocating for environmental protection.
- ❖ Brazil is the world's seventh-largest oil producer, contributing about 4.3 million barrels daily, which is 4% of global output. Oil became Brazil's top export product in 2024.
- ❖ Suely Araújo from the Climate Observatory criticized the government's choices, stating they prioritize outdated solutions over addressing present and future challenges.

Oman, India Sign Executive Programme for Cooperation in Archives

- ❖ In a landmark move to deepen historical and cultural ties, the National Archives of India and the National Records and Archives Authority of Oman have signed an Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC) for the period 2025-2028.
- ❖ The National Archives of India and the National Records and Archives Authority of Oman are the custodians of the non-current records of the Government of India and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, respectively, providing public access to historical records.
- ❖ The EPC aims to strengthen friendship between India and Oman and promotes their historical connections.
- ❖ It reflects the Indian Government's commitment to enhancing friendly relations and archival cooperation.
- ❖ This collaboration represents a significant step in strengthening cultural and historical ties between the two nations.

India, South Korea Join Forces to Strengthen Logistics Infrastructure Under PM GatiShakti

- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Korea Transport Institute (KoTI) of South Korea.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to support India's infrastructure development initiatives by leveraging KoTI's expertise.
- ❖ Joint working meetings will be facilitated to ensure effective implementation of the partnership.
- ❖ A comprehensive mechanism for knowledge exchange and institutional cooperation will be established between DPIIT's Logistics Division and KoTI.
- ❖ The partnership is expected to support the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, a flagship initiative to create an integrated multimodal transport network in India.
- ❖ Key benefits include enhancing expertise in logistics, master planning, technology adoption, and innovation.
- ❖ The initiative aims to foster cross-learning in areas like GIS technology and smart logistics solutions.
- ❖ The MoU will help showcase India's achievements in logistics modernization globally and strengthen bilateral ties with South Korea.

UK to become first country to criminalise AI child abuse tools

- ❖ The British government is intensifying efforts to combat generative AI tools used for creating child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

- ❖ On February 1, the UK Home Office announced four new legislative measures targeting AI-generated CSAM.
- ❖ These laws will be introduced as part of a broader Crime and Policing Bill in Parliament soon.
- ❖ AI-generated CSAM includes images and videos created entirely or partially using text-to-image generation tools, and AI software can also “nudify” real images of children.
- ❖ Reports of AI-generated CSAM rose by 380%, with 245 confirmed reports in 2024 compared to 51 in 2023, according to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).
- ❖ The legislation makes it illegal to possess, create, or distribute AI tools for generating CSAM, carrying a penalty of up to five years in prison.
- ❖ The UK’s Border Force now has the authority to inspect the digital devices of individuals posing a sexual risk to children upon entry to the UK.

International Big Cat Alliance, now a full-fledged, treaty-based global body

- ❖ The Framework Agreement for the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) officially came into force on January 23, 2025, establishing it as a full-fledged treaty-based inter-governmental international organization and legal entity.
- ❖ The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India confirmed that five countries—Nicaragua, Eswatini, India, Somalia, and Liberia—have deposited instruments of ratification, making them official members of the IBCA.
- ❖ Currently, 27 countries have consented to join the IBCA, alongside several international and national organizations focusing on wildlife conservation.
- ❖ The IBCA was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of the IBCA, which is headquartered in India, on February 29, 2024.
- ❖ The IBCA aims to conserve seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma, welcoming participation from all UN member countries and interested non-range countries.
- ❖ It is established under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) as the nodal organization.
- ❖ The primary objective is to foster collaboration and consolidate conservation practices globally to reverse the decline of big cat populations.

- ❖ The IBCA will provide a collaborative platform, disseminate best practices, and offer access to technical resources and funding to support big cat conservation efforts and mitigate climate change impacts.

Trump signs order imposing sanctions on ICC over investigations of Israel

- ❖ President Donald Trump on Thursday signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court over investigations of Israel, a close US ally.
- ❖ Neither the US nor Israel is a member of or recognizes the court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes over his military response in Gaza after the Hamas attack against Israel in October 2023. Tens of thousands of Palestinians, including children, have been killed during the Israeli military’s response.
- ❖ The order Trump signed accuses the ICC of engaging in illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel” and of abusing its power by issuing baseless arrest warrants against Netanyahu and his former defense minister, Yoav Gallant.

Australian scientists successfully create first-ever kangaroo embryo using IVF

- ❖ In a historic scientific breakthrough, Australian researchers have successfully created the first-ever kangaroo embryos using in vitro fertilisation (IVF).
- ❖ This achievement marks the first time a kangaroo embryo has been produced through intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), a technique widely used in human fertility treatments.
- ❖ In a study published in the journal Reproductive, Fertility and Development, researchers, led by those at the University of Queensland in Australia, documented the potential of assisted reproduction for native marsupial conservation.
- ❖ IVF is being explored around the world for conserving endangered species. In January 2024, scientists in Germany transferred a rhino embryo, the world’s first produced through IVF, into a surrogate.

Panama withdraws from China’s Belt and Road Initiative

- ❖ Panama has officially exited China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as announced by President Jose Raul Mulino.
- ❖ The decision is influenced by increasing pressure from the United States, particularly the Trump administration, to limit Chinese influence in the Panama Canal.
- ❖ Panama has submitted a 90-day statutory notice regarding its embassy to Beijing, indicating its decision not to renew involvement in the BRI.

- ❖ The BRI is a Chinese strategy aimed at enhancing regional integration and economic growth through land and maritime networks connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- ❖ This move marks a significant shift in Panama's foreign policy, as the BRI had been central to its infrastructure development strategy under previous governments.
- ❖ President Mulino denied any agreements with the US regarding exemptions for US warships transiting the Panama Canal, challenging claims made by the US State Department.
- ❖ Mulino criticized the US State Department's assertions as unfounded and expressed surprise at their claims.

Russia imposes new tourist tax

- ❖ Russia has introduced a new tourist tax nationwide, replacing the previous resort fee. Travelers will now pay an additional 1% of their lodging costs to support regional tourism infrastructure.
- ❖ Introduced in July 2024 as part of amendments to the Tax Code, the "Tourist Tax" allows regional authorities to impose it locally.
- ❖ Starting at 1% in 2025, the rate will gradually increase to 3% by 2027, with many regions already adopting the initiative.

Romania, Bulgaria fully join Schengen border-free zone

- ❖ Romania and Bulgaria officially joined the EU's Schengen Zone, eliminating land border controls and allowing free travel without passport checks.
- ❖ Austria, which vetoed their entry in 2022, dropped its opposition last month, enabling the move.
- ❖ The Schengen Zone, established in 1995, includes 29 countries with unified external border controls and shared visa policies.

India-Nepal "Surya Kiran" Military Exercise Begins

- ❖ India and Nepal commenced the 18th edition of their joint military exercise, 'Surya Kiran,' on January 1, 2025, in Saljhandi, Nepal.
- ❖ This battalion-level exercise will continue until January 13, 2025.

Switzerland Enforces Facial Covering Ban, Raises Pensions in New Year

- ❖ Effective January 1, 2025, Switzerland will implement significant reforms in legal, economic, and social areas, including a ban on facial coverings, changes to inheritance laws, pension hikes, and stricter banking regulations.

Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) Outbreak in China

- ❖ China has reported a surge in human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infections, particularly among children under 14 in northern provinces.
- ❖ Authorities are increasing screening, detection, and isolation measures to address the rise in cases.

Nascent galaxy discovered in formation at the end of the longest tidal tail of NGC 3785 galaxy

- ❖ About 430 million light years from Earth, in the Leo constellation, a new ultra-diffuse galaxy has been discovered to be under formation at the end of the tidal tail, a long, thin stream of stars and interstellar gas, of galaxy NGC 3785.
- ❖ The discovery of the galaxy formation, driven probably by the gravitational interaction between NGC 3785 and a neighbouring galaxy, marks a major milestone in understanding galaxy evolution.

Nato launches new mission to protect crucial undersea cables

- ❖ Nato has launched a new mission to increase the surveillance of ships in the Baltic Sea after critical undersea cables were damaged or severed last year.
- ❖ Nato chief Mark Rutte said the mission, dubbed "Baltic Sentry", would involve more patrol aircraft, warships and drones.
- ❖ His announcement was made at a summit in Helsinki attended by all Nato countries perched on the Baltic Sea - Finland, Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

India Joins the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics

- ❖ In a significant milestone, India has joined the prestigious UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics.
- ❖ The UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD) was created to further investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on the sustainable development goals.

Donald John Trump sworn-in as 47th President of US at Capitol Rotunda

- ❖ Republican leader Donald John Trump, on Monday, took oath as the 47th president of the United States. The swearing-in ceremony happened in the Capitol Rotunda.
- ❖ JD Vance took oath as the 50th Vice President of the United States at the US Capitol Rotunda in Washington DC. JD Vance was with his wife Usha Vance and daughter.

OpenAI announces \$500 bn ‘The Stargate Project

- ❖ Sam Altman-led OpenAI has unveiled a new initiative, ‘The Stargate Project,’ committing \$500 billion to developing AI infrastructure over the next four years.
- ❖ The project will focus on building data centres dedicated exclusively to OpenAI as the company continues to expand its generative AI computing capabilities. An initial \$100 billion is set to be deployed immediately to kick-start the initiative.

NIFTEM-K hosts delegates of the International South-South Learning programme on Food Fortification

- ❖ National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIFTEM-K), under the aegis of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), hosted a high-level international delegation comprising of 17 representatives from the different-different places, underlining the regional significance of this knowledge-sharing initiative, visited NIFTEM-K to study India’s successful food fortification initiatives.
- ❖ The visit, organised by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) brought together representatives from Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, and Madagascar.

India’s participation in International Travel Trade Exhibition at FITUR, Madrid

- ❖ The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, participated in one of the leading travel fairs - IFEMA being held in Madrid, Spain for positioning India as a potential leading destination in the source market of Spain and Latin America.
- ❖ The exhibition at FITUR, considered to be a benchmark event in the tourism sector, was held from 22nd - 26th January 2025.
- ❖ FITUR is the global meeting point for tourism professionals and leading fair for inbound and outbound markets in Ibero-America.

Advent of Chinese AI firm DeepSeek shakes up US-based Silicon Valley

- ❖ The artificial intelligence breakthrough that is sending shock waves through stock markets, spooking Silicon Valley giants, and generating breathless takes about the end of America’s technological dominance arrived with an unassuming, wonky title:
- ❖ “Incentivizing Reasoning Capability in LLMs via Reinforcement Learning.”

- ❖ The company had created a new AI model called DeepSeek-R1, built by a team of researchers who claimed to have used a modest number of second-rate AI chips to match the performance of leading American AI models at a fraction of the cost.

India to join 197 nations at UNCCD COP16 in Riyadh

- ❖ The 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) begins in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia—the first time West Asia is hosting this key environmental event.
- ❖ Representatives from 197 nations, including India, will attend, marking UNCCD’s 30th anniversary.

Australia Bars Under-16s from Social Media

- ❖ Australia passed the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 on November 28, introducing groundbreaking measures to restrict social media access for children under 16.
- ❖ The legislation requires social media companies to ensure compliance with the age restriction.

UAE leads global rankings in sustainable development & economic innovation

- ❖ According to a recent report by GCC-Stat, the UAE has emerged as a global leader in the new economy, marking its 53rd National Day.
- ❖ The country ranks first in Global Trade, Maritime Protection, Wastewater Reuse, and Green Hydrogen Production, and is fourth in Economic Performance.
- ❖ The UAE also leads the Arab world in Human Development, Education, and Gender Equality.
- ❖ The report highlights the UAE’s success in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, including healthcare, basic services, and civil registration. Its forward-looking governance model promotes technology, human rights, and infrastructure, aligning with the ‘We the UAE 2031’ vision for sustainable growth.

Romania, Bulgaria to join EU’s Schengen area on January 1, 2025

- ❖ Romania and Bulgaria will fully join the EU’s border-free Schengen Area on January 1, 2025. European Parliament President Roberta Metsola praised this move, highlighting it will strengthen safety and unity in Europe.
- ❖ The Schengen Area allows free movement for over 425 million EU citizens and others for up to 90 days by abolishing internal border checks and standardizing external border controls.

Switzerland Suspends 'Most Favoured Nation' Status to India

- ❖ Switzerland has declared the suspension of the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) clause in its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India, starting from January 1, 2025.

World's Richest Families 2024 Waltons Family Leads

- ❖ The Walmart Waltons have reclaimed the top spot as the world's richest family with a \$432.4 billion fortune, surpassing Elon Musk's net worth and Middle Eastern royal dynasties.
- ❖ India's Ambanis ranked 8th (\$99.6 billion), and the Mistrys 23rd (\$41.4 billion). Walmart's 80% share surge this year added \$172.7 billion to the Waltons' wealth, equivalent to \$473.2 million daily.

OPEC Fund approves nearly 1 billion dollars in development financing for final quarter 2024

- ❖ The OPEC Fund for International Development approved nearly \$1 billion in development financing during its 190th Governing Board meeting in Vienna.
- ❖ The funding will support 22 nations across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, focusing on infrastructure, food security, renewable energy, and economic resilience.
- ❖ Beneficiary countries include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, Kenya, and El Salvador.
- ❖ OPEC Fund President Abdulhamid Alkhalifa highlighted 2024 as a milestone year, emphasizing the organization's commitment to impactful, sustainable development and climate change mitigation.

Italy Grants Citizenship to Argentina's President

- ❖ The Italian government has granted Argentinian President Javier Milei and his sister Karina Italian citizenship due to their heritage, with the applications reportedly fast-tracked, sparking outrage in Argentina.

Sri Lanka to offer visa-free travel to Indian nationals from Jan 2025

- ❖ From January 2025, Indians will be among nationals from 39 countries eligible for free visas to Sri Lanka, announced Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath during an event in New Delhi.
- ❖ He also expressed hope for reciprocal visa-free travel for Sri Lankans. Highlighting strong cultural and economic ties, Herath noted India is Sri Lanka's largest source of tourists.
- ❖ The announcement came during President Anura Kumara Disanayake's three-day state visit to India from December 15-17.

Japan and India Collaborate to Address Space Debris

- ❖ Japan and India have teamed up to address space debris using laser technology, with a focus on debris removal and lunar exploration, highlighting their commitment to joint space initiatives.

India and France Collaborate to Establish World's Largest Museum

- ❖ The Ministry of Culture signed a pact with France Museums Développement (FMD) to upgrade the Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum into a world-class cultural institution, spanning 1,55,000 square meters across Parliament's North and South Blocks.

Largest Clove Producer in the World By 2024

- ❖ In 2024, Indonesia is the world's largest producer of cloves, contributing over 70% of global output with 109,600 metric tons. It is also the top consumer, using nearly 90% of its production.

Bald eagle officially designated as the United States National Bird after 240 years

- ❖ President Joe Biden signed legislation officially designating the bald eagle as the national bird of the United States.
- ❖ The bald eagle, a symbol of the nation's strength, has featured on the Great Seal since 1782, alongside elements like an olive branch, arrows, a shield, the motto "E Pluribus Unum," and stars.

Horror Unfolds Azerbaijan Airline Crashes in Kazakhstan

- ❖ A tragic crash of an Azerbaijan Airlines flight near Aktau, Kazakhstan, on December 25 resulted in the deaths of 38 people.
- ❖ The Embraer 190 aircraft, traveling from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Grozny, Russia, had 67 passengers and crew on board.
- ❖ Authorities confirmed that 29 individuals survived, some with injuries. A passenger onboard recorded dramatic footage before and after the crash, which went viral.
- ❖ The video shows passengers praying during the emergency, with oxygen masks hanging from the ceiling.
- ❖ After the crash, scenes captured a bleeding passenger and another attempting to escape the badly damaged plane.

Russia Declares Federal Emergency Over Black Sea Oil Spill

- ❖ Russia declared a federal emergency on Thursday following an oil spill in the Black Sea caused by two tankers struck by a storm on December 15.
- ❖ One tanker broke apart, while the other ran aground. The spill has polluted sandy beaches near Anapa, a popular resort, and severely impacted wildlife, including seabirds, dolphins, and porpoises.
- ❖ Over 10,000 individuals are involved in cleanup efforts, according to the Emergencies Ministry.

State News

Karnataka to implement horticulture development scheme

- ❖ Karnataka will implement the Comprehensive Horticulture Development Scheme – 2.0 with an outlay of ₹95 crore for the financial year 2025-26 to advance technology developments for farmers.
- ❖ Chief Minister Siddaramaiah highlighted the significant role of horticulture crops in enhancing farmers' income while presenting the state budget.
- ❖ A Knowledge Cell will be created by the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology in collaboration with private players to provide farmers with real-time data regarding crop health and market conditions using modern technologies.
- ❖ A seed bank will be established to conserve 20 GI-tagged and indigenous crops at risk of extinction.
- ❖ Research and conservation activities will focus on protecting Byadagi chilli from various diseases, with an allocation of ₹426 crore under the micro irrigation scheme for 52,000 farmers.
- ❖ ₹62 crore has been allocated for plant protection measures to assist over 2 lakh areca nut growers affected by leaf spot disease.
- ❖ The government will conduct a scientific survey to address the infestation of the black-headed caterpillar in coconut-growing regions and initiate necessary plant protection measures.
- ❖ An Organic and Millet Hub will be established at a cost of ₹20 crore to promote organic and millet farming, improve market facilities, and meet demand.

Assam to launch its satellite 'ASSAMSAT'

- ❖ Assam state government plans to launch its own satellite, ASSAMSAT, to improve data access for socio-economic initiatives and enhance border surveillance.
- ❖ The announcement was made by Finance Minister

Ajanta Neog during the Budget presentation for the financial year 2025-26.

- ❖ The satellite will support services in agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure development, and border security.
- ❖ Collaboration for the satellite will involve IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- ❖ The project aims to engage college students in Assam by involving them in building experimental satellites with support from IN-SPACe and ISRO.
- ❖ The satellite is expected to provide information on illegal border crossings, impending floods, and weather reports beneficial to farmers.

Telangana govt ropes in Thomas Piketty to analyse caste census data

- ❖ The Telangana government has established an 11-member expert committee to analyze data from its recent Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political, and Caste (SEEEPC) Survey 2024.
- ❖ Notably, the committee includes renowned French economist Thomas Piketty, known for his extensive work on income and wealth inequality.
- ❖ The committee, chaired by retired Justice Sudarshan Reddy, aims to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for various social sectors in the state.
- ❖ Other prominent members include economist Jean Drèze, former University Grants Commission chairman Sukhadeo Thorat, and academician Kancha Ilaiah, who serves as the vice-chairman.
- ❖ Praveen Chakravarty, chairman of the Congress party's data analytics and professionals' wing, is the convenor of the group.
- ❖ The SEEEPC Survey 2024 is Telangana's effort to comprehensively assess the socio-economic and caste dynamics within the state.

Uttarakhand Cabinet approves implementation of Unified Pension Scheme

- ❖ The Uttarakhand Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, has approved the implementation of the Central Government's Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for state officers and employees.
- ❖ The UPS is an option under the National Pension System (NPS) aimed at ensuring assured payouts post-retirement, which will become operational from April 1, 2025.
- ❖ The Cabinet also approved the new Excise Policy 2025,

which includes measures such as closing liquor licenses near religious places to respect their significance.

- ❖ Additionally, the new policy imposes stricter controls on liquor sales, including the cancellation of licenses if shops charge above the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), ensuring consumer protection.
- ❖ The state has seen a significant increase in excise revenue, with a target of Rs 5,060 crore set for the financial year 2025-26, following collections of Rs 4,038.69 crore in 2023-24 and approximately Rs 4,000 crore in 2024-25.

Kerala govt allocates additional ₹300 crore for integrated healthcare scheme

- ❖ The Kerala government has allocated an additional ₹300 crore for the Karunya Arogya Suraksha Padhathi (KASAP).
- ❖ This integrated health protection scheme aims to provide coverage for over 64 lakh poor and vulnerable people in the state.
- ❖ The total allocation for the scheme in the current financial year has now reached ₹978.54 crore.
- ❖ KASAP is designed to offer health coverage of ₹5 lakh annually to approximately 41.99 lakh families, representing the bottom 40% of the Kerala population.
- ❖ An additional ₹700 crore has been earmarked for the scheme in the state budget for the next financial year.
- ❖ Families covered by the scheme are eligible for free treatment up to ₹5 lakh per year.
- ❖ The scheme is accessible at 197 state-run hospitals, four central hospitals, and 364 private hospitals across Kerala.

West Bengal government launches “Nodi Bandhan”, a new scheme for rivers

- ❖ The Mamata Banerjee government has introduced the “Nodi Bandhan” scheme in the 2025-26 budget to develop riverine areas and address erosion along the Ganga.
- ❖ The scheme aims to combat natural calamities and create livelihoods for people in these regions.
- ❖ A budget allocation of ₹200 crores has been made to implement a masterplan that focuses on preventing floods in the West Midnapore region.
- ❖ Additional measures are being taken to prevent Ganga-Padma erosion affecting districts like Murshidabad and Malda.
- ❖ The scheme is expected to enhance opportunities for pisciculture and irrigation, encouraging the development of small-scale agriculture-related industries.

- ❖ The total estimated cost for the Ghatal Masterplan to prevent flooding is ₹1,500 crores, with an initial allocation of ₹500 crores for this year.
- ❖ This initiative is part of a strategy to create new earning options for local residents while addressing grievances against perceived neglect by the central government.

Maharashtra unveils roadmap for zero-waste textile industry by 2047

- ❖ The Maharashtra government, in partnership with Primus Partners, launched a report titled ‘Making India a Zero-Waste Fashion Country’ aimed at achieving zero waste in India’s textile industry by 2047.
- ❖ The report was presented by Maharashtra’s Minister of Textiles, Sanjay Savkare, during Bharat Tex 2025.
- ❖ It establishes a structured framework to promote sustainability and circular economy principles throughout the textile value chain, from farms to markets.
- ❖ The initiative has the potential to address \$3.5 billion in textile waste over the next five years, calling for strong policy support, collaboration from the industry, and consumer involvement.
- ❖ Key barriers to sustainability identified in the report include financial constraints, limited green technology adoption, skill gaps, low demand for eco-friendly products, and fragmented policies.
- ❖ The report highlights the impact of ultra-fast fashion, largely driven by social media, as a significant factor contributing to textile waste.
- ❖ A 5F approach (farm, fiber, factory, fashion, foreign) is proposed to ensure sustainability at every stage of the textile value chain.

Arunachal cabinet approves schemes for Women, Youth, and State Development

- ❖ The Arunachal Pradesh government has approved enhancements to the Dulari Kanya Scheme, increasing the fixed deposit for institutional births of girl children from ₹20,000 to ₹30,000.
- ❖ An additional ₹20,000 will be provided through direct benefit transfer for Class XI admissions, bringing the total financial support to ₹50,000.
- ❖ This decision was made during the fourth outdoor cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Nyapin.
- ❖ The Arunachal Pradesh Arun Parivar Patra Authority Bill, 2025 was approved to establish a family-centric citizen database for targeted welfare delivery.
- ❖ The Cabinet also sanctioned the establishment of

the Institute for Transforming Arunachal (ITA), focusing on socio-economic development and policy recommendations.

- ❖ Approval was given for the Arunachal Pradesh Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to update provisions of the existing GST Act.
- ❖ A legislative amendment was made to allow Deputy Commissioners to act as appellate authorities in land encroachment cases.
- ❖ The Arunachal Pradesh Handloom and Handicrafts Policy - 2024 was introduced to modernize these sectors and enhance support for artisans.
- ❖ The Cabinet approved the creation of 270 contractual posts for child helpline services in line with the Mission Vatsalya Scheme.

Jharkhand Government banned Gutkha, Pan Masala for a Year

- ❖ The Jharkhand government has implemented a complete ban on the production, distribution, sale, and storage of gutkha and paan masala containing nicotine and tobacco, effective from February 18, 2025.
- ❖ This ban will be in effect for one year, with the possibility of an extension based on a situational review.
- ❖ A prior ban in 2020 had targeted 11 brands of gutkha and paan masala, which expired in June 2023 and was unenforced for approximately one and a half years.
- ❖ The new ban encompasses all types of paan masala with nicotine and tobacco.
- ❖ The ban is enforced under Section 30(2)(A) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and associated regulations.
- ❖ Strict penalties will be imposed on individuals caught selling these products.

CM Stalin opens India's largest single-location solar plant

- ❖ Chief Minister M K Stalin inaugurated the 4.3-GW solar cell and module manufacturing plant of TP Solar Ltd at Gangaikondan SIPCOT in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ TP Solar Ltd is subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd
- ❖ This facility is recognized as India's largest single-location integrated solar manufacturing plant, established with an investment of Rs 3,800 crore.
- ❖ The plant has created 4,000 jobs, with 80% of the workforce comprising women.
- ❖ Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran acknowledged the support from CM Stalin and noted

the potential to expand the plant's capacity from 4.3 GW to 8 GW in the future.

Kerala secures Rs 2,424 cr World Bank loan to strengthen healthcare system

- ❖ The Kerala government approved the Kerala Health System Improvement Programme, securing a loan of ₹2,424.28 crore from the World Bank.
- ❖ The main objectives include improving the standard of living and life expectancy while ensuring a life free from preventable diseases and accidents.
- ❖ The programme focuses on the welfare of the poor and aims to establish resilient healthcare systems that address demographic and epidemiological challenges.
- ❖ It will enhance coordination among state departments to address emerging threats, including those related to climate change.
- ❖ Key initiatives include developing a comprehensive ecosystem to prevent non-communicable diseases, improving healthcare infrastructure, and enhancing emergency and trauma care services with a 24x7 response network.
- ❖ The project will also address elderly care by integrating local self-government institutions to tackle healthcare challenges and improve resource allocation.
- ❖ Special emphasis will be placed on providing healthcare services to individuals below the poverty line.

Odisha Govt approves Antyodaya Gruha Yojana to cover left-out beneficiaries

- ❖ Odisha government approved the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana, a housing scheme for eligible households excluded from existing initiatives.
- ❖ The scheme targets victims of natural and man-made disasters, development project displacees, differently-abled primary earners, and Forest Rights Act beneficiaries without housing benefits.
- ❖ Beneficiaries can receive financial assistance of Rs 1.2 lakh to construct a 25-square-meter house (excluding toilet area).
- ❖ The initiative aims to build at least 225,000 new homes over three years, complementing schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) and PM-JANMAN.
- ❖ Timely construction incentives: Rs 20,000 for completion within four months, and Rs 10,000 for completion within six months.
- ❖ Permanent houses must have RCC roofs and cement walls; structures with asbestos, tin, or tiled roofs are also eligible.

Maharashtra government launches Maitri 2.0 portal to make investment process hassle-free

- ❖ The Maharashtra government launched the MAITRI 2.0 Portal to streamline the investment process and reduce administrative delays.
- ❖ The portal was inaugurated by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis shortly after MoUs worth Rs 15.70 lakh crore were signed at the World Economic Forum in Davos.
- ❖ The aim of the portal is to improve the ease of doing business and maintain Maharashtra's position as a top destination for domestic and foreign investments.
- ❖ The MAITRI 2.0 Portal integrates 119 services from 16 departments into a single online ecosystem for government-to-business (G2B) services.
- ❖ Features include real-time tracking of applications, proactive escalation of delays, and an online query resolution mechanism to enhance transparency and efficiency.
- ❖ The portal includes an 'Incentive Calculator' that provides information about financial benefits, exemptions, and subsidies for investors.
- ❖ The legislation empowers the Maharashtra Industry, Trade and Investment Facilitation Cell to function as a state single-window system, facilitating smooth business setup.
- ❖ The initiative aims to accelerate the implementation of industrial projects across the state while fostering a favorable business environment.

Haryana Government Approved the Culling of male Nilgais

- ❖ The Haryana government has approved new Wildlife (Protection) Rules allowing the shooting of male Nilgais (blue bulls).
- ❖ This decision has sparked widespread protests from environmentalists and the Bishnoi community, who view it as unethical and unsustainable.
- ❖ Nilgais are vital to Haryana's wildlife and biodiversity, but their population is viewed as a threat to agriculture, prompting calls for management solutions.
- ❖ The approval of shooting raises concerns regarding ecological balance and the implications of legitimizing the killing of these animals.
- ❖ The Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) is the largest antelope in Asia and is native to the Indian subcontinent, including India, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- ❖ It has been regarded as sacred in Hinduism since ancient times, leading to discussions about renaming it to allow culling while acknowledging its religious significance.

Telangana's Rythu Bharosa Scheme Expansion

- ❖ The Telangana government has enhanced the Rythu Bharosa scheme, offering ₹7,500 per acre for every crop season to 70 lakh farmers.
- ❖ This replaces the Rythu Bandhu scheme, which previously provided ₹5,000 per acre. Starting in January 2025, ₹7,500 will be credited to farmers for each crop season.

Chhattisgarh's Green GDP Initiative

- ❖ Chhattisgarh has become the first state in India to implement the Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP) model.
- ❖ This approach incorporates the economic value of the state's forest ecosystem services—such as clean air, water conservation, and biodiversity—into its financial planning and policy-making, aiming to foster sustainable development.

Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh Launches India's First Organic Fisheries Cluster in Sikkim, Inaugurates/ Lays Foundation Stone of Projects Worth Rs. 50 Crores in Guwahati

- ❖ The Union Minister, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh inaugurated and laid the foundation for 50 key projects worth Rs. 50 crores under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) covering all North East Region States Except Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, in Guwahati, Assam, on 7th January 2025.

Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme Launched in Odisha

- ❖ The Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme was inaugurated by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at the Adivasi Mela in Bhubaneswar.
- ❖ This initiative aims to reduce the dropout rate among Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in Odisha.
- ❖ The scheme provides a one-time incentive of ₹5,000 for ST students enrolling in Class IX and Class XI.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched All India Radio's special FM channel 'Kumbhvani' and 'Kumbh Mangal Dhvani' in Prayagraj

- ❖ The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath today launched a special FM channel of All India Radio Kumbhvani (103.5 MHz), dedicated to Maha Kumbh 2025, at Circuit House, Prayagraj.
- ❖ On this historic occasion, the Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. L. Murugan also joined the event online. CM Adityanath also inaugurated the Kumbh Mangal Dhvani on this occasion.

Haryana's Declining Sex Ratio at Birth

- ❖ Haryana's sex ratio at birth dropped to 910 girls per 1,000 boys in 2024, the lowest in eight years.
- ❖ The decline has alarmed activists and civil society over concerns about gender equality.
- ❖ Government officials have described the drop as a minor fluctuation.
- ❖ The sex ratio at birth is a key indicator of gender equality and societal attitudes toward women.
- ❖ India's national sex ratio at birth was recorded at 929 girls per 1,000 boys in the NFHS-5 (2021) report.

U'khand announces implementation of UCC today, becomes first state to do so

- ❖ Uttarakhand is set to become the first state to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) today (January 27, 2025).
- ❖ Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the implementation of UCC will bring uniformity in all laws relating to personal civil matters that discriminate on the basis of caste, religion, gender, etc, adding that all the necessary preparations have been completed to implement UCC, including approval of the rules of the Act and training of the concerned officials.

Odisha's green economy may generate 1 mn new jobs by 2030: CEEW study

- ❖ Odisha has the potential to create approximately 10 lakh new full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs across three green sectors -- energy transition, circular economy, and bio-economy and nature-based solutions, attracting Rs 3.5 lakh crore in investments by 2030, according to a study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).
- ❖ The study was launched on Wednesday at 'Utkarsh Odisha-Make in Odisha Conclave,' held in Bhubaneswar. According to a statement from the Odisha government, the study finds that this could directly contribute Rs 2 lakh crore to the state's GDP, boosting it by 23 per cent and positioning Odisha as a leader in India's green growth.

Gujarat Declares First Biodiversity Heritage Site

- ❖ The Gujarat Biodiversity Board recently declared 'Inland Mangrove Guneri' in Kutch as the state's first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).
- ❖ This step focuses on preserving a rare mangrove ecosystem that flourishes without tidal influence. Covering 32.78 hectares, the site is recognized for its rich ecological diversity.
- ❖ This declaration marks a significant achievement in Gujarat's biodiversity conservation efforts.

UNESCO Declares West Bengal a Top Heritage Tourism Destination

- ❖ UNESCO has recognized Bengal as a leading destination for heritage tourism.
- ❖ We have undertaken significant efforts to enhance heritage sites and are also focusing on religious tourism by developing iconic places of worship such as the Dakshineswar Temple and the Kalighat Temple.

UP Declares Maha Kumbh Area a New District for 2025 Mela

- ❖ The Uttar Pradesh government, led by CM Yogi Adityanath, has declared the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj a new district, named Maha Kumbh Mela, to streamline administration for the grand Kumbh Mela scheduled in January 2025.

Ratapani declared as 8th Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh

- ❖ Ratapani has been designated as Madhya Pradesh's 8th Tiger Reserve following approval from the Central Government.
- ❖ Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav called it a significant gift for the state, affirming Madhya Pradesh's status as the true Tiger State.

Devendra Fadnavis to Become Maharashtra CM for the Third Term

- ❖ Devendra Fadnavis is scheduled to take oath as Maharashtra's Chief Minister for the third time on evening in a grand ceremony at Azad Maidan, Mumbai, which is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ❖ At 54, Fadnavis, the BJP legislature party leader and MLA from Nagpur, will assume office after extensive political negotiations following the state assembly elections on November 20, with results announced on November 23.

Gadkari announces nine road projects worth Rs 30,000 crore for Rajasthan

- ❖ Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on 10 December 2024 (Tuesday) announced nine new projects worth Rs 30,000 crore for Rajasthan that would lead to construction of a cumulative 800 km of road network in the state.

Madhya Pradesh CM Dr. Mohan Yadav to inaugurate 10th International Forest Fair in Bhopal

- ❖ The 10th International Forest Fair has commenced in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, and will run until December 23.

- ❖ Inaugurated by Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, the event focuses on “Women Empowerment through Minor Forest Produce,” highlighting the 50% participation of women in forest produce management.
- ❖ Representatives from Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Australia are attending, with around 300 stalls and exhibitions by various government departments.
- ❖ The fair also offers free daily medical consultations by Ayurveda doctors.

38th National Games Uttarakhand Unveils Mascot, Logo, Anthem, and Tagline

- ❖ The mascot, logo, jersey, anthem, and tagline for the 38th National Games were unveiled in Dehradun.
- ❖ IOA President PT Usha announced the inclusion of traditional sports like yoga and mallakhamb, approved after a request from Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami.

Madhya Pradesh builds over 8,000 homes in Shivpuri under PM-JANMAN

- ❖ Madhya Pradesh’s Shivpuri district leads the country with over 8,000 houses built under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), featuring essential amenities like water, electricity, and roads.
- ❖ Tribal woman Lalita’s house was the first completed, fulfilling her dream of a pucca home after her interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this year, benefiting many other families as well.

Madhya Pradesh recognized as one of ‘Go-To Global Destinations for 2025’

- ❖ Madhya Pradesh has been recognized by the Wall Street Journal as one of the “Go-To Global Destinations for 2025”, emphasizing its rich heritage, wildlife, and natural beauty.
- ❖ The state boasts UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Khajuraho, Panna, and Bandhavgarh, known for their cultural significance, wildlife, and scenic landscapes.
- ❖ Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, lauded this recognition, highlighting Madhya Pradesh as a premier travel destination offering unique experiences for all.

Madhya Pradesh Named “Go-To Global Destination for 2025” by WSJ

- ❖ Madhya Pradesh has been named one of the Wall Street Journal’s “Go-To Global Destinations for 2025”, highlighting its rich heritage, unique wildlife, and natural beauty.

- ❖ With UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Khajuraho, Panna, and Bandhavgarh, along with vibrant cultural experiences, the state is gaining prominence as a premier global travel destination.

Gujarat CM Launches SWAR Platform to Bridge Language Barriers

- ❖ On Good Governance Day (December 25), Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched the SWAR (Speech and Written Analysis Resource) platform, a new citizen-centric initiative.
- ❖ The platform aims to enhance the “ease of living” for residents, in line with the state government’s ongoing efforts to improve governance.

Awards and Honours

Mauritius PM bestows country’s highest honour on PM Modi

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honored with Mauritius’ highest civilian award, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (GCSK).
- ❖ Mauritian PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam announced this accolade during a community event in Port Louis, stating that Modi is the first Indian and the fifth foreign national to receive this distinguished recognition.
- ❖ The GCSK award acknowledges individuals who have made significant contributions to strengthening ties between Mauritius and other nations.
- ❖ Past recipients include notable figures such as Nelson Mandela, who was honored in 1998.
- ❖ This accolade adds to Prime Minister Modi’s growing list of international honors, marking the 21st such recognition bestowed upon him by a foreign nation.
- ❖ During his two-day visit to Mauritius, Prime Minister Modi participated in the country’s National Day celebrations as the chief guest.

Forbes India Leadership Awards 2025: Jejurikar of M&M is CEO of the Year

- ❖ The Forbes India Leadership Awards 2025 took place at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, honoring top leaders for innovative and transformative leadership.

Key awards included:

- ❖ Emerging Innovator Award: BugWorks Research, emphasized the impact of innovation.
- ❖ Outstanding Startup Award: BrowserStack, recognized for powering major airlines and banks.
- ❖ Icons of Excellence: Ajay Singh (SpiceJet) and Katrina

Kaif (Kay Beauty) acknowledged for their unique business approaches.

- ❖ Fireside Chat: Katrina Kaif discussed branding and self-expression in business.
- ❖ Business & Economy Panel: Leaders discussed global trade challenges and MSMEs' role; Rajesh Jejurikar highlighted India's global importance.

Final Awards:

- ❖ Icons of Excellence: Jay Shah (ICC), Shyam Srinivasan, Mohit Joshi (Tech Mahindra).
- ❖ Promising Startup: Minimalist.
- ❖ Regional Goliath: MTR Foods.
- ❖ Grassroots Philanthropists: Rizwan and Rekha Koita (Koita Foundation).
- ❖ Climate Warrior: Indra Water.
- ❖ Turnaround Star: Indian Hotels Co Ltd (IHCL).
- ❖ Next-Gen Entrepreneur: Varun Jaipuria (Varun Beverages).
- ❖ Institution Builder: Ashish Dhawan (Central Square Foundation, Ashoka University).
- ❖ Entrepreneur of the Year: Supam Maheshwari (FirstCry).
- ❖ CEO of the Year: Rajesh Jejurikar (Mahindra & Mahindra).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Conferred 'Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados' Award

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the 'Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados' award from the Barbados government.
- ❖ He expressed gratitude for the award, dedicating it to the 1.4 billion Indians and the strong ties between India and Barbados.
- ❖ The award was conferred in recognition of Modi's exemplary work during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ❖ A statement from the Prime Minister's Office confirmed his gratitude towards the government and people of Barbados.
- ❖ Union Minister Pabitra Margherita presented the award on behalf of PM Modi to Barbados President Dame Sandra Mason.

Bhaker named BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2024

- ❖ Manu Bhaker was awarded the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year following her remarkable performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics, where she won two bronze medals.
- ❖ She became the first Indian woman to secure two medals

at a single Olympic Games and the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal in shooting, achieving this in the women's 10m air pistol event.

- ❖ Bhaker's second bronze was won in the mixed 10m air pistol event alongside Sarabjot Singh.
- ❖ Her net worth skyrocketed from an estimated Rs. 60 lakhs before the Olympics to Rs. 12 crores after her Olympic success, significantly aided by endorsements.
- ❖ She has collaborated with leading brands such as Perfomax and Nothing India, which have contributed to her financial growth.
- ❖ Women athletes typically earn Rs. 8 lakhs to Rs. 30 lakhs per endorsement, while Bhaker's brand worth is estimated at Rs. 1.5 crores.
- ❖ Previously, she charged between Rs. 20-25 lakhs per endorsement.

Indian biologist Purnima Devi Barman among Time Magazine's 2025 list of 'Women of the Year'

- ❖ Purnima Devi Barman, an Indian biologist and wildlife conservationist, was named one of Time Magazine's 'Women of the Year' for 2025.
- ❖ She is the only Indian woman included on the list, which honors leaders working towards a more equitable world.
- ❖ Other notable figures on the list include actor Nicole Kidman and Gisele Pelicot, a survivor of sexual violence.
- ❖ Barman's conservation work began in 2007 after she learned about the threat to a tree housing greater adjutant storks in Assam.
- ❖ Barman leads the "Hargila Army," a coalition of approximately 20,000 women who protect the storks and promote awareness about them.
- ❖ The Hargila Army's impact now extends beyond India to Cambodia and includes educational initiatives in places like France.
- ❖ Barman incorporates cultural elements into her conservation work, wearing traditional dress with stork motifs crafted by her team.
- ❖ The Time Magazine's 'Women of the Year' list recognizes leaders addressing pressing global issues facing women and girls.

India receives top global award for enhancing road safety standards

- ❖ The Indian government has received the prestigious Prince Michael Decade of Action Road Safety Award for enhancing vehicle safety standards over the past decade.

- ❖ Key advancements recognized include a new car safety assessment programme and mandatory anti-lock braking systems (ABS) in all new two-wheelers.
- ❖ India shared this accolade with Morocco, acknowledging both countries' contributions to road safety.
- ❖ The award was presented during the 4th Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Marrakech, which aimed to strategize on reducing global road fatalities by 50% by 2030.
- ❖ Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, Ajay Tamta, accepted the award from WHO representative Etienne Krug.
- ❖ The recognition followed significant policy shifts initiated in 2014, leading to a revised framework for vehicle safety standards.
- ❖ A roadmap was outlined in 2018 to align India's vehicle safety norms with European standards by 2023.
- ❖ Despite progress, India faces challenges with high road fatalities, particularly among pedestrians and two-wheeler riders; 173,000 lives were lost in road accidents in 2023.
- ❖ The Marrakech conference emphasized a collective effort among nations to improve global road safety.

Varsha Bharath's Bad Girl wins NETPAC Award at International Film Festival Rotterdam

- ❖ The teaser for Varsha Bharath's debut film, Bad Girl, received mixed reactions on social media, provoking both praise and criticism regarding its portrayal of women's sexual desire and caste stereotypes.
- ❖ Despite the initial negative feedback, Bad Girl has achieved recognition by winning the NETPAC Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) 2025.
- ❖ This award is a significant achievement as it follows the last Tamil film, Nasir (2019), to have won the same honor, and it adds Bad Girl to a distinguished list of Indian films recognized in the past.
- ❖ The film stars Anjali Sivaraman in the lead role, along with Shanthi Priya, Hridhu Haroon, Teejay Arunasalam, and Saranya Ravichandran.
- ❖ Bad Girl marks the Tamil debut for music director Amit Trivedi and features editing by Radha Sridhar, with cinematography by Preetha Jayaraman, Jagadeesh Ravi, and Prince Anderson.
- ❖ Although a release date for Bad Girl has not been officially announced, this award might accelerate its path to release.

Rakesh Roshan to receive Outstanding Achievement Award at IIFA 2025

- ❖ Rakesh Roshan is set to receive the 'Outstanding Achievement in Indian Cinema' award at IIFA 2025.
- ❖ He expressed excitement and gratitude, calling the award "incredibly special."
- ❖ Roshan praised IIFA for its journey and impact on celebrating cinematic excellence over 25 years.
- ❖ He has had a long association with IIFA since its inaugural event in 2000.
- ❖ Roshan emphasized IIFA's role in promoting Indian talent globally and the occasion's significance.
- ❖ The IIFA Silver Jubilee will be held on March 8-9, 2025, in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- ❖ Bollywood stars Kartik Aaryan and Karan Johar will host the main event.
- ❖ Vijay Varma, Abhishek Banerjee, and Aparshakti Khurana will host the IIFA Digital Awards.

NTPC Wins Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025 for Water Resilience

- ❖ NTPC Ltd., India's largest integrated power utility, has been honoured with Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025 in the Water Resilience category.
- ❖ The award was presented at a ceremony organised by the UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) in Chennai.
- ❖ The recognition is for NTPC's significant contributions to water conservation and sustainable water management.
- ❖ The Forward Faster Sustainability Awards celebrate organizations advancing sustainability and corporate responsibility in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ❖ NTPC emphasizes environmental stewardship and resource efficiency in its operations.
- ❖ The company implements Reduce, Reuse & Recycle principles to optimize water use.
- ❖ NTPC has advanced wastewater treatment plants and achieved 100% sweet water self-sufficiency at RGPPL.
- ❖ Initiatives include enhancing community access to clean water and restoring local water bodies.
- ❖ NTPC is India's largest integrated power utility, supplying one-fourth of the country's power with over 77 GW of installed capacity.
- ❖ The company is expanding its renewable energy capacity towards a target of 60 GW by 2032.
- ❖ NTPC operates a diverse portfolio of energy sources, including thermal, hydro, solar, and wind power.

- ❖ The organization is exploring new business areas such as e-mobility, battery storage, and green hydrogen solutions.

University of Sussex awards honorary doctorate to alumnus Noel Tata

- ❖ The University of Sussex has conferred an honorary doctorate upon Noel Tata, the business leader within the Tata Group.
- ❖ Noel Tata graduated from the University of Sussex in 1978 with a degree in economics.
- ❖ Currently, Noel Tata holds several leadership positions across the Tata Group, including Chairman of Trent, Voltas, Tata International, and Tata Investment Corporation.
- ❖ He also serves as vice chairman of Tata Steel and Titan Company Limited. In 2024, he was appointed Chairman of the Tata Trusts, the philanthropic arm of the Tata Group.
- ❖ In 2024, he became Chairman of the Tata Trusts, emphasizing his commitment to ethical business practices and social impact.

Chandrika Tandon's 'Triveni' Wins Grammy for Best New Age Album

- ❖ Chandrika Tandon, an Indian-American global business leader and musician, won a Grammy for her album "Triveni" at the 67th Grammy Awards.
- ❖ The album blends ancient Vedic chants with world music and aims to provide a meditative journey for "inner healing."
- ❖ Tandon collaborated with South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto for this seven-track album.
- ❖ Tandon was raised in a traditional home in Chennai, with a strong influence of Vedic chants and Carnatic music.
- ❖ She has a notable background, being the first Indian-American woman partner at McKinsey and the founder of Tandon Capital Associates.
- ❖ Tandon is a graduate of IIM Ahmedabad and, along with her husband, donated \$100 million to the New York School of Engineering in 2015, which now carries her name.
- ❖ She was nominated for her first Grammy in 2010 for the album "Om Namo Narayana: Soul Call."
- ❖ This year, she was nominated alongside esteemed artists like Ricky Kej, Anoushka Shankar, and Radhika Vekaria.
- ❖ Anoushka Shankar, despite multiple nominations, did

not win, while her half-sister Norah Jones won the Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album for her album "Visions."

2025 Grammy Awards Highlights: Beyoncé Wins Album of the Year and Best Country Album

- ❖ The 67th Annual Grammy Awards took place in 2025, amid wildfires in Southern California, aiming to support wildfire relief efforts and honor first responders.
- ❖ The premiere ceremony featured tributes to victims and responders, announcing winners in 84 of 94 categories.
- ❖ Beyoncé led the nominations with 11, setting a record for the most nominations by a female artist (99 total), surpassing the previous record of 88 she shared with Jay-Z.
- ❖ Her album "Cowboy Carter" (2024) became the third-most-nominated album in Grammy history and won Album of the Year and Best Country Album.
- ❖ Kendrick Lamar dominated the awards with five wins for his track "Not Like Us," including Song of the Year, Record of the Year, Best Rap Performance, Best Rap Song, and Best Music Video.
- ❖ 67th Grammy Awards 2025 Important winners list:
 1. Album of the Year: COWBOY CARTER – Beyoncé
 2. Song of the Year: "Not Like Us" – Kendrick Lamar
 3. Record Of The Year: "Not Like Us" – Kendrick Lamar
 4. Producer Of The Year, Non-Classical: Daniel Nigro
 5. Best New Artist: Chappell Roan
 6. Songwriter of the Year, Non-Classical: Amy Allen
 7. Best Pop Solo Performance: "Espresso" — Sabrina Carpenter
 8. Best Pop Vocal Album: Short n' Sweet — Sabrina Carpenter
 9. Best Dance Pop Recording: "Von dutch" — Charli xcx
 10. Best Rock Performance: "Now and Then" — The Beatles

National Sports Awards 2024 announced

- ❖ The Arjuna Awards will honor several sportspersons, including athletes Jyothi Yarraji, Annu Rani, and para-athletes like Rakesh Kumar and Hokato Hotozhe Sema, who made history as Nagaland's first Paralympic medalist.
- ❖ Lifetime Arjuna Awards go to veteran athlete Sucha Singh and para-swimmer Murlikant Petkar.

- ❖ Coaches like Subhash Rana and S. Muralidharan will receive Dronacharya Awards, and institutions like Chandigarh University will get the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy.
- ❖ Awards will be presented by President Droupadi Murmu on January 17, with the selection committee led by Justice (Retd.) V. Ramasubramanian.

IREDA Achieves ‘Excellent’ Rating for Fourth Consecutive Year in MoU Performance

- ❖ Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) has achieved an ‘Excellent’ rating for the performance MoU signed with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) for the financial year 2023-24, with a score of 98.24 (rounded off 98).
- ❖ This marks the fourth consecutive year that IREDA has received ‘Excellent’ rating, showcasing its unwavering commitment to operational excellence and highest standards of corporate governance.

New Delhi-based short film ‘Anuja’ earns nomination for Oscars 2025

- ❖ “Anuja”, a New Delhi-set short film, on Thursday bagged a nomination in the Live Action Short category at the 97th Academy Awards.
- ❖ “Anuja”, directed by Adam J Graves and Suchitra Mattai, is pitted against “A Lie, I’m Not a Robot, The Last Ranger” and “The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent” at the awards gala

India’s Divith Reddy Crowned U-8 World Champion

- ❖ In a notable accomplishment for Indian chess, eight-year-old Divith Reddy from Hyderabad won the Under-8 World Cadets Chess Championship.
- ❖ Competing against strong contenders, Divith claimed the gold medal with an impressive score of 9/11 points.

India Wins ISSA Good Practice Award for Asia and Pacific 2024

- ❖ India’s EPFO received the esteemed ISSA Good Practice Award for its ongoing reforms to strengthen social security systems.
- ❖ The award was presented at the Regional Social Security Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, a key event for social security discussions.

Ang Lee to Receive DGA Lifetime Achievement Award

- ❖ Taipei, Dec. 12 (CNA) - Taiwanese American filmmaker Ang Lee, a two-time Oscar winner and highly acclaimed director, has been announced as the recipient of the Directors Guild of America’s (DGA) 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award.

National Panchayat Awards 2024: Celebrating Rural Governance and Sustainable Development

- ❖ The National Panchayat Awards 2024 recognized 45 outstanding Panchayats for their contributions to rural development in India.
- ❖ The event, held on December 11, 2024, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, was attended by President Smt. Droupadi Murmu and Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh.
- ❖ The awards celebrated Panchayats’ work in poverty alleviation, health, water conservation, sanitation, and climate sustainability, highlighting their role in grassroots development.

Indian Film “The Kumbaya Story” Wins the Global Sustainability Film Award

- ❖ The Indian film “The Kumbaya Story” won the Transforming Society Short Film award at the 13th the Global Sustainability Film Awards, held at London’s iconic BAFTA venue.

Award

Indian Heritage Conservation Projects Shine at UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards 2024

- ❖ Two Indian projects, the Abathsahayeswarar Temple in Tamil Nadu and BJPCI in Maharashtra, won the 2024 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

CoAS of Nepal Sigdel conferred the rank of Honorary General of Indian Army

- ❖ Nepal’s Chief of Army Staff, General Ashok Raj Sigdel, concluded his official visit to India, during which he was honored with the rank of Honorary General of the Indian Army by President Droupadi Murmu.
- ❖ He served as the Reviewing Officer at the Indian Military Academy’s passing out parade in Dehradun, where Nepali Officer Cadet Prabin Pandey received the “Best Foreign Officer Cadet Award.”
- ❖ General Sigdel congratulated the newly commissioned officers, paid homage at the IMA War Memorial, and held discussions with Indian officials, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and NSA Ajit Doval.
- ❖ His visit was at the invitation of Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi.

Ayodhya Ram Temple Wins Global Safety Excellence Award

- ❖ The Ayodhya Ram temple project has been awarded the prestigious ‘Sword of Honour’ by the British Safety Council for its outstanding safety protocols, as announced by Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chairman Nripendra Misra.

Suryabala's Novel Wins 34th Vyas Samman 2024

- ❖ "Kaun Des Ko Vasi: Venu Ki Diary" by renowned Hindi writer Suryabala has been chosen for the 34th Vyas Samman 2024.
- ❖ Published in 2018, the novel was selected by a committee led by eminent litterateur Prof. Ramji Tiwari.

Chennai-Born Caitlin Sandra Neil Crowned Miss India USA 2024

- ❖ Indian-origin teenager Caitlin Sandra Neil, a 19-year-old student at the University of California, Davis, was crowned Miss India USA 2024 at the annual pageant in New Jersey.

Tansen Samaroh 2024: Swapan Chaudhuri, Sanand Nyas Honored

- ❖ The centenary edition of Tansen Sangeet Samaroh 2024 was held in Gwalior.
- ❖ Padma Shri recipient Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri was awarded the Rashtriya Tansen Samman 2023, and Sanand Nyas Sanstha from Indore received the Raja Mansingh Tomar Samman 2023.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024 Announced

- ❖ Kannada critic and writer K.V. Narayana won the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 for his book *Nudigala Alivu* in the "literary criticism" category, alongside Marathi author Sudhir Rasal and Telugu writer Penugonda Lakshminarayana.

India to Host ISSF Junior World Cup 2025

- ❖ India will host the ISSF Junior World Cup 2025, as announced by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).
- ❖ The event will feature competitions in all three disciplines: rifle, pistol, and shotgun.

PM Modi Honoured with Kuwait's Top Civilian Award

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi received Kuwait's highest civilian honor, the Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer, from Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah during his state visit.
- ❖ The visit also marked the elevation of India-Kuwait ties to a Strategic Partnership, with bilateral talks focusing on strengthening relations.

Jaishankar Receives Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Award for Leadership

- ❖ External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar received the Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi National Eminence Award for Public Leadership from the South Indian

Education Society (SIES) for his contributions to India's foreign policy.

- ❖ He highlighted India's growing confidence on the global stage, inspired by Maha Periyavar's teachings of universal brotherhood.
- ❖ Jaishankar affirmed that India prioritizes its interests while contributing to global good, maintaining independence without succumbing to external pressures.

President Droupadi Murmu awards Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to 17 exceptional children

- ❖ President Droupadi Murmu conferred the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' on 17 children from 14 states and UTs for exceptional achievements in seven categories, including Art and Culture, Bravery, and Innovation.
- ❖ During the event in New Delhi, she paid tribute to the Sahibzadas on Veer Bal Diwas and praised the awardees for their extraordinary contributions, urging their stories to be widely shared to inspire the nation.

President Confers PM Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024

- ❖ On December 26, 2024, President Droupadi Murmu honored 17 children with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar for their outstanding achievements.
- ❖ The awards were presented during a special ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in New Delhi, with the children being recognized in seven categories.
- ❖ President Murmu congratulated the recipients, expressing that the entire nation and society were proud of their accomplishments.

SAIL certified as Great Place to Work for the second time

- ❖ Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has earned the prestigious 'Great Place to Work' certification for January 2025 to January 2026, awarded by the Great Place to Work Institute, India.
- ❖ This marks the second consecutive certification for SAIL, having first been certified for December 2023 to December 2024.

Appointment and Resignation

RBI approves re-appointment of Sumant Kathpalia as IndusInd Bank chief for 1 year

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted a one-year extension to Sumant Kathpalia as MD and CEO of IndusInd Bank, effective from March 24, 2025, to March 23, 2026.

- ❖ The extension is shorter than the three-year term requested by the bank's Board, marking the second consecutive instance of the RBI approving a limited tenure for Kathpalia.
- ❖ Kathpalia has been in charge since March 2020 and received a two-year extension in March 2023 despite a three-year term being approved by the Board at that time.
- ❖ The bank reported financial challenges in Q3FY25, including increased gross non-performing assets (NPAs) at 2.3% and declining net interest margins (NIMs), which dropped to 3.93%.

Saina Nehwal joins Naarica as investor and brand ambassador

- ❖ Badminton player Saina Nehwal has become an investor and brand ambassador for the menstrual hygiene brand Naarica.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to promote sustainable menstrual care solutions in India, where many women lack access to sanitary products.
- ❖ Naarica specializes in absorbent menstrual underwear as an alternative to traditional sanitary pads, combining international design with Indian manufacturing for eco-friendly products.
- ❖ India's menstrual hygiene sector is growing at a 16% CAGR and is projected to reach \$522 million by 2025, but access remains challenging in underserved communities.
- ❖ Naarica claims to be India's only German lab-certified antibacterial period underwear brand focusing on reusable menstrual products.

Government appoints Vikas Kaushal as CMD of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited

- ❖ Vikas Kaushal has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) for a five-year term.
- ❖ He previously served as the global leader for energy and process industries at Kearney.
- ❖ Kaushal is the first private sector executive to lead a state-run oil refinery in India.
- ❖ The Indian government has faced challenges in appointing heads for several public sector companies, including ONGC, IOCL, and BPCL.
- ❖ He has over 30 years of experience in the energy, oil & gas, and power sectors, and has previously advised several major companies in the sector.
- ❖ Kaushal was elected to Kearney's Global Board of Directors twice, serving two full terms, and was also Managing Director and Country Head for Kearney India for five years.

Mark Carney appointed as the new leader of Canada's Liberal Party and next PM

- ❖ Mark Carney has been appointed as the new leader of Canada's Liberal Party and the next prime minister, replacing Justin Trudeau.
- ❖ Carney won the Liberal Party leadership race with 85.9% of the votes amid rising public dissatisfaction.
- ❖ Carney, a former central banker, is set to lead the party in the upcoming general elections and address challenges posed by US President Donald Trump.
- ❖ He emphasized his readiness for the role, citing his experience in managing the Bank of Canada during the 2008-2009 financial crisis and the Bank of England during the Brexit economic turmoil.

Federal Bank appoints Vidya Balan as brand ambassador

- ❖ Federal Bank appointed actress Vidya Balan as its first brand ambassador during a ceremony in Mumbai.
- ❖ The announcement was made by Mr. K.V.S. Manian, Managing Director & CEO of Federal Bank.
- ❖ The appointment is seen as a significant milestone in enhancing the bank's market position.
- ❖ The multi-year association includes marketing initiatives such as television commercials and digital campaigns.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to communicate the bank's story and strengthen relationships with stakeholders.
- ❖ Federal Bank is focusing on breakthroughs in product offerings, service lines, and geographic reach, paralleling Ms. Balan's impact on female leadership in cinema.

Takashi Nakajima appointed as Honda Cars India's new President & CEO

- ❖ Takashi Nakajima has been appointed as the new president and CEO of Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL), effective April 1, 2025.
- ❖ He will succeed Takuya Tsumura, who is moving to Honda's head office in Japan after a three-year tenure in India.
- ❖ Takashi Nakajima has over 30 years of experience with Honda, having joined in 1994.
- ❖ He has held various roles in international markets, including Japan, China, Spain, Czech Republic, and Russia, focusing on Business Planning, Product Planning, Marketing, and Sales Promotion.
- ❖ Since 2021, Nakajima has served as President of Honda Motor, Russia, and was responsible for product planning and marketing in the domestic Japan market.

Atul Kumar Goel assumes charge as Chief Executive of IBA

- ❖ Atul Kumar Goel has assumed charge as Chief Executive (CE) of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- ❖ He served as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Punjab National Bank (PNB) from February 2022 to December 2024.
- ❖ Goel was the Chairman of IBA for two terms, specifically in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- ❖ His predecessor, Sunil Mehta, also held the position of MD & CEO of PNB from May 2017 to September 2019 and served as IBA CE from January 2020 until September 2024.
- ❖ Atul Kumar Goel is a qualified Chartered Accountant with over three decades of banking experience.
- ❖ He has worked in four banks: Allahabad Bank (now Indian Bank), Union Bank of India (as Executive Director), UCO Bank (as MD & CEO), and Punjab National Bank (as MD & CEO).

Intel Appoints Lip-Bu Tan as New CEO Amidst Strategic Shift

- ❖ Intel Corporation has appointed Lip-Bu Tan as its new Chief Executive Officer.
- ❖ Tan, a seasoned leader in the semiconductor industry, previously served as CEO of Cadence Design Systems and was a member of Intel's board until August 2024.
- ❖ This leadership change follows the departure of former CEO Pat Gelsinger in December 2024, after which David Zinsner and Michelle Johnston Holthaus served as interim co-CEOs.
- ❖ Zinsner will continue as Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, while Johnston Holthaus will remain CEO of Intel Products.
- ❖ Intel has faced challenges in recent years, including financial losses and increased competition.

Arun Mammen elected as new ATMA chairman

- ❖ Arun Mammen, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of MRF Ltd, has been elected as the new Chairman of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), the national industry body representing India's automotive tyre sector.
- ❖ He succeeds Arnab Banerjee, Managing Director and CEO of CEAT Ltd.
- ❖ Mammen holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from Ashland University, USA, and became Managing Director of MRF Ltd in 2004, later advancing to Vice Chairman and Managing Director in 2017.

- ❖ His election comes as ATMA celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2025.
- ❖ Mammen aims to position the Indian tyre industry as a major global supplier, focusing on policy enablers to enhance competitiveness and technological advancements.
- ❖ Additionally, Hiroshi Yoshizane, Managing Director of Bridgestone India, has been appointed as the new Vice Chairman of ATMA.

N Ganapathy Subramaniam appointed as Chairman of Tata Communications

- ❖ Tata Communications Ltd appointed N Ganapathy Subramaniam as Chairman of the Board of Directors, effective March 14, 2025.
- ❖ Subramaniam's appointment follows a recommendation from the Nomination and Remuneration Committee.
- ❖ He joined Tata Communications Board as a Non-Executive Director on December 2, 2021.
- ❖ Subramaniam has over 40 years of experience in the IT industry, primarily with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).
- ❖ He is recognized for his contributions to strategic initiatives in sectors like banking, telecom, and public services.
- ❖ Subramaniam possesses expertise in technology, operations, product development, and business transformation.
- ❖ Subramaniam retired as TCS Chief Operating Officer in May 2024, with confirmation announced during an earnings call.

Economic affairs secretary Ajay Seth gets additional charge of revenue dept

- ❖ Economic affairs secretary Ajay Seth was on Saturday given additional charge of the post of secretary, Department of Revenue, according to a personnel ministry order.
- ❖ The vacancy was necessitated following the appointment of revenue secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey as the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on February 27.

Levi's ropes in Diljit Dosanjh as global ambassador

- ❖ Levi's has announced Diljit Dosanjh as their newest global brand ambassador, making him the first Punjabi artist to join the brand's community of creative talent.
- ❖ This collaboration follows the success of Dosanjh's record-breaking Dil-Luminati Tour and his debut performance at Coachella.

- ❖ The partnership celebrates the merging of Levi's timeless appeal with Diljit's influential journey in music and style, emphasizing bold choices in self-expression.
- ❖ The partnership will showcase Levi's expanding menswear line, including new styles like Loose and Relaxed fits, combining music and fashion.

Ajay Bhadoo Appointed as CEO of Government e Marketplace

- ❖ Ajay Bhadoo has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Government e Marketplace (GeM) effective from March 3, 2025.
- ❖ He continues to hold his position as Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce.
- ❖ The appointment coincides with GeM's transition to a next-generation digital marketplace, supported by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).
- ❖ GeM currently has a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of ₹4.58 lakh crore, demonstrating a 28.65% increase year-on-year.
- ❖ Bhadoo is a 1999 batch IAS officer from the Gujarat cadre with over 20 years of experience in policy formulation and implementation.
- ❖ Prior roles include serving as Deputy Election Commissioner and Joint Secretary to former President Ram Nath Kovind.
- ❖ He has also led organizations such as the Gujarat Maritime Board and served as Commissioner of Rajkot and Vadodara Municipal Corporations.

Himanshu Pathak assumes charge as ICRISAT Director-General

- ❖ Himanshu Pathak has become the new Director-General of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), located in Hyderabad.
- ❖ He previously served as the Union Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Research and Education and as the Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- ❖ His leadership aims to build agricultural resilience in dryland regions and promote lasting prosperity for future generations.
- ❖ He takes over from Stanford Blade, who served as the Interim Director General.

Shaktikanta Das to be second Principal Secretary to PM

- ❖ Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das was appointed the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

- ❖ He is a retired IAS officer with unique experience in both monetary policy and fiscal policy.
- ❖ Das is only the second RBI Governor to have served a six-year tenure, following Bimal Jalan (1997-2003)
- ❖ Das joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1980 as an officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre.
- ❖ A history graduate from St. Stephen's College from the University of Delhi, he was the Fertilisers Secretary in 2014.
- ❖ Das was also a member of the 15th Finance Commission.
- ❖ Shri Das has also served as India's Alternate Governor in the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), New Development Bank (NDB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).
- ❖ He has represented India in international fora like the IMF, G20, BRICS, SAARC, etc."

Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey appointed new SEBI Chairperson for 3-year term

- ❖ Tuhin Kanta Pandey has been appointed as the 11th chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for a three-year term.
- ❖ He will replace Madhabi Puri Buch, who completed her tenure as SEBI's first woman chairperson on February 28, 2025.
- ❖ The appointment was confirmed by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on February 27, 2025.
- ❖ Pandey is currently serving as India's Finance Secretary and Secretary of the Department of Revenue.
- ❖ His tenure as SEBI chairman will commence from the day he assumes charge.

Gyanesh Kumar takes charge as Chief Election Commissioner

- ❖ Gyanesh Kumar took charge as the new Chief Election Commissioner, emphasizing that voting is the first step for nation building.
- ❖ Kumar urged all eligible Indian citizens (aged 18 and above) to register and participate in elections, affirming the Election Commission's commitment to voters.
- ❖ Gyanesh Kumar is a 1988-batch IAS officer from the Kerala cadre and is senior to other commissioners in the three-member panel.
- ❖ Rajiv Kumar, the outgoing Chief Election Commissioner, expressed optimism about the future of the Election Commission and its significance in democracy.
- ❖ Rajiv Kumar served as the 25th Chief Election Commissioner from May 15, 2022, after joining the Election Commission of India on September 1, 2020,

and highlighted reforms during his tenure.

- ❖ Also, Vivek Joshi was appointed as Election Commissioner on February 19, 2025, following a Gazette notification from the Ministry of Law and Justice dated February 17, 2025.

SBI Cards Appoints Salila Pande As CEO For Two Years

- ❖ Salila Pande has been appointed as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd.
- ❖ Her appointment is effective from April 1, 2025, and the term is for two years, pending necessary approvals, including from shareholders.
- ❖ Pande replaces Abhijit Chakravorty, who will retire at the end of March 2025.
- ❖ She is currently a Chief General Manager at the State Bank of India and has been with the organization since 1995.
- ❖ Pande has extensive experience in various banking roles, with notable contributions in international banking, retail banking, and risk management.
- ❖ Prior to the announcement, shares of SBI Cards fell by 0.56% to Rs 853.75 on the BSE.

Rekha Gupta will be the New Chief Minister of Delhi

- ❖ Rekha Gupta, a first-time BJP MLA from Shalimar Bagh, will be sworn in as the Chief Minister of Delhi, marking the BJP's return to power after 27 years.
- ❖ She will be the fourth woman Chief Minister of Delhi, following Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit, and Atishi.
- ❖ Gupta won the Shalimar Bagh seat in the February 5 Delhi Assembly elections by over 29,000 votes against AAP's Bandana Kumari.
- ❖ The motto "Kaam hi Pehchaan" (my work is my identity) is prominently featured in her campaigns.
- ❖ Her Council of Ministers will include Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Pankaj Singh, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, and Ravinder Indraj.
- ❖ The oath-taking ceremony will take place at the Ramlila Maidan around noon, attended by Prime Minister Modi, Union Ministers, and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states.
- ❖ Gupta expressed gratitude to PM Modi for promoting women empowerment by choosing a middle-class woman for such a significant role.
- ❖ Gupta has also served as the president of the Delhi University Students' Union and a municipal councillor

prior to her appointment as Chief Minister.

- ❖ She becomes the fourth BJP Chief Minister of Delhi and the only incumbent woman Chief Minister in any BJP-ruled state.

Indian-Origin Kash Patel is confirmed as FBI director by US Senate

- ❖ Kash Patel, of Indian origin, has been officially confirmed as the ninth director of the FBI by President Donald Trump.
- ❖ His confirmation followed a narrow Senate vote, with 51 in favor and 49 against.
- ❖ After his nomination, Patel pledged to investigate Trump's political enemies and promised to make the FBI "transparent, accountable, and committed to justice."
- ❖ The White House stated that Patel's confirmation supports Trump's agenda for restoring integrity and upholding the rule of law.
- ❖ Patel issued a strong warning to those who threaten Americans, emphasizing a commitment to pursuing justice globally.

About Kash Patel

- ❖ Kash Patel was born on February 25, 1980, in Garden City, New York, to Gujarati parents.
- ❖ He graduated from the University of Richmond and earned a Juris Doctor from Pace University School of Law.
- ❖ Patel started his career as a public defender, handling cases in murder, narco-trafficking, and complex financial crimes.
- ❖ He has spoken about his Indian heritage and its influence on his values and career.
- ❖ His professional focus has been on U.S. national security, intelligence, and law enforcement.
- ❖ At 45 years old, Patel has held significant roles, including deputy assistant to the President and senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council (NSC).
- ❖ He was involved in missions aimed at eliminating ISIS and Al-Qa'ida leaders and repatriating American hostages, according to the U.S. Defense Department.

Kotak Mahindra Prime appoints Shahrukh Todiwala as new MD, CEO

- ❖ Kotak Mahindra Prime appointed Shahrukh Todiwala as the new MD and CEO.
- ❖ Todiwala succeeds Vyomesh Kapasi, who becomes the head of the product-consumer bank vertical at Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB).

- ❖ Ashok Vaswani, MD & CEO of KMB, emphasized the importance of nurturing leadership talent within the organization.
- ❖ Vyomesh Kapasi's experience will aid in growth and innovation at KMB.
- ❖ Shahrukh Todiwala's expertise in vehicle financing is expected to benefit KMPL and its stakeholders.
- ❖ Ambuj Chandna, previous head of the consumer bank vertical, resigned a month ago.

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigns nearly two years after ethnic violence began

- ❖ Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned after nearly two years of ethnic violence in the northeastern state.
- ❖ His resignation occurred amidst growing dissent within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with multiple legislators calling for a leadership change.
- ❖ Singh submitted his resignation at the Raj Bhavan, accompanied by BJP's Northeast in-charge, Sambit Patra, and several state ministers.
- ❖ He tendered his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Greece elects former parliament speaker as new president

- ❖ Constantine Tassoulas was elected as Greece's president by parliament, succeeding Katerina Sakellariopoulou, the first female president.
- ❖ His election received 160 votes in the 300-seat parliament, supported by the conservative government.
- ❖ The decision to nominate him faced protests over the handling of the investigation into a deadly 2023 train crash during his tenure as parliamentary speaker.
- ❖ A judicial probe related to the train disaster is ongoing, with parliament being the sole body capable of investigating politicians under Greek law.
- ❖ At 66 years old, Tassoulas has been a lawmaker since 2000 and has previously held positions including culture minister and deputy defense minister.

Bart De Wever sworn in as New Prime Minister of Belgium

- ❖ Conservative leader Bart De Wever was sworn in as Prime Minister of Belgium. This is the first time a Flemish nationalist has held the position.
- ❖ He was appointed by King Philippe during a ceremony at the royal palace in Brussels.
- ❖ De Wever replaces Alexander De Croo, who led a seven-party coalition government.

- ❖ De Croo had been serving as a caretaker leader since the June 2024 elections.
- ❖ The June 2024 parliamentary elections did not provide a decisive mandate for any party or coalition.
- ❖ A new government was formed after over eight months of coalition talks.
- ❖ The coalition, named "Arizona," includes five political parties: N-VA, CD&V, Vooruit, MR, and Les Engagés.
- ❖ The coalition holds a majority in Belgium's 150-seat federal parliament.
- ❖ Belgium's political landscape is complex, divided between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia.
- ❖ A previous government formation in 2010-2011 took 541 days due to similar political challenges.

Citibank appoints Balasubramanian as India head

- ❖ K Balasubramanian has been appointed as the head of Citibank India, subject to regulatory approval from the Reserve Bank of India.
- ❖ He will oversee the India subcontinent sub-cluster and banking operations, reporting to Amol Gupte, the head of Asia South.
- ❖ The appointment follows Ashu Khullar's transition to co-head of Global Asset Managers (GAM) and involvement in the investment banking global operating committee.
- ❖ During Khullar's tenure from 2019 to 2025, Citi experienced significant growth, establishing itself as the leading investment bank in equity capital markets and mergers and acquisitions by 2024.

Appointment

Manish Singhal Appointed Secretary General of ASSOCHAM

- ❖ He has also been associated with several Indian multinational companies, such as Tata Motors, Eicher (Volvo), Tata AutoComp Systems, Moser Baer India, and BEML, among others.
- ❖ Singhal takes over from Deepak Sood, who recently stepped down after a five-year tenure to explore other opportunities.

Appointment

Bhuvnesh Kumar Appointed UIDAI CEO

- ❖ IAS officer Bhuvnesh Kumar assumed the role of CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the organization responsible for managing Aadhaar on January 1, 2025.

Appointment

Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati sworn in as 27th Governor of Odisha

- ❖ Dr. Hari Babu Kambhampati was sworn in as the 27th Governor of Odisha at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar.
- ❖ The oath was administered by Orissa High Court Chief Justice Charadhari Sharan Singh.
- ❖ Dignitaries, including CM Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, attended the ceremony.
- ❖ Dr. Kambhampati succeeds Raghubar Das and previously served as Governor of Mizoram.

Appointment

Arif Mohammad Khan Takes Oath as Bihar's New Governor

- ❖ Arif Mohammad Khan was sworn in as the Governor of Bihar at Raj Bhavan, with Patna High Court Chief Justice K. Vinod Chandran administering the oath.
- ❖ The ceremony was attended by CM Nitish Kumar, Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary, and other dignitaries.
- ❖ Khan succeeds Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, now Governor of Kerala, and pledged to uphold Bihar's traditions.

Appointment

Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar Sworn in as Kerala Governor

- ❖ Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar was sworn in as the Governor of Kerala on January 2, 2025, at Raj Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram.
- ❖ Kerala High Court Chief Justice Nitin Madhukar Jamdar administered the oath.
- ❖ The ceremony was attended by CM Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of Opposition V.D. Satheesan, and other dignitaries.

Appointment

Faiz Ahmed Kidwai Appointed as DGCA Director General

- ❖ Faiz Ahmed Kidwai: Appointed Director General of DGCA; previously Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture (IAS, MP cadre, 1996).
- ❖ Ashutosh Agnihotri: Appointed CMD of FCI; previously Additional Secretary, Department of Home (IAS, Assam-Meghalaya cadre, 1999).
- ❖ Akash Tripathi: Moved to Additional Secretary, Ministry of Power; previously CEO of MyGov (IAS, MP cadre, 1998).

- ❖ Kamal Kishore Soan: Appointed Mission Director, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti (IAS, Jharkhand cadre, 1998).
- ❖ Shubha Thakur: Transferred to Additional Secretary, Inter-State Council Secretariat, MHA; previously in Agriculture Ministry.

State Bank of India appoints Baldev Prakash as group chief risk officer

- ❖ State Bank of India has appointed Baldev Prakash as the deputy managing director and group chief risk officer, the lender informed the exchanges.
- ❖ Earlier, Prakash was on deputation to Jammu and Kashmir Bank as managing director and chief executive officer, whose three-year term ended in December.

V Narayanan Appointed as ISRO Chairman and Secretary, Department of Space

- ❖ V Narayanan, a distinguished scientist and the current head of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Secretary, Department of Space. He assumed office on January 14, 2025, succeeding S Somanath.
- ❖ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet announced the decision on January 7 confirming a two-year tenure for Mr. Narayanan. He will also serve as the Chairman of the Space Commission.

Punjab National Bank, Indian Bank get new chief executive officers

- ❖ The government has appointed Ashok Chandra as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Binod Kumar as the MD and CEO of Indian Bank. Both have taken charge today.
- ❖ Prior to these appointments, Chandra was an executive director at Canara Bank, while Kumar was an executive director at PNB.

Saikia and Bhatia officially named BCCI secretary, treasurer

- ❖ Devajit Saikia and Prabhtej Singh Bhatia have been elected as the Secretary and Treasurer of BCCI respectively.
- ❖ The duo were elected unopposed, being the sole members to file nominations. The BCCI made the new announcements in a press release.

IPS Gyanendra Pratap Singh appointed Director General of CRPF

- ❖ The Indian government appointed Gyanendra Pratap Singh as the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on January 18, 2025.

- ❖ Singh, a 1991-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, was previously the Director General of Police (DGP) in Assam.
- ❖ The appointment was made following a proposal from the Ministry of Home Affairs and approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.
- ❖ His tenure as DG of CRPF is set to last until his superannuation on November 30, 2027, or until further orders.
- ❖ He will take over from Special DG Vitul Kumar, who held the interim DG position after the retirement of Anish Dayal Singh on December 31, 2024.

JP Singh appointed India's new ambassador to Israel amid West Asia crisis

- ❖ Seasoned diplomat Jitender Pal Singh was on Friday (Jan 24, 2025) appointed as India's new ambassador to Israel, a posting seen as important in view of the current situation in the Middle-east.
- ❖ Singh, a 2002-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) diplomat, is presently serving as the joint secretary in the crucial Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran (PAI) division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

LTIMindtree appoints Venugopal Lambu as CEO with immediate effect

- ❖ India's sixth largest IT services firm LTIMindtree on January 24, 2025, announced that its Board has approved the appointment of Venugopal Lambu as the chief executive officer (CEO designate) and whole-time director based out of London with immediate effect.
- ❖ He will succeed current CEO and MD Debashis Chatterjee.

Nakul Jain steps down as Paytm Payments CEO

- ❖ Paytm's Nakul Jain has stepped down as the chief executive of Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL) to pursue his own entrepreneurial venture, according to the stock exchange filing of the company filed on Monday.
- ❖ In its filing, the digital payment platform said it is looking for a replacement. "Nakul Jain, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of PPSL, has resigned from his position w.e.f. close of business hours on March 31, 2025 or an earlier mutually agreed date.

Vedanta Resources appoints Deshnee Naidoo as first CEO to lead growth phase

- ❖ Vedanta Resources Ltd (VRL), the parent firm of Mumbai-based mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd, on Wednesday announced the appointment of Deshnee

Naidoo as its first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to spearhead its fresh growth phase.

- ❖ Her appointment comes at a time when Vedanta Resources Ltd's Indian subsidiary, Vedanta Ltd, is demerging its businesses to unlock significant value for stakeholders. Naidoo's appointment is effective from January 20, 2025.

Jay Shah Became A Youngest ICC Chairman in History

- ❖ At 36, Jay Shah becomes the youngest and fifth Indian to lead the ICC, succeeding New Zealand's Greg Barclay.
- ❖ Shah is the third Indian among the last four ICC chairmen.

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah becomes Namibia's first female President

- ❖ Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah of Namibia's ruling SWAPO party has won the country's eighth presidential election, becoming its first female president.
- ❖ The electoral commission announced that she secured over 57% of the vote, while her closest contender, Panduleni Itula, received 26%.
- ❖ At 72, Nandi-Ndaitwah, currently the vice president, has been a prominent figure in Namibian politics since independence from South Africa in 1990.
- ❖ With extensive leadership experience, including serving as foreign minister, she is highly respected both nationally and internationally. Additionally, SWAPO secured a majority in the National Assembly elections, winning 51 out of 96 seats.

French President Macron to name new PM in coming days

- ❖ French President Emmanuel Macron announced plans to appoint a new Prime Minister after Michel Barnier resigned following a no-confidence vote in Parliament.
- ❖ Macron vowed to serve his full term until 2027, criticized the far right and hard left for uniting against the government, and called the vote—France's first such dismissal in over 60 years—unprecedented.

Eurogrip Tyres Appoints M.S. Dhoni as Brand Ambassador

- ❖ Eurogrip Tyres, a prominent manufacturer of two-wheeler, three-wheeler, and off-highway tyres, announced cricket icon Mahendra Singh Dhoni as its brand ambassador.
- ❖ Dhoni will promote the Eurogrip brand and its full range of products, the company stated.

From Freedom Fighter to Namibia's First Female President

- ❖ Union Minister Shri Pralhad Joshi unveiled 'Anna Chakra,' a tool for optimizing the Public Distribution System (PDS) supply chain, and the SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) portal, marking a significant advancement in modernizing PDS and state subsidy claim processes.

Burkina Faso Junta Names New Prime Minister

- ❖ Burkina Faso's military junta leader, Captain Ibrahim Traore, appointed former communications minister Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo as prime minister.
- ❖ This follows the dismissal of outgoing premier Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela and the dissolution of the government.
- ❖ No reason was provided for Tambela's removal, who had led three governments since Traore's 2022 coup.

Devajit Saikia Appointed Acting Secretary of BCCI

- ❖ BCCI President Roger Binny has appointed Devajit Saikia as the board's acting secretary, succeeding Jay Shah, who assumed the role of ICC chair on December 1.
- ❖ Hailing from Assam, Saikia is a former first-class cricketer and currently serves as the BCCI joint secretary.

Sanjay Malhotra Appointed as New RBI Governor

- ❖ Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra has been appointed Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He will take charge from Wednesday for three years, the government said in a statement. Mr Malhotra is a 1990-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the Rajasthan cadre.

Devajit Saikia Appointed Acting Secretary of BCCI

- ❖ The BCCI has appointed Devajit Saikia as the board's acting secretary by president Roger Binny, replacing Jay Shah who recently took over as the new ICC chair from December 1, 2024.
- ❖ Saikia, who hails from Assam, is a former first-class cricketer. He is currently the BCCI joint-secretary.

Syrian Fighters Name Mohammed al-Bashir as Interim Prime Minister

- ❖ After overthrowing Assad's government, the rebels named Mohamed al-Bashir as Syria's caretaker prime minister.
- ❖ In a televised statement, he announced that he would hold the position until March 1, 2025.

Bhavesh Jain Appointed as MD & CEO of TransUnion CIBIL

- ❖ Bhavesh Jain has been appointed as the Managing Director and CEO of TransUnion CIBIL, replacing Rajesh Kumar, who served for five years. Jain's focus will be on advancing financial inclusion.

Mikheil Kavelashvili Becomes Georgia's New President

- ❖ Former Manchester City footballer Mikheil Kavelashvili has been elected president by Georgia's disputed parliament amid 17 days of pro-EU protests.
- ❖ Backed by the ruling Georgian Dream party, he was the sole candidate, receiving 224 out of 225 votes.
- ❖ Opposition groups, alleging election fraud, boycotted the vote, while outgoing pro-Western president Salome Zourabichvili called his election a travesty, claiming to represent Georgia's last legitimate institution.

Rama Mohan Rao Amara Appointed as SBI's New Managing Director

- ❖ State Bank of India has appointed Rama Mohan Rao Amara as Managing Director for three years, effective December 18, 2024.
- ❖ He previously served as Deputy Managing Director and Chief Risk Officer at SBI.

Iceland's new govt takes office under PM Kristrunn Frostadottir

- ❖ Iceland's Kristrunn Frostadottir of the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA) has become the country's youngest Prime Minister at 35.
- ❖ Leading a three-party coalition with the Liberal Reform Party (LRP) and People's Party (PP), her government officially took office.
- ❖ The SDA and LRP hold four ministerial portfolios each, while the PP has three.
- ❖ At their first meeting, Frostadottir outlined priorities including economic stability, reduced interest rates, stricter public finance controls, and fostering value creation.
- ❖ The SDA was the biggest winner in Iceland's November 30 parliamentary election.

Trump Appoints Sriram Krishnan as Senior AI Policy Advisor

- ❖ US President-elect Donald Trump has appointed Sriram Krishnan, an Indian-American entrepreneur and venture capitalist, as the senior White House policy advisor on artificial intelligence (AI).

- ❖ Trump stated that Krishnan will be responsible for shaping and coordinating AI policy across the government, collaborating with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.
- ❖ Trump also highlighted Krishnan's career, noting his role as a founding member of Microsoft's Windows Azure team.

V. Ramasubramanian Appointed NHRC Chairperson

- ❖ V. Ramasubramanian, former Supreme Court judge, has been appointed as the ninth chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- ❖ The position had been vacant since June 1, following the tenure of Justice (ret'd) Arun Kumar Mishra.
- ❖ Ramasubramanian, who served as a Supreme Court judge from 2019 to 2023, was previously the Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and held judicial roles in Madras and Hyderabad High Courts.

Justice Madan Lokur Appointed Chairperson of UN Internal Justice Council

- ❖ Lokur has been named the chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council (IJC) for a four-year term, concluding on November 12, 2028.

Maia Sandu Sworn in for 2nd Term as President of Moldova

- ❖ Maia Sandu assumed office for her second term as President of Moldova.
- ❖ Re-elected in November 2024, her priorities include European integration, national security, and economic growth, urging citizens' active participation to achieve these goals.

Appointment

Aisake Valu Eke elected as new Prime Minister of Tonga

- ❖ Aisake Valu Eke has been elected as Tonga's new Prime Minister and will be sworn in February 2025, succeeding Hu'akavameiliku Siaosi Sovaleni.
- ❖ A former finance minister (2014–2017), Eke will serve until the national elections in November 2025.

Justice GS Sandhawalia as Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court

- ❖ Justice GS Sandhawalia has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, while Justice Narender G will head the Uttarakhand High Court, according to the Law Ministry.

IAS officer Arunish Chawla appointed as Revenue Secretary in Ministry of Finance and many new appointments

- ❖ Arunish Chawla: Appointed as Revenue Secretary, Ministry of Finance (previously Secretary, Pharmaceuticals).
- ❖ Amit Agrawal: New Pharmaceuticals Secretary (formerly CEO, UIDAI).
- ❖ Vineet Joshi: Appointed Higher Education Secretary (formerly Manipur Chief Secretary).
- ❖ Neerja Sekhar: New DG of National Productivity Council (formerly Special Secretary, I&B Ministry).
- ❖ Rachna Shah: Appointed Secretary, DoPT (formerly Textiles Secretary).
- ❖ Neelam Shammi Rao: New Textiles Secretary (formerly Secretary, National Commission for Minorities).
- ❖ Sanjay Sethi: Appointed Secretary, National Commission for Minorities.

Amitava Chatterjee Appointed as MD & CEO of J&K Bank

- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Bank announced that its board has approved the appointment of Amitava Chatterjee as the managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) for a three-year term, starting from December 30, 2024.

President Appoints New Governors For Five States

- ❖ In a major reshuffle, President Droupadi Murmu appointed two new governors and reassigned three others, reorganizing leadership in five states.
- ❖ Ajay Kumar Bhalla, an experienced administrator, has been named the new Governor of Manipur, succeeding Anusuiya Uikey.
- ❖ Bhalla assumes the role amidst ongoing violence and escalating ethnic conflict in the state, which remains unresolved over a year after it began in May 2023.
- ❖ Additionally, Arif Mohammed Khan, the Governor of Kerala, has been transferred to Bihar.
- ❖ Khan had been engaged in a prolonged public dispute with the Pinarayi Vijayan-led government in Kerala.

BFI Chief Ajay Singh Joins Asian Body Board

- ❖ BFI President Ajay Singh has been appointed as a board member, while other Indian officials will take on significant roles in various commissions.
- ❖ Additionally, Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain has joined the Athletes' Commission, representing athletes' perspectives in shaping the future of the sport.

Shri Justice V Ramasubramanian, former judge of the Supreme Court of India joins as the new Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC), India

- ❖ Shri Justice V Ramasubramanian, former Judge of the Supreme Court of India on December 30, 2024, assumed the charge of the Chairperson and Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi as the Member of the National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC) India, at a function organised to welcome them and Shri Priyank Kanoongo who joined the Commission as a Member last week.
- ❖ They were appointed by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt Draupadi Murmu on 21st December 2024.
- ❖ Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Acting Chairperson, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and other senior officers and staff of the Commission were present on the occasion.

Appointment

Justice V Ramasubramanian Appointed NHRC Chairperson

- ❖ Justice V. Ramasubramanian, former Supreme Court Judge, assumed the role of Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), alongside Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Priyank Kanoongo, who joined as Members.
- ❖ Appointed by President Droupadi Murmu on December 21, 2024, they were welcomed in a ceremony attended by Acting Chairperson Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General Bharat Lal, and other officials.

Appointment

Vitul Kumar Appointed Officiating DG of CRPF

- ❖ Anish Dayal Singh, the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), retired on December 31, 2024, handing over leadership to senior IPS officer Vitul Kumar, who will serve as acting chief until a permanent successor is appointed.

Science and Tech

SpaceX, Nasa launch mission to bring back Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore

- ❖ SpaceX and NASA launched the Crew-10 mission to bring back U.S. astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore from the International Space Station (ISS) after they were stranded for nine months.
- ❖ The mission includes the transportation of four new crew members to the ISS: NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, JAXA astronaut Takuya

Onishi, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Kirill Peskov.

- ❖ Crew-10 marks the 10th crew rotation mission under SpaceX's human space transportation system and the 11th crewed flight to the ISS as part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program.
- ❖ Williams and Wilmore originally arrived at the ISS in June 2024 for a mission expected to last about a week.
- ❖ Prior to the launch, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth expressed support for the Crew-10 mission, relaying a message from President Trump to expedite the astronauts' return.

NASA's IM-2 Mission Brings Ice Mining, Mobile Robots, and More on Moon

- ❖ NASA is set to launch Intuitive Machines' second lunar delivery mission, IM-2, under the Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) initiative.
- ❖ The mission is part of the Artemis program, which aims to create a sustainable human presence on the Moon.
- ❖ Key technology payloads include a drill, a mass spectrometer, a cellular network, and a drone for terrain exploration.
- ❖ The landing site is in the lunar South Pole region, selected for its flat terrain and potential for in-situ resource utilization.
- ❖ The Polar Resources Ice Mining Experiment-1 (PRIME-1) will explore for water ice and resources beneath the lunar surface.
- ❖ NASA's Tipping Point initiative will demonstrate a small drone, named Grace, designed for high-resolution lunar terrain surveys.
- ❖ A communication system developed by Nokia Bell Labs will establish a lunar cellular network, enabling communication among the lander, a Lunar Outpost rover, and the Grace drone.
- ❖ The mission showcases collaboration between NASA and U.S. companies to deliver advancements in lunar exploration technologies, enhancing capabilities for future missions.

NASA and Nokia unveils the Moon's First mobile Network with Intuitive Machines

- ❖ NASA is preparing to send the first mobile network to the Moon as part of Intuitive Machines' IM-2 mission.
- ❖ The Lunar Surface Communication System (LSCS) has been developed by Nokia, utilizing cellular technology similar to that used for mobile communications on Earth.
- ❖ This initiative aims to enhance communication capabilities for future Moon missions, helping astronauts

remain in contact and advancing lunar exploration and studies.

- ❖ The network will support high-definition video streaming, telemetry data exchange, and command-and-control communications among lunar vehicles and landers.
- ❖ The system is designed to withstand harsh space conditions, including intense radiation, extreme heat fluctuations, and the shocks associated with launch and landing.

NASA's Lunar Trailblazer for Mapping the Moon's Water Launched

- ❖ NASA launched the Lunar Trailblazer spacecraft aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket on February 26, 2025, targeting the Moon's south pole.
- ❖ The mission's aim is to explore and map the presence of different forms of water on the lunar surface.
- ❖ The Intuitive Machines' lunar lander is set to land on March 6 at Mons Mouton, near the Moon's south pole, and is part of NASA's CLPS initiative.
- ❖ The IM-2 mission will conduct resource utilization demonstrations on the Moon and test various technologies including a surface communications system and a propulsive drone.

ISRO and IIT Madras jointly develop indigenous semiconductor chip for space-based applications

- ❖ ISRO and IIT Madras have developed the Indigenous RISC-V Controller for Space Applications (IRIS).
- ❖ IRIS is based on the SHAKTI processor, which is part of the RISC-IV open-source Instruction Set Architecture.
- ❖ The project aims to enhance indigenous semiconductor development for space-based applications and other domains, including IoT.
- ❖ The design of the 64-bit RSIC-V-based controller was conceived by ISRO's Inertial Systems Unit and finalized based on existing sensor systems.
- ❖ The project was led by V Kamakoti from IIT Madras under the SHAKTI microprocessor initiative supported by Electronics and IT.

ISRO's NVS-02 Satellite Faces Orbit-Raising Challenge

- ❖ ISRO is addressing a technical issue with the NVS-02 navigation satellite, launched on January 29, 2025, via the GSLV-F15 rocket.
- ❖ Post-launch, the satellite's solar panels deployed successfully, and communication with ground control was established.

- ❖ A malfunctioning valve is preventing the Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM) from firing, hindering the satellite's orbit-raising maneuvers.
- ❖ This malfunction has caused NVS-02 to remain in an elliptical Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) instead of its intended geostationary orbit.
- ❖ The primary problem is valves that failed to open, blocking the oxidizer from reaching the thrusters required for orbit-raising.
- ❖ Despite normal functionality and communication, the satellite's progress to the intended orbit is stalled.

IIT Madras unveils genome database to advance cancer research in India

- ❖ The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras launched the 'Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas (BCGA)', an India-specific cancer genome database.
- ❖ The BCGA aims to provide insights into cancer causes and facilitate early interventions, addressing the gap in genomic studies for various cancers in India.
- ❖ The cancer genome program was initiated in 2020, resulting in the analysis of 960 whole exome sequencing from 480 breast cancer patient tissue samples.
- ❖ India is under-represented in global cancer genome studies, with specific genetic variants in Indian cancers inadequately catalogued for diagnostics and drug development.
- ❖ According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), cancer incidence in India is rising, with one in nine people likely to develop cancer in their lifetime and an annual increase of 12.8% since 2022.
- ❖ The project is led by the Centre of Excellence on Cancer Genomics and Molecular Therapeutics and funded under the Government of India's 'Institutions of Eminence' initiative.

Isro's EOS-06 satellite captures Phytoplankton growth on global scale

- ❖ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that the Ocean Colour Monitor (OCM) sensor on its EOS-06 satellite has captured phytoplankton concentration on a global scale.
- ❖ Ocean Colour Monitor (OCM) sensor of EOS-06 captures chlorophyll-a (Chl-a) concentration in global scale at a frequency of 2 days.
- ❖ The below image shows global product generated at 1 km resolution using data for the period Jan-Dec 2024.
- ❖ Ocean colour observations helps in gathering valuable information on bio-geo chemical variability of oceans in a global scale..”

SpaceX Polaris Dawn Crew Returns to Earth After Historic Commercial Spacewalk

- ❖ The SpaceX Crew Polaris Dawn mission successfully returned to Earth on Sunday after five days in orbit, marking the world's first commercial spacewalk.
- ❖ The Dragon capsule splashed down off the coast of Florida, bringing the four astronauts home.
- ❖ During their time aboard the International Space Station, the crew conducted various scientific experiments and technological demonstrations.
- ❖ NASA hailed the mission as a significant advancement for the commercial space industry.

Cabinet Clears 'One Nation, One Poll' and Major Agriculture-Space Proposals

- ❖ After completing 100 days in office, the NDA government made several decisions with political and economic impact, approving over ₹60,000 crore in various sectors, including agriculture and space exploration.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet also cleared the 'One Nation, One Poll' policy for simultaneous elections.
- ❖ Additionally, the PM-AASHA scheme was revised to ensure minimum support prices for farmers, with an outlay of ₹35,000 crore, ahead of key state elections like Haryana.

India's Own Space Station for Scientific research to be established with the launch of its first module in 2028

- ❖ The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the expansion of the Gaganyaan Programme to develop India's first space station, Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS-1), with the first module targeted for launch by December 2028.
- ❖ The revised plan includes new missions, technologies, and an additional uncrewed mission, with total funding now at ₹20,193 crore.
- ❖ BAS-1 aims to boost India's capabilities in long-duration human space missions, microgravity research, and technology development.
- ❖ By 2035, BAS will be operational, with a crewed lunar mission planned by 2040. This initiative will enhance innovation, industrial participation, and job creation.

ISRO's PSLV-C60 Launch: SpaDeX deployed successfully says ISRO Chairman; set to launch NVS-02 satellite in Jan 2025

- ❖ ISRO's PSLV-C60 Launch: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has achieved another milestone

with the successful launch of the PSLV-C60 rocket, carrying the pioneering Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX).

- ❖ The rocket lifted off at 10:00:15 PM IST from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- ❖ The mission deployed two spacecraft—SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target)—which will execute a series of complex maneuvers over the coming days, culminating in their docking.

IIT Madras Inaugurates Asia's Largest Shallow Wave Basin Research Facility

- ❖ The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) has recently inaugurated Asia's largest shallow wave basin research facility.
- ❖ This development is located at the Discovery satellite campus in Thaiyur, approximately 36 km from the main IIT-M campus.
- ❖ The facility is designed to meet the research and industry requirements of India, particularly in coastal engineering and port management.

SpaDeX Mission: Revolutionising Space Exploration

- ❖ The Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission's docking operation was successfully completed on 16th January, 2025 marking India's entry into the elite group of nations capable of executing space docking operations. With this success, India becomes the fourth country in the world to achieve this technological feat.
- ❖ ISRO started the mission on 30th December 2024, with the successful launch of the SpaDeX spacecraft using Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C60, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- ❖ This groundbreaking mission aims to showcase India's technological prowess in spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking — a critical capability for future advancements such as satellite servicing, space station operations, and interplanetary exploration.

Cabinet approves the establishment of "Third Launch Pad"

- ❖ The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today approved the establishment of the Third Launch Pad (TLP) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre of ISRO at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ The Third Launch Pad project envisages the establishment of the launch infrastructure at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh for the Next Generation Launch Vehicles of ISRO and also to support as standby launch pad for the Second Launch Pad at Sriharikota. This will also enhance the launch capacity for future Indian human spaceflight missions.

Sarla Aviation unveils prototype air taxi, may launch flying taxis by 2028

- ❖ Aerospace startup Sarla Aviation on January 17, 2025 unveiled its prototype air taxi, Shunya, at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo amid its plans to introduce electric flying taxis in Bangalore by 2028 to revolutionize urban transport in India.
- ❖ With speeds reaching up to 250 km per hour and optimised for short trips of 20-30 km, Shunya is expected to significantly reduce travel times across congested urban areas, the company said.

IIT Ropar's iHub AWaDH Unveils Cost-Effective Bluetooth Low Energy Gateway with Advanced Data Security to revolutionize IoT applications across various sectors

- ❖ Ropar, 10 December 2024: iHub – AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub) at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar, under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, with funding of ₹ 110 Crore has announced the launch of its state-of-the-art AWaDH's Bluetooth Low Energy Gateway and Node System.
- ❖ Developed by IIT Ropar, this first-of-its-kind cost-effective system connects Bluetooth-enabled sensors to cloud platforms, enabling seamless data transmission, real-time environmental monitoring, and advanced analytics across diverse sectors such as agriculture, logistics, and environmental resilience.

Google's Quantum Leap: Unveiling the Revolutionary 'Willow' Chip

- ❖ Google has reached a significant milestone in quantum computing by developing a chip capable of performing complex calculations in minutes, which would take conventional supercomputers longer than the age of the universe to complete.

India to Launch Bharat Antariksha Station by 2035

- ❖ India is poised to reach significant milestones in space exploration, with plans to establish its own space station, Bharat Antariksha Station, by 2035 and to land an Indian astronaut on the Moon by 2040, Singh announced.
- ❖ He also highlighted the considerable progress in satellite launches under the Modi government.

India's Data Centre Industry Set to Surpass \$100 Billion by 2027

- ❖ India's data centre market is projected to exceed \$100 billion in investments by 2027, having already attracted \$60 billion between 2019 and 2024.

- ❖ Major growth centers like Mumbai and Chennai lead the market, with demand driven by industries such as BFSI, technology, and generative AI.

SpaDeX Mission: ISRO's Leap Towards Space Docking Technology

- ❖ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission in December 2024, aiming to make India the fourth country to achieve space docking technology.
- ❖ The mission, carried aboard PSLV-C60, will feature two 220-kg spacecraft—SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target)—designed to demonstrate autonomous in-space docking.
- ❖ This achievement will enhance ISRO's space capabilities, supporting future missions like lunar exploration, the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS), and satellite servicing.

ISRO to launch SPADEX Mission on Dec 30

- ❖ ISRO is set to launch the SPADEX Mission on December 30, 2024, at 9:58 PM from Sriharikota using the PSLV-C60 rocket.
- ❖ The mission involves two 220 kg satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), placed in a 470 km orbit.
- ❖ These satellites will demonstrate in-space docking, a crucial technology for India's space goals like lunar missions, sample returns, and building a space station.
- ❖ The satellites will align, dock, transfer power, and then separate, operating independently for two years post-mission. SPADEX positions India to become the fourth nation to achieve space docking technology.

Nvidia Unveils the Jetson Orin Nano Super Generative AI Supercomputer

- ❖ Nvidia introduced its most affordable generative AI supercomputer, the Jetson Orin Nano Super Developer Kit, priced at \$249 (approximately Rs 21,146).
- ❖ This compact AI accelerator delivers up to 67 trillion operations per second (TOPS) of AI performance, surpassing many AI PCs priced over \$1,000.
- ❖ Available globally for students, enthusiasts, and developers, this is not a completely new product, as the Jetson Orin Nano Super was initially announced in 2023 at \$499.
- ❖ Nvidia, a leader in AI hardware and software, has reduced the price to \$249 while boosting performance from 40 TOPS to 67 TOPS with a new software update.
- ❖ The product has already sold out in many regions, with shipping times now ranging from four to five weeks.

India Launches UG Minor in Quantum Technologies

- ❖ AICTE and NQM have launched India's first undergraduate Minor Programme in Quantum Technologies, set to begin in the next academic session for engineering students starting from their third semester.
- ❖ The program includes subjects like quantum mechanics, computing, and cryptography, providing hands-on learning with quantum simulators and labs.

ISRO to launch two satellites from Sriharikota tonight to demonstrate docking and undocking of spacecraft in orbit

- ❖ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is launching its SpaDex mission, a space docking experiment, using the PSLV C60 rocket from Sriharikota.
- ❖ Two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), will be placed in a 470 km orbit at a 55-degree inclination.
- ❖ The mission aims to demonstrate docking and undocking technology, which is crucial for future missions, including satellite servicing and human spaceflight.
- ❖ Once successful, it will position India as the fourth country to master this technology, supporting plans for a Bhartiya Antriksh Station and lunar missions.

ISRO's PSLV-C60 Launch: SpaDeX deployed successfully says ISRO Chairman; set to launch NVS-02 satellite in Jan 2025

- ❖ ISRO's PSLV-C60 Launch: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has achieved another milestone with the successful launch of the PSLV-C60 rocket, carrying the pioneering Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX).
- ❖ The rocket lifted off at 10:00:15 PM IST from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- ❖ The mission deployed two spacecraft—SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target)—which will execute a series of complex maneuvers over the coming days, culminating in their docking.

Defence News

CDS Gen Anil Chauhan embarks on an official visit to Australia



- ❖ Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Anil Chauhan will visit Australia from March 4 to 7, 2025.
- ❖ Discussions will be held with senior officials from the Australian Department of Defence and military leaders, including:
 - ❑ Australia's Chief of Defence Force General Admiral David Johnston
 - ❑ Secretary of Defence Mr. Greg Moriarty
 - ❑ Chiefs of the three Services.
- ❖ The CDS will visit the Force Command Headquarters to understand Australia's operational command structure and explore joint operation possibilities.
- ❖ General Chauhan will interact with the Australian Fleet Commander and the Joint Operations Commander.
- ❖ He will visit the Australian Defence College to address senior officers on strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ❖ The CDS will chair a round table discussion at the Lowy Institute, a prominent think tank in Australia.
- ❖ This visit aims to bolster diplomatic and military collaboration under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and enhance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

DRDO conducts high-altitude trials of Indigenous Integrated Life Support System for LCA Tejas



- ❖ The Defence Bio-Engineering & Electro Medical Laboratory (DEBEL) conducted successful high-altitude

trials of the Indigenous On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS)-based Integrated Life Support System (ILSS) for the LCA Tejas aircraft on March 4, 2025.

- ❖ The OBOGS-based ILSS generates and regulates breathable oxygen for pilots, removing reliance on traditional liquid oxygen cylinder systems.
- ❖ Rigorous testing was performed on the LCA-Prototype Vehicle-3 aircraft, meeting strict aeromedical standards at altitudes up to 50,000 feet and during high-G maneuvers.
- ❖ Performance evaluations included tests for oxygen concentration, demand breathing, and aerobatic maneuvers among others.
- ❖ The ILSS features 10 Line Replaceable Units, including systems for low-pressure breathing, emergency oxygen, and advanced sensors, facilitating real-time oxygen generation to enhance pilot endurance.
- ❖ L&T served as the Development cum Production Partner in the manufacture of the system, which boasts 90% indigenous content, promoting India's self-reliance in aerospace technology.
- ❖ The system can be adapted for use in MiG-29K and other aircraft with appropriate modifications.
- ❖ The achievement was recognized by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh, who highlighted its contribution to India's advanced defense technologies in alignment with the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision.

DRDO and Indian navy successfully test fire deadly anti-ship missile



- ❖ India has successfully test-fired its first indigenous naval anti-ship missile, the NASM-SR, from a Sea King Mk.42B helicopter at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha.
- ❖ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy conducted the flight trials demonstrating the missile's capability against ship targets.
- ❖ The NASM-SR is designed to replace the aging Sea Eagle missiles currently in service.

- ❖ It features a range of approximately 55 kilometers and is equipped with an imaging infrared (IIR) seeker for precise targeting.
- ❖ The missile supports "Lock On After Launch" (LOAL) and sea-skimming capabilities, allowing it to approach targets at very low altitudes, thereby evading enemy radar detection.
- ❖ During the test, the missile was launched in Bearing-Only Lock-on After Launch (BOLOAL) mode, initially targeting a large ship within a specified search zone.

India, Japan to hold 6th edition of joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian'.

- ❖ The sixth edition of Joint Military Exercise Dharma Guardian, between India and Japan, is scheduled at Mount Fuji, Japan from February 25 to March 9.
- ❖ The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the two forces while undertaking joint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under UN mandate.
- ❖ Dharma Guardian 2025 highlights the growing strategic partnership between India and Japan, focusing on operational readiness for various security challenges.
- ❖ The exercise will include personnel exchanges to share best practices, refine coordination strategies, and develop mutual trust.

Goa Shipyard Showcases Indigenous Naval Vessels at NAVDEX 2025

- ❖ Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL) is showcasing its indigenously designed Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) and Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) at NAVDEX 2025 in Abu Dhabi, highlighting India's naval innovation and self-reliance under the "Make in India" initiative.
- ❖ The FPV on display is a 50-meter-long vessel capable of speeds up to 35 knots, primarily used for patrolling, anti-smuggling, and anti-terrorist operations, with additional roles such as coastal convoy escort and communication link during wartime.
- ❖ Established in 1957, GSL has become a leading defense shipbuilder and a Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU), contributing significantly to India's maritime defense capabilities.
- ❖ NAVDEX 2025, held alongside IDEX, facilitates international cooperation in defense and security, bringing together global defense leaders, government officials, and industry experts to discuss emerging trends and technological advancements.

CII launches initiative to boost micro-entrepreneurship in Kerala

- ❖ Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched the CII Kerala Entrepreneurs Development Forum, an initiative aimed at strengthening the micro-entrepreneurial ecosystem in the State.

- ❖ The forum, established by the CII Centre of Excellence on Employment & Livelihood, seeks to transform job seekers into job creators and provide comprehensive support to micro-enterprises.
- ❖ The initiative recognises the crucial role of MSMEs in the economy. The Centre of Excellence will focus on connecting industry with micro-entrepreneurs, facilitating mentorship programmes, catalysing skill development, and developing scalable business models.
- ❖ CII Kerala Entrepreneurs Development Forum will offer mentorship, networking, and capacity-building programmes. It will provide a platform for micro-entrepreneurs to address challenges, access industry mentorship, and receive business guidance.

Brigade Group plans to invest ₹1,500 crore in Kerala, signs MOU

- ❖ Brigade Group has proposed to invest ₹1,500 crore in Kerala with a potential generating employment for around 12,000 people over the next five years.
- ❖ Brigade Enterprises Ltd, the flagship Company of Brigade Group has submitted an Expression of Interest at the Invest Kerala Global Summit 2025.
- ❖ The company proposes to set up its second World Trade Centre (WTC) in the State with the first being in Kochi.
- ❖ Besides, the company looking to expand its footprint in Kerala with a residential project in Kochi and a luxury island resort at Vaikom. These projects are expected to be completed by 2030.

India- Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise Cyclone-III begins in Rajasthan

- ❖ The 3rd edition of Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE commenced at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan.
- ❖ The exercise is being conducted from 10th to 23rd February 2025.
- ❖ Exercise CYCLONE is an annual event conducted alternatively in India and Egypt.
- ❖ Last edition of the same exercise was conducted in Egypt in January 2024.
- ❖ The Indian contingent comprising 25 personnel will be represented by troops from two Special Forces Battalions. Egypt contingent also comprising 25 personnel will be represented by Special Forces Group and Task Force of Egyptian Special Forces.
- ❖ Aim of Exercise CYCLONE is to promote military to military relationship between the two countries through enhancement of interoperability, jointness and mutual exchange of special operations tactics.

- ❖ The exercise will focus on high degree of physical fitness, joint planning and joint tactical drills.
- ❖ Exercise CYCLONE will enable the two sides to share their best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting tactical operations.
- ❖ The exercise will also facilitate developing bonhomie and camaraderie between soldiers of both the sides.

DRDO Successfully Conducts Three Trials of Indigenous Man Portable Air Defence System

- ❖ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted three flight trials of the Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) at Chandipur, Odisha.
- ❖ The trials targeted high-speed, low-altitude threats that simulated low-flying drones.
- ❖ VSHORADS is a fourth generation, indigenous, miniaturized Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) with industry collaboration.
- ❖ All three trials showed successful interception and destruction of targets with reduced thermal signatures.
- ❖ Flight-tests were conducted in deployment configuration with field operators executing weapon readiness, target acquisition, and missile firing.
- ❖ The trials confirmed the system's accuracy and capability to neutralize drones and other aerial threats, as validated by telemetry and tracking systems.
- ❖ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and DRDO chairperson Dr. Samir V Kamat praised the successful tests.
- ❖ The VSHORADS system is designed to meet the needs of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- ❖ Previous development trials conducted in October 2024 showcased the system's hit-to-kill capability in various engagement scenarios.

DRDO-IIT Hyderabad Unveils Large Area Additive Manufacturing System

- ❖ India's defense and aerospace manufacturing sectors are significantly enhanced by the development of a Large Area Additive Manufacturing (LAAM) system at the DRDO-Industry-Academia Centre of Excellence (DIA-CoE) at IIT Hyderabad.
- ❖ The LAAM system is a collaborative effort involving IIT Hyderabad, DRDO's Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), and various industry partners.
- ❖ This system is expected to revolutionize the fabrication of large components specifically for the aerospace and defense industries.

- ❖ It facilitates the large-scale production of metal parts through additive manufacturing, marking a pivotal advancement in India's advanced manufacturing technology.
- ❖ The LAAM System utilizes Powder-based Directed Energy Deposition (DED) technology, employing laser and blown-powder techniques for metal component fabrication.
- ❖ This system has achieved the capability of producing large-sized components, representing a significant milestone for India's additive manufacturing capabilities.

Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise 2025

- ❖ TROPEX-25, or Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise 2025, conducted by the Indian Navy.
- ❖ Launched in January 2025, this exercise highlights India's dedication to joint operational capabilities.
- ❖ It encompasses the Indian Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard, demonstrating inter-service collaboration in the Indian Ocean Region.
- ❖ Senior military leaders attended from INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, to observe live operational demonstrations.
- ❖ TROPEX is the most significant biennial maritime exercise conducted by the Indian Navy.
- ❖ Its objectives are to improve inter-service coordination and showcase combat readiness.
- ❖ The exercise features complex drills, live weapon firings, and operational demonstrations.
- ❖ By involving various military branches, it equips the forces to handle real-world scenarios effectively.

Key Objectives:

1. Illustrating Military Doctrine: The exercise highlights India's evolving military approach.
2. Integrated Fleet Operations: The unification of the Eastern and Western Fleets marks a transition to a consolidated maritime force, essential for addressing modern conflicts that stretch beyond individual theatres.
3. Carrier-Based Air Power: INS Vikrant's participation signifies a new chapter in carrier operations, establishing it as a crucial element of fleet combat and boosting India's maritime strike capabilities.
4. Indo-Pacific Strategy: TROPEX-25 acts as a countermeasure to China's growing naval influence, showcasing India's capacity to project power and uphold security in the Indo-Pacific region.

India-Maldives Military Exercise 'Ekuverin' Commenced in Maldives

- ❖ The 13th edition of the joint military exercise 'Ekuverin' has commenced between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force.
- ❖ Ekuverin, meaning 'Friends' in Dhivehi, is a bilateral annual exercise held alternately between India and Maldives.
- ❖ The current exercise is taking place in the Maldives from February 2 to February 15, 2025.
- ❖ The opening ceremony occurred at the MNDF Composite Training Centre in Maafilafushi, attended by Major General Ibrahim Hilmy and Indian High Commissioner G Balasubramanian.
- ❖ The exercise focuses on enhancing interoperability in counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism operations, and conducting joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
- ❖ The previous edition was held in June 2023 at Chaubatia, Uttarakhand.

India-Cambodia Joint Exercise CINBAX Begins in Pune

- ❖ The inaugural edition of the joint tabletop exercise CINBAX between the Indian Army and Cambodian Army began on Sunday at the Foreign Training Node in Pune.
- ❖ According to the Ministry of Defence, the exercise will run from December 1 to 8.

INS Tushil Commissioned into Indian Navy

- ❖ INS Tushil (F 70), the latest multi-role stealth-guided missile frigate, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at the Yantar Shipyard in Kaliningrad, Russia on December 09, 2024.
- ❖ Raksha Mantri, in his address, described the commissioning as a proud testament to India's growing maritime strength and a significant milestone in the long-standing friendship between India & Russia, which are bound together by shared values, mutual trust, and special & strategic privileged partnership.

INS Nirdeshak: Indian Navy's New Survey Ship Commissioned

- ❖ The Indian Navy is set to commission INS Nirdeshak on December 18, 2024, at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam.
- ❖ Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), the 110-meter, 3,800-ton vessel is the second ship under the Survey Vessel (Large) Project.

INDIAN NAVY TO CONDUCT A WORKSHOP ON MENTAL HEALTH

- ❖ As part of ongoing 60-day Resilience programme on Mental Health and Inner Harmony, Indian Navy is conducting a workshop on 'Self-transformation and Inner-awakening' on 07 Jan 25 at Dr DS Kothari Auditorium, DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi.
- ❖ Theme - 'Self-transformation and Inner-awakening'

Two Fast Patrol Vessels constructed by GSL for Indian Coast Guard launched in the presence of Secretary (Defence Production) in Goa

- ❖ Two Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) - *Amulya* and *Akshay* - indigenously designed and constructed by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) were launched in the presence of Secretary (Defence Production) Shri Sanjeev Kumar in Goa on January 05, 2025.
- ❖ The two FPVs are the third and fourth vessels of the fleet of eight FPVs being constructed by GSL for ICG, underscoring the shipyard's pivotal role in realising the vision of Aatmanirbharta in defence production.

DRDO's New Cold Weather Clothing System HIMKAVACH

- ❖ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has made advancements in military clothing technology. The HIMKAVACH multi-layer clothing system has successfully passed user trials, demonstrating its effectiveness in extreme cold weather conditions.
- ❖ This innovative clothing is specifically designed for operational use in the Himalayan region, where temperatures can drop drastically.
- ❖ The system is engineered to function within a temperature range of +20°C to -60°C.

Indian Army to conduct 'exercise devil strike' from January 16-19

- ❖ The Indian Armed Forces conducted Exercise Devil Strike from January 16 to 19, a joint exercise involving the elite airborne soldiers from the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force, a press release said.
- ❖ The exercise will occur at the training areas and firing ranges, validating critical drills and enhancing operational readiness in a challenging environment.

L&T launches second multi-purpose vessel for Navy from Kattupalli shipyard

- ❖ Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has launched the second multi-purpose vessel for the Indian Navy from its Kattupalli Shipyard near Chennai.

- ❖ The launch of the vessel, christened INS Utkarsh, comes within three months of the launch of the first MPV INS Samarthak.
- ❖ The first vessel is being readied for undergoing tests and trials prior to its delivery to the Indian Navy, L&T said in a statement on 14th January 2025.

Indian Armed Forces conclude exercise 'Devil Strike' successfully

- ❖ The Indian Armed Forces have successfully concluded Exercise Devil Strike, a high-intensity joint exercise held from 16 to 19 January.
- ❖ This collaborative endeavour between the Indian Army's elite airborne troops and the Indian Air Force showcased seamless integration, operational excellence, and readiness to operate in the most challenging environments, according to an official press release.

DRDO conducts Scramjet Engine Ground Test

- ❖ Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), a Hyderabad-based laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has taken the initiative in developing a long-duration Supersonic Combustion Ramjet or Scramjet powered Hypersonic technology.
- ❖ DRDL recently developed these technologies and demonstrated a cutting-edge Active Cooled Scramjet Combustor ground test for 120 seconds for the first time in India.
- ❖ The successful ground test marks a crucial milestone in developing next-generation hypersonic missiles.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh flags-off 'SANJAY - The Battlefield Surveillance System' from New Delhi

- ❖ Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh flagged-off 'SANJAY - The Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)' from South Block, New Delhi on January 24, 2025.
- ❖ SANJAY is an automated system which integrates the inputs from all ground and aerial battlefield sensors, processing them to confirm their veracity, preventing duplication and fusing them to produce a Common Surveillance Picture of the battlefield over secured Army Data Network & Satellite Communication Network.
- ❖ It will enhance battlefield transparency and transform the future battlefield through a Centralised Web Application which will provide inputs to Command & Army Headquarters, and the Indian Army Decision Support System.

Ranking and Index

India's suicide death rate drops 30% from 1990 to 2021: Lancet

- ❖ A recent Lancet study, based on data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021, indicates a 30% decline in India's suicide death rate from 1990 to 2021.
- ❖ The suicide death rate in India was 18.9 per 100,000 in 1990, decreasing to 13.1 per 100,000 in 2019 and further dropping to 13 per 100,000 in 2021.
- ❖ Overall reduction recorded is 31.5% over three decades.
- ❖ The decline in suicide rates is more significant among females, dropping from 16.8 per 100,000 in 1990 to 10.3 per 100,000 in 2021.
- ❖ Male suicide rates decreased from 20.9 per 100,000 in 1990 to 15.7 per 100,000 in 2021.
- ❖ Educated women in India reported the highest suicide rates in 2020, often citing family-related issues as the cause.
- ❖ Globally, there are approximately 740,000 suicides annually, roughly one every 43 seconds.
- ❖ The global age-standardized suicide mortality rate has declined by nearly 40% in the past three decades, falling from about 15 deaths per lakh population to 9 per lakh.
- ❖ The decline was more pronounced in females (over 50%) compared to males (34%).
- ❖ The global suicide mortality rates are 12.8 per 100,000 for males and 5.4 per 100,000 for females.

World Reputation Rankings 2025: Harvard University retains top spot

- ❖ Four Indian universities featured in the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings 2025. However, all of these institutions registered a fall in rankings compared to last year.
- ❖ Harvard University has maintained its position as the top university in the World Reputation Rankings 2025 for the 14th consecutive year.
- ❖ The University of Oxford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are jointly ranked second.
- ❖ Oxford University is the only UK institution in the top 7, with all other top spots occupied by US universities.
- ❖ The Times Higher Education (THE) has ranked a total of 300 institutions from 38 countries and territories.
- ❖ Indian Institute of Science (IISc) dropped to the 201-300 ranking band from 101-125 in 2023.
- ❖ IIT Delhi and IIT Madras also fell in rankings, both now in the 201-300 band; IIT Delhi slipped from 151-175,

while IIT Madras dropped from 176-200.

- ❖ IIT Bombay is notably absent from the rankings this year after being in the 151-175 range previously.
- ❖ Shiksha 'O' Anusandhan, a private deemed-to-be university in Odisha, India, is a new entrant in the rankings, falling within the 201-300 band.
- ❖ The 2025 World Reputation Rankings methodology includes six key measures focusing on research and teaching votes and voter diversity.

Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Jeff Bezos among top 24 superbillionaires of the world

- ❖ The Wall Street Journal has released report featuring world's top super billionaires.
- ❖ According to the WSJ, Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and Warren Buffet are among the world's top 24 super billionaires and Elon Musk is the richest person in the world, with a net worth of \$419.4 billion.
- ❖ The term "superbillionaires" refers to individuals with a net worth of \$50 billion or more.
- ❖ There are 24 superbillionaires identified in a recent list by the WSJ, based on data from Altrata.
- ❖ Out of these, 16 superbillionaires are classified as centi-billionaires, meaning they have a net worth of at least \$100 billion.

Indian billionaires

- ❖ The list also features Indian business tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani.
- ❖ Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani has a net worth of \$90.6 billion, and Gautam Adani, the chairman of the Adani Group, has a net worth of \$60.6 billion.

MGNREGS, PMAY-G account for 75% of rural development dept's budget: Report

- ❖ According to a report, in the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, the Ministry of Rural Development has been allocated ₹1,90,406 crore.
- ❖ Within this, the Department of Rural Development received ₹1,87,755 crore, marking an 8% increase over the revised estimates of 2024-25.
- ❖ Notably, two flagship schemes—Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Pradhan Mantri
- ❖ Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)—together account for 75% of this allocation. Specifically, MGNREGS comprises 46% of the department's budget, while PMAY-G accounts for 29%.
- ❖ The allocation for MGNREGS remains unchanged at

₹86,000 crore for 2025-26, consistent with the previous year's revised estimate.

- ❖ In contrast, PMAY-G has seen a significant increase, with ₹54,832 crore allocated for 2025-26, representing a 69% rise over the revised estimate of ₹32,426 crore for 2024-25.
- ❖ Other key schemes under the Department of Rural Development include the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), each receiving 10% of the department's allocation.
- ❖ The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) accounts for 5% of the allocation.
- ❖ Between 2014-15 and 2025-26, the department's budgetary allocation has grown at an average annual rate of 12%. This consistent increase underscores the government's commitment to enhancing rural infrastructure and livelihood opportunities.

Karnataka tops in Devolution Index ranking of Panchayat Raj system

- ❖ Karnataka ranks first in the overall Devolution Index (DI) for the Panchayat Raj system among Indian states.
- ❖ The report, titled 'Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking' (2024), was released by Union Minister of State, Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel in New Delhi.
- ❖ Karnataka also leads in sub-indices of 'finances' and 'accountability'.
- ❖ The overall index score for Karnataka is 72.23, followed by Kerala with 70.59 and Tamil Nadu with 68.38.
- ❖ Maharashtra ranks fourth with a score of 61.44, while Uttar Pradesh is fifth at 60.07, and Gujarat is sixth with 58.26.
- ❖ Bihar and several north-eastern and hilly states such as Assam, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand scored moderately, above the national average of 43.89.
- ❖ States/UTs were ranked according to the overall Panchayat devolution index as well as by each of the following six dimensions:
 - (i) Framework
 - (ii) Functions
 - (iii) Finances
 - (iv) Functionaries
 - (v) Capacity Enhancement
 - (vi) Accountability
- ❖ The report was prepared by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Indian Institute of Public

Administration, New Delhi.

- ❖ The latest report, prepared by IIPA, reveals that devolution has increased from 39.9% to 43.9% between the period 2013-14 to 2021-22.
- ❖ With the launch of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) on 21.4.2018, the capacity enhancement component of the Index during this period has increased substantially from 44% to 54.6% i.e. an increase of more than 10%.

Indian School of Business ranks 27th globally in FT MBA Ranking 2025, Wharton School secured top position

- ❖ The Indian School of Business (ISB) has been ranked as the best Indian business school in the Financial Times (FT) MBA Rankings 2025.
- ❖ ISB is now ranked 27th globally, marking a four-place improvement from last year's 31st rank.
- ❖ In the Asian region, ISB has retained its 5th position.
- ❖ Following ISB in the rankings are several Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs):
 1. Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM-A) - 31st globally (2nd in India).
 2. IIM Bangalore - 57th globally.
 3. IIM Calcutta - 61st globally.
 4. IIM Indore - 69th globally.
 5. IIM Lucknow - 71st globally.
 6. Other Indian institutes in the top 100 include:
 7. XLRI – Xavier School of Management at 83rd rank.
 8. IIM Kozhikode at 86th rank.
- ❖ These are the only Indian institutes to make it into the top 100 of the FT Global MBA Ranking 2025.

Global Ranking

- ❖ Globally, the first rank has been achieved by University of Pennsylvania: Wharton (US), followed by another American institute, Columbia Business School, at the second spot.
- ❖ Representing Europe in the top ranks is Spain's IESE Business School at the third spot, France's Insead at the fourth spot, and Italy's SDA Bocconi School of Management at the fifth rank globally.

Forbes top 10 richest women in the world (2025) List

- ❖ The forbes has released its 5th edition of the Top 10 Richest Women in World in 2025 list.

- ❖ The report highlights that women constitute 13.3% of the global billionaire population in the Forbes Billionaire List 2024.
- ❖ The top ten richest women collectively have a net worth exceeding \$500 billion as of February 2025.
- ❖ The emergence of these women billionaires is challenging traditional notions of male dominance in leadership and finance.
- ❖ In the 2025 edition of the Forbes' Women Billionaire List, while most of the names have remained the same as last year, there have been some notable additions,

and shifts in net worth and ranking.

- ❖ Significant changes in the 2025 Forbes Women Billionaire List include:
 1. Alice Walton surpassed Françoise Bettencourt Meyers in rankings, ending Meyers' four-year lead.
 2. Marilyn Simons, widow of hedge fund manager Jim Simons, is a new addition to the list.
 3. Savitri Jindal & family, India's richest woman, is featured on the global women billionaires list.

Top 10 Women Billionaires (2025)

Rank	Name	Net Worth (USD)	Source of Wealth
1	Alice Walton	\$112.5 billion	Walmart
2	Francoise Bettencourt	\$74.4 billion	L'Oreal
3	Julia Koch and Family	\$74.2 billion	Koch Industries
4	Jacqueline Mars	\$42.3 billion	Mars Inc
5	Rafaela Aponte-Diamant	\$39.0 billion	Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) Group
6	Abigail Johnson	\$36.0 billion	Fidelity Investments
7	Savitri Jindal & Family	\$32.3 billion	JSW Group
8	MacKenzie Scott	\$32.3 billion	Amazon
9	Miriam Adelson & family	\$31.5 billion	Las Vegas Sands
10	Marilyn Simons & Family	\$31.0 billion	Hedge Funds

India ranked second-least favoured in Asia Pacific, says BofA survey

- ❖ India has been ranked as the second-least favoured market in the Asia Pacific region according to the BofA Global Research fund manager survey.
- ❖ Allocations to Indian equities have dropped to their lowest level in two years.
- ❖ Support for Indian equities is diminishing, as they have transitioned from being a market favourite to experiencing reduced allocations.
- ❖ Japan is identified as the clear favourite market, followed by Taiwan, while India and Thailand are placed at the bottom of the rankings.
- ❖ Allocations to China have rebounded after significant declines in the previous month, indicating improved sentiment.
- ❖ Fund managers are currently overweight in markets such as Japan, Taiwan, China, and Singapore.
- ❖ The survey indicated that the greatest underweights are in Thailand, India, and Australia.
- ❖ The survey was conducted from February 7 to 13 and included 205 participants managing a total of \$482 billion in assets.

- ❖ There is a notable improvement in sentiment towards China, with increased investor interest in the AI and semiconductor sectors.

BPCL to set up new ₹5,500-crore polypropylene unit in Kochi

- ❖ The Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) is setting up a new polypropylene unit in Kochi with an investment of ₹5,000 crore.
- ❖ This is the second petrochemical unit in Kochi. We plan to commission the unit by October 2027.
- ❖ The unit will have an annual capacity of 400,000 tonnes of polypropylene.
- ❖ Polypropylene finds wide application in downstream industries such as packaging films, sheet, boxes, containers, bags, home ware, home care, personal care, and articles of day-to-day usage.
- ❖ The Compressed Biogas Plant (CBP) in Kochi is expected to be ready by the next quarter, with the capacity to process 150 tonnes of municipal waste per day.
- ❖ BPCL has also signed an MoU with Kinfra to establish a POL terminal with pipeline receipt facility and additional parking area for LPG tankers at Kinfra Industrial & Textile Park in Palakkad.

2025 Henley Passport Index: Singapore's passport is world's strongest, India at 80th spot

- ❖ The 2025 Henley Passport Index ranks Singapore's passport as the world's most powerful, with visa-free access to 193 out of 227 destinations.
- ❖ India's passport ranks 80th, sharing this position with Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Tajikistan.
- ❖ The index evaluates 199 passports based on the number of destinations with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access.
- ❖ Japan and South Korea are in second place, each providing access to 190 countries.
- ❖ Seven countries, including Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Spain, are tied for third, with access to 189 destinations.
- ❖ At the bottom of the index, Afghanistan ranks 99th with access to only 25 destinations, followed by Syria (98th, 27 destinations) and Iraq (97th, 30 destinations).
- ❖ Singapore and Japan have improved their positions, with Japan regaining visa-free access to China post-pandemic.

NITI Aayog Releases Policy Report on 'Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities'

- ❖ NITI Aayog released a policy report titled "Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities" focusing on the standards of state public universities (SPUs) in India.
- ❖ The report was launched by Vice Chairman Suman Bery and CEO B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, highlighting its status as the first comprehensive analysis of SPUs over the past decade.
- ❖ The report is the first of its kind focusing on State Public Universities (SPUs), providing detailed quantitative analysis on Quality, Funding, Governance, and Employability over the past decade.
- ❖ Extensive consultations were held with stakeholders from 20 States and Union Territories, 50 SPUs, and various educational councils to gather insights.
- ❖ Vice Chairman Suman Bery emphasized the need for SPUs to aim for high standards comparable to leading global public universities.
- ❖ The report aligns with NEP implementation and India's goal of becoming a knowledge hub by 2047, as highlighted by Dr. Vinod Kumar Paul.
- ❖ The NEP 2020 aims to double higher education enrollment to roughly 9 crore students by 2035, with a significant proportion in SPUs.
- ❖ Key budget initiatives announced include the

introduction of PMRF research fellows and investments to enhance SPUs.

- ❖ The report addresses major issues such as funding limitations, governance challenges, and the need for capacity building among vice-chancellors and faculty.
- ❖ It features nearly 80 policy recommendations with short, medium, and long-term strategies, alongside over 125 Performance Success Indicators aimed at improving various aspects of higher education.

India ranks 96 out of 180 countries in Corruption Perceptions Index 2024

- ❖ The Transparency International has published the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).
- ❖ In CPI 2024, India ranks ranked at 96 out of 180 countries, while Denmark ranks as the least corrupt country in the world for the second consecutive year, followed by Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand.
- ❖ India has dropped in rank from 93rd to 96th, scoring 38 out of 100, highlighting ongoing corruption challenges in its public sector.
- ❖ The CPI assesses corruption in 180 countries and territories based on expert and business perceptions, with a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- ❖ South Asian neighbors, including Pakistan (135th), Sri Lanka (121st), Bangladesh (149th), and China (76th), also show low corruption rankings.
- ❖ The global average corruption score is stagnant at 43, with over two-thirds of countries scoring below 50.
- ❖ Several Western nations, such as the United States (28th), France, and Germany, have seen declines in their corruption scores.
- ❖ Russia's score fell to 22 amid its invasion of Ukraine, while Ukraine made some progress despite a slight drop to 35.
- ❖ South Sudan and Somalia rank at the bottom of the index with scores of 8 and 9, respectively, followed by Venezuela (10) and Syria (12).

India ranked 38th in the Logistics Performance Index 2023

- ❖ As per the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI), 2023 India moved up to 22nd Rank in the Global Ranking in International Shipments category and the Overall 38th Rank in Logistics Performance Index score among the 139 countries.
- ❖ India's advancements in the logistics sector result from several key factors:
 1. Policy reforms

2. Initiatives driven by technology
3. Improvements in infrastructure
- ❖ The country has greatly improved its competitiveness in global trade by:
 1. Streamlining supply chains
 2. Minimizing delays
 3. Enhancing efficiency in freight transport
- ❖ International Shipments Rank Improvement:
 1. Ranked 44th in 2018; rose to 22nd in 2023
 2. This increase demonstrates the effectiveness of government policies designed to facilitate global trade
- ❖ Turnaround Times at Ports:
 1. Indian ports now have an average turnaround time of 0.9 days

Asia's 20 richest families: Mukesh Ambani leads, 6 Indians in the ranks

- ❖ New York based Bloomberg Limited Partnership has released 'Asia's Richest Family 2025' index, according to which Ambani family of Reliance Industries secured the top position as Asia's richest family.
- ❖ Under Mukesh Ambani's leadership, Reliance Industries has diversified into technology, consumer goods, financial services, and green energy.
- ❖ Top 10 Wealthiest Families in Asia:
 1. Mukesh Ambani's family (India) - \$90.5 billion, Reliance Industries.
 2. Chearavanont family (Thailand) - \$42.6 billion, Charoen Pokphand conglomerate.
 3. Hartono family (Indonesia) - \$42.2 billion, primarily through banking and tobacco.
 4. Mistry family (India) - \$37.5 billion, stakes in Tata Sons and Shapoorji Pallonji Group.
 5. Kwok family (Hong Kong) - \$35.6 billion, from Sun Hung Kai Properties.
 6. Tsai family (Taiwan) - \$30.9 billion, financial services firms.
 7. Jindal family (India) - \$28.1 billion, OP Jindal Group conglomerate.
 8. Yoovidhya family (Thailand) - \$25.7 billion, creators of "Red Bull".
 9. Birla family (India) - \$23 billion, diversified interests in various sectors.

10. Lee family (South Korea) - \$22.7 billion, fortune from Samsung.

- ❖ Notable other families in the top 20 include the Zhang family (China), Cheng family (Hong Kong), Bajaj family (India), and Kwek/Quek family (Singapore), highlighting the growing wealth in Asia.

India's 4th Biennial Report to UNFCCC Submitted

- ❖ India submitted its 4th Biennial Update Report (BUR-4) to the UNFCCC on December 30, 2024.
- ❖ The report updates the Third National Communication (TNC) and includes the National Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory for 2020.

Report

Decline in Student Enrolment: UDISE+ Report 2023-24

- ❖ Student enrolment in India dropped to 24.8 crore in 2023-24, marking a 6% decrease from 26.02 crore in 2018-19.
- ❖ Boys' enrolment decreased by 4.87%, from 13.53 crore in 2018-19 to 12.87 crore in 2023-24.
- ❖ Girls' enrolment saw a 4.48% decline, from 12.49 crore in 2018-19 to 11.93 crore in 2023-24.

India's real GDP growth to come in at 6.2% in FY25, 6.5% in FY26: HSBC

- ❖ Real GDP growth will come lower than the official estimate at 6.2 per cent in the ongoing fiscal year and inch up to 6.5 per cent in FY26, a foreign brokerage said on 7th January 2025.
- ❖ The Q2FY25 growth number at 5.4 per cent was disappointing, HSBC said in a report, adding that it expects the gross value added growth in the December quarter to go up to 6.5 per cent.

Adani Ports ranks among top 10 in S&P Global sustainability rankings 2024

- ❖ Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has entered the global top 10 list of transportation and transportation infrastructure companies in the S&P Global corporate sustainability assessment (CSA) rankings for 2024, the company stated.

India's ranking drops to 85th in Henley Passport Index, Singapore tops

- ❖ India's ranking has dropped by five points to 85 this year in a global passport index, topped by Singapore for the second consecutive year.
- ❖ The data draws from Henley Passport Index released by citizenship advisory firm Henley & Partners on January 8, 2025.

India's economy likely to grow 6.6% in 2025, 6.7% in 2026: UN report

- ❖ The Indian economy is expected to grow by 6.6 per cent in 2025 and 6.7 per cent in 2026, supported by solid private consumption and investment growth, according to the United Nations (UN) flagship report, World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025, released on January 9, 2025.

Indian economy likely to grow between 6.5-6.9% in FY26, says Ficci

- ❖ Industry body Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Thursday projected the Indian economy to clock a growth rate of 6.5–6.9 per cent in FY26, driven by easing inflationary pressures, a continuing thrust on capital expenditure (capex), and consumer spending gaining momentum.
- ❖ “Considering these factors, participating economists have pegged India’s GDP growth forecast for the fiscal year 2025–26 between 6.5 per cent and 6.9 per cent—reflecting a balanced outlook that accounts for both opportunities and challenges,” the industry body noted in its latest economic outlook.

IMF retains India's economic growth outlook for FY26 and FY27 at 6.5%

- ❖ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Friday (January 17, 2025) retained its growth projection for India at 6.5 per cent for FY26 and FY27, holding that it is “in line with potential”.
- ❖ “Growth in India had slowed more than expected, led by a sharper-than-expected deceleration in industrial activity,” the IMF said in its update to the World Economic Outlook (WEO), referring to the surprise 5.4 per cent growth in the September quarter.

India's GDP growth likely to reach 6.7% next fiscal: Crisil

- ❖ India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is projected to improve to 6.7% in the next fiscal year (FY25), according to a Crisil Intelligence report. The report noted that a sustained decline in food inflation, combined with stable non-food inflation, could create room for a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the coming months.
- ❖ Headline inflation is steadily progressing toward the RBI's 4% target, as food inflation eased for the second consecutive month and non-food inflation remained stable.
- ❖ The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation cooled to 5.2% in December, down from 5.5% in November. Food inflation eased to 8.4% from 9%, while non-food inflation remained stable at 3.1%.

India Inc's foreign borrowings decline 20.2% in 2024 as rupee slips

- ❖ Indian companies' foreign borrowings plunged 20.2 per cent to \$23.33 billion in 2024, down from \$29.22 billion a year earlier. With the Indian rupee sliding against the dollar, analysts forecast that corporate India will continue scaling back overseas debt as repayment costs and forward cover prices climb.
- ❖ The decline last calendar year followed a major uptick in 2023 when foreign loans had more than doubled from \$14.38 billion in 2022 — the sharpest spike in over a decade.

Fiscal conditions to constrain credit growth in 2025, says Moody's

- ❖ India's fiscal conditions will continue to constrain its credit strength in 2025 but it may benefit from a shift in trade and investment flows from China, Moody's Ratings said on Wednesday in its Asia-Pacific 2025 outlook.
- ❖ “We expect only gradual fiscal consolidation, and debt to remain significantly higher than the Baa-rated peer median of around 57 per cent,” Moody's Ratings said. It added that proposed trade restrictions by the US would weaken economic output across the region.

Billionaire wealth hits \$15 trillion as inequality reaches alarming levels: Oxfam report

- ❖ In 2024, billionaire wealth surged by 2 trillion, reaching to a total of 15 trillion, growing three times faster than in the previous year.
- ❖ The report from Oxfam highlighted that the number of people living in poverty has barely changed since 1990, despite the immense increase in billionaire wealth.
- ❖ Asia saw an increase of \$299 billion in billionaire wealth, with 204 new billionaires and 41 of them emerging from Asia alone.
- ❖ Oxfam reported that the richest 1% in the Global North extracted \$30 million per hour from the Global South in 2023.
- ❖ Approximately 60% of billionaire wealth is derived from inheritance, monopoly power, or crony connections, indicating that much of this wealth is unmerited.
- ❖ In 2024, billionaire wealth increased at an average of \$5.7 billion per day, bringing the total number of billionaires to 2,769.
- ❖ The wealthiest 10 men gained nearly \$100 million each day on average.
- ❖ Oxfam attributed the acceleration of billionaire wealth accumulation to the concentration of economic power

and indicated a potential rise of at least five trillionaires within the next decade.

- ❖ The report called on governments to tax the wealthy to reduce inequality and dismantle what they consider a new aristocracy.
- ❖ Colonialism's historical impacts and contemporary wealth dynamics were cited as drivers of extreme inequality, with significant funds flowing from the Global South to the Global North.

Banks NPAs may dip to 2.4% by March despite stress in retail loans: Fitch

- ❖ The gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of Indian banks may decline by 40 basis points to 2.4 per cent by March 2025 and a further 20 basis points in the next financial year, said rating agency Fitch on Thursday.
- ❖ Stress in retail loans is rising, particularly in unsecured credit, but robust growth, recoveries and write-offs are expected to offset the increase in fresh bad loans, it said in a statement.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) expects the impaired-loan ratio to trough in Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25) before rising to around 3 per cent in FY26, from the 2.6 per cent reported in the first half of FY25 (1HFY25).

Indian food services market projected to hit \$144-152 bn by 2030: Report

- ❖ The Indian food services market, valued at \$80 billion in 2024, is expected to grow to \$144-152 billion by 2030, according to Redseer Strategy Consultants' new report, The Big Bite: Scaling Success in India's Food Services.
- ❖ The projections indicate a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10-11 per cent through 2030.

Assam, Bihar households big food spenders in 2023-24, shows NSO data

- ❖ The monthly per-capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) on food items was highest in Assam (53.2 per cent), followed by Bihar (52.5 per cent), West Bengal (51.5 per cent), and Meghalaya (50.3 per cent) during the period from August 2023 to July 2024, according to the latest report of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on January 30, 2025.

Economic Survey: 8% growth needed to reach 'Viksit Bharat' goal by 2047

- ❖ India needs to achieve an average growth rate of around 8 per cent at constant prices for about a decade or two to realise its economic aspirations of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047, the Economic Survey 2024-25, released

on Friday, said.

- ❖ To achieve this growth, the investment rate must rise to around 35 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from the current 31 per cent. Additionally, it will be essential to develop the manufacturing sector further and invest in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and biotechnology.

IndiGo Ranks Among Worst Airlines Globally in AirHelp 2024 Report

- ❖ IndiGo has been ranked 103rd out of 109 airlines in AirHelp's 2024 list of the world's worst airlines, based on on-time performance, customer opinion, and compensation claims.
- ❖ The airline, with a score of 4.80, has disputed the survey's credibility. Air India was ranked 61st with a score of 6.15.
- ❖ Brussels Airlines topped the list, followed by Qatar Airways and United Airlines.

India's FDI Inflows Surpass \$1 Trillion, Solidifying Global Investment Status

- ❖ India's foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows surpassed the \$1 trillion mark between April 2000 and September 2024, cementing its status as a secure and prominent global investment hub.

IIT Kharagpur ranks 2nd in India in QS World University Rankings Sustainability 2025

- ❖ Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur has achieved 2nd rank in India and 202nd globally in the QS World University Rankings Sustainability 2025, marking a 147-place jump from 2024.
- ❖ It excelled in areas like Environment Research, Sustainability, Knowledge Exchange, Employability, Opportunity, and Governance.

India becomes 3rd largest smartphone exporter globally

- ❖ India has become the world's 3rd largest smartphone exporter, rising from 23rd in 2019.
- ❖ In November 2024, smartphone exports exceeded ₹20,000 crore, a 92% increase from ₹10,634 crore in the same month last year, surpassing PLI scheme targets.
- ❖ Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw celebrated this milestone as a "Making Bharat Story."

India Ranks 39th in Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024

- ❖ According to the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024 by the World Economic Forum

(WEF), India has climbed to 39th position among 119 countries, improving significantly from its 54th rank in 2021.

India demonstrates remarkable progress in malaria reduction: WHO

- ❖ The WHO's World Malaria Report 2024 highlights India's remarkable progress in reducing malaria cases and deaths, particularly in high-endemic states.
- ❖ Malaria cases in India dropped by 69% from 6.4 million in 2017 to 2 million in 2023, while deaths decreased by 68% from 11,100 to 3,500.
- ❖ India's community health workers, mostly women, were praised for their crucial role in reaching remote areas and driving this success.
- ❖ India officially exited the High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) group this year due to these significant achievements.
- ❖ The HBHI initiative primarily targets heavily impacted regions, with Africa accounting for 95% of global malaria deaths.

UNICEF reports 14,500 children killed in Gaza

- ❖ The UNRWA reports that one child is killed every hour in Gaza, with UNICEF data indicating 14,500 child deaths since the conflict began.
- ❖ Israel's large-scale offensive against Hamas in Gaza follows the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack that killed 1,200 Israelis and took 250 hostages.
- ❖ Gaza health authorities report a total Palestinian death toll of 45,338 from Israeli attacks.

India Ranks 49th in Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2024

- ❖ India has improved its position in the 2024 Network Readiness Index, rising 11 spots to 49th from 60th in 2023, with a score of 53.63.
- ❖ This reflects the country's enhanced focus on digital infrastructure, AI, mobile networks, and broadband connectivity.

India's Foreign Exchange Reserves cross 700 billion US dollars to place country at 4th position globally

- ❖ India has reached a significant milestone, surpassing 700 billion USD in foreign exchange reserves, ranking 4th globally.
- ❖ From 2014 to 2024, the country received over 709 billion USD in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- ❖ India improved its position on the Global Competitiveness Index, rising from 71st in 2014 to 39th in 2018, with advancements in infrastructure, market

size, and innovation.

- ❖ As the world's fifth-largest economy, India is moving towards becoming the third-largest.
- ❖ It also became the second-largest producer of crude steel and mobile phones in 2024.
- ❖ India's education sector is growing, with seven institutes now in the Top 100 in the QS World University Rankings: Asia 2025.

Raise awareness about cyber frauds, identify mule accounts: RBI report

- ❖ A Reserve Bank report on Monday stressed increasing awareness about cyber frauds and efforts to identify mule accounts amid rising digital transactions.
- ❖ With the rise in digital transactions, the incidents of cyber frauds using novel modus operandi have increased in recent times, the December edition of the Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the RBI said.

NBFCs' loan growth moderates significantly to 6.5% in H1FY24: RBI report

- ❖ Following the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increasing risk weights on NBFC lending to certain consumer credit categories as well as on bank lending to NBFCs, loan growth of shadow banks moderated significantly during H1FY25 to 6.5 per cent on a half year – on – half year (H-O-H) basis in September 2024, RBI said in its Financial Stability Report.

India has clean energy capacity over 200 GW; investments to double in 2025: IEA

- ❖ As barren arid land gets covered with solar panels and giant windmills dot the coastline, India made it to the high table of clean energy superpowers with installed capacity crossing 200 gigawatts and projections of investment doubling to over \$32 billion in 2025.
- ❖ According to the International Energy Agency, India's annual renewable capacity additions through 2030 are expected to increase more quickly than any other major economy, including China. It seeks India's capacity addition more than quadrupling from 15 GW in 2023 to 62 GW in 2030. By the end of 2024, its installed capacity touched 205 GW.

Report

India Emerges as Global Manufacturing Hub with Remarkable Growth

- ❖ India's manufacturing sector has experienced significant growth, emerging as a global leader, thanks to initiatives by the Narendra Modi government over the last decade.
- ❖ Programs like "Make in India" and Production Linked

Incentive (PLI) schemes across 14 sectors have attracted ₹1.28 lakh crore in investments and created over 8.5 lakh jobs.

- ❖ Key industries, including electronics, steel, pharmaceuticals, and defense, have seen robust growth, with toy exports up by 239% and mobile phone production surging 600%. Progress in renewable energy production, such as solar panels and wind turbines, further underscores India's rise.

Report

RBI Reports 98.12% of ₹2,000 Notes Returned

- ❖ The RBI announced that 98.12% of ₹2,000 notes have been returned to the banking system, with ₹6,691 crore worth of these notes still in circulation.

Sports News

Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah retires from international cricket

- ❖ Mahmudullah, a veteran Bangladeshi cricketer, announced his retirement from international cricket.
- ❖ He previously retired from Test cricket in 2021 and T20Is in 2024.
- ❖ Mahmudullah is Bangladesh's fourth-highest ODI run-scorer with 5,689 runs at an average of 36.46, including four centuries in ICC tournaments.
- ❖ His notable centuries occurred during the 2015 World Cup, 2017 Champions Trophy, and 2023 ODI World Cup.
- ❖ Mahmudullah played a total of 239 ODIs, 50 Tests, and 141 T20Is over his 17-year career.
- ❖ He debuted in ODIs in 2007 and became a key player, significantly contributing to Bangladesh's win over England in the 2011 World Cup.
- ❖ He is the only Bangladeshi batter to have scored three centuries in ODI World Cups.

Jharkhand beat Haryana to win 15th Hockey India Women National Championship

- ❖ Hockey Jharkhand won the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship.
- ❖ They defeated defending champions Hockey Haryana 4-3 in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw in regulation time.
- ❖ Pramodni Lakra scored for Jharkhand in the 44th minute.
- ❖ Captain Rani Rampal scored for Haryana in the 42nd minute.
- ❖ In the shootout, Rajni Kerketta, Nirali Kujur, Binima Dhan, and captain Alebla Rani Toppo successfully converted their attempts.

- ❖ Goalkeeper Anjali Bhinjala made two crucial saves to secure the victory for Jharkhand.
- ❖ In the bronze medal match, Hockey Mizoram defeated Hockey Maharashtra 2-1, with Manju Chorsiya scoring the late winner in the 59th minute.

Sunil Chhetri makes surprise return to football at 40

- ❖ Sunil Chhetri, legendary Indian footballer, has come out of retirement from international football.
- ❖ His return followed a discussion with Indian head coach Manolo Marquez.
- ❖ Chhetri has been included in the 26-member Indian squad for the March FIFA International Window.
- ❖ He is set to play a friendly match against the Maldives on March 19.
- ❖ Chhetri's return is crucial as India prepares for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers against Bangladesh on March 25.
- ❖ Chhetri is the fourth-highest international goal scorer with 94 goals.
- ❖ He had previously announced his retirement from the national team in June 2024.
- ❖ The squad includes goalkeepers Amrinder Singh, Gurmeet Singh, and Vishal Kaith among others.
- ❖ The match preparations are being organized by the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

India Wins ICC Champions Trophy 2025 defeating New Zealand in Final

- ❖ India has won the ICC Champions Trophy for the third time.
- ❖ The final was played against New Zealand.
- ❖ India successfully chased down a target of 252 runs, finishing at 252/6.
- ❖ With this win, India clinched its third ICC Champions Trophy title, adding to its previous victories in 2002 (shared with Sri Lanka) and 2013 (defeating England).
- ❖ This triumph reinforces India's ability to perform under pressure and excel in global tournaments.
- ❖ Captain Rohit Sharma received accolades for his leadership, marking his second consecutive ICC title win in two years.
- ❖ He also declared Player of the Match and Rachin Ravindra (263 Runs) from New Zealand declared Player of the Tournament.

Khelo India Winter Games 2025 to commence from March 9 in Gulmarg

- ❖ The Khelo India Winter Games 2025 will take place from March 9 to 12 in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir.
- ❖ The event was initially scheduled for February 22-25

but was postponed due to insufficient snowfall.

- ❖ Chief Minister Omar Abdullah launched the official website for the event, ensuring real-time updates and information.
- ❖ Highlights of the event include a night skiing demonstration, fireworks, a laser show, cultural programs, competitive events, and an award ceremony.
- ❖ The games will feature four major sports: Alpine Skiing, Ski Mountaineering, Snowboarding, and Nordic Skiing, held at Kongdoori and Gulmarg Club in Gulmarg.

Steve Smith announces shock retirement from ODI cricket

- ❖ Steve Smith announced his retirement from One Day International (ODI) cricket after Australia's defeat to India in the semi-final of the Champions Trophy 2025.
- ❖ The 35-year-old will continue to play in Test and T20 formats for Australia.
- ❖ Smith expressed gratitude for his career, highlighting memorable moments, including winning two World Cups.
- ❖ Smith concluded his ODI career with 5,800 runs from 170 matches, including 12 centuries, and participated in winning the World Cup in 2015 and 2023.
- ❖ He briefly served as captain after succeeding Michael Clarke in 2015 and returned to leadership during his final ODI match, filling in for an injured Pat Cummins.

Indian Table Tennis great Sharath Kamal announces retirement from the sport

- ❖ Achanta Sharath Kamal, India's iconic table tennis star, announced his retirement from professional table tennis.
- ❖ His final competition will be the WTT Star Contender event in Chennai from March 25 to 30, 2025.
- ❖ At 42 years old, Kamal has had a distinguished career with:
 1. Ten National Championships.
 2. Five Olympic appearances.
 3. 13 Commonwealth Games medals, including gold in 2006.
 4. Four medals at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games (three golds, one silver).
 5. Career-high world ranking of 30.
- ❖ He is currently India's second-ranked player, with a narrowing gap between him and emerging players.
- ❖ His legacy includes inspiring countless athletes and leaving a lasting impact on Indian table tennis.

Bangladesh cricketer Mushfiquir Rahim retires from ODI after Champions Trophy 2025 exit

- ❖ Mushfiquir Rahim, a long-serving cricketer for Bangladesh, announced his retirement from ODI cricket following the team's exit from the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.
- ❖ He disclosed his retirement via an Instagram post, expressing his dedication and commitment to his country during his career.
- ❖ He debuted in ODI cricket in August 2006 and played 274 matches, scoring 7,795 runs with an average of 36.42, including nine centuries and 49 fifties.
- ❖ Bangladesh's performance in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 was disappointing, as they faced defeats against India and New Zealand, and their final match against Pakistan was abandoned due to rain.
- ❖ Rahim's notable achievements in ODIs included an impactful unbeaten 56 runs against India in 2007.

Virat Kohli becomes fastest to hit 14,000 ODI runs

- ❖ Virat Kohli became the fastest batter to reach 14,000 ODI runs during the Champions Trophy 2025 match against Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.
- ❖ Kohli got to his 51st century in ODIs on Sunday to help India defeat Pakistan by six wickets.
- ❖ The 36-year-old Kohli surpassed Sachin Tendulkar (350 innings), by achieving the feat in only 287 innings. Kohli got to the landmark when he reached 15 runs in the chase against Pakistan.
- ❖ Kohli is only the third batter ever to reach the milestone after Tendulkar and Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara who crossed the milestone in 378 innings in 2015.
- ❖ The former India captain only took 10 innings to cross from 13,000 to 14,000.
- ❖ In September 2023, Kohli reached his 13,000th ODI run, incidentally while playing Pakistan in the Asia Cup in Colombo.

20-year-old Indian student Vishvaa Rajakumar wins Memory League World Championship 2025

- ❖ Vishvaa Rajakumar, a 20-year-old Indian student, won the Memory League World Championship 2025.
- ❖ He memorized the order of 80 random numbers in 13.50 seconds and 30 images in 8.40 seconds.
- ❖ The competition is an intense online event, and Rajakumar is ranked No. 1 with a perfect score of 5,000.
- ❖ He is a student at the Manakula Vinayagar Institute of Technology in Puducherry.

- ❖ Rajakumar emphasizes the importance of hydration for optimal cognitive performance, stating it helps maintain clarity during subvocalization.
- ❖ After completing his college education, Rajakumar plans to become a memory trainer and establish a memory institution in India to teach others memory techniques.

IOA forms ad hoc committee to oversee boxing affairs

- ❖ The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) formed a five-member ad hoc committee to manage boxing affairs in India due to the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) failing to hold timely elections.
- ❖ The ad hoc committee will be led by Madhukant Pathak and includes members Rajesh Bhandari, DP Bhatt, Shiva Thapa, and Virendra Singh Thakur.
- ❖ The BFI condemned IOA's decision as "illegal" and plans to petition the Delhi High Court to challenge the order.
- ❖ IOA President PT Usha emphasized the need for immediate corrective measures to protect the interests of Indian boxing.
- ❖ The ad hoc committee's responsibilities include holding elections, overseeing daily operations, and ensuring neutrality and independence in their actions.
- ❖ BFI countered IOA's claims, stating they had initiated the election process with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and that IOA acted without proper jurisdiction and consultation.

12 Freestyle Chess Players Club plan to form independent association for players

- ❖ The Freestyle Chess Players Club members plan to form an independent association with a legal team to represent their interests in response to recent conflicts with FIDE, the international chess governing body.
- ❖ FIDE demanded players sign a questionable document after the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, restricting participation in non-FIDE events and imposing a potential ban from World Championship cycles.
- ❖ Players, including minors, were notified by FIDE's Legal Director without a chance for legal counsel to review the demands.
- ❖ Organizer Jan Henric Buettner criticized FIDE's actions as harassment and coercive tactics that infringe on players' rights to choose events.
- ❖ During a meeting, the players unanimously agreed to ignore FIDE's demands, asserting their freedom to participate in various events.

- ❖ The winner of the 2025 Grand Slam Tour, set to take place in December in South Africa, will be titled "Freestyle Chess Champion," a decision attributed solely to the players' choice.

Kyrian Jacquet Wins the 2025 Chennai Open Tennis Single Title

- ❖ Kyrian Jacquet of France won the 2025 Chennai Open Tennis men's singles title.
- ❖ Jacquet defeated Elias Ymer of Sweden in the final held on February 9, 2025, at the SDAT Tennis Stadium in Nungambakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ This tournament was part of the ATP 100 Challenger event and took place from February 3 to February 9, 2025.
- ❖ The victory marked Kyrian Jacquet's first ATP title at the age of 23.
- ❖ Jacquet secured the win with a score of 7(7)-6(1), 6-4 against Ymer, who was ranked World No. 332.
- ❖ In the semifinals, Jacquet defeated Dalibor Svrčina of Czechia 6-4, 6-1 while Ymer overcame top seed Billy Harris of Britain 7-6(5), 7-6(2).
- ❖ The doubles title was won by the Japanese duo Shintaro Mochizuki and Kaito Uesugi, who beat the Indian pair Ramkumar Ramanathan and Saketh Myneni 6-4, 6-4.
- ❖ The ATP Challenger Tour is the second highest level of men's professional tennis organized by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), serving as a stepping stone to the higher ATP Tour events.

Meghalaya to host next edition of National Games in 2027

- ❖ Meghalaya will host the National Games in 2027, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of its statehood.
- ❖ The announcement was made by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha in a letter to Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, highlighting Meghalaya's commitment to sports and capability to host large multi-sport events.
- ❖ The state won five medals during the successful National Games campaign in Uttarakhand.
- ❖ Preparations for the next National Games have already begun, with nearly 40 sports disciplines planned.
- ❖ Sporting events will take place in Shillong, Tura, and Jowai, representing different regions within the state.

Pankaj Advani Wins Indian Snooker Championship, 36th National Gold Overall

- ❖ Pankaj Advani won his 36th national title and 10th men's snooker crown at the Yashwant Club.

- ❖ He defeated Brijesh Damani despite losing the opening frame, ultimately winning the match 5-1.
- ❖ The tournament is a crucial selection event for the Asian and World Championships.
- ❖ Advani's performance was characterized by consistency and precision; he achieved an impressive 84 break in the final frame.
- ❖ The tournament held high stakes as it determines national representatives for international competitions.
- ❖ Advani had previously lost to Damani in the group stage, where he won only one frame.
- ❖ A pivotal moment occurred in the round of 48 when Advani, down 4-2, made a comeback to win the match 5-4, saving his tournament bid.
- ❖ Advani expressed excitement about representing India in both billiards and snooker again.
- ❖ The Asian Snooker Championship is set to begin on February 15, providing both players an opportunity to compete internationally.

Kevin Durant becomes the 8th player in NBA history to score 30,000 points

- ❖ Kevin Durant became the eighth player in NBA history to score 30,000 points, achieving this milestone against the Memphis Grizzlies with a free throw late in the third quarter.
- ❖ At 36 years old, Durant plays for the Phoenix Suns and was recently selected for his 15th All-Star team.
- ❖ He joins an elite group that includes LeBron James, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Karl Malone, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, Dirk Nowitzki, and Wilt Chamberlain, with Julius Erving also included when combining NBA and ABA points.
- ❖ He is a four-time NBA scoring champion and continues to be an elite shotmaker, averaging about 27 points per game with a shooting percentage of 52%.
- ❖ In the game where he reached 30,000 points, he finished with 34 points on 12-of-18 shooting, although the Suns lost 119-112.

Chandigarh's Vanshita becomes 81 kg winner in women's weightlifting event

- ❖ Vanshita Verma, a 23-year-old weightlifter from Chandigarh, won the 81kg champion title with a total lift of 208 kg at the National Games in Dehradun.
- ❖ She credited her success to advice from Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Mirabai Chanu, who encouraged her to focus on and enjoy weightlifting.
- ❖ Verma began her weightlifting career in 2018 at the

Sector 42 Sports Complex under coach Karanveer Singh Buttar.

- ❖ She won her first junior national title in the 76kg category in 2021 and her first senior national title in the 81kg category in 2022.
- ❖ She has consistently performed well, winning medals in various championships, including a silver medal at the nationals and a gold at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship.
- ❖ Verma has been training under Indian Railways coach Christopher VA for the last two years.
- ❖ Coach Buttar noted her adaptability and natural lifting style, contributing to her growth as an athlete.
- ❖ The gold medal at the National Games marked Chandigarh's first gold medal at this event, with hopes for more victories.

Australian Cricketer Marcus Stoinis Announces Retirement From ODI

- ❖ Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis has announced his immediate retirement from ODI cricket.
- ❖ He will not participate in the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy.
- ❖ The 35-year-old will focus on T20 cricket and remains available for selection.
- ❖ Stoinis played a significant role in Australia's victory at the 2023 ODI World Cup.
- ❖ His retirement decision comes amid a challenging landscape for the Australian team, which is facing injuries to key players including Mitchell Marsh, Pat Cummins, and Josh Hazlewood.
- ❖ Stoinis played 71 ODIs, scoring 1495 runs at an average of 26.69, with a top score of *146 vs New Zealand (2017, Auckland)**.
- ❖ He also took 48 wickets at a bowling average of 43.12.

Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers win men's Hockey India League 2024-25 Title

- ❖ The Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers triumphed in the 6th Men's Hockey India League 2024-25, defeating the Hyderabad Toofans 4-3 in a closely contested final.
- ❖ The final took place on February 1, 2025, at the Birsamunda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Odisha.
- ❖ This victory marked the first title for the Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, earning them a prize of Rs 3 crore.
- ❖ The Hyderabad Toofans, as runners-up, received Rs 2 crore in prize money.
- ❖ The tournament ran from December 28, 2024, to

February 1, 2025, at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela.

- ❖ Additionally, the Odisha Warriors clinched the inaugural Women's Hockey India League 2024-25 title by beating the Soorma Hockey Club 2-1 in the final.
- ❖ The first edition of the Women's Hockey India League took place on January 26, 2025, at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi.

About Hockey India League

- ❖ The Hockey India League for both men and women is organized by Hockey India.
- ❖ It is a premier club-based tournament in India that includes participation from foreign players.
- ❖ The first edition of the Men's Hockey India League took place in 2013 and continued annually until 2017.
- ❖ After a seven-year hiatus, the 6th edition of the Men's Hockey India League was held in 2024-25 in Rourkela, Odisha.

BCCI Will Have New Secretary and Treasurer

- ❖ Devjit Saikia and Prabhtej Singh Bhatia are poised to take on important roles in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as secretary and treasurer, respectively, with their elections anticipated to be a mere formality.

West Bengal Wins 33rd Santosh Trophy Title

- ❖ In the 2024 Santosh Trophy final, West Bengal secured a record 33rd title with a 1-0 victory over Kerala.
- ❖ The match, held at Gachibowli Stadium, saw Robi Hansda score the winning goal in injury time, also finishing as the tournament's top scorer.

ICC Players of the Month for December 2024

- ❖ Indian Test vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah won the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s Men's Player of the Month award for December 2024.
- ❖ Australian all-rounder Annabel Sutherland clinched the prize in the women's category.

Karnataka Clinch Vijay Hazare Trophy For Record 5th Time

- ❖ Karnataka defeated Vidarbha by 36 runs in the final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy and clinched their fifth title at the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara on Saturday, January 18. Mayank Agarwal and Co. had a brilliant campaign in the tournament as they finished the group stage with six victories in seven games.
- ❖ They defeated Baroda in the quarterfinal by five runs

and Haryana by five wickets in the semifinal before defeating the unbeaten Vidarbha in the final to end their five-year trophy drought.

Melie Kerr Clinches ICC Women's Player of the Year Award

- ❖ In 2024, Melie Kerr won the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy (also known as the ICC Women's Player of the Year), awarded to the best player of the year.
- ❖ Her all-round performance, including explosive batting and lethal leg-spin bowling, made her stand out, especially during the ICC Women's T20 World Cup where she contributed to New Zealand's victory.

India's Pavan Kampelli secures Bronze medal in e-football event at 2024 Asian Esports Games in Bangkok

- ❖ India's Pavan Kampelli clinched a historic bronze medal in the e-football event at the 2024 Asian Esports Games held in Bangkok, Thailand, marking India's first-ever medal at the tournament.
- ❖ On his path to victory, Pavan defeated Asgard Azizi from Team Indonesia with a score of 2-1.
- ❖ Known by his gaming alias 'Mr. Tomboy,' Pavan had recently won the WAVES Esports Championship 2025 for eFootball last month.

World Chess Championship: Indian Grandmaster Dommaraju ends game in draw

- ❖ In the World Chess Championship, Indian Grandmaster Dommaraju Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren of China played to a draw after 72 moves at World Resorts Sentosa, Singapore.
- ❖ Despite holding a clear advantage, Gukesh couldn't secure a win, leading both players to agree on a draw.
- ❖ At the halfway mark of the 14-game series, they are tied at 3.5 points each, with one win and four draws apiece.

Gukesh, Ding Liren to face off in 8th game of World Chess Championship

- ❖ Indian Grandmaster Dommaraju Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren of China are set to compete in the eighth game of the 14-game World Chess Championship series this afternoon at Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore.
- ❖ Yesterday's seventh game, the longest so far at five hours and 20 minutes, ended in a draw after 72 moves, with Gukesh unable to capitalize on a clear advantage.
- ❖ At the halfway point, both players are tied at 3.5 points, each needing four more points to claim the title.

Asian Women's Handball Championship opens in the national capital

- ❖ The 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship kicked off today at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, marking India's debut as host for the event.
- ❖ Eight teams are competing in the tournament. In today's Group B matches, India defeated Hong Kong China 31-28, while Japan dominated Iran 34-14.
- ❖ In Group A, Kazakhstan edged past China 28-26, and South Korea overwhelmed Singapore 47-5.
- ❖ The top four teams from this championship will secure spots in the IHF Women's Handball World Championship 2025, set to take place in Germany and the Netherlands next November and December.

Pavan Kampelli Wins Bronze in eFootball at Asian Esports Games

- ❖ Pavan Kampelli has made history by winning a bronze medal in eFootball at the 2024 Asian Esports Games in Bangkok.
- ❖ This milestone marks India's first-ever podium finish in the eFootball category, a significant achievement in the nation's esports history.

Women's Junior Hockey: India crushes Bangladesh 13-1

- ❖ India's Women's Junior Hockey team defeated Bangladesh 13-1 in the Asia Cup in Muscat, Oman, with Mumtaz Khan scoring four goals and hat-tricks from Kanika Siwach and Deepika.
- ❖ Manisha, Beauty Dungdung, and Sakshi Rana also contributed to the dominant win.
- ❖ India will face Malaysia today at 8:30 PM IST, aiming to defend their title and secure a spot in the Junior World Cup in Chile.

Norris Wins Abu Dhabi GP, Ends McLaren's 26-Year Wait

- ❖ Lando Norris secured McLaren's first Formula 1 constructors' title in 26 years by winning the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.
- ❖ The race began with drama as champion Max Verstappen collided with Oscar Piastri's McLaren at the first corner, causing both cars to spin.

9-year-old Aarit Kapil becomes youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster

- ❖ Nine-year-old Delhi boy Aarit Kapil has become the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster as he emerged victorious against Raset Ziatdinov of United States in the ninth and penultimate round of the KIIT

International open tournament here.

- ❖ At 9 years, 2 months and 18 days, Aarit is the youngest Indian and third in the world to beat a GM under the classical time control.

Saudi Arabia to host 2034 Men's Football World Cup: FIFA

- ❖ FIFA has announced Saudi Arabia as the host of the 2034 Men's Football World Cup, while Spain, Portugal, and Morocco will jointly host the 2030 tournament.
- ❖ To mark the World Cup's 100th anniversary, three matches in 2030 will also be held in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay.
- ❖ These decisions were finalized during FIFA's Extraordinary Congress, with votes cast by all 211 member nations.

Sports

Khelo India Winter Games 2025 set to showcase Winter Games across Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir

- ❖ The Khelo India Winter Games 2025 will take place in two phases: Ladakh will host ice events (hockey, skiing) from January 23-27, and Jammu & Kashmir will host snow events (alpine skiing, snowboarding) from February 22-25.
- ❖ Union Sports Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya highlighted the games' role in promoting winter sports and identifying talent for the 2026 Winter Olympics.
- ❖ This marks the second consecutive year Ladakh is hosting part of the event, following the 2024 edition where Leh hosted ice events and Gulmarg hosted snow events.

FIFA World Cup Hosts Unveiled for 2030, 2034

- ❖ FIFA names Saudi Arabia as 2034 World Cup host; Spain, Portugal and Morocco to co-host 2030 edition.

Khelo India Winter Games 2025 Leh and Gulmarg Announced as Hosts

- ❖ The Khelo India Winter Games 2025 will be held from January 23-27 in Ladakh (ice events) and February 22-25 in Jammu & Kashmir (snow events).
- ❖ These games will kickstart the Khelo India season, followed by the Youth & Para Games in Bihar in April and the University Games later.
- ❖ Since their launch in 2020 with 1,000 participants, the Winter Games have seen increasing popularity, with over 1,500 athletes competing in 2022 and 1,200 participants, including 700 athletes, in 2024.

Afridi Becomes Youngest to Achieve 100 Wickets in All Formats

- ❖ Shaheen Shah Afridi became the youngest and first Pakistani bowler to take 100 wickets in all three cricket formats, achieving the milestone in the first T20I against South Africa.

World Squash Championships: Match between India & Hong Kong-China for 5th-place finish underway

- ❖ In the World Squash Team Championships, India is leading 1-0 in the Men's match against hosts Hong Kong-China for a fifth-place finish. Yesterday, India defeated Germany 2-0 in the fifth to eighth-place playoffs.
- ❖ Meanwhile, the Indian Women's team, after a 3-0 loss to England, can only finish seventh or eighth. They will play France in their final match today at 3 PM IST.

Riya Shirish Thatte clinches Gold medal in Women's 25m Pistol Final of 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions

- ❖ Riya Shirish Thatte of Aurangabad won her first senior national title by securing gold in the women's 25m pistol final at the 67th National Shooting Championship in New Delhi.
- ❖ She defeated Punjab's Simranpreet Kaur Brar 7-2 in a shoot-off after both tied with 31 hits.
- ❖ Olympian Rahi Sarnobat finished third. The pistol and shotgun events are in New Delhi, while Bhopal hosts the rifle competitions.

India wins Women's Junior Asia Cup 2024 in penalty shootout against China

- ❖ India clinched the Women's Junior Asia Cup 2024 title in Muscat, Oman, defeating China 3-2 in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw in regulation time.
- ❖ Goalkeeper Nidhi's three crucial saves and goals by Sakshi Rana, Ishika, and Sunelita Toppo secured the victory. Hockey India announced ₹2 lakh for each player and ₹1 lakh for support staff.
- ❖ Deepika Sehrawat emerged as the tournament's top scorer with 12 goals.
- ❖ India successfully defended their title, having won their first Junior Asia Cup last year against South Korea.

India Clinches Women's Junior Asia Cup Title

- ❖ India won the Women's Hockey Junior Asia Cup 2024 title, defeating China in a thrilling penalty shootout in Muscat, Oman, securing their second consecutive victory in the tournament.

World Chess Champion Gukesh withdraws from FIDE World Rapid & Blitz Championship

- ❖ Newly crowned World Chess Champion D. Gukesh has withdrawn from the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship after his victory over Ding Liren.
- ❖ Arjun Erigaisi and R. Praggnanandhaa will represent India at the event, featuring top players like Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana, Ian Nepomniachtchi, and Hikaru Nakamura.
- ❖ The tournament runs from December 26-31 in New York.

Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships 2024 to begin in Doha, Qatar

- ❖ The Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships 2024 begin today in Doha, Qatar, featuring 40 categories. India's 28-member contingent includes 15 junior and 13 youth lifters.
- ❖ Martina Devi Maibam, who secured sixth place at the junior world championships, and Dhanush Loganathan, a bronze medalist at the IWF Junior World Championships, are among India's key medal prospects.

Pranav Venkatesh wins FIDE World U-18 Youth Rapid & Blitz Chess titles

- ❖ India's Grandmaster Pranav Venkatesh made history by winning the FIDE World Under-18 Youth Rapid and Blitz titles in Slovenia.
- ❖ He secured gold in Rapid with 9.5 points and dominated the Blitz category with 19.5 points.
- ❖ Russia's Alexander Khripachenko and Dmitry Mochalov took silver in Rapid and Blitz, respectively. Pranav was the only Grandmaster in the event.

Ace off spinner R Ashwin announces retirement from international cricket

- ❖ India's star all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin, 38, has retired from international cricket. He took 537 wickets in 106 Tests, becoming India's second-highest wicket-taker after Anil Kumble.
- ❖ Ashwin also played 116 ODIs and 65 T20Is, claiming 156 and 72 wickets, respectively.
- ❖ While retiring from international formats, he will continue playing T20 tournaments, including representing Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2025.

India Men's Hockey Team Moves to 5th in Latest FIH Rankings for 2025

- ❖ India ranked 5th in FIH rankings with 2,955 points, reflecting consistent improvement. India and Australia will begin their Pro League seasons in February 2025, in Bhubaneswar and Sydney respectively.

- ❖ Rankings use the Elo system, factoring match results, opponent rankings, and importance.

India to face Bangladesh in U-19 Women's T20 Asia Cup final

- ❖ India will face Bangladesh in the final of the Under-19 Women's T20 Asia Cup tomorrow in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at 7 am IST.
- ❖ India reached the final by defeating Sri Lanka by four wickets in a Super 4 match, chasing 99 runs in 14.5 overs after Sri Lanka scored 98/9 in 20 overs.
- ❖ Bangladesh secured their spot by beating Nepal by nine wickets in another Super 4 match.

Youngest Brazilian Joao Fonseca wins 2024 Next Gen ATP Finals

- ❖ Brazil's Joao Fonseca won the 2024 Next Gen ATP Finals in Jeddah, defeating the USA's Learner Tien in a four-set match (2-4, 4-3, 4-0, 4-2).
- ❖ At 18, Fonseca, ranked world No. 145, became the second-youngest champion after Jannik Sinner (2019), the first Brazilian to win, and the lowest-ranked player to claim the title in the tournament's history.
- ❖ The event showcases the season's top male players aged 20 and under.

Anahat Singh picks up her 9th PSA Challenger title in 2024

- ❖ India's Anahat Singh, 16, won her ninth PSA Challenger title of 2024, claiming the Western India Slam Women's Singles crown in Mumbai.
- ❖ She defeated top seed Akanksha Salunkhe 3-0 (11-8, 11-8, 11-8) in the final.
- ❖ In the men's category, Malaysia's Amneeshenraj Chandaran defeated Czechia's Viktor Byrtus to clinch the title after India's Veer Chotrani exited in the semi-finals. The event featured over 700 players from 12 countries.

Delhi to Host 2025 Para Athletics World Championships

- ❖ India will host the 2025 Para Athletics World Championships, the first time the event takes place in the country.
- ❖ Set for September 26 to October 5, 2025, the championships will be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi, marking the 12th edition of the competition.

India Shines at Junior World Pencak Silat Championship: Nusrath Fatima Wins Silver for Nation

- ❖ Nusrath Fatima from Kargil won a silver medal at the 5th Junior World Pencak Silat Championship in Abu Dhabi, competing in the 58 kg Junior category.

- ❖ Her achievement highlights India's growing presence in global combat sports and the untapped potential in regions like Ladakh.
- ❖ Praised by Syed Mehraj Uddin Shah, General Secretary of the District Kargil Olympic Association, Nusrath's success showcases the importance of grassroots sports development and the impact of improved sports infrastructure in remote areas.
- ❖ This milestone underscores India's rising strength in traditional martial arts and global sports aspirations.

Sairaj Pardeshi bags one Gold and two Silver medals at Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Doha

- ❖ India's Sairaj Pardeshi won one gold and two silver medals at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Doha, setting national youth records in the 81kg men's category with a total lift of 310kg.
- ❖ He claimed gold overall, silver in snatch (139kg), and silver in clean and jerk (171kg).
- ❖ Meanwhile, Sanjana secured five silver medals in the women's 76kg category, lifting a total of 210kg (90kg in snatch, 120kg in clean and jerk). These achievements mark a proud moment for India in weightlifting.

78th Senior Men's National Football Championship: Odisha & Delhi secure last two quarter-final berths for Santosh Trophy

- ❖ In the 78th Santosh Trophy 2024-25, Odisha and Delhi secured the last two quarter-final spots.
- ❖ Odisha will face Group A winners West Bengal, and Delhi will play Manipur in the quarter-finals.
- ❖ Meghalaya, finishing second in their group, will meet defending champions Services, while unbeaten Kerala will take on Jammu and Kashmir.

Ganemat Sekhon clinches second consecutive national title in women's skeet competition

- ❖ At the 67th National Shooting Championship in Delhi, Ganemat Sekhon of Punjab retained her women's skeet title, hitting 50/60 targets. Asees Chhina took silver, and Olympian Raiza Dhillon won bronze.
- ❖ Sekhon also won team gold with Parinaaz Dhaliwal and Jasmeen Kaur. In men's skeet, Bhavtegh Singh Gill claimed his first senior national title with 54 hits, followed by Fatehbir Singh Shergill (silver) and Mairaj Ahmad Khan (bronze).
- ❖ In the junior events, Haryana's Ishan Singh Libra won junior men's skeet in a 6-5 shoot-off against Gill, while Raiza Dhillon secured junior women's skeet gold with 53 hits, ahead of Vanshika Tiwari (silver) and Yashasvi Rathore (bronze).

78th Senior Men's National Football Championship: Odisha & Delhi secure last two quarter-final berths for Santosh Trophy

- ❖ In the 78th Santosh Trophy 2024-25, Odisha and Delhi secured the last two quarter-final spots.
- ❖ Odisha will face Group A winners West Bengal, and Delhi will play Manipur in the quarter-finals.
- ❖ Meghalaya, finishing second in their group, will meet defending champions Services, while unbeaten Kerala will take on Jammu and Kashmir.

Ganemat Sekhon clinches second consecutive national title in women's skeet competition

- ❖ At the 67th National Shooting Championship in Delhi, Ganemat Sekhon of Punjab retained her women's skeet title, hitting 50/60 targets. Asees Chhina took silver, and Olympian Raiza Dhillon won bronze.
- ❖ Sekhon also won team gold with Parinaaz Dhaliwal and Jasmeen Kaur. In men's skeet, Bhavtegh Singh Gill claimed his first senior national title with 54 hits, followed by Fatehbir Singh Shergill (silver) and Mairaj Ahmad Khan (bronze).
- ❖ In the junior events, Haryana's Ishan Singh Libra won junior men's skeet in a 6-5 shoot-off against Gill, while Raiza Dhillon secured junior women's skeet gold with 53 hits, ahead of Vanshika Tiwari (silver) and Yashasvi Rathore (bronze).

India Squad For Champions Trophy 2025

- ❖ Joe Root returns to England's ODI squad after their group-stage exit in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.
- ❖ The 33-year-old has scored 6522 runs in 171 ODIs at an average of 47.60, with 16 centuries and 39 fifties.
- ❖ Ben Stokes was not selected due to a hamstring injury sustained in the third Test against New Zealand.

Maheshwari Chauhan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka win Skeet Mixed Team Title for Rajasthan at National Shooting Championship

- ❖ Maheshwari Chauhan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka of Rajasthan won the skeet mixed team title at the National Shooting Championship in New Delhi, narrowly defeating Uttar Pradesh's Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Areeba Khan 44-43 in the final.
- ❖ Punjab's Ganemat Sekhon and Abhay Singh Sekhon secured bronze.

Torch rally for 38th National Games set to begin in Uttarakhand

- ❖ The torch rally for the 38th National Games begins in Uttarakhand today, covering 3,823 km across 99 locations in 13 districts over 35 days.

- ❖ Almora and Pauri will host the most relay centers with 14 each.
- ❖ The rally will conclude with the National Games' inauguration on January 28.

India to Compete in Physical Disabled Cricket Champions Trophy 2025 in Colombo

- ❖ India will participate in the Physical Disabled Cricket Champions Trophy 2025 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from January 12 to 21, competing against England, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.
- ❖ The probable squad will undergo training in Jaipur in early January, with the final team selected later.
- ❖ DCCI General Secretary Ravi Chauhan called the event a proud moment, emphasizing its role in promoting inclusivity in sports.

Martina Devi Wins Silver in Asian Junior Weightlifting Championship in Doha

- ❖ Martina Devi won silver in the women's junior +87kg category at the Asian Junior Championships in Doha, lifting a total of 225 kg.
- ❖ The 18-year-old from Manipur also secured a silver in clean-and-jerk and a bronze in snatch.

Sachin Tendulkar Accepts Prestigious MCC's Membership

- ❖ Fred Oldfield, President of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), announced that Sachin Tendulkar has accepted the Honorary Cricket Membership of MCC in recognition of his exceptional contributions to the sport.
- ❖ Tendulkar, who retired in 2013, holds the record as the highest run-scorer in international cricket with 34,357 runs.

Dr. Sandip Shah Appointed A Chairperson of NABL

- ❖ Dr. Sandip Shah, a renowned medical professional and visionary leader, has been appointed as the Chairperson of the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL), a key board under the Quality Council of India (QCI).

Bumrah Breaks Record for Fastest 200 Wickets by an Indian

- ❖ Jasprit Bumrah became the fastest Indian to reach 200 Test wickets, achieving the milestone in 8484 balls with an impressive bowling average under 20.
- ❖ He took four wickets on Day 4 of the fourth Test in Melbourne, making him the 4th quickest overall to reach 200 wickets in Test cricket.

Kerala Wins Senior National Men's Handball Championship

- ❖ Kerala won their first-ever Senior National Men's Handball Championship title by defeating Chandigarh 34-31 in Changanassery.

Sports

Magnus Carlsen & Ian Nepomniachtchi share World Blitz Chess Championship title 2024

- ❖ At the 2024 World Blitz Chess Championship in New York, Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi shared the title after a tied final match. Carlsen, initially leading 2-0, saw Nepomniachtchi level the score 2-2, forcing tiebreaks.
- ❖ Following three sudden-death draws, they agreed to share the title. In the Women's section, China's Ju Wenjun defeated Lei Tingjie in the final, securing her second title after five drawn games.
- ❖ India's R. Vaishali reached the semifinals with a 2.5-1.5 comeback win against Zhu Jiner but lost 0.5-2.5 to Ju Wenjun.

GM Rameshbabu Vaishali tops table to qualify for knockout stage in FIDE World Blitz Championship 2024

- ❖ GM Rameshbabu Vaishali advanced to the knockout stage of the FIDE World Blitz Championship 2024 after topping the Women's section with 9.5 points from 11 rounds in New York, making her the sole Indian to progress.
- ❖ She ended the day with a draw against Carissa Yip. GM Humpy Koneru narrowly missed qualifying, finishing 9th. In the Open section, GM Arjun Erigaisi, GM R. Praggnanandhaa, and GM Anish Giri also failed to reach the top eight.
- ❖ The championship features 13 rounds in the Open and 11 in the Women's section, with the top eight in each moving to a knockout stage.
- ❖ Blitz games have a 3-minute time control with a 2-second increment per move.

Govt Scheme

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana Crosses Milestone of 10 Lakh Installations

- ❖ The Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), launched in February 2024, aims to solarize 1 crore (10 million) households by March 2027.
- ❖ As of March 10, 2025, the scheme has achieved over 10 lakh (1 million) installations, equating to approximately

3 GW of rooftop solar capacity.

- ❖ The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has set a target to reach 20 lakh (2 million) installations by October 2025.
- ❖ This indicates that by the end of the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25), the ministry expects to have completed around 15 lakh (1.5 million) installations, achieving 50% of the overall target.
- ❖ To facilitate this expansion, the government is providing subsidies of up to ₹78,000 for rooftop solar systems up to 3 kW, significantly reducing installation costs for beneficiaries.
- ❖ Additionally, collateral-free loans up to ₹2 lakh are available at a subsidized interest rate of 6.75%, making rooftop solar installations more accessible.
- ❖ The PMSGMBY also mandates the use of domestically produced solar modules and cells, aligning with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative to support local manufacturing.
- ❖ The scheme's phased implementation is on track, with projections to reach 40 lakh (4 million) installations by March 2026 and the full target of 1 crore (10 million) households by March 2027.

Pilot Projects on Hydrogen Fuelled Buses and Trucks Launched under the National Green Hydrogen Mission

- ❖ The Government of India has initiated five pilot projects under the National Green Hydrogen Mission aimed at using hydrogen in buses and trucks.
- ❖ The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy issued guidelines for these pilot projects, which invite proposals for hydrogen-based vehicles, routes, and refueling stations.
- ❖ A total of 37 vehicles, including 15 hydrogen fuel cell-based and 22 hydrogen internal combustion engine-based vehicles, will be deployed across 10 different routes.
- ❖ Routes include Greater Noida-Delhi-Agra, Bhubaneswar-Konark-Puri, and Ahmedabad-Vadodara-Surat among others.
- ❖ Major companies such as TATA Motors Ltd, Reliance Industries Limited, and NTPC have been awarded the projects.
- ❖ The total financial support for these projects amounts to approximately Rs. 208 crore from the Government of India.
- ❖ These pilot projects are expected to be commissioned in the next 18-24 months.

National Green Hydrogen Mission

- ❖ The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched on January 4, 2023, with an outlay of Rs. 19,744 crores up to FY 2029-30.
- ❖ The mission aims to promote self-reliance in clean energy, contribute to decarbonization, and enhance India's leadership in green hydrogen technology.

Cabinet approves Revision of Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP)

- ❖ The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Revision of the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP).
- ❖ The scheme includes three main components:
 1. National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)
 2. Livestock Health & Disease Control (LH&DC)
 3. Pashu Aushadhi (a newly added component)
- ❖ LHDCP has three sub-components:
 1. Critical Animal Disease Control Programme (CADCP)
 2. Establishment and Strengthening of existing Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries - Mobile Veterinary Unit (ESVHD-MVU)
 3. Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD)
- ❖ The total outlay for the scheme is ₹3,880 crore for the years 2024-25 and 2025-26, which includes ₹75 crore allocated for affordable generic veterinary medicine under Pashu Aushadhi.
- ❖ The programme aims to address livestock diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), and Lumpy Skin Disease.
- ❖ Implementation of LHDCP aims to reduce livestock productivity losses by preventing diseases through immunization.
- ❖ The scheme will facilitate doorstep delivery of livestock health care via Mobile Veterinary Units and improve access to veterinary medicines through PM-Kisan Samridhi Kendras and cooperative societies.
- ❖ Overall, LHDCP is designed to enhance livestock health, generate employment, encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas, and mitigate economic losses for farmers due to disease burdens.

PM Releases 19th Installment Of Kisan Scheme, Rs 22,000 Crore Transferred To Farmers

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the 19th installment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme on February 24, 2025, in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

- ❖ Over 9.8 crore farmers, including 2.41 crore female farmers, will benefit from this installment.
- ❖ The total financial assistance provided exceeds ₹22,000 crore.
- ❖ The scheme aims to support farmers nationwide and contribute to rural development initiatives.

About PM KISAN:

- ❖ The PM-KISAN scheme is a central sector scheme launched in February 2019 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister to supplement the financial needs of land-holding farmers.
- ❖ Under the scheme, a financial benefit of Rs 6,000/- per year is transferred in three equal instalments, into the Aadhaar seeded bank accounts of farmers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.

Government credit guarantee scheme of ₹1,000 crore to push e-NWR adoption: NeRL

- ❖ The government has allocated ₹1,000 crore towards the Credit Guarantee Scheme for electronic-Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs) based Pledge Financing, expected to significantly boost the adoption of warehouse receipts and post-harvest credit finance in agriculture.
- ❖ The Digital India Mission has introduced the e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi (e-KUN) program, aimed at providing farmers with access to low-interest loans through e-NWRs, empowering them and preventing distress sales.
- ❖ NeRL (National e-Repository Limited), holding an 88% market share in e-NWR issuance, anticipates an increase in warehouse registrations with the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA).
- ❖ India has approximately one lakh warehouses, of which 40,000 are public warehouses; currently, about 5,000 are registered with WDRA, and around 2,500 issue e-NWRs through NeRL or its competitor.
- ❖ The government initiatives, including the ₹1,000 crore credit guarantee scheme and e-KUN, have led to increased adoption of e-NWRs and better access to credit.
- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised the Priority Sector Lending limit for e-NWRs from ₹50 lakh to ₹75 lakh, with NeRL seeking further enhancements to ₹2 crore for farmer producer organizations and ₹4 crore for traders.
- ❖ NeRL has facilitated loans worth ₹10,000 crore against e-NWRs, with minimal non-performing asset (NPA) cases reported by banks.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana marks its nine-year anniversary

- ❖ On February 18, 2025, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana marks its nine-year anniversary, celebrating close to a decade of empowering the farmers of India.
- ❖ Launched in 2016 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the scheme offers a comprehensive shield against crop losses caused by unpredictable natural hazards.
- ❖ This protection not only stabilizes farmers' income but also encourages them to adopt innovative practices.
- ❖ Crop insurance is an important risk mitigation tool to protect farmers from natural calamities.
- ❖ It aims at providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of natural calamities like hailstorm, drought, floods, cyclones, heavy and unseasonal rains, attack of disease and pests etc.
- ❖ Witnessing the success and potential of the scheme, the Union Cabinet in January 2025 approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till 2025-26 with a total budget of ₹69,515.71 crore.
- ❖ Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) is a weather index-based scheme, which was introduced along with PMFBY.
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) envisages use of improved technology including satellite imagery, drones, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and remote sensing.

Key Benefits

- ❖ The maximum premium payable by the farmer will be 2% for the Kharif food and oilseed crops. For rabi food and oilseeds crop, it is 1.5% and for yearly commercial or horticultural crops it will be 5%. The remaining premium is subsidized by the government.
- ❖ The scheme covers natural disasters (droughts, floods), pests, and diseases, along with post-harvest losses due to local risks like hailstorms and landslides.
- ❖ PMFBY aims to process claims within two months of the harvest to ensure that farmers get the compensation quickly, preventing them from falling into debt traps.
- ❖ PMFBY integrates advanced technologies like satellite imaging, drones, and mobile apps for precise estimation of crop loss, ensuring accurate claim settlements.

Government approves Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) Scheme till 2025-26

- ❖ The Government of India approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) Scheme till 2025-26 during the 15th Finance Commission cycle.

- ❖ It is an Umbrella scheme ensuring remunerative prices for farmers through effective procurement and price support.
- ❖ It is Managed and administered by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Implemented through Central Nodal Agencies (NAFED, NCCF) along with State Governments.

Key Components:

1. Price Support Scheme (PSS): Procures pulses, oilseeds, and copra at Minimum Support Price (MSP) via NAFED and NCCF, covering 25% of national production (100% for Tur, Urad, and Masur in 2024-25).
2. Price Stabilization Fund (PSF): Maintains buffer stocks of pulses and onions to stabilize prices, prevent hoarding, and ensure affordable supply for consumers.
3. Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS): Direct compensation to farmers for the difference between MSP and market price, covering 40% of oilseed production for four months.
4. Market Intervention Scheme (MIS): Provides remunerative prices for perishable horticulture crops, covering 25% of production, with direct payments to farmers instead of physical procurement.

Key Futures:

- ❖ It ensures farmers receive fair prices for their produce.
- ❖ Through this scheme Govt. commits 100% procurement of Tur, Urad, and Masur for the next four years.
- ❖ It enhances domestic production and minimizes reliance on pulses imports.
- ❖ Through this scheme pre-registered farmers sell directly at mandated procurement centers.
- ❖ The scheme prevents price volatility and ensures affordable prices for consumers.

M Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana completes one year, paving the way for a solar-powered future

- ❖ The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY) celebrated its first anniversary, emphasizing India's commitment to renewable energy and empowering households.
- ❖ Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024, the initiative aims to provide free electricity through rooftop solar panel installations.
- ❖ This program is the world's largest domestic rooftop solar initiative, with a goal to supply solar power to one crore households by March 2027.
- ❖ As of January 27, 2025, 8.46 lakh households have

benefitted from the scheme.

- ❖ Monthly installation rates of solar panels have increased tenfold, reaching approximately 70,000 installations per month.
- ❖ The scheme provides a subsidy of up to 40%, enhancing accessibility to renewable energy.
- ❖ A total of ₹4,308.66 crore has been distributed as Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to 5.54 lakh consumers, averaging ₹77,800 per household.
- ❖ About 45% of beneficiaries are receiving zero electricity bills, contingent on their solar energy generation and consumption patterns.

National Manufacturing Mission for small, medium, large industries soon

- ❖ According to budget speech of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman the central government will set a mission for small, medium and large industries with a focus on clean tech manufacturing.
- ❖ The mission's mandate will include five focus areas – ease and cost of doing business, upskilling for in-demand jobs, MSMEs, availability of technology, and quality products.
- ❖ The mission's announcement comes as India aims to increase the share of manufacturing in its gross domestic product (GDP) to 25 per cent from the current 17 per cent.
- ❖ Under the mission, clean tech manufacturing will be supported to improve domestic value addition in solar PV cells, electric vehicle (EV) and grid-scale batteries, electrolyzers, wind turbines, and high voltage transmission equipment.
- ❖ The mission will also help counter China's dominance in the clean tech space, where it controls 80 per cent of the world's battery manufacturing capacity and produces roughly 80 per cent of the main components used in solar cells.

Coal Sector Achieves Highest Growth Among Eight Core Industries in December 2024

- ❖ The coal sector experienced a notable growth of 5.3% in December 2024, reaching 215.1 points compared to 204.3 points in December 2023.
- ❖ For the period from April to December 2024, the coal industry's index rose to 177.6 points, a 6.2% increase from 167.2 points during the same timeframe in the previous year.
- ❖ This growth is the highest among the eight core industries included in the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), which also tracks cement, crude oil, electricity,

fertilizers, natural gas, refinery products, and steel.

- ❖ The Combined Index of Eight Core Industries showed a growth of 4.0% in December 2024 compared to the previous year.
- ❖ From April to December 2024, the combined index increased by 4.2% compared to the same period in FY 2023-24.
- ❖ Significant coal production in April-December 2024 reached 726.31 million tonnes (MT), up from 684.47 MT during the corresponding period last year, highlighting the sector's capability to meet rising energy and manufacturing demands.

Government Launches Several Key Schemes to Upgrade Agricultural Technology To Improve Productivity.

- ❖ The Government has launched key schemes to upgrade agricultural technology aimed at enhancing productivity, sustainability, and farmers' income.
- ❖ The Digital Agriculture Mission utilizes technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, and geospatial data for improved crop monitoring, soil management, and weather forecasting.
- ❖ The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed 2900 crop varieties in the last decade, with 2661 being tolerant to various stresses.
- ❖ A total of 156 technologies and protocols for production and post-harvest processes have been developed, alongside advancements in the animal and fisheries sectors.
- ❖ Training and promotion of new technologies are facilitated by Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), targeting small and marginal farmers.
- ❖ Initiatives like e-NAM, Kisan Rail, and Kisan Udan enhance agricultural marketing and logistics.
- ❖ Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are promoted to reduce intermediaries and improve market access for farmers.
- ❖ Agri-tech startups and platforms like AGRI-Bazaar help farmers connect with buyers directly, improving pricing and income.
- ❖ Recommendations for soil management include test-based balanced nutrient management and efficient irrigation techniques to conserve water.
- ❖ The Soil Health Card Scheme promotes the use of appropriate fertilizers, while the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme is implemented to enhance water use efficiency.

- ❖ The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana focuses on value-added processing, improving product shelf-life, and connecting farmers with agro-industries.

Cabinet approves extension of the tenure of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis for three years

- ❖ The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has extended the tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) for three additional years, until March 31, 2028.
- ❖ The financial cost of this extension is approximately Rs. 50.91 crore.
- ❖ The extension aims to facilitate the socio-economic upliftment of sanitation workers.
- ❖ It seeks to improve working conditions in the sanitation sector.
- ❖ The initiative also aims for zero fatalities while performing hazardous cleaning tasks.
- ❖ The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, was enacted in September, 1993 and a statutory National Commission for Safai Karmcharis was first constituted in August, 1994.

Cabinet Approves Continuation and Restructuring of Skill India Programme

- ❖ The Union Cabinet approved the continuation and restructuring of the Skill India Programme (SIP) until 2026.
- ❖ The scheme has an outlay of Rs. 8,800 crore for the period 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- ❖ This initiative reflects the government's commitment to developing a skilled and future-ready workforce.
- ❖ The program integrates demand-driven, technology-enabled, and industry-aligned training across India.
- ❖ The SIP includes three key components: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0), Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS), and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme.
- ❖ These components focus on structured skill development, on-the-job training, and community-based learning.
- ❖ The program ensures access to high-quality vocational education for urban and rural populations, including marginalized communities.
- ❖ Over 2.27 crore beneficiaries have been supported under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship's flagship schemes.

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary launches Swavalambini, a women entrepreneurship programme, for the Northeast

- ❖ The Swavalambini Programme has been launched by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in collaboration with NITI Aayog to promote women entrepreneurship in Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.
- ❖ The initiative targets female students in select Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to equip them with necessary entrepreneurial skills, resources, and mentorship.
- ❖ A structured stage-wise entrepreneurial process has been introduced, covering awareness, development, mentorship, and funding support.
- ❖ The program was inaugurated by Shri Jayant Chaudhary and involves several HEIs, including Gauhati University and Mizoram University.
- ❖ The program features an Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) for 600 female students and a Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) for 300 selected students, offering intensive training over 40 hours.
- ❖ Participants will receive six months of mentorship to help them turn their business ideas into viable enterprises.
- ❖ The program aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasizing skill integration and industry collaboration.
- ❖ A Faculty Development Programme (FDP) will upskill educators to better mentor aspiring women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ The Award to Rewards Initiative will recognize successful women entrepreneurs, inspiring future female business leaders.
- ❖ The initiative aims for at least 10% of EDP trainees to successfully launch their businesses and foster a culture of entrepreneurship among women in the region.

Ministry of Women and Child Development set to celebrate 10th anniversary of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme

- ❖ This year, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is set to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, marking a decade of relentless efforts to protect, educate, and empower the girl child in India. This milestone aligns with India's vision of a Viksit Bharat 2047 and the global shift from Women's Development to Women-Led Development, a priority championed during India's G20 Presidency and now adapted by Brazil's G20 Presidency.

- ❖ The inaugural event will be held tomorrow (22nd January 2025) at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. It will be graced by the Union Minister of Health and Family Affairs, Shri J. P. Nadda along with Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Annpurna Devi and Minister of State, Smt. Savitri Thakur.

Govt introduces Diamond Imprest Authorization scheme to support exporters

- ❖ The Department of Commerce, Government of India, launched the Diamond Imprest Authorization (DIA) Scheme on January 21, 2025, as a strategic move aimed at strengthening the country's foothold in the global diamond trade.
- ❖ The initiative seeks to simplify and reduce the costs associated with importing and handling diamonds for exporters, further positioning India as a key player in the international diamond market.
- ❖ According to the announcement, the DIA scheme will come into effect on April 1, 2025, marking a new chapter for India's diamond industry that aims to enable growth, create jobs, and meet renewed global competitiveness.

Chhattisgarh CM launches scheme to provide Rs 10K annual aid to labourers

- ❖ Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday launched 'Deendayal Upadhyay Bhoomiheen Krishi Majdoor Kalyana Yojana' in Raipur. Under this scheme, more than 5.62 lakh landless agricultural labourers, Baigas and Gunias of the state will be given financial assistance of Rs 10,000 annually. Under this, an amount of more than Rs 562 crores was released to the beneficiaries of the scheme, on January 21, 2025.

Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar addresses Student beneficiaries of PM YASASVI Scheme, in New Delhi

- ❖ On the eve of the Republic Day 2025, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organized a special programme to honor 400 students from 21 states across the country. These students are beneficiaries of the PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (YASASVI) Scheme.
- ❖ It was launched to empower students from OBC, EBC, and DNT communities educationally, socially, and economically. These students have been invited as special guests for the Republic Day Parade 2025.

Objectives and Benefits of PM YASASVI Scheme:

- ❖ The primary goal of the PM YASASVI Scheme is to empower students from OBC, EBC, and DNT communities educationally, socially, and economically.

The benefits provided under the scheme include:

- ❑ Pre-Matric Scholarship: Annual scholarship of ₹1.25 lakh for students from classes 9 to 12.
- ❑ Post-Matric Scholarship: Financial assistance worth ₹12.75 crore for college-level education.
- ❑ Top-Class School and College Education: Special support for high-quality education.
- ❑ Hostel Construction for OBC Students: Providing better residential facilities for students.

Govt approves Mutual Credit Guarantee scheme to strengthen MSME sector

- ❖ The Centre on Wednesday approved the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme to give a fillip to manufacturing by micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs), fulfilling a promise made in the previous budget and just days ahead of Union Budget 2025.
- ❖ This initiative aims to strengthen the manufacturing sector by providing 60 per cent guarantee coverage for loans up to Rs 100 crore, specifically for the purchase of plant and machinery or equipment.

PM Modi to Launch 'Bima Sakhi Yojana' in Haryana on 9th December

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Panipat on December 9 to launch the "Bima Sakhi Yojana", a scheme aimed at empowering women and benefiting millions across India.
- ❖ Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini reviewed preparations for the visit, with senior officials and ministers, including Krishan Lal Panwar and Mahipal Dhanda, in attendance.

PMSGMBY: 10 Lakh Solar Installations by 2025, 1 Crore by 2027

- ❖ India's largest rooftop solar initiative, PMSGMBY, has seen significant growth, with 6.3 lakh installations in just 9 months.
- ❖ The scheme is on track to exceed 10 lakh installations by March 2025 and aims to reach 1 crore by 2027.

Sex Ratio and Girl Child Enrollment Show Positive Trends Under BBBP Scheme

- ❖ The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, initiated in 2015, has raised the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24 and boosted the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of girls in secondary education from 75.51% to 79.4% over the same period.

Enhancement of ‘Material Cost’ under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme

- ❖ PM POSHAN Scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme under which one hot cooked meal is served to 11.70 crore students studying in Balvatika and classes I to VIII, in 10.24 lakh Government and Government-aided schools on all school-days. The Scheme aims at providing nutritional support and enhancing school participation of students.
- ❖ The Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour provides data on inflation for these items under the PM POSHAN basket on the basis of Consumer Price Index – Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) in consonance with CPI index for PM POSHAN and accordingly CPI index for PM POSHAN basket has been worked out.
- ❖ The CPI-RL is constructed by Labour Bureau, Chandigarh on the basis of collecting continuous monthly prices from the sample of 600 villages spread over 20 States of the country.

PM Narendra Modi to distribute over 58 lakh property cards under SVAMITVA scheme

- ❖ PM Narendra Modi will distribute over 58 lakh property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme, providing property ownership records to rural residents.
- ❖ This initiative aims to enable credit access, reduce disputes, enhance village-level planning, and boost property tax collection.
- ❖ Panchayati Raj Secretary Vivek Bhardwaj revealed that 3.17 lakh villages have been surveyed via drones, mapping 1.37 crore sq. meters of residential land, and creating 2 crore property cards so far.

Dr. Ambedkar Samman Yojana

- ❖ AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal announced the Dr. Ambedkar Samman Scholarship to fully fund tuition, travel, and living expenses for Dalit students from Delhi studying at top international universities.

Agreement and MoU

Kalyani Powertrain and Compal Electronics Join Hands to Manufacture Servers in India

- ❖ Kalyani Powertrain, a subsidiary of Bharat Forge, has partnered with Compal Electronics for a technology licensing agreement to manufacture X86 platform servers in India.
- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed to develop the server business using locally manufactured solutions, aligning with the “Make in

India” initiative.

- ❖ Compal Electronics will provide Kalyani Powertrain with technological support that includes overseeing local production, assembly, testing, and final sales of the servers.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to boost local manufacturing and reduce dependency on imports, as well as support enterprises, cloud providers, and government organizations with efficient server solutions tailored for AI, cloud computing, and large-scale data processing.
- ❖ Kalyani Powertrain has launched Made in India servers from its new manufacturing facility in Pune, Maharashtra, which is expected to enhance local business and the region’s manufacturing potential.

CILinks pact with IIT-H for R&D in clean coal tech

- ❖ Coal India Limited (CIL) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H) to establish the Centre of Clean Coal Energy and Net Zero (CLEANZ) in Hyderabad.
- ❖ The aim of the collaboration is to develop clean coal technologies and diversify coal utilization, in alignment with India’s Net Zero commitments.
- ❖ A grant of ₹98 crore has been allocated by CIL to IIT-H for a duration of five years to support the Centre of Excellence.
- ❖ The project is expected to achieve financial self-sustainability beyond the initial funding period.
- ❖ The initiative is part of a broader strategy to enhance research capabilities in the coal sector, promoted by the Union Coal Ministry.
- ❖ Areas of focus for CLEANZ will include enhanced coal bed methane recovery, carbon capture technologies, coal gasification, syngas utilization, energy efficiency, conservation, and the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Tata Power Renewables signs MOU worth \$5.6 Bn with Andhra Pradesh govt

- ❖ Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), part of Tata Power Co., signed an initial agreement for renewable projects worth Rs 49,000 crore (\$5.6 billion) in Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ This investment is among the largest in the state’s renewable energy sector.
- ❖ The agreement includes a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Andhra Pradesh to develop up to 7,000 MW of renewable energy projects.

- ❖ Projects will encompass solar, wind, and hybrid energy solutions, with or without storage options.
- ❖ The partnership supports Andhra Pradesh's goal to enhance its renewable energy portfolio and promote sustainable energy.
- ❖ The renewable capacities will be developed under the state's Integrated Clean Energy (ICE) Policy, which aims for over 160 GW of renewable energy with a total investment potential of Rs 10 lakh crore.

NTPC Green Energy forms joint venture with Chhattisgarh Power Company

- ❖ NTPC Green Energy (NGEL) has signed a Joint Venture Agreement with Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Ltd (CSPGCL) to develop renewable energy projects in Chhattisgarh.
- ❖ The joint venture will focus on developing solar, wind, and hybrid renewable energy projects with a total capacity of up to 2 GW.
- ❖ Both companies will also identify sites for floating solar projects.
- ❖ NGEL will hold a 74% stake in the joint venture, while CSPGCL will own 26%.
- ❖ The joint venture will have an initial authorized and paid-up share capital of ₹10 lakh.
- ❖ Each partner will issue 100,000 equity shares at a face value of ₹10 per share in a 74:26 ratio.
- ❖ NGEL will appoint three directors to the joint venture's board, while CSPGCL will appoint one.
- ❖ The renewable energy produced will be supplied to CSPGCL, distribution companies in Chhattisgarh, other states, and commercial and industrial customers across India.
- ❖ NTPC Limited and its subsidiary NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL) signed multiple agreements worth ₹96,000 crore with the Chhattisgarh government.

SJVN partners with Chhattisgarh for 1800 MW pumped storage project

- ❖ SJVN Ltd signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Chhattisgarh and Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Ltd (CSPGCL) to develop an 1800 MW Pumped Storage Project (PSP) at Kotpali, Chhattisgarh.
- ❖ The Kotpali PSP is an off-stream closed-loop project located in Balrampur District.
- ❖ The project has an annual energy generation capacity of 3967 million units (MU) and will store excess energy during off-peak hours to be used during peak demand.

- ❖ Total investment for the project is estimated at ₹9,500 crore.
- ❖ The development is expected to generate around 5000 direct and indirect jobs during the construction phase.
- ❖ SJVN Ltd shares closed at ₹85.52, down by ₹2.24 (2.55%) on the NSE on the day of the MoU signing.

Jio partners with SpaceX to bring Starlink Internet to India

- ❖ Jio Platforms Limited has announced a partnership with SpaceX to provide Starlink satellite internet services across India.
- ❖ The partnership is contingent on SpaceX obtaining necessary authorizations from the government.
- ❖ Jio will sell Starlink equipment through its retail and online outlets.
- ❖ This collaboration aims to combine Jio's extensive mobile data network with Starlink's low Earth orbit satellite technology to deliver reliable broadband, particularly in remote areas.
- ❖ Jio will handle customer service for the installation and activation of Starlink equipment.
- ❖ The initiative will complement Jio's existing services, such as JioAirFiber and JioFiber, by extending high-speed internet access to challenging locations.

NHLML and IWAI signs MoU for state-of-art Multi-Modal Logistics Park in Varanasi

- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).
- ❖ The MoU aims to develop a state-of-the-art Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ The MMLP will cover an area of 150 acres.
- ❖ It will be strategically connected to National Highway 7 (NH7) via a 650-meter access road.
- ❖ The park is located just 1.5 km from the NH7-NH2 junction.
- ❖ National Waterway-1 will also connect to the park, enhancing logistical capabilities.
- ❖ The project is expected to generate significant investment and employment opportunities, boosting India's logistics sector and economic growth.
- ❖ This initiative underscores India's commitment to advancing its logistics infrastructure and global economic standing.

Airtel ties up with Elon Musk's SpaceX, to bring high-speed Internet in India

- ❖ Bharti Airtel has signed an agreement with SpaceX to introduce Starlink's high-speed Internet services in India.
- ❖ This marks the first agreement of its kind in India, pending SpaceX's acquisition of necessary government authorizations.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to leverage Airtel's market expertise to enhance Starlink's offerings to consumers and businesses.
- ❖ Starlink will support Airtel's efforts to improve connectivity across underserved areas, particularly in rural regions with limited or no coverage.
- ❖ Plans include offering Starlink equipment in Airtel retail stores and providing services to business customers.
- ❖ The partnership aims to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for various communities, schools, and health centers throughout India.

MoD inks deal with BEL for radars at a cost of ₹2,906 cr

- ❖ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a ₹2,906 crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of the Ashwini Low-Level Transportable Radar (LLTR) system for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- ❖ This radar, indigenously designed and developed by the Electronics and Radar Development Establishment (LRDE) under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), represents a significant advancement in India's air defense capabilities.
- ❖ The Ashwini LLTR is an advanced radar system equipped with Active Electronically Scanned Phased Array technology, utilizing solid-state components to ensure high reliability and superior performance.
- ❖ It is capable of tracking a diverse range of aerial targets, from high-speed fighter jets to slow-moving unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and helicopters, thereby enhancing the IAF's operational preparedness.
- ❖ This procurement aligns with the government's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, aiming to achieve self-reliance in defense manufacturing by reducing dependency on foreign equipment manufacturers.
- ❖ The integration of the Ashwini radar into the IAF's arsenal will significantly bolster India's air defense network, providing enhanced situational awareness and response capabilities against various aerial threats.

IWAI signs MoU with J&K to boost river cruise tourism

- ❖ The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to enhance river cruise tourism on three National Waterways.
- ❖ The MoU was signed during the Chintan Shivir in Srinagar, attended by key figures including Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal and Minister of State Shri Shantanu Thakur.
- ❖ The agreement aims to boost tourism, generate employment, stimulate economic growth, and introduce leisure/budget tourism on rivers in J&K.
- ❖ The three declared national waterways in J&K are River Chenab (NW-26), River Jhelum (NW-49), and River Ravi (NW-84).
- ❖ IWAI plans to invest approximately Rs 100 crore in developing river cruise tourism over the next two months.
- ❖ IWAI's initiatives are part of a broader strategy to promote sustainable tourism and leverage the potential of Indian waterways, following successful projects like the MV Ganga Vilas cruise.

Tata Electronics, and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Sign Fiscal Support Agreement for Semiconductor Fab

- ❖ The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL), and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited (TSMPL) have signed a Fiscal Support Agreement (FSA) to establish India's first commercial semiconductor fab in Dholera, Gujarat.
- ❖ This agreement is a significant advancement in enhancing India's technological self-reliance in semiconductor and display manufacturing.
- ❖ The semiconductor fab in Dholera has a total investment of over ₹91,000 crore and is expected to produce 50,000 wafers per month (WSPM).
- ❖ The Government of India is providing 50% fiscal support for eligible project costs on a pari-passu basis, reinforcing the commitment to develop a world-class semiconductor ecosystem.
- ❖ The project will generate over 20,000 direct and indirect skilled jobs in the region.
- ❖ The initiative will include expertise from Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC), establishing a strong technological alliance.
- ❖ The facility aims to cater to critical global markets in automotive, computing, communications, and artificial

intelligence, transitioning India from a technology consumer to a global manufacturing leader.

- ❖ Sushil Pal, CEO of the India Semiconductor Mission, highlighted the government's commitment to timely financial support and the project's importance for indigenous semiconductor manufacturing.

India, EU agree to conclude free trade pact in 2025

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EU President Ursula von der Leyen held a bilateral meeting where they made significant decisions regarding trade and cooperation.
- ❖ They agreed to conclude a mutually beneficial bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025.
- ❖ The backdrop for this agreement includes recent tariff threats from US President Donald Trump affecting both the EU and India.
- ❖ A focus was also placed on enhancing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, boosting digital technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), and stepping up security and defence partnerships.
- ❖ They emphasized dialogue on clean and green energy, specifically green hydrogen.
- ❖ Both sides are advancing negotiations on an investment protection pact and geographical indications to encourage greater investments.
- ❖ Von der Leyen acknowledged that the FTA negotiations, which began in 2008, have faced challenges, notably demands for significant tariff reductions on autos and beverages from the EU, and calls for easier work visas from India.
- ❖ The EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for €124 billion in trade in 2023, surpassing the US and China.
- ❖ India has Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the following countries:
 1. Sri Lanka – India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)
 2. Singapore – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)
 3. Malaysia – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (MICECA)
 4. Japan – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)
 5. South Korea – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)
 6. United Arab Emirates (UAE) – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

7. Australia – Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)

Japan and India renew Bilateral Swap Arrangement for up to \$75 billion

- ❖ Japan and India renewed the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) effective February 28, 2025.
- ❖ The agreement is for up to \$75 billion.
- ❖ The Bank of Japan and the Reserve Bank of India signed the second Amendment and Restatement Agreement.
- ❖ The BSA allows the two countries to swap their local currencies for US dollars.
- ❖ The size of the arrangement remains unchanged at up to \$75 billion.
- ❖ The BSA aims to strengthen financial safety nets and enhance cooperation between Japan and India.
- ❖ It is expected to contribute to regional and global financial stability.

IIFT Signs MoU with APEC – Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center, Belgium to Strengthen Trade and Logistics Education

- ❖ The Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with APEC – Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center, Belgium, to enhance academic collaboration in international trade, logistics, and supply chain management.
- ❖ The MoU focuses on strengthening trade education and training ties between India and Belgium, facilitating faculty and student exchanges for cross-cultural business learning.
- ❖ It includes joint research on port management, global logistics, and trade facilitation, as well as specialized training programs, workshops, and industry interactions.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to enhance knowledge transfer in areas such as e-governance, digital trade, and emerging business technologies.

Note: Established in 1963 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Commerce, the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) has gained Deemed University status and is one of the premier business institutions in India, focusing on Foreign Trade.

India and Nepal Sign MOU to Strengthen Cooperation in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Sector

- ❖ The Government of India and the Government of Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector, including waste management.

- ❖ The MoU aims to promote collaboration and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in WASH, focusing on improved access to clean drinking water and sanitation for both nations.

Key areas outlined in the agreement include:

- ❑ Capacity Building: Training programs for Nepali personnel in water resource management.
- ❑ Technology & Knowledge Transfer: Sharing technological expertise between the countries.
- ❑ Groundwater Management: Joint efforts in monitoring, assessment, and management of groundwater resources.
- ❖ This MoU marks a new chapter in the India-Nepal partnership, aimed at enhancing the well-being of their populations and ensuring a sustainable future.

Bisleri signs MOU with ASI to revive water bodies at heritage sites across India

- ❖ Bisleri International has formed a strategic partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Programme'.
- ❖ The initiative aims to combine heritage conservation with sustainable water management in India.
- ❖ The partnership will focus on revitalizing four historic water bodies: Chand Baori in Abhaneri, Baori at Neemrana, Padma and Rani Talabs at Ranthambore Fort, and Budha Budhi Pond at Kalinjar Fort.
- ❖ Activities to be undertaken include desilting, cleaning, ecological revival, and landscaping of these sites.
- ❖ The rejuvenation project will be phased to ensure minimal disruption to the historical integrity of the sites.

SECI signs MoU with Government of MP for 200 MW Solar Project at Dhar

- ❖ The Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI), a Navratna Central Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ The MoU entails the establishment of a 200 MW Solar Project in Dhar and a 1000 MWh Battery Storage Project.
- ❖ The agreement was signed during the Global Investors Summit 2025, which took place in Bhopal from February 24 to 25, 2025.
- ❖ The summit was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India, alongside the Governor and Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

- ❖ The 200 MW Solar Project is part of a larger 500 MW agreement with MP Power Management Company Limited (MPPMCL), valid for 25 years.
- ❖ SECI will invest ₹2500 crore in a phase-wise approach to develop renewable energy projects in Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ The summit attracted various stakeholders from the Government of India and international delegations.

Indian, American spice trade bodies sign MoU to enhance collaboration

- ❖ The All India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF) and the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the International Spice Conference (ISC) 2025 to enhance collaboration in the spice trade.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by AISEF Chairman Emmanuel Nambusseril and ASTA President Peter Sayia.
- ❖ The primary goals include improving food safety, regulatory compliance, and adopting industry best practices.
- ❖ Key areas of collaboration covered by the MoU involve:
 1. Information sharing
 2. Technical collaboration
 3. Industry promotion
- ❖ Both organizations will exchange insights on:
 1. Government regulations
 2. Market requirements
 3. Food safety
 4. Trade policies
- ❖ Regular meetings will be established for continuous interaction, allowing AISEF access to ASTA's market updates and vice versa regarding production developments.
- ❖ The technical collaboration emphasizes:
 1. Enhancing microbiological safety
 2. Chemical contaminant control
 3. Traceability
 4. Ethical sourcing
- ❖ Joint research, advocacy efforts, and educational programs aim to ensure compliance with international standards.
- ❖ AISEF and ASTA will support each other's events, including annual meetings, regulatory workshops, and engage in promotional activities and speaker exchanges.

CAG and IIT Madras sign MoUs to enhance audit skill sets improve sustainable audit

- ❖ The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU).
- ❖ The MoU aims to foster innovation, enhance data analytics capabilities, and contribute to technology-driven governance practices.
- ❖ Key focus areas include:
 1. Data governance and security
 2. Big data and digital infrastructure readiness
 3. Academic and research collaboration
 4. Advanced auditing practices
 5. Sustainability and governance
 6. Joint research and development initiatives
- ❖ A second MoU was signed between IIT Madras and the International Centre for Environment Audit and Sustainable Development (iCED) for capacity building and research in environmental audit and ESG (environmental, social, and governance).
- ❖ The partnerships will leverage artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and other technological advancements to improve auditing effectiveness.
- ❖ CAG Sanjay K. Murthy emphasized the need to build capacity for managing digital trails effectively.

Paytm, DPIIT partner to support fintech startups with mentorship & funding

- ❖ Paytm has partnered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to support fintech and manufacturing startups in India.
- ❖ This collaboration aims to provide mentorship, funding opportunities, and infrastructure support to emerging businesses.

Key Highlights of the Partnership:

1. **Mentorship:** Industry experts will guide startups in refining their business models and strategies.
 2. **Infrastructure Support:** Providing essential resources and facilities to help startups grow.
 3. **Market Access:** Helping startups test and refine their products through Paytm's vast merchant network.
 4. **Funding Opportunities:** Connecting startups with investors and incubation programs for financial support.
- ❖ The initiative aims to empower entrepreneurs by giving them access to cutting-edge payment and financial technology solutions.

Paytm partners with AI startup Perplexity to offer in-app search for users

- ❖ Paytm has announced a partnership with AI startup Perplexity to integrate AI-powered search features into its app.
- ❖ This collaboration aims to enhance user experience by enabling customers to ask questions, explore topics in local languages, and make informed financial decisions directly within the Paytm app.
- ❖ Perplexity provides real-time answers to user inquiries, enhancing the accessibility of information and financial services.

HAL, BEML sign MoU for collaboration in training programmes

- ❖ Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on leadership and technical training programs aimed at enhancing skill development and professional excellence.
- ❖ Under this strategic partnership, the HAL Management Academy (HMA) will design and deliver various training modules, including induction programs, middle and senior management courses, specialized workshops, and certification programs. Key focus areas encompass Six Sigma, Quality, Reliability, Data Analytics, and Industry 4.0.
- ❖ The collaboration also aims to facilitate industrial visits, knowledge-sharing sessions, joint conferences, internships, and project-based learning opportunities for BEML professionals.
- ❖ This initiative is expected to foster industry-academia collaboration, strengthen India's defense manufacturing ecosystem, and equip professionals with advanced knowledge and skills.
- ❖ Nasscom has partnered with the Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS) to enhance innovation and intellectual property (IP) growth in Karnataka's tech sector.
- ❖ KITS acts as the implementing agency for the Government of Karnataka's Department of Electronics, IT, Biotechnology, and Science & Technology.
- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed to establish a commitment to strengthen Karnataka's position as a leading innovation hub and enhance IP creation.
- ❖ The partnership focuses on creating an IP enablement program to increase innovation and patent filings in Karnataka through structured mentorship and support.
- ❖ Technical support will include IP mentorship, awareness workshops, and capacity-building initiatives across educational institutions.

DRDO, MIDHANI sign MoU for special grade steel for aeronautical applications

- ❖ The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and MIDHANI have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the indigenous development of special grade steel “MDN100”.
- ❖ This steel is characterized by high strength and high toughness, making it suitable for aeronautical applications, including the development of the 5th generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).
- ❖ The steel’s good forgeability allows its use in highly stressed aircraft parts, contributing to weight-saving benefits.
- ❖ The initiative aligns with the goal of achieving “Atmanirbhar Bharat” or self-reliance in the defense sector.
- ❖ MIDHANI has been supporting the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) by providing critical materials for aerospace purposes.
- ❖ At the Aero India 2025 event, MIDHANI showcased SuperNi 41 plates, a nickel-chromium based superalloy capable of withstanding very high temperatures in aero engines.
- ❖ Ongoing combat aircraft programs under ADA include LCA Mk2, AMCA, and Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF).

NMDC Group PJSC signs ₹21,000 crore MoU for Vadhvan Port development

- ❖ NMDC Group PJSC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) February 2025.
- ❖ The MoU proposes an investment of ₹21,000 crore for developing offshore land at Vadhvan Port in Maharashtra.
- ❖ Key activities include dredging, reclamation, and shore protection.
- ❖ JNPA Chairman Unmesh Sharad Wagh emphasized the MoU’s importance for developing Vadhvan Port as a world-class maritime hub.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to leverage global expertise for the port’s strategic and sustainable development.
- ❖ Progress on the project is ahead of schedule, focusing on enhancing India’s port capabilities to meet future trade demands.

CAAR, IIT Madras, and SAEINDIA ink pact to boost automotive R&D

- ❖ The Centre of Excellence in Advanced Automotive Research (CAAR) and the Society of Automotive Engineers India (SAEINDIA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 14, 2025.
- ❖ The MoU aims to enhance collaboration in organizing joint conferences and professional development programs within the automotive and off-highway sectors.
- ❖ CAAR, associated with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, is a recognized institution focused on automotive research and policy advisory services.
- ❖ The initiative is designed to upskill professionals in emerging automotive technologies and promote collaboration between industry and academia.
- ❖ CAAR will provide expertise through knowledge resources, courses, research papers, and subject matter experts.
- ❖ CAAR will also help shape the technological roadmap for the automotive sector.
- ❖ SAEINDIA will organize conferences and professional development programs, aligning them with industry needs and competencies.

TRIFED enters into MOUs with Reliance Retail, HCL Foundation, and Torajamelo Indonesia for entrepreneurship development of tribals

- ❖ TRIFED has signed MoUs with Reliance Retail, HCL Foundation, and Torajamelo Indonesia to promote tribal entrepreneurship and economic inclusion.
- ❖ The agreements were signed during the ‘Aadi Mahotsav’ at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium.
- ❖ The MoUs aim to enhance the market reach and sustainability of tribal products both in India and internationally.
- ❖ The partnership with Reliance Retail focuses on bulk supply of tribal products, sustainable sourcing, branding, and promotion.
- ❖ Collaboration with HCL Foundation will enhance capacity building, skill development, and expand product portfolios for tribal artisans.
- ❖ The agreement with Torajamelo Indonesia aims to develop international marketing and sales channels for Indian tribal products.
- ❖ The ‘Aadi Mahotsav’ serves as a platform to connect tribal artisans with urban markets, highlighting tribal craft, culture, cuisine, and commerce.

- ❖ The event was inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu on February 16, attended by Union Minister Jai Ram Reddy and other dignitaries.

India, Argentina ink MoU for lithium exploration and mining cooperation

- ❖ India and Argentina signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in lithium exploration and mining.
- ❖ The agreement was formalized in a meeting between Union Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy and Raúl Alejandro Jalil, Governor of Catamarca, Argentina.
- ❖ The MoU was signed between Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL) and the Provincial Government of Catamarca.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to facilitate exploration and resource development of lithium and other critical minerals.
- ❖ Argentina is part of the 'Lithium Triangle' and has significant lithium reserves, crucial for electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy storage.
- ❖ Discussions included ongoing lithium exploration projects by Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) and Greenko in Catamarca.
- ❖ Both sides explored investment opportunities, long-term supply agreements, and joint ventures for stable lithium supply to India.
- ❖ Topics covered also included policy frameworks, regulatory mechanisms, and sustainable mining practices.
- ❖ The agreement emphasizes knowledge exchange, infrastructure development, and technological collaboration.
- ❖ The MoU aims to accelerate lithium exploration projects, enhance resource security, and create business opportunities for Indian companies in Latin America.

EaseMyTrip partners with Korea Tourism to boost Indian outbound travel

- ❖ EaseMyTrip, one of India's major online travel platforms, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) to promote South Korea as a key destination for Indian tourists.
- ❖ Under the partnership, EaseMyTrip will create a dedicated microsite offering curated itineraries and travel information specifically for Indian travelers.
- ❖ The company plans to develop destination-specific content, including blogs and videos, while launching co-funded marketing campaigns to increase Korea's

visibility in the Indian market.

- ❖ The collaboration will extend to Tier 2 and Tier 3 Indian cities, targeting emerging outbound travel markets. EaseMyTrip will provide KTO with regular analytics on Indian traveler preferences and booking trends to optimize marketing strategies.

German Institute Fraunhofer signs MOUs with IIT Ropar and BITS Pilani on sustainability and circular economy

- ❖ Germany based Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial Engineering and Biotechnology IGB signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with IIT Ropar and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani.
- ❖ The MoUs were signed during the visit of Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut, the Minister of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing of the State of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, to India.
- ❖ The collaboration aims to leverage the complementary strengths of both Germany and India, creating a strong value proposition focused on sustainability.
- ❖ These partnerships will optimize the water-energy-food nexus, fostering competitive advantages and supporting a transition toward a sustainable, climate-neutral economy.
- ❖ Key areas of cooperation include collaborative research and development to identify technology gaps and demonstrate technologies addressing industry challenges, particularly under the Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat initiatives.
- ❖ The partnership will also facilitate technology transfer and licensing agreements with industry stakeholders to promote large-scale adoption.
- ❖ Training on integrating Cyber-Physical System Technologies, such as AI/ML and Automation/IoT, into the water ecosystem will be pursued.

Tata Elxsi and Garuda Aerospace Sign MoU at Aero India 2025 to Establish Centre of Excellence for Indigenised UAV

- ❖ Tata Elxsi and Garuda Aerospace signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Aero India 2025.
- ❖ The partnership aims to establish a dedicated UAV design, engineering, and certification center for indigenous drone technologies.
- ❖ Focus areas include Indian defence applications, agriculture, and smart cities, supporting the 'Make in India' initiative.
- ❖ Tata Elxsi and Garuda Aerospace are showcasing

various UAV prototypes and designs at Aero India 2025.

- ❖ The collaboration highlights advancements in autonomous UAV technologies through demonstrations of indigenised components.
- ❖ Tata Elxsi will handle the design, development, testing, and certification of UAV subsystems.
- ❖ Key expertise includes avionics, miniaturisation, ground control systems, secured communication, and energy optimisation.
- ❖ Integration of autonomous and digital twin technologies aims to enhance UAV efficiency and cut costs and development time.
- ❖ Garuda Aerospace will lead business acquisition and delivery of the developed drones, intended for various applications including payload management and ISR missions.
- ❖ The initiative is expected to benefit the Indian defence forces and Border Security Force significantly.
- ❖ The collaboration is also projected to create new employment opportunities in the aerospace sector.

IEPFA Signs MoU with ACCA for Investor Education and Protection

- ❖ An MoU has been signed between the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) and Strategic Educational Professionals Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of ACCA.
- ❖ The focus of the MoU is on developing a digital program that emphasizes experiential learning to promote financial literacy among school children.
- ❖ The program aims to provide content to select schools, including those in rural areas, as part of a pilot project.
- ❖ The delivery of the program will involve training school teachers to effectively teach financial literacy.
- ❖ The announcement was made by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Shri Harsh Malhotra, in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

IICA and CMAI Sign MoU to Enhance Capacity for Decarbonisation

- ❖ The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and the Carbon Market Association of India (CMAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 4, 2025.
- ❖ The announcement took place during the IICA-CMAI Masterclass on Global & Indian Carbon Markets in New Delhi.
- ❖ Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road, Transport &

Highways, emphasized the importance of biofuels, green hydrogen, and sustainable energy for India's future.

- ❖ The partnership aims to provide training and expertise for industry professionals, policymakers, and academics in India's carbon markets.
- ❖ The collaboration will focus on training, research, policy advocacy, and knowledge-sharing to facilitate India's transition to a low-carbon economy.
- ❖ Under the MoU, IICA and CMAI will work together in the following areas,
 - ❖ Training Programmes: Courses on carbon markets, sustainable finance, and low-carbon industrial solutions.
 - ❖ Joint Research: Studies on decarbonisation strategies and carbon trading mechanisms.
 - ❖ Workshops & Conferences: Events to foster dialogue between industry stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers.
 - ❖ Policy Advocacy: Supporting regulatory frameworks and policies to drive India's net-zero goals.

MoD inks contracts totalling Rs 10,147 crore with EEL, MIL & BEL for rockets of PINAKA Multiple Launch Rocket System

- ❖ Ministry of Defence has inked contracts with Economic Explosive Limited (EEL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL) for the procurement of Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-1 (DPICM) and High Explosive Pre Fragmented (HEPF) Mk-1 (Enhanced) rockets respectively for PINAKA Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) at a total cost of Rs 10,147 crore.
- ❖ In addition, a contract for upgrades in SHAKTI Software has also been signed with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- ❖ ADM Type-1 is designed to deliver sub-munitions over a large area, targeting mechanised forces and denying specific areas to the enemy.
- ❖ HEPF Mk-1 (E) rockets are an advanced version with enhanced range for precise strikes deep into enemy territory.
- ❖ The procurement signifies a significant milestone in modernising the Artillery Rocket Regiments and enhancing the Indian Army's firepower with precise long-range capabilities.
- ❖ The projects are expected to generate direct and indirect employment, supporting the Indian MSME sector and contributing to the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision of the Government.

MoU signed between ISLRTC and NBT at World Book Fair for making NBT Books Accessible in Indian Sign Language

- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) and the National Book Trust (NBT) during the World Book Fair 2025.
- ❖ The MoU aims to convert 500 NBT storybooks and other reading materials into accessible formats for Deaf children using Indian Sign Language (ISL).
- ❖ The agreement was signed by Shri Kumar Raju, Director of ISLRTC, and Shri Yuvraj Malik, Director of NBT, with key officials present.
- ❖ The collaboration is intended to ensure that Deaf children have access to quality reading materials in ISL.
- ❖ The signing of the MoU is considered a significant step towards promoting accessible and inclusive education, reflecting the commitment of both organizations to this cause.

FIU-IND and IRDAI sign MoU for enhanced coordination and information exchange

- ❖ The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of continued coordinated efforts in effective implementation of requirements of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Rules framed thereunder, in New Delhi, on January 6, 2025.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by Shri Vivek Aggarwal, Director, FIU-IND and Shri Satyajit Tripathy, Member (Distribution), IRDAI.

Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and NALSAR University Sign MoU to Train Animal Welfare Representatives, in Hyderabad

- ❖ The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), a statutory body of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NALSAR University of Law, in Hyderabad, on January 9, 2025.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by Dr. Abhijit Mitra, Chairman, AWBI and Prof. Shrikrishna Deva Rao, Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University.

India-U.S. Collaboration on Sonobuoy Production for Indian Navy

- ❖ India and the U.S. announced a partnership for co-production of U.S. sonobuoys to enhance Undersea Domain Awareness (UDA) for the Indian Navy.

Key Highlights of Collaboration on Sonobuoy Co-Production

- ❖ Partnership Details: The agreement is between Ultra Maritime (UM) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- ❖ Sonobuoys will meet U.S. Navy standards and be co-produced in both India and the U.S., aligning with 'Make in India' principles.
- ❖ The production will be based in Visakhapatnam, with BDL committed to meeting operational demands of the Indian Navy.

C-DOT and IIT Delhi sign agreement for “Building Blocks for THz Communication Front Ends” for 6G

- ❖ In the on-going process of developing indigenous hardware for next-generation telecommunications technology 6G, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the premier Telecom R&D centre of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT),
- ❖ Government of India, has signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) for the development of “Building Blocks for THz Communication Front Ends” for 6G.
- ❖ The agreement is signed under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) 6G Call for proposal of the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India.

C-DOT, IIT Mandi and IIT Jammu Collaborate to Develop Wideband Spectrum-Sensor ASIC-Chip

- ❖ The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) has recently partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology Mandi (IIT Mandi) and IIT Jammu.
- ❖ This collaboration aims to develop a Wideband Spectrum-Sensor ASIC-Chip to enhance spectrum utilisation. The agreement, signed under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF), reflects investment in India's telecommunication research and development.
- ❖ The TTDF supports Indian startups and institutions in creating innovative telecommunications solutions. This initiative is crucial for providing affordable broadband and mobile services, particularly in rural areas.

DPIIT enters into strategic partnership with ITC to bolster India's startup ecosystem and innovation

- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has entered into a strategic partnership with ITC Limited, one of India's leading diversified conglomerates.
- ❖ Under this partnership, ITC is looking to deploy startup solutions in key areas such as digital platforms for

Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), integrating renewable energy opportunities for manufacturing locations, energy storage systems, etc.

C-DOT and IIT Bombay sign agreement for “Optical Transceiver Chipset for High-Bandwidth 6G Wireless Links”

- ❖ In the on-going process of developing indigenous hardware for next-generation telecommunications technology, Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the premier Telecom R&D centre of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, has signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT Bombay) for the development of “Optical Transceiver Chipset for High-Bandwidth 6G Wireless Links”.

Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND) and National Housing Bank (NHB) sign MoU for enhanced coordination and information exchange

- ❖ The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND) and the National Housing Bank (NHB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of continued coordinated efforts in effective implementation of requirements of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Rules framed thereunder in New Delhi, on 17th January 2025.
- ❖ The MoU was signed by Shri Vivek Aggarwal, Director, FIU-IND and Shri Sanjay Shukla, Managing Director, NHB.

Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel join hands to create fintech platform

- ❖ NBFC firm Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel on Monday announced a strategic partnership to create a digital platform for financial services.
- ❖ The one-of-a-kind partnership brings together Airtel's customer base of 375 million, about 1.2 million strong distribution network, and Bajaj Finance's diversified suite of 27 product lines, and distribution of 5,000 more branches and 70,000 field agents.

India, UK renew five-year partnership to strengthen health cooperation

- ❖ India and the United Kingdom have renewed their health and life sciences partnership, signing a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deepen collaboration in critical health sectors.
- ❖ The agreement was formalised at a ceremony in New Delhi on Thursday, attended by Union Health Minister JP Nadda, UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Wes Streeting, and Christina Scott, Acting High Commissioner of the UK to India.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) signs MoU to Establish Centre of Excellence on Energy Transition in Hyderabad

- ❖ The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly establish a Centre of Excellence for Energy Transition (CoEET). The CoEET will be housed at TERI's Institute of Energy Transition (IoET) at its campus in Hyderabad.
- ❖ The MoU signing ceremony took place at Hyderabad, in the esteemed presence of Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, and Shri A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister of Telangana.

Directorate General of Shipping & Centre for Development of Advanced Computing sign umbrella Memorandum of Understanding to drive Maritime Innovation

- ❖ In a landmark move to advance technological innovation and excellence in India's maritime sector, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), a Scientific Society under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) signed an umbrella Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today on 25 Jan 2025.

DPIIT and JKEDI sign MoU to strengthen startup ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir

- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration, mentorship, and support for startups in the region.
- ❖ The signing took place during “Jammu Kashmir Konnect,” a special startup-focused program organized at JKEDI's Baribrahman campus.

DPIIT inks MoU with Flipkart to invest in and mentor Indian startups

- ❖ In a significant move, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has partnered with Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce market and signed an MoU with the former to support and empower tech start-ups across India.
- ❖ Aimed at encouraging the growth of innovators and entrepreneurs, the partnership further catapults existing efforts under the Flipkart Leap and Ventures initiative

with its USD 100 mn fund. Till date the company has invested in 20 companies and continues to identify startups with high growth potential.

Union Cabinet Approves Signing of MoU between GSI and CNR-IRPI, Italy, for Collaboration in Landslide Prediction and Forecasting

- ❖ The Geological Survey of India will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with The Research Institute for Geo-Hydrological Protection of the National Research Council (CNR-IRPI), Italy for collaboration in Landslide Forecast and Early Warning.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet in its meeting held on 06.12.2024 approved the proposed MoU between GSI and CNR-IRPI.
- ❖ This partnership aims to enrich the knowledge and acquire skills in landslide forecasting and early warning through collaborative research.

MoEFCC Facilitates Landmark Agreements to Advance Circular Economy and Waste Management

- ❖ The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has facilitated the signing of a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Telangana and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi, alongside agreements between CSIR and leading recyclers.
- ❖ These initiatives underscore MoEFCC's pivotal role in driving India's transition to a circular economy while fostering sustainable waste management practices.
- ❖ The MoU between the Government of Telangana and CSIR aims to develop a skilled workforce in the recycling and waste management sectors.

Centre, ADB Sign \$42 Million Loan for Coastal Protection in Maharashtra

- ❖ The Centre and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$42 million loan to enhance coastal and riverbank protection, improving resilience for communities and ecosystems in Maharashtra.

Summit and Conference

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Sh. Bhupender Yadav addresses Inaugural Session at World Sustainable Development Summit, 2025

- ❖ Union Minister Sh. Bhupender Yadav addresses the World Sustainable Development Summit 2025.
- ❖ The summit, organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), focused on "Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions."

- ❖ Minister Yadav emphasized the Global South's essential role in combating climate change, urging enhanced collaboration and ambition globally.
- ❖ He reaffirmed India's commitment to sustainability, highlighting initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE).
- ❖ Yadav outlined India's vision for "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2070 and significant reductions in emission intensity.
- ❖ He emphasized integrating climate action with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advocated for global equity and justice in climate negotiations.
- ❖ The leadership of TERI in uniting the Global South for climate action was praised, along with the need for multi-sectoral partnerships to advance sustainability.

12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific Concludes with the unanimous adoption of Jaipur Declaration by member countries

- ❖ The 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific concluded today with the unanimous adoption of the 'Jaipur Declaration' by the member countries.
- ❖ A guidance document has been prepared to suggest indicative strategies to countries as per national policies, circumstances and capabilities.
- ❖ As part of the Jaipur declaration, a collaborative knowledge platform as a global alliance C-3 (Cities Coalition for Circularity) has also been agreed upon.
- ❖ Jaipur Declaration speaks about different waste streams and circular economy goals for each of them. It speaks about the resource efficiency and sustainable material consumption. The declaration also covers informal sectors, gender issue and labour issues.
- ❖ It also provides for means of implementation, partnerships, technology transfer, funding mechanism and research and development.
- ❖ The 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific was organized from 3rd to 5th March 2025 at Rajasthan International Centre, Jaipur.
- ❖ The theme of the Forum is "Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving SDGs and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific."

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurates the Global Investors Summit 2025 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2025 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, emphasizing the importance of the event for

developing a “Viksit Madhya Pradesh” as part of a larger vision for a developed India.

- ❖ Modi expressed pride in welcoming investors and highlighted optimism about India’s potential, referring to a World Bank statement projecting India to remain the fastest-growing economy.
- ❖ He indicated that India is becoming a critical supply chain hub for global aerospace firms and noted Madhya Pradesh’s significant contributions to agriculture and minerals, stating it could become one of the top five states in India by GDP.
- ❖ Modi highlighted advancements in renewable energy in Madhya Pradesh, mentioning that the state is now power surplus with substantial clean energy capacity and related investments.
- ❖ He announced the initiation of the ₹45,000 crore Ken-Betwa River Interlinking Project aimed at bolstering water management and agricultural productivity.
- ❖ The budget has been designed to empower the middle class and includes reforms to support MSMEs and simplify regulations to create a conducive investment climate.
- ❖ The GIS 2025 features discussions on various sectors including textiles, tourism, and technology, promoting Madhya Pradesh as a hub for investment in these fields.
- ❖ The summit serves as a platform for establishing Madhya Pradesh as a global investment destination, featuring exhibitions and sessions focused on various industries.

India poised to host the 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific in Jaipur

- ❖ India will host the 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific.
- ❖ The Forum will take place at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur on 3-5 March 2025.
- ❖ The event will centre on the theme of “Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving SDGs and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific.”
- ❖ The Forum will host an international ‘3R trade and technology exhibition’, providing a platform for over 40 Indian and Japanese businesses and start-ups to showcase best practices, ideas and solutions that support circularity and 3R principles while encouraging cross-learning.
- ❖ Launched by UNCRD in 2009, the Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum aims to provide strategic policy inputs to government authorities in the Asia-Pacific region for mainstreaming 3R (reduce, reuse,

recycle) and circularity and serve as a platform for disseminating and sharing best practices in 3R.

- ❖ The last Forum was hosted in 2023 by Cambodia. India has previously hosted the Forum in 2018, when the 8th edition was held in Indore.

India hosts first ‘Global South’ meet on women in UN peacekeeping

- ❖ India recently hosted the inaugural “Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective” conference in New Delhi.
- ❖ This landmark event brought together women peacekeepers from 35 Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) of the Global South, aiming to enhance female participation and leadership in United Nations peacekeeping missions.
- ❖ Organized collaboratively by India’s Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), the conference provided a platform for dialogue and experience-sharing among women peacekeepers.
- ❖ The event underscored India’s commitment to gender inclusivity in peacekeeping operations and its leadership role within the Global South.
- ❖ India’s history of contributing to UN peacekeeping is notable, with over 5,900 personnel deployed across 12 missions as of December 31, 2023.
- ❖ The nation has been a pioneer in promoting women’s involvement in peacekeeping, deploying the first all-women Formed Police Unit to Liberia in 2007.

Brazil to host BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro in July

- ❖ The next BRICS summit will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on July 6-7, 2025.
- ❖ Brazil will chair the BRICS bloc throughout 2025, focusing on global governance reform and enhancing cooperation among Global South countries.
- ❖ BRICS was founded in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining in 2010.
- ❖ The bloc expanded in 2024 to include new members: Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates; Saudi Arabia has also been invited.
- ❖ Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Malaysia have formally applied for BRICS membership.
- ❖ Indonesia has recently become an official member, while Nigeria has received “partner country” status, introduced at the 2024 summit.
- ❖ Partner countries are invited to participate in the summit and other meetings if consensus is reached among members.

15th edition of Biennial Aero-India International Seminar held in Bengaluru

- ❖ The 15th Aero India International Seminar took place in Bengaluru, Karnataka as a precursor to Aero India 2025, which will be held from February 10 to 14, 2025.
- ❖ The seminar was organized by the Centre for Military Airworthiness & Certification (CEMILAC) in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI).
- ❖ Union Minister of State for Defence, Sanjay Seth, presented Restricted Military Type Certificates (RMTC) for the indigenous Astra Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile and the HTT-40 aircraft during the seminar.
- ❖ The seminar's theme was 'Futuristic Aerospace Technologies: Challenges in Design Validation' and focused on emerging trends in aerospace technologies and military airworthiness certification challenges.
- ❖ Approximately 1,100 delegates attended, representing DRDO, Defence PSUs, Armed Forces, and Private Industries including MSMEs.
- ❖ Around 33 speakers from India and abroad delivered technical talks on various topics related to aerospace technology and design validation challenges.
- ❖ International delegates from leading foreign companies including Airbus, Collins Aerospace, GE Aerospace, and others were present.

First edition of WAVE Summit to be held in Mumbai from May 1-4

- ❖ The first World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) will take place from May 1, 2025, at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai.
- ❖ The event aims to promote discussions, collaboration, and innovation in the media and entertainment industry.
- ❖ Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasized India's ambition to become the creative powerhouse of the world, declaring the summit a unifying event for global media CEOs and entertainment icons.
- ❖ The summit was initially scheduled for November at Goa but was rescheduled to May.
- ❖ PM Narendra Modi chaired a meeting of the advisory board to discuss the summit, receiving valuable input from eminent individuals to enhance India's position as a global entertainment hub.
- ❖ WAVES will serve as a groundbreaking initiative providing a platform for creators in fields such as animation, visual effects (VFX), augmented reality-virtual reality (AR-VR), and virtual production.

AI Action Summit in France to Discuss Future Global Collaborations and Governance

- ❖ The AI Action Summit will take place in France on February 10 and 11, co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ❖ The summit aims to gather global leaders, CEOs, academics, artists, and civil society representatives to address critical challenges in artificial intelligence (AI).
- ❖ Key topics include ensuring AI benefits society, the economy, and the environment in an inclusive way, focusing on five central themes.
- ❖ The summit will emphasize public interest AI, showcasing projects addressing societal issues and equitable benefits.
- ❖ Discussions will cover the future of work, balancing AI's productivity enhancements with its impact on jobs and economic stability.
- ❖ The event will explore how AI can foster innovation and cultural enrichment while respecting cultural diversity.
- ❖ Building trust in AI systems through transparency, ethics, and accountability will be a core focus.
- ❖ Global AI governance will be discussed, emphasizing the need for international collaboration and regulation.
- ❖ The summit aims to provide a platform for innovative solutions to use AI responsibly, benefiting all citizens and promoting a sustainable future.

14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (14AFAF) on "Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific"

- ❖ The 14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (14AFAF), with the theme "Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific" is being organized in New Delhi during February 12-14, 2025.
- ❖ The Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (AFAF) is a triennial event of the Asian Fisheries Society with its Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- ❖ This 14th AFAF is being jointly organized by the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS), Kuala Lumpur; Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi; the Department of Fisheries (DoF), Government of India; and the Asian Fisheries Society Indian Branch (AFSIB), Mangalore.
- ❖ This prestigious event is being hosted in India for the 2nd time after the 8AFAF held at Kochi in 2007.
- ❖ The forum will feature approximately 1,000 delegates from 24 countries, including researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders.

- ❖ India is highlighted as a key player in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, holding the 2nd position in global fish and aquaculture production.
- ❖ The forum aims to showcase India's contributions and strengthen international partnerships in sustainable fish production systems.

President Draupadi Murmu Inaugurates International Conference on Unani Medicine

- ❖ The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, inaugurated the International Conference, organised by Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM), Ministry of Ayush, Government of India on the occasion of Unani Day, 11th February 2025.
- ❖ The conference's theme is "Innovations in Unani Medicine for Integrative Health Solutions – A Way Forward," emphasizing the importance of integrating tradition with innovation for global recognition of Unani Medicine.
- ❖ The event paid tribute to Hakim Ajmal Khan, an influential Unani physician and freedom fighter, highlighting his contributions to education and Unani medicine.
- ❖ The President praised CCRUM for its significant contributions to healthcare through Unani Medicine and noted India's extensive network of educational and research institutions in this field.
- ❖ The conference aims to foster meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative efforts to advance Unani Medicine and its integration into mainstream healthcare.
- ❖ The event was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Ayush, national and international delegates from nine countries, and representatives from reputed institutions.

President Draupadi Murmu Inaugurates 10th International Women's Conference (ICW)

- ❖ The 10th Edition of the International Women's Conference was inaugurated by the Hon. President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu emphasizing the inner strengths and virtues of women to create a positive impact on society.
- ❖ The conference is being organized by the Art of Living International Centre
- ❖ President Murmu highlighted the importance of maintaining human values in an era of technological disruption, stating that women's roles are crucial as they embody compassion and kindness.
- ❖ The President highlighted women's achievements

across various fields, including science, sports, politics, arts, and culture.

- ❖ Discussions at the conference focused on mental health, advocating for safe spaces to break silence on mental health issues.
- ❖ The conference theme, "Just Be," encouraged self-acceptance, balance, and resilience in navigating life's challenges.
- ❖ The event was attended by key figures, including Karnataka Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot, Union Minister Annapurna Devi, and spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, who advocated for women's emotional well-being.

5th Joint Working Group meeting between MoD of India & Spain held in New Delhi

- ❖ The 5th Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting between India and Spain's Ministry of Defence occurred in New Delhi.
- ❖ The meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary, International Cooperation Shri Amitabh Prasad and Brigadier General Paulino Garcia Diego, Special Advisor on Defence Diplomacy.
- ❖ Participants reviewed ongoing bilateral defence cooperation activities.
- ❖ Discussions included plans for multiple joint activities, with a specific focus on the maritime domain.
- ❖ Both sides agreed on enhancing collaboration in defence, particularly in technology and armament production.
- ❖ The C295 Project, a collaboration between Airbus Spain and Tata Advanced Systems Limited, represents India's first Make-in-India initiative in the defence aircraft sector.
- ❖ The project aims to foster collaboration between Indian and Spanish companies in the aerospace domain.

BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025 to kick off in Gandhinagar, Gujarat

- ❖ The Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, is organizing the BIMSTEC Youth Summit from 7th to 11th February 2025 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ❖ During the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on 30th -31st August 2018, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India announced the hosting of a three-day BIMSTEC Youth Summit, aimed at bringing together the youth of BIMSTEC nations on a unified platform to exchange experiences and insights on youth-led initiatives undertaken by member states.
- ❖ The primary objective of the BIMSTEC Youth Summit

is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and youth-led initiatives among member countries.

- ❖ Centered around the theme “Youth as a Bridge for Intra-BIMSTEC Exchange,” the summit seeks to harness the collective energy of young leaders to advance the region’s shared goals.
- ❖ The Government of India aims to channel this youthful energy towards achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- ❖ BIMSTEC Members: India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Chennai to Host World Maritime Conference 2024

- ❖ This esteemed event unites industry leaders, professionals, and experts in maritime technology and related fields from around the world.
- ❖ The 2024 edition of WMTC is set to take place in Chennai, India, from December 4 to 6, organized by the Chennai Branch of the Institute of Marine Engineers (India).

Indian delegation shares tax innovation at Global ZATCA Summit

- ❖ Union Minister of State for Finance, M P Chaudhary, led a delegation to the Zakat, Tax, and Customs Authority (ZATCA) Conference 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, held on December 4-5.
- ❖ The conference, themed “Shaping Tomorrow for Sustainable Ecosystems,” focused on fostering global economic cooperation. Chaudhary held talks with Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan to strengthen economic and tax ties between the two countries. He also participated in a panel on economic recovery, highlighting India’s growth strategies.
- ❖ Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman Ravi Agrawal discussed India’s progress in multilateral tax agreements, particularly on the Automatic Exchange of Information. The event aimed to explore sustainable frameworks for future economic collaboration.

Iconic ‘Godfather’ Screened at 30th KIFF in Centenary Tribute Category

- ❖ The 30th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF) enters its fifth day today. Iconic film Godfather was screened in the Centenary Tribute category at Nandan this morning.
- ❖ Films like The Shameless and The Most Precious of Cargos from France and The Room Next Door from Spain were featured in the Cinema International category.
- ❖ Various other screenings and evening seminars are taking place across the city.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar addresses 50th Foundation Day Ceremony of IP & TAFS in New Delhi

- ❖ Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar emphasized that Indian democracy should balance expression and dialogue, with democracy thriving on core values.
- ❖ Speaking at the 50th Foundation Day of Indian Posts and Telecommunications Accounts, and Finance Service, he noted that challenges arise from a lack of meaningful dialogue and expression, stressing the importance of harmony between the two.
- ❖ He highlighted the need for self-audit and scrutiny to prevent institutional degeneration and urged civil servants to embrace technology and drive change.
- ❖ Additionally, he called for innovative models to bridge the digital divide in rural areas. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia praised the service’s achievements over the past 50 years.

India Maritime Heritage Conclave 2024

- ❖ The 1st India Maritime Heritage Conclave (IMHC 2024), organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), took place on December 11-12, 2024.
- ❖ This significant event highlighted India’s rich maritime history and its major contributions to global trade, culture, and innovation.
- ❖ The conclave brought together ministers, experts, and dignitaries from across the globe, offering a dynamic platform for discussion and collaboration, while reaffirming India’s vital role in shaping the global maritime landscape.

PM Modi Chairs 45th PRAGATI Meeting

- ❖ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the 45th edition of PRAGATI, an ICT-based platform for proactive governance and timely implementation, involving both the Centre and State governments.
- ❖ During the meeting, eight major projects were reviewed, including six urban transport metro projects, and one each related to road connectivity and thermal power.
- ❖ These projects, spread across various States/UTs, have a combined cost exceeding Rs. 1 lakh crore.
- ❖ The Prime Minister emphasized that government officials at all levels must understand that project delays not only increase costs but also prevent the public from benefiting as intended.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, chairs a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security' in New Delhi

- ❖ Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, chaired a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security' at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, on January 11, 2025.
- ❖ The Home Minister also launched the Drug Disposal Fortnight, inaugurated the new office complex of Bhopal Zonal Unit of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and extension of MANAS-2 helpline to all 36 states and Union Territories.

Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav addresses SIAM's 3rd International Conference on Sustainable Circularity, in New Delhi

- ❖ Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, delivered the keynote address at the Special Ministerial Session of the 3rd International Conference on Sustainable Circularity, organized by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), in New Delhi today.
- ❖ Themed 'Nature Positive Recycling', the conference brought together key stakeholders from the automotive industry to discuss sustainable development and circularity.

Central, state ministers unveil India Pavilion at WEF's Davos summit

- ❖ Chief Ministers, and central and state ministers jointly inaugurated the India Pavilion at the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s annual summit at Davos in Switzerland, and held meetings with top executives of multinational companies on January 21, 2025, a day that was

marked by discussions on the challenges that artificial intelligence (AI) poses to societies and economies.

- ❖ The WEF released a report, Blueprint for Intelligent Economies, developed in collaboration with KPMG, which said that a global challenge would be to ensure that AI's benefits are shared equitably.

Initiative Lab Mitra receives National e-Governance Gold Award at National e-Governance Conference 2024

- ❖ The 'Lab Mitra' initiative, launched last year in Varanasi, received the National e-Governance Gold Award at the 2024 National e-Governance Conference in Mumbai.
- ❖ Developed by the Varanasi district administration with support from a private bank and NGO, it has successfully expanded across Uttar Pradesh under the name 'Lab Report'.
- ❖ The system, available in 20 hospitals including all government facilities in Varanasi, benefits over 250,000 patients by allowing them to receive their lab test results via a link sent to their phones within hours.

Telangana CM to inaugurate Global Artificial Intelligence Summit 2024 in Hyderabad

- ❖ Hyderabad is hosting the Global Artificial Intelligence Summit 2024, themed "Making AI Work for Everyone."
- ❖ Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will inaugurate the two-day event at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre.
- ❖ The summit aims to boost discussions on AI advancements, applications, and future opportunities, supporting the state's goal of becoming a global innovation hub.
- ❖ It will feature a central plenary and specialised sessions.



TG Community Link:- <https://tinyurl.com/BankingwallahCommunity>

YT link: <https://www.youtube.com/@BankingWallah>

IG link :- <https://www.instagram.com/bankingwallah ?igsh=bG5oZ3JqeXh1ZmE=>

Telegram link: – <https://telegram.me/pwbankingwallah>

Faculty Telegram link: – <https://t.me/CAbysushmitamam>