



# Shankar School of Banking

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## APRIL - 2026



**Indian Army contingent reached Egypt to take part in Exercise 'CYCLONE'**



**Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing becomes Myanmar's acting president**



**ADB CUTS INDIA FY26 GROWTH FORECAST**



**Sadhvi Satish Sail Crowned Femina Miss India 2026**



**World Heritage Day**

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## **APRIL – 2026**

### **NATIONAL NEWS**

#### **Rajasthan Launches Industrial Park Promotion Policy 2026**

- ★ The Rajasthan Government has launched the Industrial Park Promotion Policy 2026 under the leadership of Bhajanlal Sharma to attract investments, generate employment and develop world-class industrial parks.
- ★ The policy aims to position Rajasthan as a future-ready industrial destination and aligns with national initiatives like Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- ★ The policy provides a structured and flexible framework for industrial development with participation from both public and private sectors.
- ★ Industrial parks will be developed through multiple models including: Fully private ownership, Hybrid land-sharing models and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework
- ★ The government has mandated minimum area of 50 acres for private industrial parks and at least 10 industrial units in each park.
- ★ These provisions aim to create integrated industrial ecosystems instead of fragmented development.
- ★ The policy focuses on boosting investment, employment generation and economic growth by: Attracting domestic and foreign investors, Promoting manufacturing and industrial expansion and Ensuring balanced regional development across the state
- ★ It is expected to strengthen Rajasthan's position as an emerging industrial hub in India.
- ★ A key feature of the policy is its emphasis on green and sustainable industrial development.

#### **Indian Railways Imposes ₹10 Lakh Fine on Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation**

- ★ Indian Railways imposed a ₹10 lakh penalty on Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation following a food quality complaint on the Patna – Tatanagar Vande Bharat Express.
- ★ The incident was reported on Train No. 21896, where a passenger raised concerns regarding poor onboard food quality.
- ★ After investigation, authorities identified deficiencies in service standards, leading to strict action.
- ★ Along with Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, the private catering service provider responsible for the lapse was fined ₹50 lakh, and its contract was immediately terminated.
- ★ The action reflects the Government of India's focus on improving passenger experience and enforcing accountability in railway services.

- ★ Indian Railways serves approximately 58 crore meals annually, making it one of the largest railway catering networks in the world.
- ★ The Ministry of Railways has reiterated its zero-tolerance policy towards negligence affecting passenger safety and service quality.
- ★ Over the last three years, penalties worth ₹2.6 crore have been imposed in cases related to catering and service deficiencies.

### **India Pharma 2026 to be Held in New Delhi**

- ★ The Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India, in association with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), is set to organize the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of India Pharma 2026 on April 13-14, 2026 at Federation House, New Delhi.
- ★ The conference will serve as a strategic platform to accelerate the sector's transition from a volume-driven industry to a value- and innovation-led global powerhouse.
- ★ India Pharma 2026 aims to accelerate India's progress in the global pharmaceutical ecosystem by promoting innovation, collaboration, and future growth opportunities among policymakers, researchers, and industry leaders.
- ★ The central theme of the conference is "Discover in India: Leapfrogging Life-Sciences Innovation", reflecting India's shift towards high-value research, advanced drug development, and cutting-edge healthcare solutions.
- ★ India has established itself as the "Pharmacy of the World" by supplying affordable medicines to more than 200 countries, and India Pharma 2026 aims to further strengthen this global role through innovation and international partnerships.
- ★ India Pharma 2026 will also showcase India's growing investments in biotechnology, biosimilars, precision medicine, and life sciences research, strengthening its position in the global healthcare sector.
- ★ The Department of Pharmaceuticals is playing a key role in promoting policy reforms, infrastructure development, and innovation in the pharmaceutical and medical technology sectors, and the initiative aligns with the Government of India's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat for strengthening self-reliance and long-term sectoral development.

### **Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurated Samrat Samprati Museum**

- ★ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Samrat Samprati Museum at Shri Mahavir Jain Aradhana Kendra in Koba, Gandhinagar during his visit to Gujarat.
- ★ The inauguration coincided with the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti and marked a significant step towards preserving India's rich Jain heritage and cultural legacy.
- ★ The Samrat Samprati Museum serves as a comprehensive repository of Jain culture and traditions and is named after Samprati, a ruler known for spreading Jainism and promoting the principle of non-violence across his empire.
- ★ The museum houses nearly 2,000 rare artefacts, including stone idols, ancient manuscripts, miniature paintings, coins, silver chariots, and traditional artefacts, which reflect the spiritual richness and artistic mastery of Jain traditions.

- ★ The museum uses modern audio-visual technology to enhance the educational and cultural experience of visitors and to present Jain philosophy and history in an interactive manner.
- ★ The museum has been divided into seven galleries, and each gallery presents different aspects of Jainism and Indian civilisation, including illustrated manuscripts depicting Jain teachings, stone and metal idols representing Tirthankaras, miniature paintings, coins, silver chariots, and traditional artefacts reflecting centuries-old craftsmanship.
- ★ The structured layout of the museum enables visitors to understand the chronological development and spread of Jainism across India from its origin to its wider influence.
- ★ Samprati, who ruled during 224–215 BCE, is regarded as one of the greatest patrons of Jainism and is often compared with his grandfather Ashoka for spreading religious values, although Samprati focused specifically on promoting Jain teachings.

### **World Buddhist Peace Conference 2026**

- ★ The inaugural edition of the World Buddhist Peace Conference 2026 was held from 27 to 29 March 2026 across Hyderabad and Buddhavanam at Nagarjunasagar in Telangana.
- ★ The conference was organised by Buddhavanam, a unit of the Telangana Tourism Development Corporation, Government of Telangana, in association with Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
- ★ A major highlight of the conference was the unveiling and adoption of the Telangana Peace Declaration, which emphasises inner transformation and ethical values as the foundation for global harmony and peace.
- ★ The Government of Telangana announced that Buddhavanam, spread across 274 acres, will be developed as a global World Peace Centre.
- ★ During the conference, Jupally Krishna Rao, Tourism and Culture Minister of Telangana, was honoured with the 'Grand Prize for Contribution to World Peace'.

### **Punjab Cabinet Approved Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana**

- ★ The Cabinet of Punjab led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann approved a new women centric welfare scheme named Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana to ensure direct economic support to women across the state.
- ★ The scheme marks a major step towards strengthening financial security and social empowerment of women through direct income support in Punjab.
- ★ The Government of Punjab sanctioned Rupees 9,300 crore for implementation of the scheme in the State Budget for Financial Year 2026 to 2027, which was presented in the Punjab Legislative Assembly in March 2026.
- ★ The Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana has been designed as a Direct Benefit Transfer initiative, under which financial assistance will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of eligible women beneficiaries.
- ★ The scheme is expected to benefit nearly 97 percent of adult women in Punjab, making it a large scale women focused Direct Benefit Transfer initiative in the state.
- ★ Under the eligibility criteria of the scheme: women aged 18 years or above and women registered as voters in Punjab will be eligible to receive benefits under the scheme.

- ★ Under the provisions of the scheme: eligible women beneficiaries will receive Rupees 1,000 per month as financial assistance and women belonging to Scheduled Caste category will receive Rupees 1,500 per month as financial assistance.
- ★ The scheme has been introduced as part of the broader efforts of the Government of Punjab to strengthen women's financial inclusion, social security coverage, and economic empowerment across the state through Direct Benefit Transfer mechanism.

### **Andhra Pradesh to Launch India's First Quantum Computer at Amaravati**

- ★ The Government of Andhra Pradesh announced that India's first quantum computer will be launched at Amaravati on 14 April 2026 as part of the Amaravati Quantum Valley Project, marking a major step in advanced computing and emerging technologies development in India.
- ★ The announcement was made by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu, highlighting the objective of positioning India as a global leader in next generation computing technologies.
- ★ The initiative is being implemented with support from the National Quantum Mission to strengthen quantum research, innovation ecosystems, and technological self reliance in India.
- ★ Quantum computers use the principles of quantum mechanics and operate through quantum bits known as qubits, which can represent 0, 1, or both simultaneously through superposition, unlike classical computers that operate only with binary bits 0 or 1.
- ★ The launch of India's first quantum computer is expected to accelerate scientific research and innovation and enable breakthroughs in cryptography, artificial intelligence, and drug discovery
- ★ The Amaravati Quantum Valley Project is envisioned as a world class ecosystem for quantum research, startups, academia industry collaboration, and advanced technology infrastructure.
- ★ The Amaravati Quantum Valley Project will include:
  - Eight dedicated towers for quantum computing and innovation activities
  - Infrastructure support for research institutions and technology startups
- ★ The initiative aims to transform Amaravati into a global quantum technology hub by the year 2030.

### **Government of Andhra Pradesh Launched Free Electricity Scheme**

- ★ The Government of Andhra Pradesh led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu launched a free electricity scheme for handloom and powerloom weavers across the state from 1 April 2026 with an annual outlay of ₹150 crore to reduce power costs, a major component in weaving operations.
- ★ Under the scheme, handloom weavers will receive free electricity up to 200 units per month and powerloom operators will receive free electricity up to 500 units per month.
- ★ The scheme is expected to enable annual savings of approximately ₹8,640 for handloom weavers and ₹21,600 for powerloom operators.
- ★ Additional support measures under the initiative include ₹4,000 monthly pension, ₹5 crore thrift fund for co-operatives, up to 90% subsidy on modern machinery, and 15% yarn rebate.

- ★ The initiative also supports cluster development in Dharmavaram, Pithapuram, and Mangalagiri, along with marketing assistance through Amazon, Flipkart, exhibitions, and digital platforms of Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society to improve market access for weavers.

## **Government of India Extended National Piped Natural Gas Drive 2.0 till 30 June 2026**

- ★ The Government of India extended the National Piped Natural Gas Drive 2.0 by three months till 30 June 2026 to sustain momentum in nationwide expansion of Piped Natural Gas connectivity and increase the share of natural gas to 15 percent in India's energy basket.
- ★ The initiative was earlier scheduled to conclude, and the extension aims to accelerate household and commercial natural gas connectivity and support the transition towards a gas based economy in India.
- ★ The National Piped Natural Gas Drive 2.0 was launched by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board from 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026, bringing together City Gas Distribution companies across India under the theme "Har Ghar Piped Natural Gas Har Gaadi Compressed Natural Gas".
- ★ Under the initiative, the Government of India aims to extend natural gas pipeline connectivity to 37 additional Geographical Areas that are currently not connected to the national gas pipeline network.
- ★ The programme also targets expansion of Piped Natural Gas network coverage to 44 districts that presently do not have access to Piped Natural Gas infrastructure.
- ★ As part of the implementation progress, during March 2026 alone, India added more than 310,000 new Piped Natural Gas connections and issued approximately 270,000 additional connections for domestic and commercial users.
- ★ The National Piped Natural Gas Drive 2.0 is expected to strengthen clean energy adoption, urban energy infrastructure development, and accessibility of natural gas across households and commercial establishments, contributing to India's long term transition towards a cleaner and sustainable energy mix.

## **Delhi Government Introduced Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana**

- ★ The Government of Delhi introduced the Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana to support girl child education and long term financial security from birth to higher education, through a gazette notification issued.
- ★ The scheme has been implemented under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and it replaces the earlier Ladli Scheme of the Delhi Government.
- ★ The scheme provides phase wise financial assistance linked to educational milestones, with total assistance reaching ₹61,000, which can grow up to approximately ₹1.20 lakh with interest at maturity.
- ★ The scheme aims to promote education of girl children from school level to higher education, prevent early marriage of girls, ensure financial independence and empowerment of girls and support families belonging to economically weaker sections.

- ★ The total assistance amount of ₹61,000 is deposited in phases, and it will mature to approximately ₹1.20 lakh with interest, which can be accessed after completion of Class 12 or after attaining the age of 18 or 21 years as per scheme provisions.

### **ECI Launched 'Know Your Candidates' Feature on ECINet Platform**

- ★ The Election Commission of India (ECI) launched the 'Know Your Candidates (KYC)' feature on the ECINet platform ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, aiming to enhance transparency and enable voters to access verified candidate information.
- ★ The feature has been introduced in view of the upcoming Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry.
- ★ The Know Your Candidates module enables voters to access comprehensive background details of contesting candidates, supporting informed electoral decision-making.
- ★ Through this feature, voters can verify criminal antecedents, assets and liabilities, educational qualifications, and verified social media profiles of candidates.
- ★ The platform also allows users to download the official Form 26 affidavit, which is mandatorily submitted by candidates during the nomination process.
- ★ The ECINet platform is described as the world's largest electoral service interface, integrating more than 40 applications and portals into a single digital system.
- ★ ECINet provides multiple voter-centric services, including voter registration, electoral roll search, application status tracking, grievance redressal, and download of digital voter identity card (electronic Electoral Photo Identity Card – e-EPIC).
- ★ The platform also integrates tools such as cVIGIL, which enables citizens to report violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- ★ Another integrated tool is Saksham app, which assists persons with disabilities in accessing election-related services.

### **Indian Railways Completed Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal to Dadri**

- ★ Indian Railways successfully completed the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), marking a major milestone in India's railway infrastructure development.
- ★ The Western Dedicated Freight Corridor spans 1,506 kilometres from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal (Maharashtra) to Dadri.
- ★ The corridor has been executed by the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) under the Ministry of Railways.
- ★ The final milestone was achieved on 31 March 2026 with successful trial runs on the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal–New Saphale section, confirming full operational readiness of the corridor.
- ★ The corridor is a high-capacity double-line electrified freight corridor, designed specifically for heavy and long freight trains.
- ★ The Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is expected to: Double freight carrying capacity, Enable faster freight movement across western India, Reduce transportation time and logistics costs,

Improve port connectivity, especially with Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal and Enhance efficiency of supply chains.

- ★ The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC), another major freight corridor project, has a length of 1,337 kilometres and runs from Ludhiana (Punjab) to Sonnagar, and is already completed and operational.
- ★ In the Union Budget 2026–27, Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister of Finance, announced a new proposed freight corridor from Dankuni (West Bengal) to Surat (Gujarat).

### **India Added Record 6.05 GW Wind Power Capacity in FY 2025–26**

- ★ India added a record 6.05 Gigawatt (GW) of wind power capacity in Financial Year 2025–26, marking the highest-ever annual wind capacity addition in the country's history.
- ★ The addition represents a 46% increase compared to FY 2024–25, indicating strong momentum in the renewable energy sector.
- ★ With this achievement, India's total installed wind power capacity crossed 56 GW, strengthening its global position in clean energy leadership.
- ★ The new milestone surpassed the previous peak addition of 5.5 GW recorded in FY 2016–17.
- ★ The growth supports India's progress toward achieving the 500 GW non-fossil fuel energy capacity target by 2030.
- ★ Key policy measures supporting wind energy expansion include: Concessional customs duty on wind turbine components, Waiver of Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) charges till 2028 and Improved grid connectivity and transmission readiness
- ★ The top contributing States to wind energy capacity addition include: Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- ★ India is among the leading wind energy producers globally, supported by:
  - A robust domestic manufacturing ecosystem.
  - Strong institutional support from the National Institute of Wind Energy.
  - Increasing private sector participation.
- ★ India's wind energy development journey began in the early 1990s, and continued policy support has enabled consistent long-term sectoral growth toward achieving 2030 sustainability targets.

### **Unique Identification Authority of India Partnered with MapmyIndia**

- ★ The Unique Identification Authority of India signed an agreement with MapmyIndia to enable the display of authorised Aadhaar centres on the Mappls App.
- ★ The initiative was announced by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and the facility is expected to be available in the coming months.
- ★ The feature will help users locate the nearest authorised Aadhaar centres using the Mappls App, improving accessibility to Aadhaar-related services.
- ★ Users will also be able to identify services available at specific Aadhaar centres, including: Adult enrolment, Child enrolment, Address update services and Mobile number update services.

- ★ Once operational, search results on the Mappls App will directly guide users to authorised Aadhaar centres, ensuring accurate navigation and service availability information.
- ★ MapmyIndia will integrate UIDAI-provided Aadhaar centre data into the Mappls platform to enable:
  - Accurate digital mapping.
  - Distinct listing of authorised Aadhaar centres.
  - Improved transparency and service accessibility for citizens.
  - India Post Aims to Become Global Logistics Powerhouse by 2030.
- ★ Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia stated that India Post is rapidly transforming into a major logistics powerhouse and aims to become a global player by 2030.
- ★ The statement was made during the release of a commemorative postage stamp marking 75 years of the Postal Training Centre Saharanpur (PTC) in New Delhi.
- ★ The Minister highlighted that PTC Saharanpur has played a crucial role in training nearly 2.5 lakh postal employees over the past 75 years, instilling values such as service, efficiency, accuracy, and “Nation First, Service First”.
- ★ The institute currently trains around 30,000 personnel annually, contributing significantly to capacity building in the postal sector.
- ★ The Minister described PTC Saharanpur as an institution that transforms employees into dedicated “Karma Yogis” committed to national service.
- ★ During the event, the Government of Goa and the Cochin Port Authority signed an agreement to onboard onto the System for Accounting and Management of Pension (SAMPANN) platform.
- ★ SAMPANN is an integrated online pension management system for pensioners of the Department of Telecommunications, providing:
  - End-to-end digital processing, sanction, and disbursement of pensions directly to bank accounts.
  - Online grievance redressal mechanism.
  - Digital profile management and transaction records.
  - The platform enhances transparency, efficiency, and service delivery for telecom pensioners across India.
- ★ Maharashtra Launched “Majha Gaon, Arogyasampann Gaon” Campaign.
- ★ The Government of Maharashtra launched the “Majha Gaon, Arogyasampann Gaon” (My Village, Healthy Village) campaign on the occasion of World Health Day to improve rural healthcare services, sanitation, and preventive health infrastructure.
- ★ The campaign was launched in Mumbai by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with an outlay of ₹65.25 crore to strengthen healthcare accessibility in villages.
- ★ A short film and information booklet explaining the objectives and implementation strategy of the campaign were released during the launch event.
- ★ The campaign aims to strengthen rural healthcare systems, ensure availability of quality medical services near villages, and promote self-reliance in managing local health challenges.

- ★ The initiative focuses on preventive healthcare measures, including: Improving cleanliness and sanitation, Ensuring safe drinking water availability, Strengthening wastewater management systems and Promoting proper nutrition
- ★ The campaign targets the control of communicable diseases and lifestyle-related diseases through community-based interventions.
- ★ Special emphasis has been placed on improving: Maternal health, Child health, Mental health and Lifestyle disease prevention
- ★ Committees have been formed at State, district, and village levels to monitor implementation and ensure effective execution of the campaign.
- ★ Villages achieving prescribed health standards will be recognised with the title “Arogyasampann Gaon”, encouraging community participation and performance-based improvement in rural health indicators.
- ★ The campaign is designed as a people’s participation movement to strengthen public involvement in improving health outcomes across rural Maharashtra.

### **Regional Passport Office Bhopal Becomes First in India to Introduce Braille Script**

- ★ The Regional Passport Office Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh became the first Regional Passport Office in India to introduce Braille script and Sign Language services to improve accessibility for differently-abled passport applicants.
- ★ The initiative was inaugurated by B.S. Mubarak, Joint Secretary (Passport Seva Programme) and Chief Passport Officer, in the presence of Shitanshu Chaurasiya, Regional Passport Officer, at the Regional Passport Office Bhopal.
- ★ Under the Braille script services initiative: Braille booklets explaining the complete passport application process, Inclusion of essential do’s and don’ts and Installation of Braille signage plates within the office premises to facilitate easy navigation for visually impaired applicants
- ★ Under the Sign Language services initiative:
  - Instructional videos in Sign Language introduced for speech and hearing-impaired applicants.
  - Videos provide guidance on types of passport applications, document requirements, and application procedures.
  - Quick Response codes placed near queues and service counters to enable easy digital access to the instructional content.
- ★ The initiative aims to strengthen inclusive citizen services under the Passport Seva Programme by improving accessibility and service delivery for persons with disabilities.

### **Telangana Declares Cancer as Notifiable Disease**

- ★ The Government of Telangana has declared cancer as a notifiable disease across the state to strengthen monitoring of the rising burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).
- ★ The objective of this initiative is to establish a centralised cancer registry to enable:
  - Accurate estimation of cancer incidence and prevalence.
  - Support evidence-based policymaking.
  - Improve resource allocation for treatment, palliative care, and rehabilitative services.

- ★ The Mehdi Nawaz Jung Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre, Hyderabad has been designated as the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for data validation and co-ordination with the National Cancer Registry.
- ★ For implementation, the State Government will launch a dedicated digital portal to facilitate mandatory reporting of cancer cases through secure login credentials while ensuring strict confidentiality of patient data.
- ★ Additionally, AstraZeneca signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Telangana to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled lung cancer screening in the state to support early detection and improved cancer management outcomes.

### **Puducherry Deployed 'Nila' Humanoid Robot at Polling Booth**

- ★ Election authorities in Puducherry deployed 'Nila' humanoid robot for the first time during Assembly elections at the VOC Government School polling booth to enhance voter experience through technology-driven assistance.
- ★ The initiative aimed to create a high-technology and welcoming environment for voters, especially to encourage participation among young voters and first-time voters.
- ★ The robot was developed by Robo Mirror, Coimbatore, and was dressed in a traditional saree, greeting voters with flowers, providing polling booth directions, and assisting elderly and first-time voters.
- ★ 'Nila' is an event-based interactive humanoid robot equipped with sensor-based voter detection capability, supports communication in Tamil and English languages, and can perform walking and hand-waving interactions.
- ★ The robot is designed for deployment in multiple public settings, including elections, official functions, and social events such as weddings.

### **CCEA Approved Two Hydroelectric Projects in Arunachal Pradesh Worth ₹40,175 Crore**

- ★ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved two hydroelectric projects in Arunachal Pradesh with a total investment of ₹40,175.33 crore to strengthen renewable energy capacity, energy security, and infrastructure development in the North-Eastern region.
- ★ The approved projects include the 1,200-megawatt Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project in Anjaw district and the 1,720-megawatt Kamala Hydroelectric Project across Kamle district, Kra Daadi district, and Kurung Kumey district.
- ★ The Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project, to be developed on the Lohit River, received approval with an investment of ₹14,105.83 crore.
- ★ The project has an installed capacity of 1,200 megawatts and is expected to generate 4,852.95 million units of electricity annually, with completion planned within 78 months.
- ★ The project also includes construction of 29 kilometres of roads and bridges to improve connectivity in Namsai district and Anjaw district.

- ★ The Kamala Hydroelectric Project received approval with an investment of ₹26,069.50 crore and has an installed capacity of 1,720 megawatts, expected to generate 6,870 million units of electricity annually.
- ★ The project includes ₹4,743.98 crore for flood moderation, ₹1,340 crore for enabling infrastructure, and ₹750 crore as Central Financial Assistance for the State's equity share.
- ★ The Kamala project will support peak demand management, national grid balancing, and flood moderation in the Brahmaputra River basin, contributing to sustainable development and improved energy infrastructure in the region.

### **CCEA Approved Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh**

- ★ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved ₹14,105.83 crore for the 1,200-megawatt Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh to strengthen renewable energy capacity and infrastructure development in the North-Eastern region.
- ★ The project will be developed on the Lohit River in Anjaw district, marking the first hydropower project in the Lohit Basin.
- ★ The Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project will have an installed capacity of 1,200 megawatts, comprising six units of 190 megawatts each and one unit of 60 megawatts, and is expected to generate 4,852.95 million units of electricity annually.
- ★ The project will be implemented through a joint venture between THDC India Limited and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, ensuring both technical expertise and State participation, and is scheduled for completion within 78 months.
- ★ The Central Government will provide ₹599.88 crore for enabling infrastructure such as roads, bridges, transmission lines, and connectivity facilities, improving regional infrastructure along with renewable energy generation capacity.
- ★ Alongside this project, the Kamala Hydroelectric Project was also approved with an investment of ₹26,069.50 crore and an installed capacity of 1,720 megawatts, expected to generate 6,870 million units of electricity annually, reflecting a combined hydropower investment of over ₹40,000 crore in the North-Eastern region.

### **NHAI Launched 'Arogya Van' Initiative**

- ★ The National Highways Authority of India launched the 'Arogya Van' initiative to plant medicinal trees along National Highways to promote biodiversity, ecological sustainability, and awareness of traditional medicinal systems such as Ayurveda.
- ★ The initiative aims to transform highways into green ecological corridors by integrating plantation of medicinally significant plant species with environmental conservation objectives.
- ★ In the first phase, plantations will be carried out across 17 land parcels covering 62.8 hectares, with approximately 67,462 medicinal trees to be planted across States including Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.
- ★ A total of 36 medicinal plant species have been selected under the initiative based on their ecological adaptability and medicinal value, including Neem, Amla, Jamun, Tamarind, Gular, and Maulsari.

- ★ Priority plantation locations include toll plazas, interchanges, cloverleaf junctions, and wayside amenities to maximise visibility and promote awareness among highway users.
- ★ Additionally, around 188 hectares of vacant land has been identified for future plantation during the monsoon season to improve survival rates of medicinal plants.
- ★ The initiative will help support pollinators such as bees and butterflies, provide habitat for birds and small fauna, improve soil quality, and strengthen ecosystem resilience along National Highways.

### **Vantara Announced Vantara University in Jamnagar, Gujarat**

- ★ Vantara announced the establishment of Vantara University in Jamnagar, Gujarat, under the leadership of Anant Ambani.
- ★ The university is envisioned as a modern Gurukul-style institution and aims to become the world's first integrated global university dedicated to wildlife conservation, animal welfare, and veterinary sciences.
- ★ The university aims to position India as a global leader in conservation education, animal welfare, and veterinary science training through an integrated multidisciplinary academic ecosystem.
- ★ The institution will focus on training professionals in wildlife medicine, conservation science, and ethical animal care, while combining scientific research with real-world field experience.
- ★ The vision of Vantara University draws inspiration from the legacy of Nalanda University, promoting holistic learning, compassion towards all living beings, integration of traditional knowledge with modern science, and global exchange of ideas.
- ★ Vantara University will offer programmes at multiple academic levels including Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Fellowship, and specialised training programmes in disciplines such as wildlife medicine and surgery, veterinary sciences, animal nutrition and behaviour, genetics, epidemiology, and conservation policy.
- ★ To promote inclusive access to education, the university announced initiatives such as the Vantara University Founding Fellows Programme and the 'Every Life Matters' Scholarships, aimed at supporting students from economically weaker sections and aspiring conservation researchers.

### **Gujarat Police Launched NARIT Artificial Intelligence System**

- ★ Gujarat Police launched NARIT Artificial Intelligence (Narcotics Analysis and Retrieval-Augmented Generation-based Investigation Tool) becoming the first law enforcement agency in India to deploy an Artificial Intelligence-based investigation system for cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- ★ The system uses Retrieval-Augmented Generation-based analysis, enabling officers to process First Information Reports and generate structured investigation reports using verified legal databases instead of open internet sources, improving accuracy and reliability.
- ★ NARIT Artificial Intelligence was developed by the Western Railway Police in Vadodara, in collaboration with a Mumbai-based Artificial Intelligence startup, marking a major innovation in India's policing and investigation ecosystem.

- ★ The initiative was conceptualised under K.L.N. Rao and supported by Harsh Sanghvi, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Gujarat, reflecting the State Government's zero-tolerance policy against narcotics crimes.
- ★ After uploading a First Information Report, the system: analyses the case details, generates structured investigation reports, identifies strengths and weaknesses in the case, suggests legal remedies and next procedural steps and provides investigation guidelines based on High Court and Supreme Court judgments.
- ★ The system integrates provisions from major criminal laws including the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, along with Government circulars and judicial precedents to strengthen investigation quality.
- ★ The initiative addresses procedural lapses in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances cases, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and helping investigators take corrective action before filing charges, thereby improving conviction outcomes.

### **India Moving Towards Fully Digital Toll Collection on National Highways**

- ★ India has initiated the transition towards a fully digital toll collection system across National Highways, enabling payments through FASTag (Electronic Toll Collection System using Radio Frequency Identification Technology) and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) from 11 April 2026, aimed at improving transparency, reducing congestion, and enhancing commuter convenience.
- ★ The initiative marks a shift from the hybrid toll payment system (cash and digital) to an exclusively digital toll payment ecosystem, supporting the development of technology-driven transport infrastructure in India.
- ★ Under the new system, toll payments at plazas will be processed through: FASTag, and Unified Payments Interface.
- ★ Key objectives of the digital-only toll collection system include: faster vehicle movement at toll plazas, reduction in waiting time and traffic congestion, minimisation of cash handling and revenue leakages,
- ★ However, the nationwide rollout has been temporarily paused in certain regions due to enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct by the Election Commission of India, which restricts implementation of new policy measures during election periods.
- ★ The temporary pause applies to areas including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry, where elections are underway.
- ★ The initiative reflects India's broader push towards cashless mobility solutions, transparent toll operations, and efficient highway travel infrastructure.

### **Ministry of Civil Aviation Approves Warangal and Adilabad Airports in Telangana**

- ★ The Ministry of Civil Aviation approved the development of two new airports at Warangal and Adilabad in Telangana.
- ★ The decision was announced during a special meeting chaired by Rajnath Singh, Union Minister of the Ministry of Defence, held in New Delhi.
- ★ The foundation stone for Warangal Airport will be laid at Mamnour within the next three months.

- ★ The Ministry of Defence will develop the Adilabad Airport project.
- ★ The airport will be constructed over 370 acres of land.
- ★ The Airports Authority of India will build the civilian terminal at Adilabad Airport.
- ★ Adilabad Airport will serve a dual purpose, supporting civilian flight operations and armed forces training activities.
- ★ The development of these airports is expected to improve regional connectivity and infrastructure development in Telangana.

### **SARAL AI Platform to Simplify Research Content into 18 Indian Languages**

- ★ Minister of the Science and Technology Jitendra Singh announced that the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) is developing an AI-powered platform SARAL AI to convert complex research papers and patents into simple, social media-friendly content in 18 Indian languages, aiming to bridge the gap between scientific innovation and the general public.
- ★ The platform will convert research papers and patents into short videos, podcasts, posters, and social media content.
- ★ The platform will also prepare business briefs and presentations for practical and policy-level use.
- ★ The initiative aims to promote scientific awareness among citizens and enhance public engagement with research.
- ★ It supports evidence-based decision-making and encourages innovation-driven development.
- ★ The announcement was made during a review meeting held in New Delhi.
- ★ ANRF is focusing on mission-mode research programmes and faster translation of research into real-world applications.
- ★ The foundation is strengthening collaboration between academia, industry, and government.
- ★ To improve the research ecosystem, nodal officers have been deployed in 250 institutions.
- ★ Administrative processes related to research support are being simplified.
- ★ WhatsApp and Arattai channels have been launched for real-time updates to researchers.
- ★ PM-ECRG Lightning Talk Series has been introduced to enable researchers to present their work in short formats.

### **Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 Launched with ₹10,000 Crore Corpus**

- ★ The Government of India launched Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0) with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore to strengthen India's startup ecosystem by supporting deep-tech, innovative manufacturing, and early-stage startups.
- ★ The initiative aims to improve access to venture capital through Alternative Investment Funds and promote innovation-driven economic growth.
- ★ The scheme aims to boost funding support for deep-tech, innovative manufacturing, and early-stage startups.

- ★ Under the scheme, the Government will invest in Securities and Exchange Board of India-registered Alternative Investment Funds, which will further invest in startups.
- ★ The scheme is monitored by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ The implementation of the scheme will be carried out by the Small Industries Development Bank of India.
- ★ The scheme aims to increase venture capital investment and strengthen research and development-intensive startups.
- ★ It focuses on promoting technology-driven startups and supporting both early-stage and growth-stage enterprises.
- ★ The scheme follows a segmented funding structure covering deep-tech startups, early-stage and Micro Venture Capital support, innovative manufacturing startups, and sector-agnostic investments.
- ★ It encourages investments in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum computing, and biotechnology.
- ★ The initiative supports long-duration investments for startups with longer gestation periods.
- ★ An empowered committee chaired by the Secretary of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will oversee implementation.
- ★ Detailed operational guidelines including eligibility criteria, fund disbursement mechanisms, and monitoring framework will be issued separately.

### **Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates Delhi–Dehradun Economic Corridor**

- ★ Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated the Delhi–Dehradun Economic Corridor, a major infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity between Delhi and Dehradun.
- ★ The corridor is expected to boost tourism, trade, logistics, employment opportunities, and regional economic development in Uttarakhand and surrounding areas.
- ★ The project supports regional economic growth by boosting trade, logistics, warehousing, and industrial development.
- ★ The corridor will generate employment opportunities during construction and operational phases.
- ★ It will help farmers and local producers access larger markets more quickly and efficiently.
- ★ The expressway will improve connectivity to major religious and tourist destinations including Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mussoorie, and the Char Dham sites – Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath.
- ★ Improved connectivity is expected to enhance tourism activities, including hotels, transport services, and homestay businesses in the region.
- ★ A 12-kilometre elevated wildlife corridor has been constructed to ensure safe movement of wildlife, especially elephants, while protecting forest ecosystems and biodiversity.
- ★ The inauguration coincided with major festivals including Baisakhi, Bohag Bihu, and Puthandu.

- ★ The event also marked the birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar, highlighting its national significance.

### **India's Unemployment Rate Rises to 5.1% in March 2026**

- ★ India's unemployment rate rose to 5.1% in March 2026, the highest level in the last five months, according to the National Statistics Office based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey.
- ★ The unemployment rate increased from 4.9% in February 2026 to 5.1% in March 2026.
- ★ Urban unemployment rate increased to 6.8% from 6.6% in the previous month.
- ★ Rural unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.3% from 4.2%.
- ★ Male unemployment rate increased to 5.0%, while female unemployment rate rose to 5.3%.
- ★ The Labour Force Participation Rate declined to 55.4% in March 2026 from 55.9% in February 2026.
- ★ The rural Labour Force Participation Rate decreased to 58.0%, while the urban Labour Force Participation Rate declined to 50.3%.
- ★ The Worker Population Ratio declined to 52.6% from 53.2% in February 2026.
- ★ The rural Worker Population Ratio decreased to 55.5%, while the urban Worker Population Ratio declined to 46.8%.
- ★ The unemployment estimates are calculated using the Current Weekly Status method under the Periodic Labour Force Survey, which considers a person unemployed if they did not work even for one hour during the reference week but were available for work.

### **Karnataka High Court Directs Implementation of Menstrual Leave Policy Across All Sectors**

- ★ The Karnataka High Court directed the Karnataka State Government to implement a menstrual leave policy across both organised and unorganised sectors.
- ★ The Court recognised menstrual leave as part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
- ★ M. Nagaprasanna, Judge of the Karnataka High Court, observed that menstruation is a natural biological process and workplace support during this period ensures humane working conditions.
- ★ The Court directed the State Government to issue guidelines, circulars, and administrative measures to ensure uniform implementation across workplaces.
- ★ The directions include extending menstrual leave benefits to women workers in the unorganised sector.
- ★ The order will remain effective until the proposed Karnataka Menstrual Leave and Hygiene Bill, 2025 is formally enacted.
- ★ The case was filed by a woman daily wage worker employed at a hotel in Belagavi, seeking extension of menstrual leave benefits to all sectors.
- ★ Earlier Government notifications issued in November 2025 provided one day of paid menstrual leave in selected industrial establishments.

- ★ The Court clarified that menstrual leave provisions support substantive equality under Article 14 of the Constitution of India and do not violate the Right to Equality.
- ★ The judgment strengthens gender-sensitive workplace reforms by recognising menstrual health support as part of constitutional guarantees of dignity, equality, and social justice.

### **India Targets Cocoa Self-Sufficiency by 2040**

- ★ India aims to achieve self-sufficiency in cocoa production by 2040 to reduce import dependence worth United States Dollar 866 million.
- ★ The roadmap was prepared by Grant Thornton Bharat in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ India currently produces less than 20 percent of its domestic cocoa requirement, leading to a significant supply-demand gap.
- ★ Cocoa consumption in India is projected to reach 4.67 lakh tonnes by 2040, driven by the growth of the chocolate and food processing industry.
- ★ The roadmap recommends the launch of a National Mission on Cocoa to strengthen domestic production and improve farmer incomes.
- ★ The proposed mission includes the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for cocoa research and development.
- ★ The strategy proposes the development of 250 hectares of seed gardens during the initial implementation phase between 2026 and 2028.
- ★ It also includes training of one lakh farmers and distribution of 25 million seedlings during the capacity-building phase between 2028 and 2030.
- ★ The roadmap aims to expand cocoa cultivation to one lakh hectares and meet 50 percent of domestic demand by 2035.
- ★ The long-term objective is to achieve complete cocoa self-sufficiency and position India as a global cocoa processing hub by 2040.
- ★ The plan also proposes the introduction of digital farmer registry systems and full traceability mechanisms across the cocoa value chain.
- ★ Cocoa is a plantation crop of humid tropical regions, native to the Amazon Basin.
- ★ Globally, about 70 percent of cocoa beans production is concentrated in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon.
- ★ In India, cocoa cultivation is mainly concentrated in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

### **Chhattisgarh Government Approves Committee to Draft UCC Framework**

- ★ The Government of Chhattisgarh, led by Vishnu Deo Sai, approved the formation of a high-level committee to prepare a draft framework for implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the State.
- ★ The move places Chhattisgarh among States taking steps toward a common civil law framework.
- ★ The committee will: study the feasibility of implementing the Uniform Civil Code, prepare a draft framework and examine legal, social, and cultural implications.

- ★ The decision marks the initial policy-level step, not immediate implementation of the Uniform Civil Code.
- ★ The Uniform Civil Code aims to introduce common civil laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption for all citizens irrespective of religion.
- ★ The concept of the Uniform Civil Code is mentioned under Article 44 of the Constitution of India in the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- ★ Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) are non-justiciable and implementation depends on legislative action by governments.
- ★ With this step, Chhattisgarh joins other States moving toward the Uniform Civil Code, including:
  - Uttarakhand, which has implemented the Uniform Civil Code;
  - Gujarat, where the Assembly has recently taken steps related to the Uniform Civil Code.
- ★ The initiative reflects a gradual approach toward legal uniformity in personal laws across citizens in line with constitutional guidance under Article 44.

### **All India Council for Technical Education Launches VAANI 3.0 Scheme**

- ★ The All-India Council for Technical Education has launched the third edition of the AICTE-VAANI Scheme (Vibrant Advocacy for Advancement and Nurturing of Indian Languages) to promote the use of Indian languages in technical education and research and improve accessibility for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- ★ The scheme was launched by Yogesh Singh, highlighting the importance of making technical knowledge accessible in native languages.
- ★ A dedicated online portal has been introduced to simplify participation by institutions.
- ★ The scheme aims to promote research and publication in Indian languages, strengthen academia–industry collaboration, and enable students to understand technical concepts in their mother tongue.
- ★ The initiative addresses the language gap between school education and higher technical education, where many students shift from regional languages to English-medium learning.
- ★ Under VAANI 3.0, the Government will provide ₹4 crore annually to support academic activities.
- ★ More than 200 conferences, seminars, and workshops will be funded each year, with selected institutions receiving ₹2 lakh each.
- ★ Activities will be conducted in 22 regional languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, and Urdu.
- ★ The scheme will support programmes in 16 emerging domains such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Quantum Technology, Hydrogen Energy, Cybersecurity, Space and Defence, and Agrotechnology.
- ★ Applications from AICTE-approved institutions will be accepted between 18 April and 17 May 2026 through the AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Portal.
- ★ The scheme is expected to improve learning outcomes, increase participation in research and innovation, and promote inclusive technical education, especially for students from rural and regional backgrounds.

## **Bengaluru Water Board Becomes First in India to Receive ISO 50001 Certification**

- ★ The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has become the first water utility in India to receive the ISO 50001:2018 certification for energy management.
- ★ The recognition, announced on April 14, 2026, highlights efforts toward efficient energy use and sustainable urban infrastructure in Bengaluru.
- ★ The certification was issued by Bureau Veritas, a global certification agency.
- ★ The certification covers key operations including: bulk water pumping stations at TK Halli, Harohalli, and Tataguni, operations at Cauvery Bhavan headquarters and continuous water supply systems across Greater Bengaluru.
- ★ ISO 50001 focuses on: improving energy efficiency, reducing operational costs and lowering carbon emissions.
- ★ The achievement is significant for rapidly growing urban centres like Bengaluru, where demand for water and energy is increasing.
- ★ Earlier, BWSSB also received certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for its piped drinking water supply management system.
- ★ The milestone reflects BWSSB's commitment to sustainable infrastructure and adoption of global best practices.

## **Meghalaya Grants Official Status to Khasi and Garo**

- ★ The Meghalaya Government has approved the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026, granting official language status to Khasi and Garo along with English.
- ★ The decision was taken by the State Cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Conrad Sangma and aims to strengthen indigenous identity and improve administrative accessibility.
- ★ Khasi and Garo, spoken by the two largest tribal communities of Meghalaya, will now be used in government communication and administrative functioning.
- ★ English will continue as the linking language in the State.
- ★ The Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005 will be repealed following the new ordinance.
- ★ Members of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly will be able to speak and debate in Khasi and Garo.
- ★ The languages may also be introduced in government examinations and recruitment processes after implementation frameworks are prepared.
- ★ The move follows long-standing demands from local communities and aims to strengthen cultural identity and governance accessibility.
- ★ The decision is expected to support Meghalaya's demand for inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which currently recognises 22 languages and provides support for language development, representation in official examinations, and greater national recognition.
- ★ The decision aligns with constitutional provisions such as Article 345, which allows States to adopt one or more languages for official purposes, Article 346 related to communication between

States and the Union, and Article 347, which empowers the President of India to direct recognition of a language spoken by a section of the population for official use.

### **Indian Institute of Technology Madras Introduces OmegaBall in India**

- ★ The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) introduced OmegaBall, a three-team football format, marking its first-ever entry into India.
- ★ IIT Madras proposed the formation of a national-level OmegaBall Club to promote and expand the sport across the country.
- ★ The institute organized an inter-college OmegaBall tournament at its campus football field to mark the launch.
- ★ Participating institutions included Loyola College, Guru Nanak College, Dr. Ambedkar Law University, The New College, Saveetha University, and YMCA College of Physical Education, along with teams from IIT Madras.
- ★ OmegaBall is played with three teams simultaneously on a circular field with three goals, increasing ball interaction and scoring opportunities.
- ★ The format is gaining popularity in regions such as the United States, Brazil, and Europe, indicating its emergence as a global sport.
- ★ The initiative was launched under the leadership of V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, highlighting the importance of innovation in sports.
- ★ The introduction of OmegaBall aligns with the institute's vision of encouraging creativity, enhancing student engagement, and strengthening India's sports ecosystem.

### **India's First 3D Semiconductor Packaging Unit to be Set Up in Odisha**

- ★ The foundation stone for India's first advanced 3D semiconductor packaging unit was laid in Odisha at Info Valley, marking a major step towards self-reliance in high-end electronics manufacturing.
- ★ The project is being developed by 3D Glass Solutions through its Indian arm Heterogeneous Integrated Packaging Systems Private Limited (HIPSPL) and will introduce 3D Heterogeneous Integration (3DHI) packaging technology in India for the first time.
- ★ The project involves an investment of around ₹1,943 crore (approximately ₹2,000 crore) with support from both Central and State Governments.
- ★ Commercial production is expected to begin by August 2028, with full-scale production targeted by 2030.
- ★ The unit will strengthen India's position in the global semiconductor value chain, reduce import dependence, and support sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Fifth Generation (5G) telecommunications, defence electronics, and high-performance computing.
- ★ Odisha is emerging as a semiconductor and Information Technology hub and is the only state in India set to host both a compound semiconductor fabrication unit and a 3D glass substrate packaging facility, positioning it as a key centre for advanced electronics manufacturing.
- ★ The project aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, aiming to build a robust domestic semiconductor ecosystem, enhance strategic autonomy, and support India's growth as a major

electronics manufacturing hub, where it has already become the second-largest mobile phone manufacturer globally.

### **Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary Declared India's 99<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Site**

- ★ Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav announced the inclusion of Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary as India's 99<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Site.
- ★ The wetland is located in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, taking the state's total to 12 Ramsar Sites.
- ★ The recognition is granted under the Ramsar Convention, which focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands of international importance.
- ★ With this addition, India's total Ramsar Sites increased to 99, moving closer to the milestone of 100 sites.
- ★ Shekha Jheel is an important wetland ecosystem that supports migratory birds and diverse aquatic life.
- ★ It lies along the Central Asian Flyway, a key migratory route for birds between northern breeding and southern wintering regions.
- ★ Notable species found in the sanctuary include Bar-headed Goose and Painted Stork, along with several species of ducks and waterfowl.
- ★ The Ramsar designation supports biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, and water security.
- ★ It also promotes eco-tourism, local employment generation, and community participation in conservation efforts.
- ★ A Ramsar Site is a wetland recognised under the Ramsar Convention (1971) for its ecological significance, including roles in habitat protection, groundwater recharge, flood control, and climate regulation.
- ★ India now has 99 Ramsar Sites across 28 States and Union Territories, strengthening its commitment to wetland conservation.

### **ASI Begins Major Conservation Work at Konark Sun Temple**

- ★ The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) began a major conservation project at the Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site, to restore the structure and ensure its long-term stability.
- ★ The project involves careful removal of sand from the Jagamohan (assembly hall), which had been filled by British engineers between 1901 and 1903 to prevent the structure from collapsing.
- ★ The earlier sand-filling measure helped stabilise the monument at the time but resulted in: The Jagamohan remaining sealed and inaccessible, Limited scope for internal structural assessment and Conservation efforts being largely restricted to the exterior portions
- ★ Before initiating the operation, ASI conducted scientific assessments, including: Drilling two test holes in December, Analysis of stone and sand samples by Indian Institute of Technology Madras and Confirmation that the sand remained structurally stable, enabling safe commencement of restoration work

- ★ The Konark Sun Temple was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty and is designed in the form of a giant chariot dedicated to the Sun God.
- ★ The temple's construction reportedly took around 12 years and involved nearly 1,200 artisans and sculptors, and it is globally renowned for its intricate stone carvings and architectural excellence.

### **Ninth Edition of India International Water Week 2026 Launched**

- ★ C. R. Patil, Union Minister of Ministry of Jal Shakti, launched the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of India International Water Week 2026, India's flagship global water event, at Shram Shakti Bhavan in New Delhi.
- ★ India International Water Week 2026 aims to bring together experts, planners, innovators, and stakeholders from across the world to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in water resource management.
- ★ During the launch event:
  - The official brochure of India International Water Week 2026 was released
  - The official website portal of India International Water Week 2026 was made live
- ★ While addressing the event, the Union Minister highlighted that:
  - More than 60 lakh artificial recharge and water conservation structures have already been created under national water conservation initiatives
  - The Government of India has set a target to create one crore such structures by May 2026 to strengthen water security and groundwater recharge efforts.

### **India Launches Toll-Free Helpline 1855 for Census 2027**

- ★ India launched a nationwide toll-free helpline (1855) to simplify the Census 2027 process and enhance citizen participation.
- ★ The helpline has been introduced by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and is operational across all States and Union Territories with multilingual support.
- ★ It will provide guidance on House Listing and Housing Census, assist citizens in understanding procedures, and help ensure accurate data submission.
- ★ The initiative promotes inclusive and citizen-centric governance by reducing confusion, especially in rural areas, and improving transparency in the census process.
- ★ Census 2027 will mark a digital transformation, with enumerators using smartphone-based applications, enabling real-time monitoring, faster processing, and improved accuracy.
- ★ A self-enumeration portal has been introduced for the first time, allowing citizens to submit their data independently.
- ★ The census will be conducted in two phases:
  - Phase I (April–September 2026): House Listing and Housing Census covering housing conditions, amenities, and assets, along with a 15-day self-enumeration window.
  - Phase II (February 2027): Population Enumeration covering demographics, education, migration, and fertility details.

### **Andhra Pradesh Launches ₹13,000 Crore Mushroom Mission**

- ★ The Government of Andhra Pradesh has launched its first Mushroom Mission with an investment of ₹13,000 crore, announced by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.
- ★ The mission aims to make the state India's largest mushroom producer with a target of 67,500 tonnes annually, surpassing Bihar.
- ★ Around 1.62 lakh mushroom units will be established, each covering 5,000 square feet, focusing on small farmers, Self-Help Groups, and rural women.
- ★ The government will provide a ₹5,184 crore subsidy (about 40% of project cost) through Central and State support.
- ★ Key varieties promoted include milky mushroom, paddy straw mushroom, and button mushroom for better climate suitability and market demand.
- ★ The initiative will boost rural employment, exports (especially to Gulf countries), and agri-value chain development.
- ★ The mission is expected to strengthen agricultural diversification and income generation in the state.

### **MoEFCC Launch Five-Year Biodiversity Project (2025–2030)**

- ★ The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) have launched a five-year biodiversity project (2025–2030).
- ★ The project, titled “Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Securing Biodiversity Conservation Commitments”, is supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with a funding of USD 4.88 million.
- ★ The initiative aims to integrate biodiversity conservation into Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), making it part of local governance and rural planning.
- ★ It focuses on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) to ensure community participation and benefit sharing.
- ★ Key regions covered:
  - Tamil Nadu: Sathyamangalam landscape including Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.
  - Meghalaya: Garo Hills region including Nokrek Biosphere Reserve, Balpakram National Park, and Siju Wildlife Sanctuary.
- ★ The project promotes sustainable financing mechanisms such as: Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) co-financing and Green micro-enterprises
- ★ Special emphasis is given to women, Scheduled Castes, and tribal communities for inclusive participation.
- ★ The initiative aligns with:
  - India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2030).
  - India's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.

## **Government Expands Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan Procurement in Chhattisgarh**

- ★ The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has expanded procurement under Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan in Chhattisgarh and launched the first structured pulse procurement under Atmanirbhar Pulses Mission in Bihar.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance farmer income support and ensure price stability.
- ★ Procurement operations are led by National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India Limited and National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India Limited.
- ★ In Chhattisgarh, procurement has been strengthened through digitised farmer registration through Electronic Samyukti portal and awareness campaigns.
- ★ Around 85 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies centres are operational across districts such as Dhamtari, Durg, Raipur, and Raigarh, with further expansion planned.
- ★ In Bihar, National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India Limited has started organised procurement of masoor (lentil) using scientific storage in Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority-approved warehouses, in collaboration with Central Warehousing Corporation.
- ★ National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India Limited is also expanding procurement under the Price Support Scheme through its co-operative network.
- ★ The move will strengthen pulse procurement systems, improve market access for farmers, and stabilise prices.

## **UNGA President Annalena Baerbock Visits India**

- ★ Annalena Baerbock, President of the United Nations General Assembly, is visiting India, marking her first visit after assuming office.
- ★ The visit highlights India's growing importance in global diplomacy and multilateral co-operation.
- ★ Key focus areas include:
  - Strengthening multilateralism and adherence to the United Nations Charter.
  - Addressing global challenges such as conflicts, economic instability, and climate change.
  - Promoting co-operation across peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights.
- ★ She will hold high-level meetings with S. Jaishankar and officials from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), along with the United Nations country team in India.
- ★ Discussions will cover digital governance, global policy co-ordination, and India's role in shaping international frameworks.
- ★ The visit underscores India's role as a key supporter of the United Nations, contributing to peacekeeping, sustainable development, and digital innovation.
- ★ After concluding her India visit, she will travel to China on April 29–30, where she is scheduled to meet Vice President Han Zheng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, along with the United Nations country team, reflecting the United Nations' focus on engaging major global powers.

## **IRCTC Launches 14-Day Bharat–Bhutan Mystic Mountain Tour**

- ★ Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation launched a 14-day 'Bharat–Bhutan Mystic Mountain Tour' from New Delhi.
- ★ The tour will be conducted on the Bharat Gaurav Deluxe Air-Conditioned (AC) Tourist Train, offering a rail-cum-road international travel experience.
- ★ The itinerary covers Guwahati, Shillong, Cherrapunji and Hasimara, with entry into Bhutan via Phuentsholing.
- ★ Key Bhutan destinations include Thimphu (Capital of Bhutan), Punakha and Paro.
- ★ The package is all-inclusive, covering train travel, hotel accommodation (3-star category), vegetarian meals, local transport, sightseeing, travel insurance and tour escort services.
- ★ Accommodation categories available: AC First Class, AC 2-Tier and AC 3-Tier, equipped with modern amenities and onboard dining facilities.
- ★ Cost of the package ranges from approximately ₹1.16 lakh to ₹1.5 lakh per person depending on the class selected.
- ★ The initiative aims to promote tourism in Northeast India and Bhutan, enhance cross-border cultural exchange, and strengthen India–Bhutan connectivity.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **India and European Union Ink Aviation Manufacturing Pact to Enhance Safety**

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) signed a working arrangement with the European Union (EU) in the field of industrial aviation production to strengthen bilateral co-operation.
- ★ The agreement aims to align India's aviation manufacturing processes with global safety standards and enhance regulatory harmonisation.
- ★ The arrangement was signed ahead of a regional aviation workshop in New Delhi under the EU-South Asia Aviation Partnership Project.
- ★ The agreement was exchanged between the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).
- ★ The collaboration will focus on certification, production processes, and regulatory co-operation in the aviation sector.
- ★ A key project under this arrangement includes the assembly of Airbus Helicopters H125/AS350 in Bengaluru, Karnataka, boosting domestic aerospace manufacturing.
- ★ The initiative supports India's 'Make in India' programme by promoting indigenous manufacturing with foreign collaboration.
- ★ It is expected to enhance technical know-how, employment generation, and industrial capacity in the aviation sector.
- ★ The partnership will improve aviation safety, quality standards, and compliance with international norms.

- ★ Overall, the agreement positions India as an emerging global hub for aviation manufacturing and maintenance operations.

## **UN Establishes Task Force to Address Disruptions and Protect Trade in the Strait of Hormuz**

- ★ Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), announced the formation of a dedicated task force to address challenges arising from disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz due to the West Asia conflict.
- ★ The task force will be led by Jorge Moreira da Silva, who is the Executive Director (ED) of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).
- ★ The task force will include representatives from key international organisations such as United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Maritime Organization (IMO), and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).
- ★ The primary mandate of the task force is to develop technical mechanisms to address humanitarian needs arising in the Strait of Hormuz region.
- ★ The initiative focuses on ensuring continuity of critical maritime operations and humanitarian support amid disruptions.
- ★ For political management, Jean Arnault, the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, will engage with relevant member states.
- ★ The task force, along with political engagement, aims to provide a co-ordinated international response to maritime and humanitarian challenges.
- ★ Overall, the initiative reflects the UN's proactive approach in addressing geopolitical disruptions, maritime security, and humanitarian concerns in a strategically important global chokepoint.

## **Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov Visits India**

- ★ First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Denis Manturov, undertook a two-day official visit to India, aimed at strengthening India–Russia bilateral relations across key sectors.
- ★ During the visit, he co-chaired the India–Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Co-operation (IRIGC-TEC) along with Union External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar in New Delhi.
- ★ The IRIGC-TEC is a key institutional mechanism for reviewing and enhancing strategic economic co-operation between India and Russia.
- ★ Both sides discussed strengthening co-operation in trade, industry, energy, fertilizers, connectivity, mobility, and emerging technologies.
- ★ Special focus was given to collaboration in innovation, technology, and critical minerals.
- ★ The leaders also reviewed progress on implementing outcomes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> India–Russia Annual Summit (December 2025).
- ★ A high-level bilateral meeting was also held between both sides to further deepen economic and strategic engagement.

## **India Elected to United Nations Economic and Social Council Subsidiary Bodies**

- ★ The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations announced that India was elected by acclamation to key subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- ★ India has secured positions in major UN bodies, including the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) (2027–2030), the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Committee) (2027–2030), and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) (2027–2029).
- ★ The CSTD serves as an intergovernmental forum to discuss issues related to science, technology, and development.
- ★ The NGO Committee is responsible for evaluating applications for consultative status and handling reclassification requests from NGOs.
- ★ The CPC acts as the main subsidiary organ for planning, programming, and co-ordination within the United Nations system.
- ★ Additionally, Preeti Saran, India's Ambassador, has been re-elected to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) for 2027–2030.
- ★ The CESCR is a body of 18 independent experts that monitors the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- ★ The Covenant ensures key economic, social, and cultural rights such as adequate food, housing, education, health, social security, water, sanitation, and work.
- ★ This achievement strengthens India's global presence and enhances its role in international policymaking, development, and human rights governance.

## **First Life-Size Statue of Swami Vivekananda Unveiled in Seattle, United States**

- ★ In a significant cultural milestone, the first life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda in the United States was unveiled at Westlake Square in Seattle, honouring his legacy as a spiritual leader and philosopher and strengthening India–United States cultural ties.
- ★ The bronze statue was sculpted by Naresh Kumar Kumawat, making Seattle the first city in the United States to host a life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda at a prominent public location visited by large numbers of people daily.
- ★ The statue is strategically located near major landmarks including the Amazon Spheres, Seattle Convention Center, and the Seattle Center Monorail, ensuring high visibility among residents and international visitors.
- ★ The statue was unveiled by Katie Wilson, Mayor of Seattle, along with Prakash Gupta, Consul General of India in Seattle, in the presence of local leaders, community representatives, and members of the Indian-American diaspora.
- ★ The statue was gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) under the Government of India, and the unveiling coincided with the observance of ICCR Day, reinforcing India's cultural diplomacy efforts globally.
- ★ The initiative aims to: enhance India–United States cultural engagement, promote Indian philosophy and heritage internationally, and strengthen ties with the Indian diaspora community.

- ★ Swami Vivekananda's historic address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893 introduced Hindu philosophy to the Western world and brought him global recognition.

## **Russia Designates Stanford University as 'Undesirable', Putting Students at Legal Risk**

- ★ Russia has officially designated Stanford University as an "undesirable organisation", making any association illegal for Russian citizens.
- ★ The decision was announced by the Russian Ministry of Justice, escalating the crackdown on foreign academic institutions.
- ★ Under Russian law, students linked to "undesirable organisations" can face up to 4 years of imprisonment, while organisers or collaborators may face up to 6 years in prison.
- ★ The move effectively criminalises academic engagement with Stanford University, one of the world's leading research institutions.
- ★ Stanford's Centre for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREEES) and CRISP (Crisis Simulation for Peace, Germany) were also added to the "undesirable" list.
- ★ Over the past five years, at least 19 Western universities and educational programmes have been declared "undesirable" by Russia.
- ★ More than 200 foreign organisations, including Yale University, Amnesty International, and British Council, have been blacklisted under this law.
- ★ The classification is based on a 2015 Russian law, used to restrict foreign influence, independent media, and opposition groups.
- ★ Earlier, institutions such as Tufts University, UC Berkeley, and George Washington University were also designated as "undesirable organisations".
- ★ According to the Liberty Forward advocacy group, around 2,000–3,000 Russians may face legal risks due to links with such institutions.

## **India and Mauritius Operationalise \$680 Million Aid Package Projects**

- ★ India and Mauritius operationalised projects under a \$680 million economic assistance package, strengthening bilateral co-operation and development partnership.
- ★ The initiative includes 11 India-supported community development projects across sectors such as sustainable development, energy, sports, and infrastructure.
- ★ Both countries launched a "Karmayogi Portal", a first-of-its-kind initiative by India abroad, to train Mauritian civil servants and enhance governance capacity building.
- ★ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India's University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Higher Education Commission of Mauritius, strengthening education co-operation.
- ★ The projects are part of a broader India-Mauritius economic package, including grants, loans, and budgetary support of \$25 million.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance infrastructure, health, energy security, and governance systems in Mauritius.

- ★ A proposed government-to-government agreement on oil and gas supply was discussed to strengthen Mauritius' energy security, especially amid global disruptions.
- ★ India will also appoint a Defence Attaché in Mauritius, marking a step towards deeper strategic and defence co-operation.
- ★ The projects were inaugurated in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, in the presence of Navinchandra Ramgoolam and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

### **India and Germany Unveil Commemorative Logo**

- ★ India and Germany officially launched a commemorative logo to mark 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- ★ The logo was unveiled during the India-Germany Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) held in Berlin, Germany.
- ★ The consultations were co-chaired by Vikram Misri, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs (India), and Dr. Géza Andreas von Geyr, German State Secretary.
- ★ The year 2026 marks 75 years of diplomatic ties between India and Germany.
- ★ The two nations are also celebrating 25 years of Strategic Partnership in 2026.
- ★ The commemorative logo was selected through a joint competition hosted on the MyGov platform.
- ★ Participants from both India and Germany were invited to design a symbol representing the countries' deep-rooted friendship.
- ★ During the consultations, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.
- ★ A comprehensive review of co-operation was conducted in areas such as trade and investment, defence and security, technology, green and sustainable development, mobility, and people-to-people exchanges.

### **Bannerghatta Biological Park Receives Four Cheetahs from South Africa**

- ★ Bannerghatta Biological Park, located in Bengaluru, announced the successful arrival of four cheetahs, including two females from South Africa.
- ★ The cheetahs were sourced from Induna Primate and Parrot Park and arrived in India via Kempegowda International Airport.
- ★ The animals were received as part of an exchange programme involving four Asiatic elephants, strengthening international wildlife conservation co-operation.
- ★ The zoo is also set to receive other species including Capuchins, Jaguars, Pumas, and Chimpanzees, enhancing its biodiversity collection.
- ★ The import process involved extensive health screening and an initial quarantine period in South Africa to ensure animal safety.
- ★ The transfer was completed after receiving necessary regulatory approvals under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

## India Expands Overseas Citizen of India Card Eligibility in Sri Lanka

- ★ The Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card scheme has gained prominence in India's engagement with the Indian-origin community in Sri Lanka.
- ★ The Government of India has extended OCI eligibility up to the sixth generation for persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, expanding the scope from the earlier fourth generation limit.
- ★ The OCI card is a form of long-term residency status granted by India to foreign citizens of Indian origin.
- ★ It was introduced in 2005 through amendments to the Citizenship Act to strengthen links with the global Indian diaspora.
- ★ The OCI card provides a lifelong, multiple-entry visa facility, allowing holders to travel to India without repeated visa requirements.
- ★ During a two-day visit to Sri Lanka, the Vice President of India C.P. Radhakrishnan announced the expansion of OCI eligibility for the Indian community in Sri Lanka.
- ★ He met Anura Kumara Dissanayake to discuss bilateral relations, housing projects, and fishermen issues.
- ★ The discussions also covered India-supported development projects in Sri Lanka, including the \$450 million Cyclone Ditwah aid package.
- ★ Both sides emphasized resolving fishermen issues in a humanitarian manner, focusing on the livelihood concerns of coastal communities in both countries.

## India Releases ₹30 Billion First Drawdown for Maldives Under South Asian Association

- ★ The Government of India approved a ₹30 billion currency swap facility for the Maldives under the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Currency Swap Framework, reinforcing India's role as a key financial partner.
- ★ This marks the first withdrawal (drawdown) of funds under the framework agreed between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Maldives.
- ★ The facility is provided under the INR Swap Window of the 'Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Countries (2024–2027)'.
- ★ The agreement was signed between RBI and the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) during the state visit of Mohamed Muizzu to New Delhi in October 2024.
- ★ Earlier, the Maldives repaid a USD 400 million swap facility (October 2024) under the USD/Euro Swap Window, highlighting its commitment to financial obligations.
- ★ Since the launch of the SAARC Swap Framework in 2012, RBI has extended aggregate support of over USD 1.1 billion to the Maldives.
- ★ The currency swap facility plays a crucial role in maintaining financial stability and supporting the Maldives' balance of payments.
- ★ The initiative aligns with India's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR, strengthening regional co-operation and economic resilience.

## **Union Minister of State Jitin Prasada Undertakes Official Visit to Czech Republic**

- ★ Jitin Prasada, Union Minister of State (MoS) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, undertook a two-day official visit to the Czech Republic from April 22–23, 2026.
- ★ The visit was undertaken at the invitation of the Government of the Czech Republic to enhance bilateral trade, investment, and industrial co-operation.
- ★ Jitin Prasada co-chaired the 13<sup>th</sup> India–Czech Republic Joint Commission for Economic Co-operation (JCEC) with Czech counterpart Jan Sechter in Prague.
- ★ During the meeting, both sides signed the protocol of the 13<sup>th</sup> India–Czechia JCEC, marking progress in economic collaboration.
- ★ The leaders also jointly inaugurated the India–Czech Business Forum in Prague to promote trade and investment opportunities.
- ★ The forum aimed to strengthen Business-to-Business (B2B) linkages between Indian and Czech companies.

## **UK Parliament Approves Tobacco and Vapes Bill Prohibiting Cigarette Sales**

- ★ The UK Parliament passed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, introducing one of the strictest anti-smoking laws.
- ★ The law bans the sale of cigarettes to individuals born on or after January 1, 2009, creating a “smoke-free generation” with a lifetime prohibition.
- ★ This means children aged 17 or younger will never be legally allowed to purchase tobacco products.
- ★ The bill has been approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and will come into force after royal assent by King Charles III.
- ★ The legislation grants the government powers to regulate tobacco, vaping, and nicotine products, including flavours, packaging, and marketing practices.
- ★ It also introduces restrictions on vaping in public spaces, such as cars carrying children, playgrounds, and areas near schools and hospitals.
- ★ The bill is part of broader efforts to tackle smoking-related health issues, which are a leading cause of preventable death, disability, and illness in the UK.

## **Logo, Theme and Website for 4<sup>th</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit**

- ★ External Affairs Minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar officially launched the logo, theme, and website for the 4<sup>th</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV) under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- ★ The IAFS-IV marks a renewal phase in India-Africa relations, following the last summit held in 2015, highlighting continued diplomatic engagement.
- ★ The 4<sup>th</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV) is scheduled to be held on 31 May 2026 in New Delhi, in collaboration with the African Union Commission.

- ★ Preparatory meetings of senior officials will take place on 28 May 2026, followed by the India–Africa Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on 29 May 2026, leading up to the main summit.
- ★ The logo of IAFS-IV features a Lion superimposed on interlocked maps of India and Africa, symbolizing pride, courage, unity, and shared identity between the two regions.
- ★ The theme of the summit is “IA SPIRIT: India-Africa Strategic Partnership for Innovation, Resilience, and Inclusive Transformation”.
- ★ The term ‘SPIRIT’ reflects the core values of India-Africa relations, emphasizing shared values, mutual respect, solidarity, and long-term collaboration beyond transactional ties.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### ESA Launches First Celeste Satellites to Test Low Earth Orbit Navigation Layer

- ★ The European Space Agency (ESA) successfully launched the first two In-Orbit Demonstrators (IOD)-1 and IOD-2 under its Celeste Mission from the Rocket Lab launch site, New Zealand, to demonstrate a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) navigation layer.
- ★ The mission aims to strengthen Europe’s satellite navigation system by complementing existing Galileo (Medium Earth Orbit - MEO) and EGNOS (European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service) systems, marking a shift towards a multi-layered navigation architecture.
- ★ The primary objective of the Celeste Mission is to test a LEO-based Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) system to improve the resilience, accuracy, and coverage of satellite navigation services.
- ★ Under the mission, two satellites named IOD-1 and IOD-2 were launched, weighing 20 kg and 30 kg respectively, and are operating in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) at an altitude of around 500–560 km.
- ★ The satellites were developed by GMV (Spain) and Thales Alenia Space (France), showcasing international collaboration in advanced space technology.
- ★ The launch was carried out using the Electron rocket of Rocket Lab (New Zealand), highlighting a New Space approach focused on faster, cost-effective, and flexible satellite deployment.
- ★ The Celeste Mission is designed to enhance future satellite navigation resilience by integrating a LEO navigation layer with existing global navigation systems.
- ★ Overall, the mission represents a major step towards a next-generation multi-orbit navigation system, improving global Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT).

### NewSpace India Limited Signed MoU with Dhruva Space Private Limited

- ★ NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dhruva Space Private Limited to collaborate on the design, manufacture, testing, and supply of space-grade solar panels for global satellite manufacturers.
- ★ Under the agreement, Dhruva Space Private Limited will leverage NSIL’s programme management and product assurance expertise to scale up manufacturing of space-grade solar panels.

- ★ NewSpace India Limited is a wholly owned Government of India company, established on 6 March 2019 under the Companies Act, 2013.
- ★ NSIL functions under the Department of Space (DoS) and is responsible for producing, assembling, and integrating launch vehicles with industry support, along with commercialising space-based technologies and services.
- ★ As per the Space Solar Cells Market Report 2026, the global space solar cells market is projected to grow from United States Dollar 1.38 billion in 2025 to United States Dollar 1.55 billion in 2026, registering a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.3%, indicating rising demand for satellite solar power technologies globally.

### **NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission Launches ATL Sarthi**

- ★ The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) under its Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) launched two new initiatives: ATL Sarthi and the Mentor India Academy at Vardhaman College of Engineering, Hyderabad (Telangana).
- ★ The initiatives align with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aiming to strengthen school-level innovation and entrepreneurship.
- ★ The ATL Sarthi programme is a capacity-building initiative for Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) in-charges and educators to improve innovation guidance in schools.
- ★ The Mentor India Academy is an advanced training platform for mentors under the AIM Mentor India initiative, focused on developing strong mentorship networks.
- ★ The programme will provide structured mentorship and institutional support to 379 ATLS in Telangana.
- ★ The key objective is to empower students with hands-on experience in emerging technologies and structured problem-solving skills.
- ★ Under the initiative, ATLS will be grouped into regional clusters, each supported by a nodal institution for guidance and co-ordination.
- ★ Vardhaman College of Engineering has been designated as the nodal institution for Telangana, providing technical support, teacher training, mentorship, and incubation assistance.
- ★ The initiative aims to create a strong school-to-innovation pipeline, enabling students to transform ideas into scalable solutions and startups.
- ★ It focuses on shifting from access to innovation resources towards continuous engagement and sustained mentorship.
- ★ The programme will strengthen teacher capacity building and ensure innovation becomes a continuous process within schools.
- ★ The rollout supports AIM's larger mission of building one of the world's largest student innovation ecosystems, with over 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs operational across India.

### **Indian Council of Agricultural Research Forms Special Task Force**

- ★ The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has constituted a Special Task Force (STF) on Agriculture to strengthen India's agricultural resilience amid global disruptions.

- ★ The STF aims to address challenges related to geopolitical uncertainties, climate variability, supply chain disruptions, and rising input costs affecting the agriculture sector.
- ★ The initiative focuses on ensuring food security, agricultural input security, and data-driven policy support for the Government of India (GoI).
- ★ The first meeting of the STF was chaired by Mangi Lal Jat, Secretary of DARE (Department of Agricultural Research and Education) and Director General (DG) of ICAR.
- ★ The STF was formed in response to issues such as global food and fertiliser supply chain disruptions, energy market volatility, and climate risks.
- ★ ICAR is strengthening the Mera Gaon Mera Gaurav (MGMG) programme in 100 Aspirational Districts through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).
- ★ Key initiatives include promoting balanced fertiliser use, millet region mapping, and eco-fisheries diversification during the Kharif season.
- ★ A major technological focus is on Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR), which helps save 20–30% water and reduces labour costs.
- ★ ICAR is also strengthening the All India Co-ordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Agricultural Meteorology for real-time weather-based advisories.
- ★ A weekly monitoring system will be implemented through Nodal Officers in each Subject Matter Division (SMD) for co-ordinated execution of action plans.
- ★ The STF will ensure continuous institutional feedback and periodic meetings for effective implementation of agricultural strategies.

### **Meta Launches Muse Spark AI Model from Superintelligence Team**

- ★ Meta Platforms has launched Muse Spark, its first AI model from a new superintelligence team, aimed at competing with Google, OpenAI, and Anthropic.
- ★ Muse Spark is part of a new internal model series called “Avocado”, designed to be a small, fast, and efficient AI model.
- ★ The model is capable of cross-domain reasoning, including science, mathematics, and healthcare
- ★ Initially, Muse Spark is available on the Meta AI app and website.
- ★ The model will soon replace Llama-based chatbots across platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Meta smart glasses.

### **Karnataka Postal Circle Released Commemorative Stamps**

- ★ The Department of Posts, Karnataka Postal Circle, released commemorative postage stamps and souvenir sheets in Bengaluru to honour the achievements of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and highlight India’s progress from early satellite missions to advanced human spaceflight and space exploration initiatives.
- ★ The stamps depict India’s journey in space exploration, beginning with the launch of Aryabhata in 1975 and extending to the upcoming Gaganyaan mission, reflecting the country’s steady technological advancement in the space sector.

- ★ The stamp design also includes references to Jantar Mantar, symbolising India’s long-standing heritage in astronomy and scientific inquiry.
- ★ The Gaganyaan mission, led by the Indian Space Research Organisation, aims to send Indian astronauts (Gaganyatris) to Low Earth Orbit for a short-duration mission and return them safely to Earth, making India the fourth country after the United States, Russia, and China to independently achieve human spaceflight capability.
- ★ The commemorative release also highlighted the Indian Space Research Organisation’s plan to establish an Indian Space Station, consisting of 52-tonne modules, with the first module targeted for launch by 2028, to support long-duration space research, strengthen India’s orbital infrastructure, and enable future deep-space exploration missions.

### **e-NAM Launched In 2016 As A Pan-India E-Trading Platform To Integrate APMC Mandis Under ‘One Nation, One Market’**

- ★ The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) was launched in 2016 as a pan-India electronic trading platform integrating APMC mandis to create a “One Nation, One Market” system for agricultural commodities.
- ★ It addresses limitations of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system by enabling inter-state trade, transparent price discovery, and wider market access for farmers.
- ★ The platform provides end-to-end digital services including gate entry, lot creation, quality testing, e-bidding, real-time price tracking, and direct e-payments (UPI, NEFT, RTGS) to farmers’ bank accounts.
- ★ The e-NAM network expanded from 1,389 mandis in 2024 to 1,656 mandis by March 2026, covering 23 States and 4 Union Territories, indicating growing market integration.
- ★ As of March 2026, the platform has registered over 80 crore farmers, 2.73 lakh traders, and 4,724 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).
- ★ The platform recorded cumulative trade of 13.25 crore metric tonnes with a total value of ₹4.84 lakh crore (2016–March 2026), reflecting increasing scale and participation.
- ★ The trade value increased from ₹3.19 lakh crore in 2024 to ₹4.84 lakh crore in 2026, showing deepening market engagement.
- ★ By March 2026, around 76 lakh metric tonnes of agricultural produce had been traded in recent periods, indicating strong operational momentum.
- ★ The e-NAM app provides free price information for 247 notified commodities, enabling informed and timely decision-making by farmers.
- ★ The platform features a multi-layered digital ecosystem including a web portal, mobile app, helpline, human support system, and AI-enabled quality assessment tools.
- ★ The e-NAM web portal (gov.in) enables end-to-end digital agricultural marketing, linking mandis into a unified national market.
- ★ It supports the complete trade lifecycle, including digital gate entry, unique lot ID tracking, quality assaying, online bidding, and direct payments.
- ★ Key digital features include single-window services, real-time price dashboards, 12-language interface, and secondary sale module for resale within the platform.

- ★ The inter-state trade facility allows traders to operate across states using a Unified License system.
- ★ The government provides financial assistance up to ₹75 lakh per mandi for infrastructure development and digital integration.

### **NASA's Artemis II Lunar Mission Crew Safely Returns To Earth**

- ★ All four crew members of National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Artemis II safely returned to Earth, splashing down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of California, United States of America (USA).
- ★ The mission was completed using NASA's Orion capsule named 'Integrity', which carried the astronauts on a 10-day journey around the Moon and back.
- ★ The Artemis II crew members were:
  - Reid Wiseman – Commander (the United States of America, USA)
  - Victor Glover – Pilot (USA)
  - Christina Koch – Mission Specialist (USA)
  - Jeremy Hansen – Mission Specialist (Canada)
- ★ The mission created history by completing the first-ever ship-to-ship call between a human Moon mission and the International Space Station (ISS).
- ★ During this historic communication, Christina Koch aboard Artemis II spoke with Jessica Meir aboard the ISS.
- ★ Artemis II also set a new record for the farthest distance humans have travelled from Earth.
- ★ The spacecraft reached 252,752 miles from Earth during a flyby of the Moon's far side.
- ★ This surpassed the previous record of 248,655 miles, set by Apollo 13 in 1970.
- ★ Artemis II marks a major milestone in NASA's lunar exploration programme, paving the way for future human Moon landings under the Artemis programme.

### **ISRO's Space Applications Centre Signs MoU with ATREE**

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) through its Space Applications Centre (SAC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE).
- ★ The partnership aims to revolutionize sustainable land management in India.
- ★ The initiative will develop standardized protocols for ecosystem monitoring and generate policy-ready data for land-use planning.
- ★ It combines ISRO's satellite-based mapping technology with ATREE's field-based ecological validation.
- ★ The collaboration will support land-use planning, climate action, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihoods.
- ★ The project will map nearly 319,675 square kilometres (sq. km), covering around 10% of India's total land area.

- ★ The focus will be on Open Natural Ecosystems (ONE) such as shrublands, woodland savannas, and saline landscapes.
- ★ The initiative is strategically important for helping India achieve its target of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030.

### **NASA Confirms SpaceX Launch of Rosalind Franklin Rover Mission to Mars in 2028**

- ★ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket will launch the Rosalind Franklin rover to Mars in 2028.
- ★ The launch will take place from Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center, located in the United States of America.
- ★ The Rosalind Franklin rover is part of the ExoMars mission led by the European Space Agency (ESA).
- ★ NASA has approved the Rosalind Franklin Support and Augmentation (ROSA) project to enhance mission success.
- ★ The primary objective of the mission is to drill up to 2 meters beneath Mars' surface to search for signs of past or present microbial life.
- ★ The rover will become the first Mars rover to explore subsurface life on the Red Planet (Mars).
- ★ Under the ROSA project, NASA will provide critical support systems and technologies.
- ★ NASA's role includes launch services, braking engines for the landing platform, and radioisotope heater units to maintain the rover's internal temperature in extreme Martian conditions.
- ★ In 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA).
- ★ The MoU formalized the expansion of NASA's role in the ExoMars programme, strengthening international space co-operation.

### **Ministry of Home Affairs Receives Indigenous Satellite Imaging System 'Prajna'**

- ★ The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) received the indigenously developed satellite imaging system 'Prajna' to strengthen real-time decision support for security agencies.
- ★ Prajna is an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled system developed by Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR), a laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ★ The system is expected to play a major role in monitoring sensitive regions, tracking suspicious activities, and improving counter-terrorism and border management operations.
- ★ Prajna will enhance India's internal security architecture through advanced satellite-based surveillance.
- ★ Separately, DRDO and the Indian Navy successfully conducted four in-flight release trials of the indigenous ADC-150 from the P-8I aircraft off the coast of Goa between 21 February and 1 March.
- ★ The ADC-150 is designed to deliver a 150 kg payload such as critical stores, equipment, and medical assistance to naval ships in distress at sea.

- ★ The system improves naval operational logistics and quick response support for vessels deployed far from the coast.
- ★ Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL) was the nodal laboratory for the ADC-150 project.
- ★ Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) developed the parachute system, while Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC) provided flight clearance.
- ★ Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) supported the project with instrumentation assistance.
- ★ After successful trials, the ADC-150 is expected to be inducted into the Indian Navy.
- ★ DRDO is India's premier defence research agency focused on military strength and self-reliance in defence technology.

### **Pakistan Conducts Successful Test of Homegrown Taimoor Anti-Ship Cruise Missile**

- ★ The Pakistan Navy successfully conducted a live test-firing of the indigenously developed "Taimoor" Air-Launched Anti-Ship Cruise Missile (ALCM).
- ★ The development was announced by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), highlighting a major boost to maritime strike capability.
- ★ The missile system was deployed jointly by the Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force (PAF), enabling co-ordinated air-sea and multi-domain operations.
- ★ The test showcased the missile's ability to detect, track, and neutralise sea-based targets with high precision at extended ranges.
- ★ Taimoor Missile Overview: It is an indigenously developed ALCM with anti-ship capability and secondary land-attack capability.
- ★ The missile offers precision strike capability up to approximately 600 km, providing a stand-off engagement advantage.
- ★ The successful test validated target detection, tracking, and neutralisation efficiency, demonstrating advanced operational capability.
- ★ The system significantly enhances naval strike strength, maritime security, deterrence capability, and defence modernisation.
- ★ Overall, the development improves battlefield flexibility and strengthens Pakistan's multi-domain warfare readiness.

### **China Picks Two Pakistani Astronauts for Training Ahead of Tiangong Space Station Mission**

- ★ The China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) announced the selection of two Pakistani astronauts, marking a major step in China-Pakistan space co-operation.
- ★ The selected candidates are "Muhammad Zeeshan Ali" and "Khurram Daud", who will undergo advanced astronaut training in China.

- ★ This is a significant milestone as it marks the first inclusion of foreign astronauts in China's human spaceflight programme.
- ★ One of the selected candidates is expected to become the first Pakistani astronaut to reach Earth's orbit and visit the Tiangong Space Station.
- ★ The selected astronauts will serve as reserve astronauts and may be chosen as payload specialists for future missions.
- ★ Their role will include conducting scientific experiments, technology demonstrations, and space research activities aboard Tiangong missions.
- ★ The collaboration strengthens China's space diplomacy and international outreach while supporting Pakistan's entry into human spaceflight.
- ★ It enhances Pakistan's scientific capabilities, technological development, and space research capacity.
- ★ The selection follows a February 2025 agreement between China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) and Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), covering astronaut training, experiments, and joint mission co-operation.

### **GalaxEye to Deploy World's First OptoSAR Satellite**

- ★ GalaxEye is set to launch its first satellite Mission Drishti within three months, marking a major milestone in India's private space ecosystem.
- ★ The satellite introduces the world's first "OptoSAR platform", combining optical sensors with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) for high-resolution Earth imaging.
- ★ This hybrid OptoSAR system enables all-weather, day-and-night imaging, overcoming limitations of optical (cloud/light dependent) and SAR (complex interpretation) technologies individually.
- ★ The satellite has a weight of approximately 180–190 kg and offers 1–1.5 metre resolution, creating a new category in Earth observation capabilities.
- ★ GalaxEye has partnered with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) for data distribution to government users.
- ★ The company plans to build a constellation of 10–20 satellites by 2029, enabling near-daily global coverage.
- ★ The initiative also aims to expand into AI-driven analytics and global space data markets, strengthening India's space-tech innovation ecosystem.

## **BANKING & FINANCE**

### **Reserve Bank of India imposes ₹3.10 lakh penalty on Pine Labs Limited**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹3.10 lakh on Pine Labs Limited for non-compliance with regulatory guidelines.
- ★ The penalty was imposed for violations of RBI directions related to Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs).

- ★ The RBI exercised its powers under Section 30(1) read with Section 26(6) of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 to impose the penalty.
- ★ The key regulatory breach involved issuing Full-KYC Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) without completing proper Know Your Customer (KYC) verification of customers.
- ★ This violation is considered a serious compliance lapse in digital payment regulations, highlighting the importance of strict adherence to RBI KYC norms.

### **RBI sets ₹2.5 lakh crore Ways and Means Advances limit for H1 FY 2026–27**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with the Government of India, has fixed the Ways and Means Advances (WMA) limit at ₹2,50,000 crore for the first half of FY 2026–27 (April–September 2026).
- ★ The Ways and Means Advances (WMA) is a temporary loan facility provided by RBI to the government to manage short-term mismatches between receipts and expenditures.
- ★ The RBI may initiate fresh market borrowings (floatation of government securities) when 75% of the WMA limit is utilised, ensuring fiscal liquidity management.
- ★ The RBI retains the flexibility to revise the WMA limit based on changing economic and fiscal conditions.
- ★ The interest rate on WMA is linked to the Repo Rate, making it a relatively low-cost borrowing option for the government.
- ★ In case of Overdraft (when WMA limit is exceeded), the interest rate becomes Repo Rate + 2%, making it costlier and discouraging excessive borrowing.
- ★ The framework ensures efficient cash management and fiscal discipline for the Government of India.

### **Reserve Bank of India imposes ₹58.50 lakh penalty on Bank of India**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹58.50 lakh on Bank of India for regulatory non-compliance.
- ★ The violations were related to RBI directions on Priority Sector Lending (PSL) – Targets and Classification and Interest Rate on Deposits.
- ★ The penalty was imposed under Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 51(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ★ The first violation involved charging ad-hoc service, inspection, and processing fees in certain priority sector loans up to ₹25,000, which is not permitted under RBI guidelines.
- ★ The second violation was the failure to pay interest on certain Term Deposit Receipts (TDRs) from the date of maturity until repayment, violating deposit interest norms.
- ★ The action highlights strict enforcement of RBI regulatory compliance norms in banking operations.

### **Reserve Bank of India issues directions on Net Open Position in INR (NOP-INR)**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued directions on Net Open Position in INR (NOP-INR) for Authorised Dealers (ADs) under the Master Direction on Risk Management and Inter-Bank Dealings (July 05, 2016).
- ★ As per the Master Direction, the RBI is empowered to set limits on open positions in Indian Rupee (INR) to manage exchange rate volatility based on prevailing market conditions.
- ★ Exercising this authority, the RBI has introduced a specific cap on NOP-INR positions for Authorised Dealers operating in the onshore deliverable foreign exchange market.
- ★ Authorised Dealers (ADs) must ensure that their Net Open Position in INR (NOP-INR) does not exceed USD 100 million at the end of each business day.

### **SEBI Extends Suspension of Derivatives Trading in Seven Agricultural Commodities**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has extended the suspension of trading in derivatives of seven agricultural commodities till 31 March 2027.
- ★ The affected commodities include wheat, moong, paddy (non-basmati), chana, crude palm oil, mustard seeds, and soybean, along with their derivative contracts.
- ★ The suspension was originally imposed in December 2021 and has been extended multiple times due to ongoing concerns regarding market stability.
- ★ The decision aims to curb excessive speculation and volatility in essential agricultural commodities that significantly influence food prices and inflation.
- ★ The suspension allows market participants to square off existing positions but prohibits any fresh futures trading in the specified commodities.
- ★ The move is intended to stabilize key agricultural commodity markets and protect consumers from price shocks.

### **Reserve Bank of India Imposes ₹95.4 Lakh Penalty on Union Bank of India**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹95.40 lakh on Union Bank of India for regulatory non-compliance.
- ★ The violations were related to RBI directions on “Limiting Liability of Customers in Unauthorised Electronic Banking Transactions” and “Automation of Income Recognition, Asset Classification and Provisioning (IRACP)”.
- ★ The penalty was imposed under Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 51(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ★ The first violation was the failure to credit (shadow reversal) the amount of unauthorised electronic transactions within 10 working days of customer notification.
- ★ The second violation was the non-availability of 24×7 facility through multiple channels for reporting unauthorised electronic transactions, violating customer protection guidelines.
- ★ The third violation involved manual intervention in system-based asset classification in certain Kisan Credit Card (KCC) accounts, violating IRACP norms.

- ★ These lapses highlight the importance of strict compliance with RBI digital banking security and asset classification frameworks.

### **Government Initiatives Boost KCC System to Improve Farmers' Credit Access**

- ★ The Government of India is actively promoting financial inclusion for farmers through expanded access to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme and its digital issuance across States and Union Territories.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Priority Sector Lending (PSL) guidelines mandate banks to allocate at least 18% of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposures (CEOBSE) to agriculture sector lending.
- ★ Under PSL norms, a sub-target of 10% is fixed for Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) to ensure equitable credit distribution.
- ★ The PSL framework also includes incentive and dis-incentive mechanisms for districts to promote balanced agricultural credit flow.
- ★ Since 2019, KCC has been extended to cover animal husbandry, dairying, and fisheries, expanding credit access to allied agricultural activities.
- ★ Under the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS), farmers receive short-term agricultural loans at 7% interest through KCC, and prompt repayment reduces the effective rate to 4% through a 3% incentive.
- ★ The limit for collateral-free short-term agricultural loans has been increased from ₹1.60 lakh to ₹2.00 lakh per borrower (w.e.f. 01 January 2025), benefiting small and marginal farmers (over 86% of farmers).
- ★ This enhancement improves credit access, reduces borrowing cost, and removes collateral requirements for eligible farmers.
- ★ Awareness about the KCC scheme is promoted through financial literacy camps (FLCs), Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL), RBI, NABARD, and government-led programmes.

### **Reserve Bank of India Releases Payments Vision 2028**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has unveiled its 'Payments Vision 2028', titled 'Shaping India's Payment Frontier', aimed at strengthening and expanding India's rapidly growing digital payments ecosystem.
- ★ The RBI has been periodically issuing the Payments Vision framework since 2001, and the latest 2028 vision provides a 3-year roadmap up to December 2028 for improving India's payment infrastructure and digital economy.
- ★ The vision focuses on user empowerment, fraud prevention, cross-border payment efficiency, and ease of doing business, while strengthening trust, operational resilience, and global competitiveness of India's payment systems.
- ★ It contains 15 key initiatives designed to modernize and secure India's digital payment ecosystem and support the country's position as a global leader in real-time digital transactions.
- ★ A key proposal is the switch on/off facility for digital payments, enabling users to control transactions and strengthen fraud prevention and security mechanisms.

- ★ RBI has introduced a Shared Responsibility Framework (SRF) to define fraud liability sharing between issuing and beneficiary institutions, enhancing consumer protection and confidence.
- ★ The vision includes an improved cross-border (CB) payment framework with a single-window authorization system, aimed at making international payments faster, cheaper, and more efficient under Payment and Settlement Systems Act and FEMA regulations.
- ★ The RBI also aims to strengthen bank account portability through the proposed Payments Switching Service (PaSS), enabling seamless transfer of standing instructions, EMIs, salaries, utility payments, and investment mandates.

### **Government Retains Unchanged Interest Rates on Small Savings Schemes**

- ★ The Government of India has decided to keep interest rates unchanged for small savings schemes for the June quarter.
- ★ This marks the ninth consecutive quarter of unchanged interest rates for these schemes.
- ★ The Public Provident Fund (PPF) continues to offer an interest rate of 7.1%, while the Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme offers 8.2%.
- ★ The Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS) interest rate remains at 8.2%, and the National Savings Certificate (NSC) at 7.7%.
- ★ The Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) continues to offer 7.5% interest with a maturity period of 115 months.
- ★ Other unchanged rates include:
  - Savings Deposit – 4%
  - 1-year Deposit – 6.9%
  - 2-year Deposit – 7%
  - 3-year Deposit – 7.1%
  - 5-year Deposit – 7.5%
  - 5-year Recurring Deposit (RD) – 6.7%
  - Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) – 7.4%
- ★ Funds collected under small savings schemes are used to part-finance the Central Government's fiscal deficit.
- ★ The government aims to mobilize ₹3.88 lakh crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) in FY27, higher than ₹3.43 lakh crore (revised estimate) in the current fiscal.
- ★ The interest rates of small savings schemes are determined based on a market-linked formula recommended by the Shyamala Gopinath Committee.

### **Reserve Bank of India Imposes ₹31.80 Lakh Penalty on Airtel Payments Bank**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹31.80 lakh on Airtel Payments Bank Limited for non-compliance with certain provisions of the directions issued by RBI on 'Disclosure in Financial Statements'.
- ★ This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers conferred on RBI under the provisions of section 47A(1)(c) read with section 46(4)(i) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- ★ The Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE 2025) of the bank was conducted by RBI with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2025.
- ★ Based on supervisory findings of non-compliance with RBI directions, a notice was issued to the bank advising it to show cause as to why penalty should not be imposed.
- ★ After considering the bank's reply, additional submissions, and oral submissions during the personal hearing, RBI found that the charge was sustained.
- ★ The specific violation involved the non-disclosure of certain complaints in its annual financial statements for the financial year 2024-25.
- ★ The action is based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank with its customers.
- ★ Further, imposition of monetary penalty is without prejudice to any other action that may be initiated by RBI against the bank.

### **Reserve Bank of India imposes ₹63.60 lakh penalty on Central Bank of India**

- ★ The Central Bank of India has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹63.60 lakh by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ The penalty was imposed for non-compliance with RBI directions on Know Your Customer (KYC) and Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA) norms under Financial Inclusion guidelines.
- ★ The action was taken under Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 51(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, empowering RBI to impose penalties for regulatory violations.
- ★ The Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE 2025) was conducted with reference to the bank's financial position as on 31 March 2025.
- ★ Based on supervisory findings, RBI issued a show-cause notice after identifying non-compliance with regulatory directions.
- ★ After reviewing the bank's reply and oral submissions, RBI confirmed the following major violations:
- ★ Failure to upload KYC records of certain customers to the Central KYC Records Registry within the prescribed timeline.
- ★ Opening of multiple Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA) for the same customers, violating guidelines.
- ★ RBI clarified that the penalty is based on deficiencies in statutory compliance and does not affect the validity of customer transactions or agreements.
- ★ The action is without prejudice to any other regulatory action that may be initiated by RBI against the bank in future.

### **RBI Defers Implementation of Revised Capital Market Exposure Framework**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the implementation of its revised Capital Market Exposure (CME) framework by 3 months, now effective from 1 July 2026 instead of 1 April 2026.
- ★ The revised framework was originally issued in February 2026 through RBI Amendment Directions on CME.

- ★ The framework aims to create an enabling system for banks to finance acquisitions by Indian corporates.
- ★ It also seeks to rationalize lending limits against shares, REITs, InvITs, and other securities.
- ★ A principle-based framework for lending to Capital Market Intermediaries (CMI) has also been introduced.
- ★ RBI has revised the definition of “acquisition finance”, which now includes mergers and amalgamations.
- ★ Acquisition finance can now be extended only for acquiring control over non-financial target companies.
- ★ Under new rules, limits have been introduced on loans against securities across the banking system.
- ★ The borrowing limits are set at ₹1 crore per individual for general loans against securities.
- ★ For capital market-linked purposes, limits include ₹25 lakh for IPO loans, FPOs, and ESOP subscriptions.
- ★ The changes aim to strengthen risk management, financial discipline, and capital market lending regulation in the banking system.

### **IRDAI Directs Insurers to Implement Ind Accounting Standards-Based Financial Reporting**

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has mandated adoption of Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) for insurers from 1 April 2026.
- ★ The decision was taken during the 135<sup>th</sup> meeting of IRDAI, approving the IRDAI (Actuarial, Finance and Investment Functions of Insurers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2026.
- ★ All insurers are required to prepare and present financial statements in accordance with Ind AS, marking a shift to a new financial reporting framework.
- ★ The implementation is applicable to all categories of insurers, including life insurers, general insurers, standalone health insurers, and reinsurers.
- ★ IRDAI has introduced a parallel reporting system for a transition period of 2 years (or as specified).
- ★ During this period, insurers must prepare financial statements under Ind AS alongside the existing accounting framework.
- ★ The move aims to enhance transparency, comparability, and global alignment of India’s insurance sector financial reporting.

### **SEBI to Launch ‘SEBI SETU’ Digital Platform**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is set to launch a digital platform called SEBI SETU to expand the base of Investment Advisers (IAs) in India.
- ★ SEBI SETU will act as a single-window interface to simplify registration and compliance processes for advisers.

- ★ The initiative aims to bridge the gap between over 22 crore demat accounts and less than 1,000 registered investment advisers, highlighting the need for a larger advisory base.
- ★ The platform will provide end-to-end regulatory guidance, from registration to ongoing compliance, making it easier for professionals to enter the advisory space.
- ★ The move comes amid a surge in retail investor participation, necessitating better access to regulated financial advice.
- ★ The SETU will offer simple and comprehensive compliance support to advisers.
- ★ SEBI has introduced regulatory relaxations, including allowing advisers to share past performance data using standardised templates approved by ICAI/ICMAI professionals.
- ★ Advisers can provide second opinions on financial products, with fees capped at 2.5% of Assets Under Advice (AUA), subject to client consent and disclosures.
- ★ Eligibility norms have been simplified, allowing any graduate with certification from the National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) to register as an adviser.
- ★ Documentation requirements have been reduced, removing the need for CIBIL reports and detailed asset-liability disclosures, easing entry barriers.
- ★ SEBI aims to bring more professionals into the regulated advisory framework and reduce the compliance burden on existing participants.

## **CBDT Launches New Income Tax Portal And Artificial Intelligence-Based 'Kar Saathi'**

- ★ The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) under the Department of Revenue (DoR), Ministry of Finance (MoF) launched a new income tax website and an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered assistant 'Kar Saathi' to simplify tax filing procedures.
- ★ The launch coincides with the nationwide awareness campaign PRARAMBH 2026 (Policy Reform and Responsible Action for Mission Viksit Bharat).
- ★ The 'Kar Saathi' portal provides 24×7 assistance to taxpayers for queries and compliance under the Income Tax Act, 2025.
- ★ It features an AI chatbot offering real-time responses and tax-related information in Hindi and English, improving user accessibility.
- ★ The new website acts as a unified platform, consolidating income tax forms, filing procedures, and guidelines in one place.
- ★ The portal helps taxpayers understand processes like filing returns, updated provisions, and form navigation without relying on in-person support.
- ★ Since the launch of PRARAMBH in March 2026, the number of rules has been reduced from 510 to 333 and forms from 399 to 190, simplifying compliance.
- ★ These reforms have eliminated requirements for over 6 crore transactions, reducing complexity and compliance burden.
- ★ PRARAMBH 2026 is being implemented through print, radio, television, digital platforms, social media, and workshops to enhance taxpayer awareness.

- ★ The initiative reflects the government's focus on process simplification, digitalisation, and taxpayer-friendly reforms under the new tax regime effective April 1, 2026.

## **NSE and IGX Limited to Introduce India's First Domestic Benchmark Natural Gas Derivatives**

- ★ India's leading stock exchange, the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has announced a strategic collaboration with Indian Gas Exchange Limited (IGX) to launch India's first exchange-traded natural gas derivatives based on a domestic benchmark with an aim to improve risk management in the gas market.
- ★ The initiative has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- ★ NSE will introduce Indian Natural Gas Futures contracts based on the Gas Index of India (GIXI) developed by IGX.
- ★ The pricing of these derivatives will be linked to actual trades on the IGX platform, ensuring transparent price discovery.
- ★ The initiative aims to provide efficient risk management tools for producers, consumers, financial institutions, brokers, and investors.
- ★ It will enhance market efficiency, liquidity, and transparency in India's natural gas market.
- ★ Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) is India's first automated national-level gas trading platform, operating under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).
- ★ The collaboration supports NSE's expansion into domestically benchmarked commodity derivatives, strengthening India's energy trading ecosystem.

## **Axis Bank Introduces Mobile Number Update Facility Using Aadhaar Face Authentication**

- ★ Axis Bank has launched a digital mobile number update facility on its mobile banking app using Aadhaar Face Authentication.
- ★ The feature allows customers to update their registered mobile numbers anytime and anywhere through a secure three-step authentication process.
- ★ The system uses facial recognition technology by matching a live image of the customer with the Aadhaar database records maintained by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
- ★ The solution enables self-service mobile number updates, complementing traditional branch-based support services.
- ★ The Aadhaar Face Authentication system ensures secure verification by validating identity through real-time facial matching.
- ★ As an additional security measure, Axis Bank has introduced a safeguard where mobile banking transaction limits are reset to default for 24 hours after a mobile number update.
- ★ This ensures enhanced customer data security and fraud prevention during the re-registration process on the Axis Mobile App.

## **BoB Achieves ₹30 Lakh Crore Global Business Milestone for First Time**

- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB) crossed the ₹30 lakh crore global business milestone (deposits + advances) for the first time, reaching ₹30.78 lakh crore in March 2026.
- ★ BoB recorded a 13.93% year-on-year (YoY) growth in global business during Q4 FY26.
- ★ Global deposits grew by 12% YoY to ₹16.48 lakh crore, while global advances increased by 16.23% YoY to ₹14.30 lakh crore.
- ★ Domestic deposits increased by 12.83% YoY to ₹14.01 lakh crore as of March-end 2026.
- ★ Domestic advances rose by 14.56% YoY to ₹11.69 lakh crore at March-end 2026.
- ★ Domestic retail advances recorded a 17.93% YoY growth, reaching ₹3.02 lakh crore as of March-end 2026.
- ★ The growth in BoB's global business reflects strong performance across deposits and advances, both domestic and international.

## **RBI Imposes ₹10.30 Lakh Penalty on Exclusive Capital Limited**

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹10.30 lakh on Exclusive Capital Limited.
- ★ The penalty was imposed for non-compliance with RBI directions related to leverage ratio, filing of supervisory returns, and submission of balance sheet.
- ★ Action was taken under the provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, specifically Sections 58G(1)(b) and 58B(5)(aa).
- ★ The company was found to have breached the permissible leverage ratio limit, violating RBI regulatory norms.
- ★ It also failed to submit supervisory returns on time, as required under RBI guidelines.
- ★ Additionally, the company did not furnish its balance sheet within the stipulated period, leading to regulatory action.
- ★ The penalty followed offsite analysis, correspondence, and a show-cause notice, after which RBI confirmed the violations.
- ★ RBI clarified that the action is based on regulatory compliance deficiencies and does not comment on the validity of transactions or agreements of the company.
- ★ The penalty is without prejudice to any further action that may be initiated by RBI in future against the company.

## **RBI Data Shows Current Account And Savings Account Ratio Declines**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported that the Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) ratio declined to a 2-year low of 37.9% in the December 2025 quarter, compared to 40.1% in December 2023.
- ★ CASA (Current Account Savings Account) ratio represents the proportion of low-cost deposits (current + savings accounts) in a bank's total deposits.

- ★ The decline was mainly due to a fall in savings account deposits, whose share dropped by 210 basis points to 28.9%.
- ★ Depositors are shifting towards higher-yielding investment options such as equities, Mutual Funds (MFs), and gold, indicating a slowdown in deposit mobilisation.
- ★ Total bank deposits grew by 10% Year-on-Year (YoY) to ₹239.8 lakh crore.
- ★ Savings deposits increased by 8% YoY to ₹69.4 lakh crore, while current account deposits grew by 10% YoY to ₹21.4 lakh crore.
- ★ Certificates of Deposit (CD) issuances reached a record ₹15.5 lakh crore in FY26, showing a 17% YoY growth.
- ★ Banks are increasingly relying on market borrowings (CDs) to support credit growth, amid declining CASA share.

### **Department of Financial Services Secretary Unveils Bank of Baroda's AI-Based Multilingual Platform 'BoB SAMVAD'**

- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB) launched bob SAMVAD, an AI-powered multilingual conversational platform, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ The platform was inaugurated by Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance.
- ★ BoB SAMVAD is an industry-first initiative aimed at transforming customer interactions in bank branches.
- ★ It enables seamless communication between customers and staff in different languages, helping to eliminate language barriers.
- ★ The platform uses AI-driven speech and language technologies to provide real-time, low-latency, two-way communication.
- ★ It supports 22 languages, ensuring contextual accuracy and natural fluency, reflecting India's linguistic diversity.
- ★ Customers can speak or type queries in their preferred language, which are instantly translated for bank staff and vice versa.
- ★ The system offers both text display and optional voice mode (text-to-speech), making it accessible and user-friendly.
- ★ The initiative enhances customer experience, inclusivity, and service efficiency in banking operations.
- ★ In the first phase, bob SAMVAD will be rolled out in 250 branches across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
- ★ A phased nationwide rollout is planned across the entire Bank of Baroda branch network.
- ★ The launch also aligns with BoB's broader initiatives like bob Earth, Green Deposits, Green Bonds, and bob Forest, supporting sustainability and ESG goals.

## **RBI Keeps Foreign Portfolio Investor Investment Limits in Government Securities, State Government Securities and Corporate Bonds Unchanged**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) investment limits in Government Securities (G-Secs), State Government Securities (SGSs), and Corporate Bonds unchanged for FY 2026–27.
- ★ The limits remain at 6% for G-Secs, 2% for SGSs, and 15% for corporate bonds of the outstanding stock of securities.
- ★ The RBI confirmed that the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) will continue, allowing unrestricted investment in specified government securities by eligible FPIs.
- ★ The allocation of incremental changes in G-Sec limits between General and Long-term sub-categories has been retained at a 50:50 ratio for FY 2026–27.
- ★ Any increase in State Government Securities (SGS) limits will be fully allocated to the General category
- ★ The RBI has also retained the investment framework harmonisation, bringing the Voluntary Retention Route (VRR) in line with the General route limits.
- ★ The limit for Credit Default Swaps (CDS) sold by FPIs has been capped at 5% of corporate bond outstanding stock.
- ★ An additional limit of ₹3.30 lakh crore has been set for CDS exposure in FY 2026–27.
- ★ The total permissible FPI debt investment for April–September 2026 is ₹15,51,646 crore, increasing to ₹16,32,640 crore for October 2026–March 2027.
- ★ The RBI's decision ensures policy continuity, market stability, and a predictable foreign investment framework in India's debt market.

## **RBI Cancels Licence of The Shirpur Merchants' Co-operative Bank Limited**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the licence of The Shirpur Merchants' Co-operative Bank Ltd., Shirpur and the bank ceased operations from April 06, 2026.
- ★ The action was taken under Section 22 read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 due to non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- ★ The bank was found to have inadequate capital and weak earning prospects, violating provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ★ It also failed to comply with multiple requirements under Section 22 (3)(a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) of the Act.
- ★ The RBI stated that continuation of the bank would be prejudicial to depositors' interests and against public interest.
- ★ The bank is now prohibited from carrying out banking activities, including accepting and repaying deposits.
- ★ Following licence cancellation, the bank will undergo winding up and liquidation, with a liquidator to be appointed by Maharashtra Co-operative authorities.
- ★ Depositors are protected under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).

- ★ Each depositor is eligible for insurance cover up to ₹5 lakh, as per the DICGC Act, 1961.
- ★ Around 99.7% of depositors will receive the full insured amount of their deposits.
- ★ As of January 31, 2026, DICGC had already paid ₹48.95 crore towards insured deposits based on eligible claims.

### **RBI Proposes Revamp of Business Correspondent Model**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a revamp of the Business Correspondent (BC) model to strengthen last-mile banking delivery and financial inclusion.
- ★ The draft framework introduces a three-tier banking delivery structure: Bank Branches, Business Correspondent–Banking Outlets (BC-BO), and Business Correspondent–Banking Touchpoints (BC-BT).
- ★ The RBI has proposed classification of BCs into two categories (BC-BO and BC-BT) based on their functions, service scope, and operational structure, along with uniform wage and remuneration standards.
- ★ BC-BOs will function as fixed-point service units, offering branch-like banking services with minimum working hours of 4 hours per day for at least 5 days a week.
- ★ In contrast, BC-BTs will operate without fixed timings and will handle smaller-value transactions only, providing flexible and limited banking services.
- ★ Both BC-BOs and BC-BTs will work exclusively for a single bank, ensuring better control and accountability in service delivery.
- ★ The RBI has also proposed uniformity in commission and remuneration structures, where BC-BOs will receive fixed + variable pay, while BC-BTs will receive only variable payouts.
- ★ The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) will design a benchmark-linked remuneration framework, with incentives partly based on customer satisfaction levels.
- ★ The draft norms propose including Business Facilitators (BFs) under the BC framework and phasing out the BF category by September 30, 2026, requiring transition into the BC system.
- ★ Banks will be required to conduct strict due diligence on BCs, including financial strength, governance standards, and operational capability assessments before onboarding.
- ★ The draft is based on recommendations of a multi-agency committee comprising RBI, Department of Financial Services (DFS), IBA, and NABARD, aimed at improving efficiency and financial inclusion delivery mechanisms.

### **Bajaj Alternate Investment Management Limited Receives SEBI Nod to Start Portfolio Management Services**

- ★ Bajaj Alternate Investment Management Limited (Bajaj Alts) has received regulatory approval from Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch Portfolio Management Services (PMS).
- ★ Portfolio Management Services (PMS) is a service where professional experts manage investments (stocks, bonds, etc.) based on investors' goals and risk appetite.
- ★ The approval enables the company to expand into listed equities through PMS offerings, in addition to its existing Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs)

- ★ With this move, Bajaj Alts strengthens its position as a diversified investment platform, offering solutions across both AIFs and PMS segments.
- ★ The PMS business will primarily target High-Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) and Ultra High-Net Worth Individuals (UHNWIs), focusing on customised and differentiated investment strategies.
- ★ The company will offer actively managed equity portfolios, backed by research-led investment processes and structured risk management frameworks.
- ★ The key focus areas include strong research, effective risk management, and use of technology to enhance transparency and risk control, aiming for steady and balanced returns.
- ★ This development reflects a growing trend of investor preference towards customised strategies and active portfolio management, especially in equity markets under evolving conditions.
- ★ With the addition of PMS, Bajaj Alts joins a growing pool of asset managers diversifying across multiple investment products, amid increasing competition in the wealth and asset management industry.

### **Razorpay Partners with OpenAI**

- ★ Razorpay has partnered with OpenAI to enable seamless integration of payment systems into AI-built applications, allowing developers to embed payments directly into apps within minutes and simplify monetisation of AI products.
- ★ The collaboration introduces the concept of “agentic payments”, where AI systems can autonomously initiate and complete financial transactions, making commerce more automated and intelligent.
- ★ Under this integration, developers using OpenAI’s Codex platform can connect Razorpay’s payment infrastructure via its MCP Server, enabling instant payment activation and faster product monetisation.
- ★ The system allows developers to move from idea to revenue-generating applications in minutes instead of days, by removing traditional payment setup complexities.
- ★ Razorpay is also integrating its services with ChatGPT, enabling businesses to manage payments, settlements, refunds, and reconciliation through conversational prompts instead of dashboards.
- ★ This allows users to track transactions, verify bank statements, and check refund status using simple AI commands, improving efficiency and user experience in financial operations.
- ★ The initiative is part of Razorpay’s broader push toward AI-driven commerce and automated financial ecosystems, enhancing developer and business accessibility to digital payments.
- ★ With India processing over 20 billion UPI transactions monthly, the collaboration positions AI-built applications to achieve monetisation from day one, leveraging India’s large developer ecosystem and digital payment infrastructure.
- ★ The launch of agentic payments, developed in collaboration with OpenAI and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), aims to make AI-driven transactions seamless, autonomous, and highly scalable.

## **SEBI Extends IPO Approval Validity and Minimum Public Shareholding Compliance Deadline to September 30, 2026**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) announced a two-pronged one-time relief measure to ease Initial Public Offering (IPO) timelines and Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) compliance norms.
- ★ SEBI extended the validity of Initial Public Offering (IPO) approvals (SEBI Observation Letters) for companies whose approvals were expiring between April 1 and September 30, 2026, now valid till September 30, 2026.
- ★ Under existing rules, companies must launch IPOs within 12 months of SEBI approval, but the extension provides additional time and flexibility due to market conditions.
- ★ SEBI also granted a one-time relaxation for MPS compliance, allowing listed companies to meet the 25% public shareholding requirement if deadlines fall between April 1 and September 30, 2026.
- ★ During this relaxation period, no penal action will be initiated for non-compliance with MPS norms, and any ongoing enforcement actions will be withdrawn.
- ★ Companies are also allowed to update offer documents with fresh compliance certification at the time of IPO launch.
- ★ The relaxations aim to support companies amid market volatility, weak investor sentiment, and geopolitical uncertainties, especially due to the West Asia conflict.

## **IRDAI Forms Sub-Panel of Insurance Advisory Committee**

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has constituted a sub-committee under the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) to review the current scenario of private health insurance in India.
- ★ The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to improve policyholder experience, increase health insurance penetration, and strengthen consumer trust and satisfaction.
- ★ The sub-committee will focus on improving overall consumer experience and enhancing confidence in the health insurance ecosystem.
- ★ The scope of review includes key parameters such as coverage, penetration, claims experience, product design, grievance redressal, and consumer experience.
- ★ The committee will act in an advisory role, recommending regulatory, policy, and operational reforms to promote innovation, wider coverage, better risk pooling, and improved financial protection.
- ★ It will also evaluate digital transformation aspects including healthcare provider networks, hospital tariffs, fraud control mechanisms, and digital systems to improve policyholder value and reduce administrative inefficiencies.

## **PNB Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Government e-Marketplace**

- ★ State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government e Marketplace (GeM) to strengthen financial access for sellers on the platform.

- ★ The partnership aims to enhance access to formal credit for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and small businesses through timely, affordable, and digital lending solutions.
- ★ PNB has been onboarded as a lending partner on the GeM Sahay Portal, enabling sellers to access collateral-free short-term loans against GeM purchase orders, improving liquidity and cash flow management.
- ★ The initiative ensures transparent and paperless loan processing, promoting efficiency and faster credit delivery through digital banking systems.
- ★ This integration of procurement and financing strengthens Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and encourages greater vendor participation in the government procurement ecosystem.
- ★ The partnership supports the Digital India mission by building a seamless, inclusive, and technology-driven procurement and credit ecosystem.
- ★ The MoU was signed by Ajit B. Chavan, Additional Chief Executive Officer (CEO), GeM and Atish Kumar Rout, General Manager (GM) – Digital Business Transformation Division (DBTD), PNB, in New Delhi, Delhi.
- ★ Overall, the initiative is designed to empower MSMEs, strengthen working capital access, and boost financial inclusion in the government procurement space.

### **DBS Bank India Launches DBS Aspire Relationship-Led Banking for Emerging Affluent Segment**

- ★ DBS Bank India launched its new DBS Aspire Banking proposition along with the Aspire debit card, targeting India's emerging affluent segment.
- ★ The offering is designed for fast-growing, well-travelled, digitally savvy customers, including High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs) and Ultra-HNWIs.
- ★ Customers are eligible for DBS Aspire with a relationship value of ₹10 lakh or a minimum monthly savings account balance of ₹2 lakh.
- ★ The program focuses on providing premium banking services to India's emerging affluent segment with a focus on wealth accumulation and lifestyle banking needs.
- ★ Key benefits include zero forex markup on international transactions, 0% charges on banking services, and high savings interest rates up to 5% per annum on balances between ₹2 lakh and ₹50 lakh.
- ★ The initiative supports customers with global mobility needs, including overseas education, travel, and international work opportunities.
- ★ DBS Aspire offers seamless digital banking access, including the digiportfolio investment platform for wealth management and investments.
- ★ The proposition strengthens DBS Bank India's role as a long-term banking partner for upwardly mobile customers transitioning from mass banking to premium banking services.

### **World Bank Raises India's Growth Forecast to 6.6% from 6.3%**

- ★ The World Bank has revised India's GDP growth forecast upward to 6.6% for FY27, from the earlier 6.3%, citing strong domestic demand and benefits from free trade agreements (FTAs).

- ★ India is expected to remain the primary engine of growth in South Asia and continue as the fastest-growing major economy globally.
- ★ India's economic growth accelerated from 7.1% in FY25 to 7.6% in FY26, driven by robust domestic demand and resilient exports.
- ★ Private consumption emerged as a key growth driver, supported by low inflation and rationalisation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- ★ The growth outlook for FY27 is projected at 6.6%, with moderation due to global headwinds, especially geopolitical tensions in West Asia.
- ★ The report highlights that free trade agreements with the UK and European Union, along with tariff reductions, are supporting export growth and market access.
- ★ However, elevated global energy prices are expected to increase inflationary pressures and reduce household disposable income.
- ★ Government consumption may soften due to higher subsidy outlays on fuel and fertilisers, while investment growth could slow amid rising input costs and global uncertainty.
- ★ Although improved market access to the United States and European Union may support exports, slow growth in major trading partners could limit gains.
- ★ In India, inflation is expected to rise slightly in FY26 and FY27, driven by strong demand, stabilising food prices, and global energy trends.

### **FIU-IND and I4C Sign Landmark Memorandum of Understanding**

- ★ The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Indian Cyber Crime Co-ordination Centre (I4C) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen India's fight against cyber frauds and financial crimes.
- ★ The MoU was signed by Shri Amit Mohan Govil (Director, FIU-IND) and Shri Rajesh Kumar (CEO, I4C), marking enhanced inter-agency intelligence collaboration.
- ★ The agreement aims to improve information sharing, co-ordination, and operational intelligence support between both agencies.
- ★ It comes at a time when India's digital payment ecosystem has expanded significantly, increasing the need for cybersecurity safeguards and fraud prevention mechanisms.
- ★ The collaboration will help in preventing financial crimes, protecting digital transactions, and supporting asset recovery efforts.
- ★ A key objective is to develop feedback mechanisms to improve fraud detection systems at the national level.
- ★ The MoU also focuses on creating and sharing red flag indicators and guidelines for financial institutions to strengthen cyber fraud prevention.
- ★ The initiative represents a "whole-of-government" approach to tackling cybercrime and financial misconduct.

## **Reserve Bank of India's First Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy for Financial Year 2026-27**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted the 60<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting for Financial Year 2026-27 (FY27) from April 06 to April 08, 2026.
- ★ The meeting was chaired by Sanjay Malhotra, with participation from MPC members Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Saugata Bhattacharya, Prof. Ram Singh, Dr. Poonam Gupta, and Indranil Bhattacharyya.
- ★ The MPC kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25% under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and maintained a 'Neutral' policy stance due to global uncertainties and West Asia conflict.
- ★ The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate was retained at 5.00%, while the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and Bank Rate were held at 5.50%.
- ★ The MPC cited factors like rising crude oil prices, rupee depreciation, and supply chain disruptions as key reasons for its cautious stance.
- ★ The GDP growth forecast for FY27 was revised downward by 50 basis points to 6.9% from the earlier estimate of 7.4%.
- ★ The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation is projected at 4.6% for FY27, remaining within the tolerance band of  $\pm 2\%$ , with core inflation estimated at 4.4%.
- ★ The next MPC meeting is scheduled to be held from June 03 to June 05, 2026.

## **National Stock Exchange of India Partners with S&P Global Energy**

- ★ The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has partnered with S&P Global Energy to launch exchange-traded derivatives based on Platts benchmarks.
- ★ The initiative will initially introduce futures contracts linked to Platts Dated Brent Crude Oil, a globally recognised international crude oil pricing benchmark.
- ★ The move will enable Indian market participants to access global crude oil prices through a regulated domestic exchange platform.
- ★ The NSE, based in Mumbai, was incorporated in 1992 and began operations in 1994 to bring transparency to Indian financial markets.
- ★ The collaboration integrates S&P Global Platts pricing benchmarks into India's commodity derivatives ecosystem.
- ★ The Dated Brent Crude Oil (Platts) Futures received regulatory approval, with the official launch scheduled for 13 April 2026.
- ★ The contracts aim to serve a wide range of participants including refiners, importers, traders, financial institutions, and investors.
- ★ The initiative will provide exposure to global Brent crude oil markets while operating within a domestic regulated framework.
- ★ The integration of Platts benchmarks is expected to enhance transparency, price discovery, and credibility in India's energy derivatives market.
- ★ Overall, the move strengthens India's position in global commodity trading and energy price alignment mechanisms.

## **RBI Issues New Guidelines to Accelerate Inward Cross-Border Remittances and Reduce Banking Delays**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed banks to speed up cross-border inward payments by eliminating processing delays.
- ★ RBI observed that many banks rely on end-of-day nostro account reconciliation, which leads to delays in crediting beneficiary accounts.
- ★ Banks are now required to perform frequent reconciliation of nostro accounts, preferably on a near real-time basis, with intervals not exceeding one hour.
- ★ Inward remittances received during foreign exchange market hours must be credited to customers on the same business day, and those received after market hours must be credited on the next business day.
- ★ Banks must immediately inform customers upon receiving cross-border payment messages, or at the start of the next working day if received after business hours.
- ★ RBI has also directed banks to provide a digital interface for forex transactions, including document submission and transaction tracking.
- ★ These measures align with Payments Vision 2025 and G20 objectives of ensuring faster, cheaper, and more transparent cross-border payments.
- ★ The guidelines will come into effect after a 6-month implementation period.

## **Payu And 8B Forge Strategic Alliance To Boost India–Central Asia Digital Payment Connectivity**

- ★ PayU and 8B signed a strategic partnership to expand digital payment connectivity between India and Central Asia.
- ★ The partnership enables Indian travellers to use UPI, net banking, and debit/credit cards for cross-border payments in Central Asia.
- ★ It integrates PayU's payment infrastructure (APIs) with 8B's merchant network, ensuring seamless transaction capability.
- ★ The service is available across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, expanding regional payment acceptance.
- ★ Indian users can make payments abroad using familiar domestic apps, making transactions feel like local payments.
- ★ Central Asian merchants can accept UPI payments without additional hardware, improving ease of adoption.
- ★ The system functions as a one-way payment bridge, where Indian users pay abroad and funds are routed to local merchants.
- ★ Transactions are processed through compliant financial channels, ensuring security and regulatory adherence.
- ★ The partnership supports UPI (Unified Payments Interface), one of the fastest-growing digital payment systems globally.

- ★ This collaboration marks a major milestone in strengthening digital payment infrastructure and financial integration between India and Central Asia.

## **Axis Bank Joins NPCI's Banking Connect Platform to Boost Interoperable Netbanking Services**

- ★ NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL) has onboarded Axis Bank onto its Banking Connect platform, joining major banks like State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, and HDFC Bank.
- ★ The integration will enable 37 million Axis Bank customers to experience faster checkout and smoother netbanking payments across 4,800+ merchants.
- ★ The Banking Connect platform (launched in 2025) simplifies merchant onboarding and payment integration using standardised APIs, reducing complexity for banks and payment aggregators.
- ★ Currently, 8 banks and 11 payment aggregators (PAs) are live on the platform, indicating rapid adoption of digital payment infrastructure.
- ★ The platform enhances interoperability between payment aggregators and banks for seamless netbanking transactions.
- ★ It also enables advanced features like Direct-to-Merchant Settlements, Third-Party Verification (TPV), and mandate & lien capabilities for high-volume transactions.
- ★ The system replaces the traditional model where each payment aggregator had to integrate individually with each bank, reducing operational complexity.
- ★ NPCI is the parent organisation of NBBL, strengthening India's digital payments ecosystem under a unified framework.

## **Asian Development Bank Approves \$115.8 Million Loan To Narayanganj, Bangladesh**

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$115.8 million loan for the Narayanganj Green and Resilient Urban Development Project in Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), Bangladesh.
- ★ The project aims to upgrade drinking water supply, modernise drainage systems, and expand green public spaces to improve urban sustainability and resilience.
- ★ It is expected to benefit at least 400,000 residents, supporting efforts to reduce congestion in Dhaka and strengthen urban governance and service delivery.
- ★ A key objective is to reduce non-revenue water (NRW) to below 20% through replacement and expansion of 230 km pipeline network and installation of metered household connections.
- ★ The project will adopt digital technologies such as Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and strengthen online billing and revenue collection systems.
- ★ The water supply capacity of NCC will increase from 113 million litres per day (MLD) to 162 MLD.
- ★ This will be achieved through new tube wells, rehabilitation of water treatment plants, and upgrades of existing wells.
- ★ The project will enhance climate resilience and flood management by increasing the share of surface water to 51%.

- ★ It includes development of 22 km of drainage infrastructure using nature-based solutions to improve flood control and groundwater recharge.
- ★ The project will also construct inclusive green parks and rehabilitate a playground to improve livability and reduce urban heat effects.
- ★ The Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC) will be responsible for the long-term operation and maintenance of all facilities under the project.

### **CSB Bank Launches Its First Retail Savings Product ‘SMART SAVE ACCOUNT’**

- ★ CSB Bank Limited, one of India’s oldest private sector banks, launched its first dedicated retail savings product called the ‘SMART SAVE ACCOUNT’, marking a major expansion in retail banking portfolio.
- ★ The launch aims to boost bank liquidity and provide automated, customer-centric banking services.
- ★ The SMART SAVE ACCOUNT is available in three variants: Savings Account, Current Account, and Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) Account.
- ★ The account is designed for salaried individuals, business professionals, and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), ensuring easy liquidity management without manual intervention.
- ★ A key feature is the auto-sweep facility, which automatically transfers excess funds into Fixed Deposits (FDs).
- ★ The account offers up to 7% interest on ‘Sweep-in FDs’ for a 13-month tenure.
- ★ It comes with a ‘no lock-in’ facility, ensuring flexible fund access for customers.
- ★ Customers receive a complimentary RuPay Platinum debit card for enhanced banking convenience.
- ★ The account provides a maximum net banking transaction limit of ₹10 lakh per day.
- ★ It also includes a daily ATM withdrawal limit of ₹75,000.
- ★ Customers can avail up to a 30% discount on locker rentals, adding additional value benefits.

### **PFRDA approves PPFAS Asset Management Company**

- ★ The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), under the Ministry of Finance (MoF), approved PPFAS Asset Management Company (AMC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Parag Parikh Financial Advisory Services Limited (PPFAS), to act as a sponsor for a pension fund under the National Pension System (NPS).
- ★ This approval marks the entry of PPFAS into India’s retirement savings space, enabling it to manage long-term pension assets.
- ★ The initiative aims to manage long-term retirement savings of NPS subscribers with a focus on investor protection, disciplined investing, and consistent returns.
- ★ A separate pension fund company will be established to manage NPS schemes and invest across Equities (EQ), Government Securities (G-Secs), and Corporate Bonds (CBs).
- ★ The operations of the fund will begin after completion of regulatory approvals, procedural requirements, and infrastructure setup.

- ★ The National Pension System (NPS) was launched in 2004 for government employees and extended to all citizens in 2009, and is regulated by PFRDA.
- ★ NPS allows subscribers to choose and switch fund managers for flexible long-term retirement planning.

### **SEBI Launches Three Information Technology Platforms**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) launched three new Information Technology (IT) platforms to enhance ease of doing business, transparency, and cybersecurity oversight.
- ★ The three platforms are SUPCOMS, e-adjudication portal, and Cyber-Sec Audit Compliance (C-SAC), each designed for a specific regulatory function.
- ★ SUPCOMS (Single Universal Platform for Communication System) is a unified communication platform that replaces email-based interactions with SEBI.
- ★ SUPCOMS ensures centralised communication, audit trails, and strong institutional memory, preventing fragmented and broken communication chains.
- ★ The e-adjudication portal digitises quasi-judicial proceedings, allowing entities to access notices, submit replies, and attend hearings online.
- ★ This portal improves transparency, efficiency, and digital access to regulatory proceedings.
- ★ C-SAC (Cyber-Sec Audit Compliance) is an AI-enabled cybersecurity supervision tool developed by SEBI.
- ★ C-SAC analyses cyber audit reports of regulated entities to identify compliance gaps, risk areas, and security vulnerabilities.
- ★ It provides data-driven insights, risk scores, and comparative analysis, supporting risk-based supervision.
- ★ The platform enhances regulatory efficiency, reduces manual effort, and strengthens cybersecurity governance.

### **India's UPI Completes 10 Years Of Transforming Digital Payments**

- ★ Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has completed 10 years of operations, transforming India from a cash-led economy to a real-time digital payment system.
- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched UPI in 2016, simplifying money movement and digital transactions across India.
- ★ UPI replaced complex banking details by eliminating the need for account numbers and IFSC codes, enabling a simple and user-friendly payment interface.
- ★ The system has expanded significantly from 216 banks in 2021 to 691 banks by January 2026, forming a unified national payments infrastructure.
- ★ In January 2026 alone, UPI processed 21.70 billion transactions, reflecting massive adoption and daily usage across the country.
- ★ UPI accounts for 81% of all retail digital transactions in India, making it the dominant digital payment system in the country.

- ★ According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UPI is the world's largest real-time payment system by transaction volume.
- ★ UPI is evolving into a broader financial ecosystem, with features like UPI Lite for small payments and UPI AutoPay for recurring payments such as bills and subscriptions.
- ★ Institutions like the IMF and World Bank have recognized UPI for its scale, efficiency, and financial inclusion impact.
- ★ UPI has expanded globally and is now linked with countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar.
- ★ The system holds around 49% share in global real-time payment transaction volume, highlighting India's leadership in digital payment innovation.

### **Visa and HDFC Bank Launch FIFA World Cup 2026 Credit Card**

- ★ Visa and HDFC Bank launched a limited-edition FIFA World Cup 2026 Pixel Credit Card along with a nationwide "Spend & Win" campaign.
- ★ The card is a FIFA-themed variant of HDFC's Pixel Play digital credit card, available via the PayZapp app and HDFC Bank website.
- ★ The launch event was held in Mumbai, attended by former England footballer Michael Owen.
- ★ The card issuance began on 11 April 2026, targeting digital-first and young urban consumers.
- ★ The Spend and Win campaign is applicable across HDFC Bank's entire card portfolio, including credit cards, debit cards, business cards, and forex prepaid cards.
- ★ Customers can earn rewards through everyday spending, including FIFA World Cup 2026 match packages, official merchandise, staycations, and shopping vouchers.
- ★ The campaign aims to make FIFA experiences accessible across income segments, not limited to premium cardholders.
- ★ The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- ★ The tournament will feature an expanded 48-team format, making it the largest FIFA World Cup edition to date.

### **Reliance Jio and Bank of Baroda launch 'bob World Lite'**

- ★ Reliance Jio and Bank of Baroda have partnered to launch 'bob World Lite', a mobile banking app for feature phone users on JioPhone Prima 4G.
- ★ The initiative aims to expand digital banking access beyond smartphones, supporting financial inclusion in India.
- ★ It aligns with the goals of the Government of India and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to promote digital payments and inclusive banking services.
- ★ The 'bob World Lite' app is designed as a lightweight mobile banking solution for affordable feature phones, targeting users in semi-urban and rural areas.
- ★ The app is built on a low-bandwidth, lightweight architecture with keypad-based navigation and secure access.
- ★ It will be pre-installed on JioPhone Prima 4G devices and accessible directly from the home screen.

- ★ Existing users can also download it via the JioStore, ensuring wide accessibility.
- ★ The platform is open to Bank of Baroda customers and customers of other banks through a simple self-onboarding process.
- ★ The app currently offers UPI-based Scan & Pay, money transfers, bill payments, mobile recharges, and profile management services.
- ★ Additional digital banking features will be added in future updates to enhance user experience.
- ★ The initiative strengthens digital financial inclusion, rural banking access, and expansion of India's fintech ecosystem.

### **Phonepe And SBI Card Launch Co-Branded Credit Card With Zero Joining Fee Offer**

- ★ PhonePe, in partnership with SBI Card, has launched a co-branded credit card with a limited-time first-year fee waiver to improve accessibility and adoption of digital credit services.
- ★ The PhonePe SBI Card is available on both RuPay and Visa networks, targeting digital-first users and integrating seamlessly with the PhonePe app ecosystem.
- ★ The card aims to expand credit access, promote digital payments, and enhance customer rewards, especially among PhonePe's large user base.
- ★ The card offers a universal rewards structure, providing 5% rewards on all online purchases regardless of merchant or brand.
- ★ Users earn 10% rewards on select PhonePe ecosystem categories, including mobile recharges, utility bill payments, and routine digital transactions.
- ★ Additional benefits include rewards on insurance premium payments, helping users save on essential financial expenses.
- ★ For offline spending via UPI, the RuPay variant offers 1% rewards on scan-and-pay transactions, making everyday payments more rewarding.
- ★ The card includes travel perks such as 4 complimentary domestic airport lounge visits per year without spending requirements.
- ★ Users also receive a 2-year Priority Pass membership, enabling access to international airport lounges.
- ★ Reward points can be redeemed directly against credit card bills, with 1 point equal to ₹1, increasing liquidity and value redemption flexibility.
- ★ The application process is fully digital via the PhonePe app, ensuring a seamless onboarding experience.
- ★ SBI Card, launched in October 1998 in New Delhi, is a joint venture between State Bank of India and GE Capital.

### **Reserve Bank of India Launches 'Utkarsh 2029' as its Medium-Term Strategy Framework**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched 'Utkarsh 2029', its Medium-Term Strategy Framework for April 2026–March 2029, succeeding Utkarsh 2.0 (2023–25).

- ★ The framework aims to guide the RBI's strategic priorities, institutional development, and transformation into a world-class, full-service central bank.
- ★ It is built around six strategic pillars, defining RBI's long-term priorities: Robust Regulations, Customer Centricity and Inclusive Finance, Competitive Markets, Effective Technology, Future-ready Organisation and Global India/Global Integration.
- ★ The RBI earlier introduced Utkarsh 2022 in 2019, replacing short-term annual planning with a long-term strategic framework.
- ★ Progress under Utkarsh 2029 will be monitored through a digital Utkarsh web application, with quarterly review by top management and oversight by a Sub-committee of the Central Board.
- ★ The strategy includes 49 deliverables across the six pillars, focused on strengthening India's financial and regulatory ecosystem.
- ★ Under Project Sa-Mudra, the RBI will focus on modernising currency management systems.
- ★ The framework plans to expand Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) to enable efficient cross-border payments and financial innovation.
- ★ It emphasizes scaling the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) to improve inclusive credit delivery, especially for underserved segments.
- ★ The RBI also plans to develop an indigenous AI-based Large Language Model (LLM) for internal operational efficiency and digital transformation.

### **Paytm Introduces Biometric Unified Payments Interface Payments and Cardless Automated Teller Machine Withdrawals**

- ★ Paytm (One 97 Communications Limited) introduced biometric authentication for Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payments and cardless Automated Teller Machine (ATM) withdrawals.
- ★ The rollout aligns with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) new 2-Factor (2F) authentication framework, effective from 1 April 2026.
- ★ The system enables users to authenticate payments, check balances, and withdraw cash without entering a UPI PIN, improving ease and security of transactions.
- ★ The new mechanism supports PIN-free digital transactions using biometric verification, enhancing user convenience in digital payments.
- ★ As per National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) guidelines, biometric UPI transactions are capped at ₹5,000 per transaction.
- ★ Cardless ATM withdrawals are capped at ₹10,000 per transaction, ensuring controlled risk in cashless banking operations.
- ★ The RBI 2F authentication framework mandates verification using more than one factor, including PIN, password, secure token, or biometric authentication.
- ★ The framework applies to all digital payment systems, including UPI, cards, and wallets, strengthening overall cybersecurity in India's digital payments ecosystem.
- ★ Overall, the initiative marks a shift towards biometric-driven, secure, and user-friendly digital payment authentication in India.

## **LIC Launches MyLIC and Super Sales Saathi Apps**

- ★ Shri M. Nagaraju, IAS, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, launched LIC's new mobile applications – MyLIC Customer App and Super Sales Saathi App – in Mumbai, Maharashtra in the presence of senior LIC leadership.
- ★ With over 260 million policies, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) aims to strengthen its digital ecosystem to improve service efficiency, scale, and customer experience in the insurance sector.
- ★ The MyLIC App provides a 360-degree digital platform integrating policy servicing, claims support, payments, documentation, and customer engagement in a single interface.
- ★ The app enables policyholders to manage their insurance journey through paperless, secure, and user-friendly digital services, reducing dependence on physical documentation.
- ★ Key customer features of MyLIC App include policy portfolio management, instant premium payments, real-time policy benefit tracking, paperless policy loans, online policy updates, and revival of lapsed policies.
- ★ The app also supports online purchase of policies, along with fast and secure e-KYC, ensuring a fully digital onboarding experience.
- ★ The Super Sales Saathi App is designed for LIC's intermediaries and field agents, enhancing their ability to serve customers more effectively.
- ★ It provides digital sales tools, real-time policy tracking, automated follow-up reminders, customer communication integration, and AI-driven customer engagement insights.
- ★ The app also includes performance dashboards, digital sales kits, and product explainers, enabling better target tracking and customer outreach.
- ★ Both applications are part of LIC's DIVE (Digital Innovation & Value Enhancement) platform, aimed at delivering a secure, seamless, and fully integrated digital insurance experience for customers, intermediaries, and employees.

## **DoT and SEBI Sign Memorandum of Understanding**

- ★ The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen India's financial ecosystem security by addressing the misuse of telecom resources in financial frauds and investment scams.
- ★ The MoU was signed by Shri Sanjeev Kumar Sharma (DoT, AI & Digital Intelligence Unit) and Shri Sandip Pradhan (SEBI Whole Time Member) in the presence of Shri Deb Kumar Chakrabarti, Member (Services), Digital Communications Commission.
- ★ The partnership aims to integrate telecom intelligence systems with market surveillance mechanisms, marking a shift from reactive enforcement to proactive fraud prevention.
- ★ A key feature of the collaboration is the Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI), which uses inputs from DoT's Chakshu facility under Sanchar Saathi, financial institutions, and law enforcement agencies to detect potentially fraudulent mobile connections.
- ★ The FRI system acts as an early warning mechanism to prevent misuse of mobile numbers in financial scams and securities frauds.

- ★ Under DoT's Sanchar Saathi initiative, over 88 lakh fraudulent mobile connections have already been disconnected using ASTR technology.
- ★ The deployment of FRI has helped prevent financial losses of around ₹2300 crore in the last ten months, strengthening cybersecurity in the financial sector.
- ★ The MoU will enable the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for co-ordinated action and facilitate the sharing of red-flag indicators between institutions.
- ★ The collaboration is designed to enhance investor protection, digital trust, and regulatory co-ordination in India's expanding digital investment ecosystem.
- ★ Overall, the partnership strengthens India's approach to combating cyber-enabled financial frauds through real-time intelligence sharing and preventive enforcement mechanisms.

### **FIU-IND and Securities and Exchange Board of India Sign MoU**

- ★ The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen co-operation against money laundering and financial crimes.
- ★ The MoU was signed by Shri Amit Mohan Govil (Director, FIU-IND) and Shri Sandip Pradhan (SEBI Whole Time Member).
- ★ The agreement marks a new phase of collaborative intelligence sharing between two key agencies involved in India's financial security and regulatory system.
- ★ Under the MoU, both organisations will share relevant intelligence and database information to detect suspicious financial activities.
- ★ It will also establish procedures for reporting by regulated entities and reporting entities to FIU-IND under the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules/PML Rules.
- ★ The MoU enables information exchange with foreign Financial Intelligence Units through the Egmont Principles of Information Exchange.
- ★ FIU-IND and SEBI will jointly organise outreach and training programmes to improve Anti-Money Laundering/Combating Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) capabilities of SEBI-regulated entities.
- ★ Both agencies will hold quarterly meetings to exchange information and discuss matters of mutual interest while ensuring alignment with international standards.
- ★ The co-operation includes assessment of Money Laundering/Terror Financing (ML/TF) risks and vulnerabilities across relevant financial sub-sectors.
- ★ Both institutions will identify and disseminate red flag indicators for suspicious transactions to strengthen fraud detection and prevention.
- ★ The MoU also covers monitoring compliance with the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), PML Rules, and SEBI guidelines.

### **Bajaj Allianz Life Launches Nifty 500 Low Volatility Index Fund Under ULIP Scheme**

- ★ Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance has launched the Nifty 500 Low Volatility 50 Index Fund under its ULIP (Unit Linked Insurance Plan)

- ★ The fund follows a rules-based passive investment strategy, selecting 50 low-volatility stocks from the broader Nifty 500 universe.
- ★ It aims to reduce investment risk while maintaining portfolio diversification across market segments.
- ★ The portfolio has a strong large-cap bias (around 79%), with remaining allocation in mid-cap and small-cap stocks.
- ★ The fund is benchmarked against the Nifty 500 Low Volatility 50 Index.
- ★ Its objective is to deliver steady compounding returns with lower market volatility while still participating in India's equity growth story.
- ★ The New Fund Offer (NFO) for the scheme will close on April 30.

### **Shriram Finance Arm Receives Reserve Bank of India Approval to Launch Primary Dealer Business**

- ★ Shriram Finance Limited announced that its wholly owned subsidiary Shriram Overseas Investments Limited has received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to commence Primary Dealer (PD) business.
- ★ The approval is conditional, subject to compliance with RBI operational, technical, and infrastructure requirements before final commencement.
- ★ Primary Dealers (PDs) are specialised financial institutions authorised by the RBI to act as intermediaries between the central bank and financial markets in the Government Securities (G-Sec) ecosystem.
- ★ PDs are responsible for participating in Government Securities (G-Sec) and Treasury Bills (T-Bills) auctions, supporting efficient government borrowing.
- ★ They also perform the function of underwriting government securities issuances to ensure smooth market absorption.
- ★ Primary Dealers provide liquidity in the secondary market through active buying and selling of government securities.
- ★ The PD framework is regulated under RBI guidelines governing market operations and financial stability.
- ★ The approval and related disclosures fall under the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (SEBI LODR) for transparency in listed entities.
- ★ The status of approval is not final, and full operational permission will be granted only after fulfilling all RBI-mandated conditions.

### **Cabinet Approves Creation of 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)'**

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the creation of a domestic insurance pool named the 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)'.
- ★ The pool will be backed by a sovereign guarantee of ₹12,980 crore to ensure continuous maritime insurance coverage.

- ★ It aims to provide affordable insurance for vessels and cargo moving between international ports and Indian ports, including during transit through volatile maritime corridors.
- ★ The initiative addresses rising risks due to global volatility and geopolitical instability, which have increased marine insurance costs and uncertainty.
- ★ Currently, India relies heavily on the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Clubs for third-party liability insurance.
- ★ These include coverage for oil pollution liability, wreck removal, cargo damage, crew injury and repatriation, and collision liabilities.
- ★ The BMI Pool will ensure domestic maritime risk coverage to maintain sovereignty and trade continuity, even during sanctions or geopolitical disruptions.
- ★ The pool will be operated by participating insurers using a combined underwriting capacity of around ₹950 crore.
- ★ It will help develop domestic marine insurance expertise, including underwriting, claims management, and legal capabilities in India.
- ★ A Governing Body will oversee the formation and functioning of the BMI Pool.
- ★ The sovereign guarantee supports objectives of self-reliance, sanctions resilience, and sovereign control over maritime insurance systems.

### **APCRDA to Raise ₹15,000 Crore from WB and ADB for Amaravati Development**

- ★ The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) has secured ₹40,887 crore so far for the development of Amaravati, the greenfield capital city of Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ The State Government plans to raise an additional ₹15,000 crore from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- ★ The total estimated requirement for the Amaravati capital city project exceeds ₹43,000 crore, indicating a funding gap that is yet to be addressed.
- ★ Major funding sources include NaBFID (₹7,500 crore), HUDCO (₹11,000 crore), and NABARD (₹7,387 crore), apart from multilateral loans.
- ★ The project includes development of over 1,200 km of last-mile connectivity, along with cycle tracks, footpaths, and underground utility infrastructure.
- ★ The Amaravati master plan integrates existing villages with new urban development, ensuring a balanced urban expansion model.
- ★ All 26 villages in the capital region have been classified as “R1 Zone” and retained wherever feasible in the master plan.
- ★ Land pooled under the scheme is being developed into residential, commercial, and recreational zones to build a world-class capital city.
- ★ Farmers who contributed land under the Land Pooling Scheme have been allotted around 70,000 returnable plots.
- ★ They have received ₹1,800 crore as annuity and ₹618 crore as pensions, along with 5,024 housing units for the poor.

- ★ The project also provides access to healthcare and education facilities, supporting inclusive urban development.

### **World Bank Group Launches 'Water Forward' Initiative**

- ★ Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group, announced the launch of 'Water Forward', a global platform to improve water security for 1 billion people by 2030.
- ★ The initiative is launched in collaboration with multilateral development banks (MDBs) and development finance institutions (DFIs).
- ★ Water Forward aims to expand reliable water services, enhance resilience against droughts and floods, and support economic growth and job creation.
- ★ The platform adopts country-led water compacts, aligning policy reforms, financing, partnerships, and investment-ready projects.
- ★ These compacts enable governments to define reform priorities, strengthen institutions, and create investment pathways in the water sector.
- ★ The World Bank Group (WBG) aims to provide water security to 400 million people by 2030, while partner institutions will cover an additional 600 million people.
- ★ Overall, the initiative targets 1 billion beneficiaries globally by 2030.
- ★ Currently, around 4 billion people face water scarcity, highlighting the urgency of the initiative.
- ★ The programme addresses challenges such as weak regulations, unclear policies, and financially unsustainable utilities.
- ★ It focuses on building strong, reliable water systems to support health, food security, energy, and livelihoods, impacting nearly 7 billion jobs worldwide.
- ★ About 14 countries have already announced national water compacts, with more expected to join.
- ★ Key participating institutions include the Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank, and International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- ★ With 2 billion young people entering the workforce in developing countries, reliable water systems are crucial for sustainable development and employment generation.

### **World Bank Sanctions USD 225 Million Funding for Rajasthan**

- ★ The World Bank (WB) Board of Executive Directors approved a USD 225 million (approx. ₹2,080 crore) loan for the Rajasthan Highway Modernisation Project.
- ★ The loan has been provided through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
- ★ The financing package includes a 35-year maturity period, a 5-year grace period, and India's first Step-Up Loan (SuL) mechanism.
- ★ The Step-Up Loan (SuL) helps reduce initial fiscal burden during the early high-risk phase and increases repayments later once the project stabilises and becomes suitable for market refinancing.

- ★ The project aims to improve the efficiency, resilience, and safety of state highways in Rajasthan.
- ★ Around 800 kilometres (km) of state highways will be upgraded and maintained under the project.
- ★ The initiative will support the transformation of the Rajasthan State Highway Authority (RSHA) into a modern, service-oriented highway agency.
- ★ The project is expected to benefit more than 3 million people and improve regional connectivity across economic corridors.
- ★ It will strengthen job creation in key sectors including agriculture, industry, mining, and tourism.
- ★ Rajasthan serves as a key gateway connecting about 40% of India's markets and is one of the country's largest states.
- ★ The project places strong emphasis on road safety management to reduce accidents and fatalities.
- ★ It will enhance climate resilience, making highways more safe, reliable, and durable for commuters.
- ★ The project will crowd in nearly USD 295 million in private capital through public-private partnerships (PPP) and market borrowing.

### **RBI Releases Guidelines on Exchange Facility for Currency Notes and Coins**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued Master Directions on Facility for Exchange of Notes and Coins to ensure smooth currency exchange services across India.
- ★ As per the guidelines, all bank branches across the country are mandated to provide free and non-discriminatory exchange services of currency notes and coins to the public.
- ★ Banks are required to provide key customer services including:
  - Issuing fresh and good-quality notes and coins of all denominations
  - Exchanging soiled, mutilated, or imperfect currency notes
  - Accepting coins and notes for transactions or exchange purposes
- ★ A "soiled note" is defined as a currency note that has become dirty due to normal wear and tear.
- ★ It also includes a two-piece note pasted together, provided both pieces belong to the same note and no essential security feature is missing.
- ★ Such soiled or damaged notes must be accepted by banks either for exchange over counters or for credit into customer bank accounts.

### **CheQ and AU Small Finance Bank Introduce India's First Co-branded LED-Powered Credit Card**

- ★ CheQ, a credit management platform, partnered with AU Small Finance Bank to launch the 'CheQ AU Credit Card'.
- ★ The card is India's first co-branded Light-Emitting Diode (LED)-powered credit card, designed to enhance digital payment experience and reward management.
- ★ The credit card focuses on simplified payments, maximised rewards, and a unified rewards ecosystem with tap-to-pay features.

- ★ The card lights up during transactions by using energy from the Near Field Communication (NFC) field of the Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal.
- ★ It operates without an internal battery, making it a battery-free LED credit card.
- ★ The card supports dual payment networks, including Visa for global transactions and RuPay for Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- ★ The annual fee is ₹499, which is waived on ₹3 lakh annual spends.
- ★ A ₹999 one-time fee applies for the LED variant, but it is waived until 31 May 2026 for CheQ customers.
- ★ The card offers a unified CheQ Points rewards system with multiple earning categories.
- ★ Users can earn up to 12% rewards on select platforms, 5% on everyday spends, 2.5% on UPI (RuPay) transactions, and 1% on other transactions.
- ★ Rewards can be redeemed for gift cards, travel bookings, and bill payments.
- ★ The card also includes a welcome EazyDiner membership worth ₹695, enhancing lifestyle benefits.

### **SEBI Amends Alternative Investment Fund Regulations**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has amended the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) regulations to promote social impact investing in India.
- ★ The minimum investment requirement for Social Impact Funds has been reduced significantly from ₹2 lakh to ₹1,000, enabling greater retail investor participation.
- ★ This reform aligns with improvements in the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) framework, aimed at enhancing accessibility and financial inclusion.
- ★ SEBI has allowed Social Impact Funds under AIF regulations to be treated as “non-operative funds” during specified periods, subject to regulatory conditions.
- ★ The minimum subscription requirement for Zero Coupon Zero Principal (ZCZP) instruments has been reduced from 75% to 50%, improving fundraising flexibility.
- ★ These regulatory changes aim to establish a clear, predictable, and efficient investment framework for both entry and exit of investors.

### **Abu Dhabi National Insurance Company Gets Approval to Set Up Reinsurance Branch in GIFT City, Gujarat**

- ★ Abu Dhabi National Insurance Company (ADNIC), a United Arab Emirates (UAE) -based insurance and reinsurance provider, received approval to set up a reinsurance branch in India at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ★ The licence became effective from 1 April 2026, granted by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), allowing ADNIC to operate from India’s International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
- ★ The approval enables ADNIC to undertake reinsurance business in India, marking its entry into the country’s offshore financial ecosystem.

- ★ ADNIC is a multiline insurer and reinsurer with operations in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the UK, providing services in global insurance markets.
- ★ The expansion is part of ADNIC's international growth strategy, aimed at strengthening its presence in high-growth markets like India.
- ★ It enhances cross-border insurance capabilities, supports revenue diversification, and ensures long-term business expansion.
- ★ The move strengthens India-UAE economic co-operation by boosting trade, investment, and financial sector collaboration.
- ★ It also aligns with India's goal of becoming a global financial services hub.
- ★ GIFT City serves as a global centre for reinsurance, banking, and offshore financial services, attracting international financial institutions.
- ★ The development comes amid broader reforms in India's insurance sector, including approval of new insurers such as Allianz Jio Reinsurance and Kiwi General Insurance by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

### **Karnataka Bank Ties Up with Pine Labs**

- ★ Karnataka Bank Limited, a private sector bank in India, entered into a partnership with Pine Labs Limited, a leading provider of Point-of-Sale (PoS) solutions, to strengthen its digital payment ecosystem.
- ★ The collaboration enables advanced PoS payment services, ensuring seamless, secure, and efficient transactions across India.
- ★ The partnership ensures pan-India availability of PoS services across all bank branches, enhancing digital banking reach.
- ★ It supports Karnataka Bank's vision of becoming a "Digital Bank of the Future" by strengthening its digital banking infrastructure.
- ★ The initiative will benefit retail customers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by providing access to advanced PoS terminals.
- ★ It promotes digital payment adoption, financial inclusion, and improved merchant payment solutions.

### **BSE Index Services Introduces Housing Finance Sectoral Benchmark**

- ★ BSE Index Services announced the launch of the BSE Housing Finance Index, a new sectoral benchmark tracking the performance of companies in the housing finance sector.
- ★ The index has a base value of 1,000 with 22 June 2015 as the base date.
- ★ It will be reconstituted semi-annually (June and December) in line with standard index review practices.
- ★ The index is designed to support investment analysis, benchmarking, and financial product development.
- ★ BSE Index Services Pvt. Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of BSE Ltd, formerly known as Asia Index Pvt. Ltd.

- ★ The index comprises 11 constituents, including LIC Housing Finance, PNB Housing Finance, Sammaan Capital, Home First Finance Company, Bajaj Housing Finance, Aptus Value Housing Finance, Can Fin Homes, Aadhar Housing Finance, AAVAS Financiers, and India Shelter Finance Corporation.
- ★ The highest weight (17.16%) is assigned to LIC Housing Finance, while the lowest weight is 3.89%, reflecting sectoral representation.

### **NBBL Adds Postal Life Insurance to Bharat Connect Insurance Biller Network**

- ★ NPCI Bharat Bill Pay Limited (NBBL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), onboarded Postal Life Insurance (PLI) as a biller under the insurance category on the Bharat Connect.
- ★ With this inclusion, the number of insurance billers on the platform has increased to 65, strengthening India's digital bill payment ecosystem.
- ★ The move enables policyholders of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) to pay renewal premiums through Bharat Connect-enabled digital platforms as well as offline agent networks.
- ★ State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest Public Sector Bank (PSB), acted as the Biller Operating Unit (BOU) to facilitate the onboarding process.
- ★ The development allows customers to access recurring insurance premium payment services through multiple digital and assisted channels across India.
- ★ Postal Life Insurance (PLI) is operated by India Post, which functions under the Department of Posts (DoP), Ministry of Communications.

### **Pay Point India Becomes First Private Fintech to Get Reserve Bank of India Centralised Payment System Membership**

- ★ Pay Point India Network, a leading fintech company, became the first private-sector fintech firm to secure membership in the Centralised Payment System (CPS) operated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ This marks a significant development as it allows a non-bank fintech company direct access to India's core payment infrastructure.
- ★ Earlier, access to CPS was limited to banks and select large institutions, including National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL).
- ★ With this membership, Pay Point gains direct access to key payment systems such as Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT).
- ★ This eliminates the need for intermediary partner banks, improving operational independence and efficiency.
- ★ The company has been assigned its own IFSC code, enabling it to maintain both a current account and settlement account directly with RBI.
- ★ Key benefits of direct CPS access include reduced transaction costs, faster fund transfers, enhanced efficiency, and improved data security.

- ★ Overall, this development represents a major shift in India's digital payments ecosystem, strengthening fintech participation in core financial infrastructure.

### **Punjab National Bank Joins Hands with Kiwi to Introduce RuPay Credit Card**

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB) entered into a strategic partnership with fintech firm Kiwi to launch a co-branded RuPay credit card named "PNB Kiwi Credit Card" integrated with Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- ★ The initiative aims to expand formal credit access, promote financial inclusion in semi-urban and rural areas, and strengthen the credit-on-UPI ecosystem.
- ★ The partnership targets nearly 180 million customers through a fully digital onboarding process, enhancing digital credit penetration in India.
- ★ The card enables credit-based payments via UPI QR codes, allowing seamless scan-and-pay transactions across millions of merchants without requiring a physical credit card.
- ★ Customers will receive cashback benefits ranging from 0.5% to 1.5% on online transactions along with zero joining and annual fees.
- ★ The product offers a completely digital and paperless onboarding process, ensuring quick, easy, and accessible credit card issuance.
- ★ Overall, the partnership strengthens India's digital payments ecosystem, expands UPI-linked credit adoption, and boosts financial inclusion and cashless economy growth.

### **RBI Revokes Banking Licence of Paytm Payments Bank Limited**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the banking licence of Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) with effect from April 24, 2026, citing serious regulatory violations.
- ★ The action was taken under Section 22(4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, effectively prohibiting PPBL from conducting any banking business under Sections 5(b) and 6.
- ★ RBI stated that PPBL's operations were detrimental to depositors' interests and public interest, and the bank failed to comply with Section 22(3)(b), 22(3)(c), and 22(3)(g) of the Act.
- ★ Key reasons for cancellation included non-compliance with KYC norms, weak internal compliance systems, and repeated regulatory violations.
- ★ RBI also noted that the general management conduct of the bank was prejudicial to depositors and public interest, and continuation of operations would not serve any useful public purpose.
- ★ The central bank confirmed that PPBL has sufficient liquidity to repay all deposits during winding up.
- ★ RBI will initiate an application for winding up of the bank before the High Court.
- ★ This marks the first-ever shutdown of a Payments Bank since the framework was introduced in 2015-16.
- ★ Following the cancellation, the number of operational payments banks in India has reduced to five: Airtel Payments Bank, India Post Payments Bank, Fino Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank, and NSDL Payments Bank.

## **Reserve Bank of India Imposes ₹80,000 Penalty on Ebix Payment Services**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a ₹80,000 penalty on Ebix Payment Services for failing to ensure proper risk categorisation of customers, a key compliance requirement.
- ★ The penalty was imposed on April 17, 2026 under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, highlighting RBI's strict enforcement of payment system regulations.
- ★ RBI also imposed a ₹80,000 fine on Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Nagari Sahakari Bank for violations under the Supervisory Action Framework (SAF).
- ★ The bank was found to have breached lending limits on advances and offered higher deposit interest rates than State Bank of India, violating regulatory directives.
- ★ Jio Financial Services and Allianz Form 50:50 Joint Venture for Insurance Business.
- ★ Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL) signed a binding agreement to form a 50:50 Joint Venture (JV) with Allianz Europe B.V., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Allianz, for general insurance and health insurance business in India.
- ★ The collaboration was initially announced in July 2025, when both firms signed a non-binding term sheet to explore equal joint ventures in general and life insurance
- ★ The partnership aims to combine JFSL's digital distribution network and customer reach with Allianz's global underwriting and risk management expertise.
- ★ The objective is to tap into India's underpenetrated insurance market, enhancing insurance penetration and financial inclusion.
- ★ As part of the broader collaboration, JFSL and Allianz have also established Allianz Jio Reinsurance Limited, a 50:50 JV for reinsurance services in India.

## **RBI Relaxes Forex Norms, Permits Related-Party Hedging Within USD 100 Million Exposure Cap**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) withdrew some restrictions on forex dealers in offshore Non-Deliverable Forward (NDF) markets to manage rupee volatility.
- ★ On 27 March 2026, RBI imposed an initial restriction by capping banks' net open positions in offshore derivatives at USD 100 million.
- ★ On 1 April 2026, RBI further tightened norms by banning arbitrage trades and prohibiting banks from offering NDFs to corporate clients.
- ★ These measures were aimed at curbing one-sided positioning in the Indian Rupee and reducing speculative flows in the foreign exchange market.
- ★ The overall objective was to ensure currency stability, prevent excessive volatility, and maintain orderly functioning of forex markets.

## **CBIC Removes ₹10 Lakh Cap on Courier Exports**

- ★ The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has removed the ₹10 lakh value cap on courier export consignments, effective from April 1, 2026, to boost India's e-commerce exports and ease of doing business.

- ★ The reform is part of broader government measures to streamline courier-based imports and exports, aimed at improving logistics efficiency and enhancing India's global trade competitiveness.
- ★ Earlier, exporters using courier mode were restricted to ₹10 lakh per shipment, which limited scalability for MSMEs, start-ups, artisans, and online sellers engaged in e-commerce exports.
- ★ As part of the reforms, CBIC has introduced a Return to Origin (RTO) mechanism, under which uncleared or unclaimed imported goods (after 15 days) can be sent back to the origin country, reducing congestion at courier terminals.
- ★ The RTO facility applies only to goods that are not prohibited, restricted, or under enforcement hold, and is designed to improve clearance efficiency at International Courier Terminals.
- ★ CBIC has also simplified the re-import process for returned or rejected goods by adopting a risk-based assessment approach instead of consignment-wise verification, improving processing speed.
- ★ A dedicated return module has been developed in the Express Cargo Clearance System to facilitate smoother handling of e-commerce-related returns and cross-border courier shipments.
- ★ The reforms are expected to reduce dwell time, lower logistics costs, and significantly benefit exporters, logistics operators, MSMEs, and the wider e-commerce ecosystem.
- ★ These changes align with the Union Budget 2026–27 announcement and reflect the Government of India's focus on strengthening India's e-commerce export ecosystem and improving global trade competitiveness.

### **PhonePe Becomes First Unified Payments Interface App to Cross 10 Billion Monthly Transactions in March 2026**

- ★ PhonePe became the first Unified Payments Interface (UPI) app to cross 10 billion monthly transactions, recording 10.50 billion transactions in March 2026, marking a major milestone in India's digital payments ecosystem.
- ★ It held a dominant 46.4% share by volume and 49.1% share by value, processing transactions worth ₹14.48 lakh crore, as per data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- ★ Overall, UPI recorded a historic 22.64 billion transactions worth ₹29.53 lakh crore in March 2026, highlighting strong growth in India's real-time digital payment system.
- ★ Google Pay remained the second-largest UPI player, processing 7.53 billion transactions (~33% share), while nearing ₹10 lakh crore monthly transaction value.
- ★ Paytm ranked third with 1.77 billion transactions (~7.8% share), significantly behind the top two dominant platforms.
- ★ NPCI has set a policy objective to ensure that no single UPI app exceeds 30% market share, but this cap has not yet been enforced due to operational challenges.
- ★ The total UPI transaction value crossed ₹29.6 lakh crore in March, reflecting the continued expansion of India's cashless economy and fintech adoption.
- ★ PhonePe and Google Pay together dominate the market with approximately 45% and 33% share respectively, reinforcing a duopoly structure in UPI ecosystem.

## **Government Sets Up Panel Led by State Bank of India Chairman to Evaluate Risks from AI Platform Mythos**

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) has constituted a high-level panel under the Chairmanship of C.S. Setty, to assess risks arising from advanced AI platform “Anthropic’s Mythos” and recommend cybersecurity mitigation measures.
- ★ The decision was taken in a high-level meeting co-chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Ashwini Vaishnaw, highlighting inter-ministerial co-ordination on AI risk governance.
- ★ The panel will evaluate potential threats from AI systems to the banking and financial sector and recommend policy, regulatory, and technological safeguards.
- ★ The Indian Banks Association (IBA) has been directed to develop a co-ordinated response mechanism to address AI-driven cybersecurity threats across banks.
- ★ Banks have been mandated to report cyber incidents immediately to Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) for early detection, rapid response, and threat mitigation.
- ★ The initiative aims to strengthen cyber resilience, real-time threat intelligence sharing, and overall financial system security in India.
- ★ Mythos AI, part of the Anthropic Claude family, represents an advanced AI model with strong capabilities in cybersecurity and autonomous vulnerability detection.
- ★ It can identify software vulnerabilities and convert them into working cyber exploits at unprecedented speed, raising global cybersecurity concerns.
- ★ The model has a dual-use nature, meaning it can be used for both strengthening cyber defence and enabling large-scale cyberattacks if misused.
- ★ Its agentic behaviour allows it to perform multi-step autonomous cyber operations, marking a shift from AI as a tool to AI as an independent actor, increasing systemic risk in digital infrastructure.
- ★ The government will engage with banks and technology experts to assess risks and explore defensive applications of AI for cybersecurity strengthening.

## **ECONOMY**

### **ADB Revises India’s FY27 GDP Growth Forecast upward to 6.9% from 6.5%**

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) released its latest Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2026 report, titled “The Middle East Conflict Challenges Resilience in Asia and the Pacific”.
- ★ The report raised India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth forecast for FY2026–27 (FY27) to 6.9%, up from the earlier estimate of 6.5%, indicating stronger-than-expected economic performance.
- ★ The revised projection is still lower than the 7.6% growth estimated for FY2025–26 (FY26).
- ★ India’s growth outlook is driven by robust private consumption, rising real incomes, higher investment activity, supportive policies, and recent trade agreements.

- ★ For FY2028, India's economy is projected to grow at 7.3%, supported by government salary revisions, pensions, strong public investment, and favourable external conditions.
- ★ Inflation in India is expected to rise from 2.1% in FY26 to 4.5% in FY27, driven by food price rebound, higher global crude oil prices, and currency weakness.
- ★ Inflation is projected to ease to 4% in FY28, indicating improvement in supply-side conditions.
- ★ The developing Asia and Pacific region is expected to grow at 5.1% in CY2026 and CY2027, slightly lower than 5.4% in CY2025, showing moderation in regional growth momentum.

### **India's Non-Life Insurance Premiums Rise 9.2% in FY26, Led by Strong Growth in Health Insurance Segment**

- ★ The Gross Direct Premium (GDP) underwritten by non-life insurers in India grew by 9.20% in FY26, reaching ₹3.35 lakh crore, compared to ₹3.07 lakh crore in the previous financial year.
- ★ As per IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India), the total non-life insurance premium collection stood at ₹3,35,918 crore in FY26, up from ₹3,07,612 crore in FY25.
- ★ The general insurance segment recorded a growth of 7.86%, reaching ₹2,78,376 crore, compared to ₹2,58,090 crore in the previous fiscal year.
- ★ The standalone private health insurers segment saw a sharp rise of 19.8%, with premiums increasing to ₹45,865 crore, driven by higher demand for health coverage and policy expansion.
- ★ The growth in health insurance premiums was supported by the GST waiver on health insurance, which boosted affordability and demand.
- ★ Specialised PSU insurers registered a growth of 5.11%, with premium collection rising to ₹11,676 crore from ₹11,108 crore.
- ★ Overall, the data reflects strong growth in the Indian non-life insurance sector, driven by health insurance expansion, regulatory support, and rising awareness of financial protection.

### **China Becomes India's Largest Trading Partner in FY26**

- ★ China emerged as India's largest trading partner in Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26), with total bilateral trade reaching USD 151.1 billion, according to Government of India (GoI).
- ★ India's trade deficit with China widened significantly to USD 112.16 billion, reflecting a sharp imbalance in bilateral trade.
- ★ China has replaced the United States of America (USA) as India's largest trading partner after the US held the position for four consecutive years (till FY25).
- ★ India's exports to China rose sharply by 36.66% to USD 19.47 billion, indicating improved outbound shipments.
- ★ India's imports from China increased by 16% to USD 131.63 billion, contributing to the widening trade deficit.
- ★ The trade deficit with China touched an all-time high of around USD 112.6 billion in FY26, compared to USD 99.2 billion in FY25.
- ★ India's trade with the United States grew marginally, with exports rising 0.92% to USD 87.3 billion, while imports increased 15.95% to USD 52.9 billion.

- ★ The trade surplus with the USA declined to USD 34.4 billion in FY26 from USD 40.89 billion in FY25.
- ★ India recorded negative export growth with key partners including the Netherlands, UK, Singapore, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Australia, France, South Africa, and Malaysia.
- ★ India recorded positive export growth with countries such as the UAE, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nepal, Brazil, Spain, Belgium, and Vietnam.
- ★ India's imports declined from countries including Russia, Iraq, Indonesia, Australia, Qatar, and Taiwan.
- ★ India's imports increased from countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Thailand, and Malaysia.

### **UN Report Projects India's Economy to Expand 6.4% in CY 2026 and 6.6% in CY27**

- ★ The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) released its report titled "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2026: Socioeconomic Prosperity Amid the Transition to an Environmentally Sustainable Economy".
- ★ The report projected India's economy to grow by 6.4% in Calendar Year 2026 (CY26) and 6.6% in CY27.
- ★ According to the survey, the South and South-West Asia region recorded 5.4% growth in CY25, compared to 5.2% in CY24.
- ★ The higher regional growth was mainly attributed to robust economic performance of India.
- ★ The report estimated India's inflation at 4.4% in CY26 and 4.3% in CY27.
- ★ In Greenfield Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), India attracted USD 50 billion, ranking among the top destinations in the first three quarters of CY26.
- ★ Other leading countries for greenfield FDI were Australia (USD 30 billion), Republic of Korea (USD 25 billion), and Kazakhstan (USD 21 billion).
- ★ The survey noted that nearly 40% of remittances in India and the Philippines are used for essential household spending, including medical expenses.
- ★ India was identified as the world's largest remittance recipient in 2024.
- ★ The report warned that India could face a significant remittance loss due to the United States of America imposing a 1% tax on all remittances from January 2026.

### **India's Textile Exports Rise 2.1% to ₹3.16 Trillion in FY26 Despite US Tariff Pressures**

- ★ India's Textile sector demonstrated resilience in FY 2025–26, with total exports (including handicrafts) rising 2.1% to ₹3.16 lakh crore, reflecting steady global demand and competitiveness.
- ★ Ready-Made Garments (RMG) remained the largest export segment, growing 2.9% to ₹1.39 lakh crore, while man-made textiles grew 3.6% and cotton textiles remained largely stable (0.4%).
- ★ Among value-added segments, handicrafts (excluding carpets) recorded the highest growth of 6.1%, highlighting rising demand for artisanal and niche products.

- ★ Strong export growth was seen in key markets including the UAE (22.3%), UK (7.8%), Germany (9.9%), Spain (15.5%), Japan (20.6%), Egypt (38.3%), Nigeria (21.4%), Senegal (54.4%), and Sudan (205.6%), indicating global diversification of exports.
- ★ Textile exports expanded across 120+ destinations (April 2025–Feb 2026), showing broad-based geographical growth.
- ★ India's expanding Free Trade Agreement network (FTAs) with EFTA, UK, Oman, New Zealand, and EU is expected to improve market access, reduce tariffs, and strengthen global value chain integration.
- ★ Despite facing high US tariffs, including a peak of 50% under the reciprocal tariff regime, the sector maintained positive export growth momentum.
- ★ The performance reflects continued global demand for Indian textile products and strong sectoral competitiveness across product categories.

### **United Nations Projects India's Economic Growth at 6.4%**

- ★ The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has revised India's GDP growth forecast for 2026 downward to 6.4%, from the earlier estimate of 6.6%, citing rising global uncertainties.
- ★ India's growth is projected at 7.4% in 2025 and 6.6% in 2027, indicating a moderation in near-term growth momentum due to external pressures.
- ★ The report estimates India's inflation at 4.4% in 2026, reflecting rising price pressures and potential monetary tightening.
- ★ Economic activity in India slowed in the second half of 2025 as exports to the United States fell by 25% following 50% tariffs imposed in August 2025.
- ★ Despite global challenges, India remains a key driver of regional growth in South and South-West Asia, which expanded by 5.4% in 2025.
- ★ The report highlights India's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme as a major policy tool to boost domestic manufacturing in sectors such as solar modules, batteries, and green hydrogen.
- ★ India remained among the top destinations for greenfield FDI in Asia-Pacific, attracting around USD 50 billion in announced investments.
- ★ However, FDI inflows to developing Asia-Pacific economies declined by 2% in 2025, amid trade tensions and geopolitical uncertainty.
- ★ India is also the world's largest remittance recipient (USD 137 billion in 2024) and may face impact due to the 1% US tax on remittances from January 2026.
- ★ The country accounts for around 1.3 million green jobs globally, highlighting its role in the renewable energy and green employment sector.

## BUSINESS NEWS

### **KreditBee Enters Unicorn Club with USD 280 Million Pre-IPO Funding Round**

- ★ KreditBee has entered the unicorn club after raising USD 280 million in a Series E funding round, achieving a post-money valuation of USD 1.5 billion ahead of its planned Initial Public Offering (IPO).
- ★ With this milestone, KreditBee becomes the 3<sup>rd</sup> unicorn of 2026, after Juspay (January 2026) and Neysa (February 2026).
- ★ The funding round was backed by key investors including Motilal Oswal Alternates, Hornbill Capital, and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG)-backed Dragon Fund, along with participation from Advent International and Premji Invest.
- ★ The funds will be used to diversify lending portfolio, strengthen technology infrastructure, and scale Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven risk assessment systems, enabling personalised financial product offerings.
- ★ The capital will also help strengthen the lending book and balance sheet as the company prepares for its IPO, expected either by end of 2026 or early 2027, depending on market conditions.
- ★ Since inception, KreditBee has disbursed over USD 6 billion in loans, covering personal loans, business credit, real estate, and auto lending segments.
- ★ The company also offers credit score services, gold investment options, and financial calculators, expanding its presence in the digital financial services ecosystem.
- ★ This makes KreditBee the second Indian fintech unicorn of 2026, following Juspay, which reached a USD 1.2 billion valuation after a USD 50 million funding round.

### **State Bank of India Overtakes ICICI Bank in Market Capitalisation Ranking**

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) has overtaken ICICI Bank to become the 2<sup>nd</sup>-largest bank by market capitalisation in India.
- ★ SBI's market capitalisation reached approximately ₹9.60 trillion, surpassing ICICI Bank's ~₹9.57 trillion, after a gap of over 6 years.
- ★ The rise was supported by a ~7% surge in SBI's stock price, reaching an all-time high.
- ★ The rally reflects investor re-rating of PSU banks, with perception shifting towards profitability, efficiency, and stability.
- ★ HDFC Bank retained its position as India's most valuable bank, despite a 26.1% decline in market cap to ₹11,261 billion.
- ★ The decline in HDFC Bank's valuation was partly due to stock pressure following the resignation of Chairman Atanu Chakraborty.
- ★ According to S&P Global Market Intelligence, SBI's improved ranking reflects a relatively stable outlook compared to peers.
- ★ During the January–March quarter, 18 out of the top 20 banks witnessed a decline in market capitalisation.

- ★ The decline was driven by a broad-based sell-off amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.
- ★ Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) turned net sellers, offloading around \$10.8 billion worth of Indian equities in March.
- ★ Market sentiment was impacted by global uncertainties, including tensions involving the United States and Iran.

## DEFENCE

### Indian Navy Sail Training Ship INS Sudarshini Reaches Sète During Lokayan-26 Transoceanic Expedition

- ★ The Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini arrived at the historic port city of Sète as part of the transoceanic expedition Lokayan-26.
- ★ The visit of INS Sudarshini marks a significant milestone in its journey and highlights India's commitment to maritime co-operation and cultural diplomacy.
- ★ During its stay, INS Sudarshini will participate in the 'Escale à Sète' festival, one of Europe's most prestigious gatherings of traditional tall ships and seafaring communities.
- ★ The Escale à Sète festival provides a global platform to showcase India's maritime heritage and promote international camaraderie.
- ★ The participation also aims to strengthen naval partnerships and maritime co-operation across nations.
- ★ Prior to reaching Sète, INS Sudarshini completed port calls at Salalah (Oman), Safaga and Alexandria (Egypt), and Valletta (Malta).
- ★ The ship covered a distance of approximately 5,500 nautical miles during its voyage.
- ★ Throughout the expedition, INS Sudarshini served as a "Floating Ambassador" of India.

### DAC Approves ₹2.38 Lakh Crore Proposals to Boost Military Capabilities

- ★ The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Rajnath Singh granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for proposals worth ₹2.38 lakh crore.
- ★ For the Indian Army, approvals were given for the Air Defence Tracked System, Armoured Piercing Tank Ammunition, High Capacity Radio Relay, Dhanush Gun System, and Runway Independent Aerial Surveillance System.
- ★ The Air Defence Tracked System will provide real-time air defence control and reporting capability, enhancing operational awareness.
- ★ The High Capacity Radio Relay will ensure reliable and fail-proof communication systems for the Army.
- ★ The Dhanush Gun System will improve long-range artillery capability with enhanced lethality and accuracy across all terrains.

- ★ The Runway Independent Aerial Surveillance System will strengthen surveillance capabilities of Army units.
- ★ The Armoured Piercing Tank Ammunition will enhance the lethality of anti-tank operations.
- ★ For the Indian Air Force, approvals were granted for Medium Transport Aircraft, S-400 Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile System, Remotely Piloted Strike Aircraft, and overhaul of Su-30 aero engine aggregates.
- ★ The Medium Transport Aircraft will replace AN-32 and IL-76 fleets, meeting strategic, tactical, and operational airlift.
- ★ The S-400 Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile System will counter enemy long-range air threats targeting vital areas.
- ★ The Remotely Piloted Strike Aircraft will enable offensive counter operations, co-ordinated air operations, and stealth Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR).

### **Indigenously Built Stealth Frigate 'Dunagiri' Handed Over To Indian Navy**

- ★ INS Dunagiri (Yard 3023), the fifth ship of Nilgiri Class (Project 17A), was delivered to the Indian Navy at GRSE, Kolkata.
- ★ It is the second Project 17A frigate built at Garden Reach Shipbuilding and Engineers Ltd (GRSE), marking a milestone in self-reliance (Aatmanirbharta) in warship construction.
- ★ Project 17A frigates are advanced multi-mission warships designed to address current and future maritime security challenges.
- ★ The new Dunagiri is a reincarnation of the earlier INS Dunagiri (Leander-class frigate), which served from 05 May 1977 to 10 October 2010 (33 years of service).
- ★ The ship represents a quantum leap in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation, and survivability.
- ★ It was designed by the Warship Design Bureau (WDB) and overseen by the Warship Overseeing Team (Kolkata), reflecting indigenous design excellence.
- ★ The frigate is built using the Integrated Construction philosophy, ensuring timely delivery and efficiency.
- ★ Project 17A ships are equipped with advanced weapons and sensors, superior to the earlier P17 (Shivalik-class) frigates.
- ★ The propulsion system is based on Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) configuration with Controllable Pitch Propellers (CPP) and an Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS).
- ★ The weapon suite includes BrahMos Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSM), MFSTAR radar, MRSAM air defence system, 76 mm Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM), and close-in weapon systems (30 mm and 12.7 mm) along with torpedoes and rockets for anti-submarine warfare.
- ★ Dunagiri is the fifth P17A ship delivered in the last 16 months, indicating accelerated naval shipbuilding capability.

### **Fourth Survey Vessel (Large) 'Sanshodhak' handed over to Indian Navy**

- ★ INS Sanshodhak (Yard 3028), the last Survey Vessel (Large) ship, was delivered to the Indian Navy at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata.
- ★ The vessel was designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB), highlighting indigenous warship design capability.
- ★ The contract for four Survey Vessel (Large) ships was signed on 30 October 2018.
- ★ The earlier ships of the class include INS Sandhayak (03 Feb 2024), INS Nirdeshak (18 Dec 2024), and INS Ikshak (06 Nov 2025).
- ★ The SVL ships are built as per Indian Register of Shipping classification rules, ensuring high safety and quality standards.
- ★ INS Sanshodhak is capable of full-scale coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys, including mapping harbour approaches and navigational channels.
- ★ The ship also performs oceanographic and geophysical data collection for both defence and civil applications.
- ★ The vessel has a displacement of about 3,400 tons and an overall length of 110 meters, making it a large survey platform.
- ★ It is equipped with advanced hydrographic systems such as Data Acquisition and Processing System, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), DGPS positioning system, and Digital Side Scan Sonar.
- ★ Powered by two diesel engines, the ship can achieve speeds of over 18 knots.
- ★ The keel was laid in June 2022 and the ship was launched in June 2023, followed by extensive harbour and sea trials before delivery.
- ★ The ship has an indigenous content of over 80%, reflecting strong progress in Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance in defence production).
- ★ The project involved multiple stakeholders, MSMEs, and Indian industries, boosting the domestic defence ecosystem.
- ★ The delivery of INS Sanshodhak enhances India's maritime survey capability and strengthens its presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

### **Ministry of Defence Signs ₹1,950 Crore Deal with Bharat Electronics Limited**

- ★ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a capital acquisition contract worth ₹1,950 crore with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of two Mountain Radar systems for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- ★ The contract was signed in New Delhi under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured – IDDM) category, promoting Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India
- ★ The Mountain Radar system has been indigenously designed and developed by the Electronics and Radar Development Establishment (LRDE) of DRDO and will be manufactured by BEL.
- ★ The system is designed for high-altitude terrain operations, overcoming line-of-sight limitations and harsh weather conditions.
- ★ It is capable of detecting fighter aircraft, drones, and cruise missiles.

- ★ The radars will enhance border surveillance, early warning capability, situational awareness, and response time within the Integrated Air Defence Network.
- ★ The system will be integrated into the Integrated Air Command, Control and Communication System (IACCCS).
- ★ The procurement will strengthen India's air defence capabilities and improve national security.
- ★ The project will reduce dependence on foreign defence equipment and support indigenous manufacturing.
- ★ It will also benefit MSMEs, promote employment generation, and encourage technological advancement in the defence sector.

### **GSL Achieves Key Naval Milestones with INS Shachi Launch**

- ★ Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) achieved a major milestone with the ceremonial launch of INS Shachi (Yard 1280) for the Indian Navy and the delivery of ICGS Achal (Yard 1274) to the Indian Coast Guard.
- ★ INS Shachi is part of the Navy's Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) programme, launched in the presence of Shagun Sobti, Vice Admiral Tarun, V K Parmar, and senior naval officials.
- ★ The launch of INS Shachi and delivery of ICGS Achal marks a key step in strengthening indigenous naval capabilities and enhancing coastal surveillance and maritime security.
- ★ Chairman and Managing Director Shri Brajesh Kumar Upadhyay highlighted that GSL has launched 14 vessels in the last 600 days, demonstrating strong execution capability and growing production capacity.
- ★ Both vessels showcase high indigenous content: over 65% in ICGS Achal and around 76% in INS Shachi, supporting Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India
- ★ This achievement reinforces GSL's role as a key contributor to India's defence shipbuilding and maritime strength.

### **Border Roads Organisation Project Chetak Marks its 47<sup>th</sup> Raising Day**

- ★ Project Chetak of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) celebrated its 47<sup>th</sup> Raising Day at Bikaner, Rajasthan on April 4, 2026.
- ★ The project was raised in 1980 and has completed over four decades of dedicated service in the strategically important western sector.
- ★ Project Chetak plays a crucial role in infrastructure development and maintenance across Rajasthan, Punjab, and northern Gujarat, enhancing border connectivity and national security.
- ★ With the motto 'Chetak ka Prayas, Desh ka Vikas', it is one of the largest BRO projects in terms of geographical coverage.
- ★ The project covers over 4,000 km of road network and 214 km of Ditch Cum Bund, supporting defence and border management.
- ★ It provides critical feeder roads to the International Border, aiding the Defence Forces in strategic mobility.

- ★ Continuous efforts are underway to upgrade these roads to National Highway Double Lane specifications, improving infrastructure standards and operational readiness.

## **INS Sunayna Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR Mission Boosts Maritime Co-operation in IOR**

- ★ Amid escalating tensions in West Asia and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, the Indian Navy launched a major maritime initiative to strengthen regional security and maritime co-operation.
- ★ The ship INS Sunayna has been flagged off as the Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR from Mumbai, reflecting India's commitment to a free, open, and stable Indian Ocean Region.
- ★ The mission was flagged off by Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth in the presence of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi.
- ★ The initiative highlights India's focus on freedom of navigation and safeguarding critical sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) amid rising geopolitical tensions.
- ★ The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is witnessing increasing maritime competition, extending beyond oil and energy resources to include rare earth elements, seabed minerals, fishing resources, and data infrastructure.
- ★ The region is facing growing security challenges such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, piracy, armed robbery at sea, and narco-trafficking.
- ★ Around 3,700 maritime incidents were reported in the region last year, while narcotics seizures exceeded \$1 billion in 2025, indicating rising maritime threats.
- ★ The IOS SAGAR mission includes participation from personnel of 16 foreign countries, highlighting strong multilateral maritime co-operation.
- ★ The ship will undertake port calls at Colombo, Phuket, Jakarta, Singapore, Chittagong, Yangon, and Male, before concluding at Kochi.
- ★ The mission focuses on capacity building and training, including seamanship, navigation, communication, maritime safety, firefighting, damage control, and VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seizure) operations.
- ★ The initiative strengthens India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region and promotes maritime stability and regional partnership under SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

## **INS Trikand Reaches Dar-Es-Salaam During Deployment in South West Indian Ocean Region**

- ★ INS Trikand, a frontline guided missile frigate of the Indian Navy, arrived at Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania as part of its deployment in the South West Indian Ocean Region.
- ★ The visit aims to strengthen maritime co-operation and enhance bilateral ties between India and Tanzania.
- ★ Engagements include professional interactions and joint training exercises with the Tanzania Navy to improve interoperability and operational co-ordination.
- ★ The visit also features social and community engagements such as friendly sports events, yoga sessions, and a cultural evening onboard to promote people-to-people connections.

- ★ Critical stores transported from India will be handed over during the port call, supporting logistical co-operation.
- ★ Captain Sachin Kulkarni, Commanding Officer of INS Trikand, will meet senior officials of the Tanzania People's Defence Forces and Government of Tanzania.
- ★ The port visit aligns with India's vision of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), promoting regional maritime security and co-operation.

### **Indian Army Releases Technology Roadmap for Unmanned Aerial Systems and Loitering Munitions in New Delhi**

- ★ The Indian Army (IA) has unveiled the 'Technology Roadmap for Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and Loitering Munitions' to strengthen India's self-reliant drone ecosystem and enhance modern warfare capabilities.
- ★ The 50-page strategic document was released by Rahul R Singh, Deputy Chief of the Army Staff (Capability Development & Sustenance), at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Delhi.
- ★ The purpose of the roadmap is to provide long-term clarity on UAS requirements, align operational needs with technological development, and guide industry, academia, and Research and Development (R&D) investments toward priority areas.
- ★ The scope of the roadmap covers 30 types of UAS and loitering munitions, translating into nearly 80 variants to meet diverse operational needs.
- ★ The roadmap is divided into five key categories: Surveillance, Loitering Munitions, Air Defence UAS, Special Role UAS, and Logistics UAS.
- ★ It incorporates advanced technologies such as High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE), Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE), swarm drones, First Person View (FPV) drones, anti-drone systems, Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUM-T), and 'mother-child drone' concepts.

### **Indian Army Team Leaves for India–Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise 'Cyclone'**

- ★ The Indian Army contingent has departed for Egypt to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the India–Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise 'Cyclone-IV'.
- ★ The exercise is scheduled to be conducted at Anshas from 09 to 17 April 2026, marking an important step in bilateral defence co-operation.
- ★ The Indian contingent comprises 25 personnel from Special Forces units, who will train alongside Egyptian counterparts in a realistic operational environment.
- ★ Exercise Cyclone-IV is a continuation of the growing military co-operation between India and Egypt, following the successful previous edition held in India.
- ★ The objective of the exercise is to enhance joint mission planning capabilities and improve interoperability through the exchange of best practices in special operations.
- ★ The training includes special operational tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in desert and semi-desert terrain, reflecting real-world combat scenarios.
- ★ The exercise will also promote mutual exchange of professional expertise, strengthen camaraderie, and deepen understanding of military traditions and cultures of both nations.

- ★ Bilateral military exercises like Cyclone-IV are a key component of India–Egypt defence ties, helping to build mutual trust and strengthen armed forces co-operation.

### **Indian Army Demonstrates Apache Strike Capabilities During Exercise Brahmastra**

- ★ The Indian Army conducted Exercise Brahmastra at the Pokhran Field Firing Range, showcasing advanced combat capabilities.
- ★ The exercise highlighted the growing focus on integration of air power with ground operations in modern warfare.
- ★ A key highlight was the deployment of AH-64E Apache helicopters, demonstrating precision strike capabilities in a simulated battlefield.
- ★ The Apache helicopters, known as “tanks in the air”, conducted live firing exercises using AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, rockets, and onboard guns.
- ★ The helicopters operated at low altitudes in desert terrain, executing accurate and lethal target engagements.
- ★ The exercise emphasised close air support (CAS) and air-land integration, reflecting a shift towards network-centric warfare.
- ★ The drill addressed challenges in high-threat environments, including drones, small arms fire, and shoulder-fired missiles.
- ★ The Army also showcased the role of HAL Rudra helicopters in strengthening combat capabilities.
- ★ Extensive simulator training and mission planning contributed to the successful execution of the exercise.
- ★ The exercise validated the Army’s preparedness for future conflicts and evolving warfare scenarios.
- ★ Use of advanced sensors, fire control systems, and real-time data links enabled rapid target detection and engagement.
- ★ Integration of platforms like Apache, Prachand, and Rudra significantly enhances combat effectiveness and operational readiness.

### **Indian Army Contingent Leaves For India–Uzbekistan Joint Military Exercise DUSTLIK**

- ★ The Indian Army contingent has departed for the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the India–Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK, aimed at strengthening bilateral defence co-operation.
- ★ The exercise will be conducted at the Gurumsaray Field Training Area, Namangan, Uzbekistan, from 12 to 25 April 2026.
- ★ Exercise DUSTLIK is a yearly joint military exercise, conducted alternatively in India and Uzbekistan.
- ★ The previous (6<sup>th</sup> edition) was held at the Foreign Training Node, Aundh (Pune), India in April 2025.
- ★ The Indian Armed Forces contingent (60 personnel) includes 45 personnel from the Indian Army (mainly from a Battalion of the MAHAR Regiment) and 15 personnel from the Indian Air Force.

- ★ The Uzbekistan Armed Forces contingent also comprises approximately 60 personnel from the Uzbekistan Army and Air Force.
- ★ The aim of Exercise DUSTLIK is to enhance military co-operation and develop combined capabilities for joint operations in semi-mountainous terrain.
- ★ The exercise focuses on high physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills, and special arms skills.
- ★ It aims to establish a unified operational algorithm between command-and-control structures of both countries for planning and execution of joint operations.
- ★ Key operational activities include land navigation, strike missions on enemy bases, and seizure of enemy-held areas.
- ★ The exercise includes a 48-hour validation exercise to test tactical drills for joint special operations, focusing on neutralisation of unlawful armed groups.
- ★ It enhances interoperability, operational synergy, and joint command-and-control co-ordination between both contingents.
- ★ It also promotes bonhomie, camaraderie, and defence co-operation between the armed forces of India and Uzbekistan.
- ★ The first edition of Exercise DUSTLIK was held in November 2019 at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

### **Indian Army Launches Operation Him Setu**

- ★ The Indian Army Trishakti Corps launched Operation Him Setu to rescue and evacuate stranded tourists in North Sikkim (Lachen region).
- ★ The operation was triggered after a major landslide disrupted road connectivity between Lachen and Chungthang, severely affecting regional mobility.
- ★ The mission is being carried out under the Eastern Command of the Indian Army in extreme weather conditions with heavy snowfall.
- ★ The Army has opened critical passes and alternate routes to support safe evacuation of tourists.
- ★ The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is working in close co-ordination with the Army for road clearance, snow removal, and restoration of connectivity.
- ★ The operation is being executed in phases, ensuring systematic and safe evacuation of affected individuals.
- ★ So far, 135 tourists have been safely evacuated, along with 32 light vehicles and 10 motorcycles.

### **LPG Tanker Jag Vikram Becomes First India-Flagged Vessel to Cross Strait of Hormuz**

- ★ The India-flagged LPG tanker Jag Vikram became the first Indian vessel to transit the Strait of Hormuz after the Iran–Israel ceasefire, marking a cautious resumption of maritime movement.
- ★ The transit through the Strait of Hormuz is significant as it carries around one-fifth of global oil and gas trade, making it a crucial global energy chokepoint.

- ★ Jag Vikram is the 9<sup>th</sup> Indian vessel to exit the Persian Gulf since early March, while around 15 Indian-flagged ships remain stranded awaiting safe passage.
- ★ The tanker is carrying approximately 20,000–20,400 tonnes of LPG and is expected to reach Mumbai, indicating restoration of India’s energy supply routes.
- ★ The vessel is owned by the Great Eastern Shipping Company, Mumbai, and has a deadweight capacity of over 26,000 tonnes.
- ★ Earlier, around 28 India-flagged vessels were stranded in the region during the West Asia conflict, including ships on both sides of the Strait.
- ★ At least 426 tankers, 34 LPG carriers, and 19 LNG vessels remain in the region, highlighting major disruption in global maritime trade.
- ★ India is the world’s 3<sup>rd</sup> largest energy consumer and 4<sup>th</sup> largest gas user, importing about 88% crude oil, 50% natural gas, and 60% LPG
- ★ A major share of imports – about 50% crude oil, 40% gas, and 85–90% LPG – comes from Gulf countries via the Strait of Hormuz.

### **Indian Army Launches ‘Radio Sikkim Sundari’ 88.4 FM**

- ★ The Indian Army (IA) Trishakti Corps launched ‘Radio Sikkim Sundari’ (88.4 FM) in East Sikkim near the India–China border, marking the first border village community radio station in Sikkim.
- ★ The initiative is aimed at strengthening last-mile connectivity and community engagement in border regions under the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP).
- ★ The station is powered by Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) and solar backup systems, ensuring continuous and reliable broadcasting services.
- ★ It is equipped with a dedicated encoder system, enabling online streaming via the Google Play Store application, expanding its digital reach.
- ★ The radio station promotes socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and youth empowerment in border areas.
- ★ It broadcasts programmes focused on agriculture, health, education, and community awareness, supporting grassroots development.
- ★ The initiative strengthens the Indian Army’s role in nation-building and border area development beyond traditional defence responsibilities.
- ★ Similar Indian Army community radio initiatives include Radio Sangam (88.8 FM) in Rajouri (J&K), Ibex Tarana (88.4 FM) in Jyotirmath (Uttarakhand), and high-altitude radio stations in Drass and Kharu (Ladakh).

### **Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR – INS Sunayna Departs Phuket**

- ★ The Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR – INS Sunayna departed Phuket, Thailand after completing a three-day Operational Turnaround (OTR).
- ★ This marked the successful completion of its second port call during the ongoing IOS SAGAR deployment.

- ★ During the visit, IOS SAGAR conducted professional, strategic, and cultural engagements with the Royal Thai Navy.
- ★ These engagements significantly strengthened bilateral naval co-operation between India and Thailand.
- ★ The Commanding Officer, Commander Siddharth Chaudhary, held a meeting with Rear Admiral Sathaporn Wajarat, Chief of Staff, Third Naval Area Command (RTN).
- ★ The interaction reaffirmed a shared commitment to maritime co-operation and regional security.
- ★ Crew exchanges included a friendly football match and a joint Yoga session, promoting camaraderie and people-to-people connect.
- ★ A formal deck reception onboard INS Sunayna facilitated discussions on the IOS SAGAR mission and maritime co-operation.
- ★ The ship was also opened to visitors, strengthening public engagement and cultural diplomacy.
- ★ A Passage Exercise (PASSEX) was conducted with HTMS Klongyai, demonstrating operational interoperability.
- ★ The exercise included communication drills and formation manoeuvres, showcasing a “plug-and-play” capability between navies.
- ★ The visit aligns with India’s MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
- ★ IOS SAGAR has now proceeded to Jakarta, Indonesia, for its next port of call.

### **Ministry of Defence Signs ₹975 Crore Deal for TRAWL System**

- ★ The Ministry of Defence signed contracts with Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Electro Pneumatics and Hydraulics (India) Private Limited for procurement of TRAWL Assembly for T-72/T-90 Tanks worth approximately ₹975 crore.
- ★ The contracts were signed in the presence of Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh in New Delhi on 21 April 2026.
- ★ The TRAWL Assembly is a critical system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ★ It will significantly enhance the minefield breaching capability of the Indian Army.
- ★ The system enables creation of Vehicle Safe Lanes through anti-tank minefields with proximity magnetic fuses, improving operational effectiveness.
- ★ The procurement is under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured).
- ★ The project supports the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat by promoting indigenous defence manufacturing.
- ★ It is expected to generate significant direct and indirect employment, especially in the MSME sector through component manufacturing.
- ★ The initiative contributes to the broader goal of modernising India’s defence infrastructure and strengthening self-reliance in defence production.

- ★ Earlier defence procurements under similar categories include contracts for Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH Mk-II) for the Indian Coast Guard and Shtil surface-to-air missiles for the Indian Navy.
- ★ Another major contract included the acquisition of Dornier 228 Aircraft from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- ★ These initiatives reinforce India's commitment to Make in India and strengthen maritime security capabilities.

### **Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh Launches Robotic Orthopaedic System and Maternity Operation Theatre**

- ★ Rajesh Kumar Singh (Defence Secretary) inaugurated the Robotic Orthopaedic System and Maternity Operation Theatre at the Cantonment General Hospital on 23 April 2026.
- ★ The event was attended by Shobha Gupta (Director General, Defence Estates) along with other dignitaries.
- ★ The new facilities aim to provide advanced healthcare services to cantonment residents and nearby municipal populations.
- ★ The Robotic Orthopaedic System is a major technological upgrade, enabling precision-driven surgeries, reduced recovery time, and improved patient outcomes.
- ★ The system enhances the hospital's ability to handle complex orthopaedic procedures with greater accuracy and efficiency.
- ★ The Maternity Operation Theatre is designed to deliver safe and comprehensive surgical care for expectant mothers.
- ★ The initiative reflects the Government's focus on modernising healthcare infrastructure in cantonment areas and ensuring high-quality medical services.
- ★ Planned short-term upgrades (within 3 months) include Dialysis Centre, Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD), ICU upgrades, and laboratory expansion.
- ★ Planned long-term developments (within 1 year) include Paediatric ICU, Neonatal ICU, CT Scan, MRI, Cancer Screening Unit, High Dependency Unit, Multispecialty Ward, and Surgical ICU.

### **Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh to Head Indian Delegation at SCO Defence Ministers' Meet**

- ★ Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh will lead a high-level Indian delegation to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting scheduled on April 28, 2026 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- ★ The SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting will focus on regional defence and security issues, including international peace, counter-terrorism, and defence co-operation among member states.
- ★ The meeting is being held amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia, with discussions likely on measures to mitigate the impact of ongoing conflicts.
- ★ India will emphasise its commitment to global peace and reiterate its policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism and extremism.

- ★ On the sidelines, Rajnath Singh is expected to hold bilateral meetings with defence ministers of participating countries.

### **INS Sunayna (IOS SAGAR) Reaches Changi Naval Base in Singapore**

- ★ INS Sunayna (Indian Ocean Ship – IOS SAGAR) arrived at Changi Naval Base, marking its fourth port call under the MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision.
- ★ The ship is deployed in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with a multinational crew from 16 Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs), promoting international maritime co-operation.
- ★ Prior to Singapore, INS Sunayna completed port calls at Malé, Phuket, and Jakarta, reflecting regional outreach and engagement.
- ★ At Singapore, the ship received a warm welcome, reaffirming strong India–Singapore maritime ties and co-operation.
- ★ Shilpak Ambule, High Commissioner of India to Singapore, interacted with the crew, appreciating their role in strengthening maritime partnerships and interoperability under SAGAR vision.
- ★ Commander Siddharth Chaudhary, Commanding Officer of INS Sunayna, laid a wreath at Kranji War Memorial and met Col Chuah Meng Soon, Commander of 9<sup>th</sup> Flotilla, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) to discuss enhanced maritime co-operation.
- ★ The ship was open to visitors, including schoolchildren and social media influencers, providing a first-hand experience of naval life and maritime awareness.
- ★ On 27 April 2026, IOS SAGAR crew and the Indian diaspora participated in a run themed “One Ocean, One Mission”, promoting unity and maritime awareness.
- ★ The ship is engaging with the RSN through professional and community interactions, including planned visits to Navigation and Damage Control simulators, Information Fusion Centre, and Navy Museum in Singapore.
- ★ Additional activities include interaction with think tank personnel onboard, joint Yoga session, and formal deck reception, enhancing stakeholder engagement and exchange of best practices.
- ★ INS Sunayna is scheduled to depart Singapore on 29 April 2026, continuing its mission of strengthening maritime co-operation and promoting collective security in the Indian Ocean Region.

## **SUMMITS & CONFERENCES**

### **9<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Conference 2026 Held in Mauritius**

- ★ The 9<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2026) was held from April 10 to 12, 2026 in Port Louis, Mauritius.
- ★ The theme of IOC 2026 was “Collective Stewardship for Indian Ocean Governance”.
- ★ The conference was held for the first time in an African country, making Mauritius the first African host nation of the event.

- ★ IOC 2026 aimed to bring together key maritime states and stakeholders to strengthen regional dialogue, co-operation, and governance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ★ The 3-day conference was jointly organised by India Foundation (IF) in association with the Government of Mauritius.
- ★ India was represented by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar, who visited Mauritius on April 9–10, 2026.
- ★ At the conference, Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered the keynote address, held bilateral meetings with Mauritian leadership, reviewed India–Mauritius relations, and interacted with delegates from participating countries.
- ★ India highlighted priorities such as regional resilience, overcoming colonial legacies, and adapting to a fragmented global order.
- ★ The Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) is a flagship consultative forum launched in 2016 by the India Foundation in collaboration with regional partners.
- ★ The forum brings together ministers, policymakers, scholars, and strategic experts from more than 40 countries.
- ★ The conference promotes co-operation under India’s SAGAR vision – Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- ★ It serves as an important platform to discuss geopolitical, economic, maritime security, and environmental challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.
- ★ No delegate attended from the Maldives, as Mauritius–Maldives diplomatic relations were suspended over territorial differences linked to the Chagos Islands.

### **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and GE Aerospace Sign Agreement**

- ★ Hindustan Aeronautics Limited signed a key technology agreement with GE Aerospace for the co-production of F414 jet engines in India.
- ★ The agreement includes transfer of critical manufacturing technology to strengthen domestic defence production capabilities.
- ★ It marks the first major technology transfer collaboration between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and GE Aerospace for advanced jet engine production.
- ★ The F414 jet engines will power next-generation indigenous fighter aircraft of India.
- ★ Around 120–130 planned indigenous fighter jets are expected to be equipped with these engines to replace ageing Russian-origin aircraft currently in service.
- ★ The F414 jet engine has been in operational service with the United States Navy for over three decades and is known for its high thrust-to-weight ratio, durability and reliability.
- ★ The agreement supports the Make in India initiative and aims at reducing dependence on defence imports.
- ★ The partnership reflects strengthening strategic defence co-operation between India and the United States of America.
- ★ The groundwork for this collaboration was strengthened during discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former President of the United States of America Joe Biden.

- ★ India is also exploring defence technology partnerships with France, Japan and the United Kingdom to diversify technology sources and reduce dependence on a single country

## **RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS**

### **2025 World Air Quality Report**

- ★ Loni near Ghaziabad in the state of Uttar Pradesh, has overtaken Delhi to become the world's most polluted city, according to the 2025 World Air Quality Report released by IQAir.
- ★ The finding highlights the worsening air pollution crisis across the National Capital Region (NCR) and raises serious public health concerns.
- ★ Loni recorded an annual average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration of 112.5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which is more than 22 times higher than the safe limit prescribed by the World Health Organization.
- ★ PM<sub>2.5</sub> refers to fine particulate matter that can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, posing severe health risks.
- ★ Earlier, Delhi symbolised India's air pollution crisis, but the emergence of Loni at the top of global rankings indicates that pollution has expanded beyond the national capital to the wider National Capital Region (NCR).
- ★ Cities such as Ghaziabad, Noida and Faridabad are increasingly forming a continuous pollution belt, showing that air pollution is now a regional crisis rather than a localised issue.
- ★ Major causes behind severe pollution levels in Loni include:
  - Unregulated industrial emissions
  - Vehicular pollution due to heavy traffic and outdated fuel standards
  - Construction dust and weak enforcement of dust-control norms
  - Open waste burning and biomass combustion
  - Stubble burning in neighbouring states

### **World's Best Airport at Skytrax World Airport Awards 2026**

- ★ Singapore Changi Airport was named the World's Best Airport 2026 at the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2026 held during the Passenger Terminal Expo and Conference World in London.
- ★ Singapore Changi Airport received the World's Best Airport title for the 14<sup>th</sup> time since 2000, reaffirming its global leadership in airport services and infrastructure.
- ★ In addition to the top global ranking, Singapore Changi Airport also won awards for: World's Best Airport Dining, Best Airport in the 60 to 70 Million Passenger Category, Best Airport Immigration Service and Best Airport in Asia
- ★ Seoul Incheon International Airport ranked second globally and received the award for World's Most Family Friendly Airport.
- ★ Tokyo Haneda Airport ranked third globally and received awards for: World's Cleanest Airport Major Airport Category, World's Best Domestic Airport and World's Best Airport for Persons with Reduced Mobility and Accessible Facilities.

- ★ Hong Kong International Airport ranked fourth globally and received key service related awards at the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2026.
- ★ Narita International Airport ranked fifth globally and received the World's Best Airport Staff award.
- ★ Five Indian airports were featured among the world's top 100 airports in the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2026 rankings.
- ★ Indira Gandhi International Airport ranked 28<sup>th</sup> globally, improving from 32<sup>nd</sup> position earlier, and received the award for Best Airport in India and South Asia.
- ★ Kempegowda International Airport ranked 41<sup>st</sup> globally and received the Best Regional Airport in India and South Asia award for the third consecutive year.
- ★ Rajiv Gandhi International Airport received the Best Airport Staff in India and South Asia 2026 award, continuing its recognition for service excellence.
- ★ Manohar International Airport ranked 64<sup>th</sup> globally, showing improvement in its global ranking position.
- ★ Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport ranked 66<sup>th</sup> globally, also improving its position in the rankings.

### **'Yashoda and Krishna' by Raja Ravi Varma Became India's Most Expensive Artwork**

- ★ The painting Yashoda and Krishna by Raja Ravi Varma became the most expensive artwork ever sold in India, after being auctioned for ₹167.20 crore (approximately United States Dollar 17.98 million) in Mumbai.
- ★ The painting was created in the 1890s and the sale has set a new benchmark for Indian artworks at global auction markets, highlighting the growing international recognition of India's artistic heritage.
- ★ The record surpassed the previous benchmark set by artworks of Maqbool Fida Husain, whose paintings earlier dominated high-value auctions in India.
- ★ The painting was purchased by Cyrus S. Poonawalla, Chairman of Serum Institute of India, who described the painting as a national treasure and expressed commitment to preserve it and make it available periodically for public viewing.
- ★ Raja Ravi Varma is regarded as one of India's greatest painters, known for introducing European oil painting techniques into Indian art and blending them with Indian mythological themes.
- ★ He played a transformational role in shaping modern Indian art by making mythological depictions more realistic and relatable to the public.

### **NITI Aayog Released Report Titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women and India's Evolving Credit Market"**

- ★ Nidhi Chhibber, Chief Executive Officer of the National Institution for Transforming India Aayog, released the second edition of the report titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women and India's Evolving Credit Market" in New Delhi.
- ★ The report highlighted that women hold a credit portfolio of ₹76 lakh crore, accounting for 26% of total system credit, registering a 4.8-fold increase since 2017.

- ★ The report was prepared under the Women Entrepreneurship Platform and developed by TransUnion CIBIL in collaboration with MicroSave Consulting.
- ★ Credit penetration among women increased from 19% in 2017 to 36% in 2025, with around 16 crore credit-active women borrowers, growing at a 9% Compound Annual Growth Rate.
- ★ The report stated that nearly 45 crore women are credit-eligible in India, of which around two-thirds remain unserved, indicating significant potential for expansion in women's access to formal credit system.

### **World Economic Forum April 2026 Report**

- ★ The World Economic Forum released its April 2026 report titled 'Growth in the New Economy: Towards a Blueprint' highlighting global economic trends.
- ★ The global economy is projected to expand by USD 56 trillion over the next five years, driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and other emerging technologies.
- ★ Growth will be concentrated in sectors where digitisation and automation significantly improve productivity.
- ★ Key growth sectors include Information Technology (IT) services, advanced manufacturing, energy, and other technology-driven industries.
- ★ Middle-income economies are expected to become major contributors to global expansion.
- ★ These economies are projected to contribute around 65% of cumulative global GDP growth (2025–2030).
- ★ In contrast, low-income economies, despite having the fastest growth rates, will account for only about 1% of global growth.
- ★ Regionally, Asia is expected to remain the primary engine of global economic growth.
- ★ Asia alone is projected to contribute more than 50% of total global growth during the period.

## **AWARDS & PRIZES**

### **International Booker Prize 2026**

- ★ The International Booker Prize 2026 shortlist has been announced featuring six translated novels from across the world, highlighting themes such as human struggle, identity, exile, political unrest, and resilience.
- ★ The award recognises outstanding fiction translated into English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland, promoting global storytelling and cross-cultural literary exchange.
- ★ According to judging panel chair Natasha Brown, the shortlisted works collectively reflect hope, emotional depth, insight, and the “burning humanity” of contemporary global literature.
- ★ The six shortlisted books for International Booker Prize 2026 are:
  - The Nights Are Quiet in Tehran by Shida Bazayr, which narrates the story of an Iranian family from the 1979 Revolution to exile, highlighting political upheaval and generational trauma.

- She Who Remains by Rene Karabash, which explores identity and survival through the life of a woman living as a man in the Albanian mountains.
  - The Director by Daniel Kehlmann, which depicts the life of filmmaker G.W. Pabst during Hollywood and Nazi-era Austria.
  - On Earth As It Is Beneath by Ana Paula Maia, which presents a dark narrative set in a harsh penal colony exploring morality and survival.
  - The Witch by Marie NDiaye, which tells a dreamlike story of a sorceress and her daughters.
  - Taiwan Travelogue by Yang Shuang-zi, which portrays a historical journey of culture and identity in 1930s Taiwan
- ★ The winner of the International Booker Prize 2026 will be announced on 19 May 2026 at a ceremony to be held at Tate Modern, and the winning book will join the list of globally recognised literary works with enhanced international readership and influence.

### **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025**

- ★ Tripura achieved a major milestone as three Panchayats secured top honours at the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025 and Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025, presented by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- ★ Sepahijala District Panchayat secured 1<sup>st</sup> rank in the Best District Panchayat category under the Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025.
- ★ Kanchanbari Gram Panchayat of Unakoti district secured 1<sup>st</sup> rank under the Healthy Panchayat category of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025.
- ★ Baikunthapur Gram Panchayat of West Tripura district secured 3<sup>rd</sup> rank under the Women Friendly Panchayat category of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025.
- ★ Financial incentives announced:
  - Sepahijala District Panchayat will receive ₹ 5 crore
  - Kanchanbari Gram Panchayat will receive ₹ 1 crore
  - Baikunthapur Gram Panchayat will receive ₹ 50 lakh
- ★ These awards recognise excellence in Panchayat level governance, sustainable development practices, health initiatives, and women friendly local administration under the Panchayat Sustainable Development Goals framework.

### **Chetak Screen Awards 2026 Honoured Excellence in Indian Cinema**

- ★ The Chetak Screen Awards 2026 celebrated outstanding achievements in Indian cinema at a grand ceremony held in New Delhi.
- ★ The film Dhurandhar emerged as the biggest winner of the night, winning 14 awards across major performance and technical categories.
- ★ The Best Film award was won by Homebound, which was also nominated for the Academy Awards 2026, highlighting its strong storytelling and global recognition.
- ★ Ranveer Singh won the Best Actor (Male) award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Yami Gautam won the Best Actor (Female) award for Haq.

- ★ Aditya Dhar won the Best Director award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Akshaye Khanna won the Best Supporting Actor (Male) award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Shalini Vatsa won the Best Supporting Actor (Female) award for Homebound.
- ★ Ahaan Panday won the Breakthrough Actor (Male) award for Saiyaara.
- ★ Aneet Padda won the Breakthrough Actor (Female) award for Saiyaara.
- ★ Shazia Iqbal won the Breakthrough Director award for Dhadak 2.
- ★ Vikash Nowlakha won the Best Cinematography award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Shivkumar V. Panicker won the Best Editing award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Saini S. Johray won the Best Production Design award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Bishwadeep Chatterjee won the Best Sound Design award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Dhurandhar also won the Best Special Effects (Visual Effects) award.
- ★ Homebound won the Best Story and Screenplay award.
- ★ Aditya Dhar won the Best Dialogue award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ The Best Song award was won by the title track of Saiyaara.
- ★ Gulzar won the Best Lyrics award for Gustaakh Ishq.
- ★ Faheem Abdullah won the Best Playback Singer (Male) award for Saiyaara.
- ★ Shreya Ghoshal won the Best Playback Singer (Female) award for Saiyaara.
- ★ Shashwat Sachdev won the Best Background Score award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Shararat won the Best Choreography award for Dhurandhar.
- ★ Chhaava and Dhurandhar jointly received the Best Costume Design award.
- ★ Dhurandhar also won awards for Best Makeup and Hairstyling and Best Action.
- ★ Haq received the Best Film for Gender Sensitivity award.
- ★ In the Over The Top platform category, Stolen won the Best Over The Top Film award.
- ★ Abhishek Banerjee won the Best Over The Top Actor (Male) award for Stolen.
- ★ Sanya Malhotra won the Best Over The Top Actor (Female) award for Mrs.
- ★ Karan Tejpal won the Best Over The Top Director award for Stolen, which also received the Best Over The Top Script award.
- ★ The performance of Dhurandhar across acting and technical categories highlighted its excellence in both cinematic storytelling and production quality, while Homebound's Best Film award reflected the importance of strong narrative depth and audience connection.

### **World Wide Fund for Nature Machchli National Award for Wildlife Conservation**

- ★ Anita Chaudhary, posted at Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary, has rescued nearly 500 wild animals since 2021 and taken strong action against poachers, smugglers, and illegal mining activities.
- ★ In recognition of her conservation efforts, she was honoured with the World Wide Fund for Nature Machchli National Award by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

- ★ Anita Chaudhary, aged 30, has emerged as a symbol of courage and commitment to wildlife conservation.
- ★ She has rescued more than 500 wild animals, including high-risk species such as crocodiles.
- ★ She has been serving in Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary for nearly 10 years.
- ★ The sanctuary spans about 9,880 hectares and is home to species such as leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, wild boars, chinkaras, and sambar deer.
- ★ The sanctuary lies between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, making it ecologically significant.
- ★ She registered more than 50 First Information Reports against poachers and illegal activities.
- ★ Her efforts helped reduce illegal mining, hunting, grazing, and forest produce smuggling including tendu leaves.
- ★ She contributed to creating water sources such as check dams and ponds to prevent animals from leaving the sanctuary.
- ★ The World Wide Fund for Nature Machchli National Award is named after the famous tigress Machli of Ranthambore National Park.
- ★ Her work highlights the importance of grassroots-level conservation and has inspired young forest personnel to protect forest ecosystems.

### **Sayani Gupta Named Harvard South Asian “Person of the Year” 2026**

- ★ Sayani Gupta has been honoured with the Harvard South Asian “Person of the Year” Award 2026 by the Harvard South Asian Association for her impactful contribution to storytelling and representation of South Asian identities at the global level.
- ★ The award recognises individuals making significant contributions to South Asian culture, identity, and representation globally.
- ★ Sayani Gupta was honoured for promoting inclusive and socially relevant storytelling through her performances.
- ★ She joins Vikas Khanna, who received the award in 2025.
- ★ Her notable works include: Four More Shots Please!, Article 15, Delhi Crime, Inside Edge and Axone
- ★ Her role as Damini Rizvi Roy in Four More Shots Please! received wide appreciation for portraying a modern urban woman’s challenges.
- ★ She is also making her directorial debut with the short film Aasmani.
- ★ The film is scheduled to premiere at: WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival (April 25, 2026) and Indie Meme Film Festival (April 26, 2026).
- ★ The Harvard South Asian Association is a student-led body at Harvard University that promotes South Asian culture, leadership, and global dialogue on identity and representation.

### **Nishita Yogesh Antarkar Crowned Miss Sake India 2026**

- ★ Nishita Yogesh Antarkar was crowned Miss Sake India 2026 at an event held in Mumbai.

- ★ The event was organised by Hirohama India Pvt. Ltd. to promote Japanese sake culture and strengthen India–Japan cultural ties.
- ★ Nishita Yogesh Antarkar, a business owner and trained Kathak dancer with over 16 years of experience, was crowned Miss Sake India 2026.
- ★ The event was held at Robata Kuuraku and recognised her as a cultural ambassador of Japanese sake in India.
- ★ She was crowned by the outgoing titleholder Akansha Shrivastava.
- ★ The ceremony highlighted growing cultural co-operation between India and Japan through promotion of traditional sake culture.
- ★ Key dignitaries present included Toshihiro Kaneko, Chisato Tateno, Mika Onishii, and Mika Eoka.
- ★ During the event, Toshihiro Kaneko emphasised strong cultural similarities and ongoing co-operation between India and Japan, especially in regional and sustainable development initiatives.
- ★ The initiative has been organised in India for the third consecutive year to promote Japanese sake traditions and people-to-people cultural exchange.
- ★ Priyanka Sarkar from Bengaluru and Sakshi Khari from Delhi were named runners-up among the seven finalists in the competition.

### **World Wide Fund for Nature National Award**

- ★ N. Alim Yusuf, a botanist from Kerala, was honoured with the World-Wide Fund for Nature National Award at the National ECHO Youth Innovation Summit 2026, organised as part of the International Youth Biodiversity Conference in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- ★ He received the award for developing an Artificial Intelligence-powered mobile application “NeophyteID” designed to identify invasive plant species in Kerala.
- ★ During the summit, he was granted ₹ 1.5 lakh as a seed fund by the World Wide Fund for Nature to support the further development and expansion of the application.
- ★ The NeophyteID application was developed by researchers at the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences (MGBIPS) located at Olavanna, Kozhikode, Kerala, and is capable of identifying around 100 invasive plant species in the State.
- ★ The application uses the Machine Learning-based YOLOv11 model and currently supports two languages: Malayalam and English.

### **Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao Conferred with 9<sup>th</sup> Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Award 2026**

- ★ Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director and Vice-Chancellor of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), was honoured with the 9<sup>th</sup> Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Award in Hyderabad.
- ★ He received the award for his contributions to climate-resilient agriculture and natural resource management, supporting sustainable agricultural development in India.
- ★ The Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Award is instituted by the Retired ICAR Employees Association in collaboration with Nuziveedu Seeds Limited, recognising excellence in agricultural research, food security, and sustainability.

- ★ The 2026 edition of the award holds special significance as it coincides with the birth centenary year of M.S. Swaminathan, widely regarded as the architect of India's Green Revolution.
- ★ Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao has played a key role in promoting resource conservation technologies, development of district-level contingency plans for climate risks, and improving soil health and water management practices across agricultural regions.
- ★ His initiatives supported the adoption of sustainable farming practices across millions of hectares, strengthening India's capacity to manage climate variability, droughts, and extreme weather conditions.
- ★ The award presentation ceremony was attended by eminent personalities including M. Venkaiah Naidu, Tummala Nageswara Rao, Mandava Prabhakar Rao, and C. Vidyasagar Rao.

### **Sadhvi Satish Sail Crowned Femina Miss India World 2026**

- ★ Sadhvi Satish Sail from Goa was crowned Femina Miss India World 2026 at the 61<sup>st</sup> edition of the Femina Miss India pageant held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- ★ She was crowned by the outgoing titleholder Nikita Porwal, marking a significant milestone in her beauty pageant journey.
- ★ Rajnandini Pawar from Maharashtra secured the position of first runner-up in the competition.
- ★ Following her victory, Sadhvi Satish Sail will represent India at the Miss World 2027.
- ★ Sadhvi Satish Sail is a model and entrepreneur, and has participated in multiple fashion shows and promotional campaigns, along with co-founding a company in the construction and development sector.
- ★ Rajnandini Pawar is known for her achievements as a state-level dancer and squash player, highlighting a blend of sports and artistic excellence.
- ★ The Femina Miss India pageant serves as a major platform to promote confident, socially aware, and purpose-driven women, with participants evaluated on personality, communication skills, social awareness, talent, and stage presence.

### **Gender Equality Mobilization Award 2026 in Vienna**

- ★ Guntur Municipal Corporation won the Gender Equality Mobilization Award 2026 in Vienna, Austria for deploying over 200 women as electric auto drivers for door-to-door waste collection.
- ★ The award was conferred by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization during the International Day of Women in Industry 2026 celebrations.
- ★ The initiative promotes: Use of clean energy through electric vehicles, Efficient waste management systems and Women empowerment through sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- ★ Under the initiative more than 200 women were trained and employed and electric autos are used for door-to-door garbage collection
- ★ The recognition highlights: Innovative and inclusive urban governance, Integration of gender equality with environmental sustainability and A replicable model for other cities.
- ★ The award was received by officials of Guntur Municipal Corporation in the presence of dignitaries including Tarja Halonen.

- ★ The Gender Equality Mobilization Award recognises institutions promoting women’s participation in industrial and urban sectors, supporting broader Sustainable Development Goals.
- ★ The initiative strengthens India’s commitment to gender equality, clean energy adoption, and sustainable urban development.

## Sur Jyotsna National Music Awards 2026

- ★ The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the Sur Jyotsna National Music Awards was held in New Delhi, where veteran Hindustani vocalists Sumitra Guha and Pandit Laxman Krishnarao Pandit were honoured for their contribution to Indian classical music.
- ★ The awards aim to promote, preserve, and encourage Indian musical heritage, while supporting both veteran and emerging artists.
- ★ The ceremony was held at Dr Ambedkar International Centre in the presence of dignitaries including Ramdas Athawale, Shripad Naik, S. P. Singh Baghel, and Ghulam Nabi Azad.
- ★ The event featured performances by Kailash Kher and his band Kailasa, showcasing a blend of classical, folk, and contemporary music.
- ★ Instituted in memory of Jyotsna Darda, the awards highlight efforts to preserve India’s intangible cultural heritage.
- ★ In 2026, the awards expanded to multiple cities including Nagpur, Nashik, Pune, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and New Delhi, increasing outreach and accessibility.

## APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

### National President of FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO)

- ★ Puja Garg has assumed charge as the 43<sup>rd</sup> National President of FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), succeeding Poonam Sharma (42<sup>nd</sup> President, 2025–26).
- ★ The tenure of Puja Garg is 2026–27, during which she aims to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship, industry participation, and economic empowerment.
- ★ Under her leadership, FLO will focus on facilitating an enabling ecosystem for women’s economic growth and increasing their participation in India’s industrial development.
- ★ Puja Garg is a strategic leader and entrepreneur associated with the Tex India Group under Distributors India Group, a pharmaceuticals and FMCG logistics network across 20+ states.
- ★ She co-founded the Amara Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition (2010), a platform featuring national and international designers across Lucknow, Varanasi, and London.
- ★ As Past Chairperson of FICCI FLO Lucknow, she led high-impact grassroots initiatives focused on women’s economic empowerment and scalable village development across multiple chapters.
- ★ She received the Aatmanirbhar Nari Award (2021) by Amar Ujala for contributions during the COVID-19 period, presented by the Minister of State for MSME.
- ★ She was also honoured on International Women’s Day (2021) under Mission Shakti, by the Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, in collaboration with Femina India and The Times Group.

- ★ As a National Initiative Head, she led village adoption and holistic development programmes, promoting scalable grassroots transformation models.

### **Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth Takes Charge as Vice Chief of the Army Staff**

- ★ Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM has assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS).
- ★ He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.
- ★ He has nearly four decades of distinguished military service with extensive operational and counter-insurgency experience.
- ★ He has commanded key formations including an Armoured Regiment (Desert Sector), an Armoured Brigade (Developed Sector), and a Counter Insurgency Force in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ As a Lieutenant General, he commanded the Sudarshan Chakra Corps and later served as GOC, Delhi Area, managing major national and international engagements.
- ★ He served as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C), South Western Command and Southern Command, achieving the rare distinction of commanding two operational commands along the Western Front.

### **Min Aung Hlaing Elected As President By Myanmar Parliament**

- ★ Min Aung Hlaing, former Commander-in-Chief of the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces), was elected as the 11<sup>th</sup> President of Myanmar by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Assembly of the Union).
- ★ The election was held in a parliament dominated by the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and appointed armed forces representatives.
- ★ Min Aung Hlaing secured 429 out of 584 votes, achieving a clear majority to become President of Myanmar.
- ★ Nan Ni Ni Aye and U Nyo Saw were elected as Vice-Presidents of Myanmar.
- ★ The elections, held in December–January, were widely criticised by the United Nations and Western governments as a sham to legitimise military rule.
- ★ The USDP won over 80% of parliamentary seats, strengthening military influence in governance.
- ★ Min Aung Hlaing (69 years) has been the de facto leader of Myanmar since the 2021 military coup, which overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.
- ★ Aung San Suu Kyi was later sentenced to 27 years in prison, drawing widespread international condemnation.
- ★ Min Aung Hlaing stepped down as Commander-in-Chief before the election and handed over charge to Ye Win Oo, his close ally.

### **Uchral Nyam-Osor Elected as Prime Minister of Mongolia**

- ★ Uchral Nyam-Osor, former Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia and leader of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP), was elected as the new Prime Minister of Mongolia.

- ★ He became the country's third Prime Minister in nine months, reflecting ongoing political instability and economic challenges.
- ★ The State Great Khural (parliament) voted on March 30, 2026, with 107 of 126 lawmakers participating in the election.
- ★ Uchral Nyam-Osor secured 88 votes (82.2%), winning the election to become Mongolia's Prime Minister.
- ★ He succeeded Zandanshatar Gombojav, who resigned on 27 March 2026 to address the political crisis.
- ★ At 39 years old, Uchral Nyam-Osor is among the younger leaders in Mongolia's political landscape.

### **Shri Narendra Bhooshan Takes Over as Secretary, Department of Land Resources**

- ★ Shri Narendra Bhooshan (IAS, 1992 batch, Uttar Pradesh cadre) has assumed charge as Secretary, Department of Land Resources under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
- ★ He possesses over three decades of vast and diversified administrative experience at both Central and State Government levels.
- ★ Prior to this role, he served as Additional Chief Secretary (Energy, Additional Energy and Technical Education) in the Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ He has held key positions as Principal Secretary in departments such as Science & Technology, PWD, Infrastructure, Industry, NRI Affairs, IT & Electronics.
- ★ He also served as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Greater Noida Authority.
- ★ At the Central Government level, he served as Deputy Director General (Joint Secretary equivalent) at UIDAI under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- ★ He held the position of Mission Director, National Food Security Management (NFSM).
- ★ He also served as Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Co-operation.
- ★ Additionally, he worked as OSD to the Minister and Joint Secretary at India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- ★ At the State level, he served as Secretary (Finance Department), Managing Director of State Transport Corporation, and Special Secretary (Industries Department).
- ★ He has extensive field administration experience as District Magistrate (DM) of Mathura, Firozabad, and Udham Singh Nagar.

### **Secretary of Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals (DCPC)**

- ★ Tejveer Singh (IAS: 1994 batch, Punjab Cadre) has assumed charge as Secretary of the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals (DCPC) under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- ★ On the occasion, he was welcomed by Nivedita Shukla Verma (outgoing Secretary, DCPC) along with senior officials of the department.

- ★ Prior to this appointment, Tejveer Singh served as Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training, Government of Punjab, reflecting his extensive administrative experience.
- ★ He has also held several key roles in the Government of Punjab, including Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister and Secretary to the Chief Minister, and has served as District Magistrate in multiple districts.
- ★ In a parallel development, Nivedita Shukla Verma has been appointed as Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- ★ She will also hold additional charge as Secretary of the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare, strengthening administrative co-ordination and governance reforms.

### **Chief Operating Officer of Overseas Global Delivery Operations**

- ★ Sunil Fernandes has been promoted to the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Coforge, reflecting the company's focus on strengthening operational capabilities and accelerating AI-driven services.
- ★ Fernandes will continue to report to CEO and Executive Director Sudhir Singh while taking on expanded responsibilities.
- ★ In his new role, Fernandes will oversee global delivery operations and critical internal functions including administration, facilities, and IT services, ensuring high-quality outcomes for clients.
- ★ A key priority will be driving the adoption of AI-native practices across engineering, service delivery, and internal workflows to improve efficiency and innovation.
- ★ He brings over three decades of industry experience and has been Coforge's Chief Delivery Officer since 2024, leading a comprehensive transformation of the delivery framework.
- ★ Prior to Coforge, Fernandes held senior leadership positions at Accenture, Infosys Technologies, and Cognizant Technology Solutions, gaining global experience in technology services.

### **President of Vietnam**

- ★ To Lam, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), has been unanimously re-elected as President of Vietnam by the National Assembly during its 16<sup>th</sup> session.
- ★ He has secured a new five-year term (2026–2031), having already served as President since May 2024, strengthening his continued leadership role in Vietnam's political system.
- ★ The election was held in the 500-seat National Assembly, where he received 100% support (495/495 deputies present), reflecting complete parliamentary backing for the CPV nomination.
- ★ This development marks a significant shift in Vietnam's governance structure, as the roles of Party General Secretary and State President are traditionally held by separate individuals.
- ★ During the same session, Le Minh Hung, former Governor of the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV), was elected as the Prime Minister (PM) of Vietnam.

### **Nasscom Foundation Names U.B. Pravin Rao as Its New Chairperson**

- ★ Nasscom Foundation has appointed B. Pravin Rao as its new Chairperson, effective immediately.

- ★ He succeeds Rostow Ramanan, who has completed his tenure as Chairperson.
- ★ B. Pravin Rao brings over 35 years of experience in the technology sector, including global operations, large-scale transformation, and execution excellence.
- ★ He previously served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Infosys from 2014 to 2021.
- ★ He has been associated with National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) since 2014, holding key roles such as Vice-Chairperson and Chairman.
- ★ His appointment brings continuity and strategic depth to the Foundation's next phase of growth and initiatives.
- ★ As Chairperson, he will help guide the Foundation's strategic priorities and contribute to the government's vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

### **Djibouti President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh Wins Sixth Consecutive Term in Presidential Election**

- ★ Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, the incumbent President of Djibouti, was re-elected for a sixth consecutive term after winning the presidential election.
- ★ His re-election reflects the continued political dominance of the ruling establishment in Djibouti.
- ★ The election followed a constitutional amendment in October 2025, which removed the 75-year age limit for presidential candidates.
- ★ This amendment enabled the 78-year-old Ismaïl Omar Guelleh to contest the election again.
- ★ The election was marked by boycotts from major opposition parties, reducing electoral competition.
- ★ Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, representing the Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP), secured 97.81% of the total votes.
- ★ He defeated his only opponent Mohamed Farah Samatar, representing the Unified Democratic Centre (CDU).
- ★ The voter turnout was 80.33%, indicating strong electoral participation despite opposition boycott.
- ★ Djibouti's political system shows strong incumbent advantage and long-term leadership continuity.
- ★ The country's location in the Horn of Africa gives it strategic geopolitical importance near the Red Sea shipping route.

### **Iraq Parliament Chooses Nizar Amedi as New President**

- ★ The Parliament of Iraq elected Nizar Mohammed Saeed Amedi, former Environment Minister and member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as the country's 9<sup>th</sup> President during a voting session held in Baghdad, Iraq.
- ★ Nizar Amedi succeeded Abdul Latif Rashid and became the 6<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Head of State since 2003.
- ★ In the first round of voting, Nizar Amedi secured 208 votes, while Muthanna Amin received 17 votes and Fuad Hussein got 16 votes.

- ★ Since no candidate achieved the required two-thirds majority in the first round, the election proceeded to a second-round runoff between Amedi and Amin.
- ★ In the second round, Nizar Amedi won with 227 votes, defeating Muthanna Amin Nader, who secured 15 votes.
- ★ After his victory, Nizar Mohammed Saeed Amedi took the constitutional oath as the new President of Iraq.
- ★ Around 250 lawmakers attended the session out of the total 329 members of Parliament, surpassing the required quorum of 220 members for the presidential election.

### **Infosys Appoints Carlos Alcaraz as Global Brand Ambassador for Tennis and AI Partnership Initiative**

- ★ Infosys, a global technology company, has appointed Spain's men's World No. 1 tennis player Carlos Alcaraz as its Global Brand Ambassador.
- ★ The partnership continues Infosys' association with tennis legends such as Rafael Nadal (Spain) and Iga Świątek (Poland).
- ★ Through Infosys Topaz (AI-first platform), Infosys will collaborate with Carlos Alcaraz and his coaching team to develop AI-driven match analytics.
- ★ The collaboration will support personalised performance applications for match preparation and in-game strategy improvement.
- ★ The partnership will also extend beyond sports through joint initiatives between Infosys and the Carlos Alcaraz Foundation.
- ★ Carlos Alcaraz Garfia is a Spanish professional tennis player and, as of April 2026, is recognised as the youngest male player to complete a Career Grand Slam.
- ★ He has won multiple Grand Slam titles, including Wimbledon and the US Open.
- ★ Alcaraz became the youngest World No. 1 in ATP rankings in the modern era.
- ★ He has also won several ATP Masters 1000 titles, establishing himself as one of the top players in global tennis.

### **Samrat Choudhary -Chief Minister of Bihar**

- ★ Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as the 24<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Bihar, becoming the first BJP leader to hold the post in the state.
- ★ The oath ceremony was administered by Syed Ata Hasnain at Raj Bhavan, Patna (Bihar).
- ★ His appointment marks a significant political shift in Bihar's leadership.
- ★ Samrat Choudhary has been a member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly representing the Tarapur Assembly constituency since 2025.
- ★ He previously served as the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar (2024–2026) in the Nitish Kumar-led government.
- ★ The leadership change followed the resignation of Nitish Kumar, who is Bihar's longest-serving Chief Minister.

- ★ Nitish Kumar transitioned to national politics after becoming a Member of the Rajya Sabha.
- ★ Senior Janata Dal (United) leaders Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav were sworn in as Deputy Chief Ministers of Bihar.
- ★ The development reflects continued co-operation within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar politics.
- ★ The transition marks the end of Nitish Kumar's long tenure as CM, which lasted from February 2015 to April 2026.

### **Apple Appoints John Ternus as Incoming Chief Executive Officer**

- ★ Apple Inc. officially announced that John Ternus will become the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) effective 1 September 2026.
- ★ He will succeed Tim Cook, who will step down as CEO and continue as Executive Chairman.
- ★ As Executive Chairman, Tim Cook will oversee policy matters, engage with policymakers, and guide the long-term strategic direction of Apple.
- ★ Prior to this appointment, John Ternus served as Senior Vice President of Hardware Engineering at Apple.
- ★ Before joining Apple, he worked at Virtual Research Systems, contributing to early virtual reality headset
- ★ His early VR experience later influenced Apple's advanced products such as Apple Vision Pro.
- ★ John Ternus joined Apple in 2001 and has played a major role in the company's hardware innovations for 25 years.
- ★ He led the design of the first Apple iPad launched in 2010 and was instrumental in the introduction of AirPods.
- ★ In 2013, he became Vice President, overseeing several major Apple product lines including iPhone, Mac, and Apple Watch.
- ★ He was instrumental in driving Apple's transition to Apple Silicon, replacing Intel chips with in-house processors.
- ★ In 2021, he was promoted to Senior Vice President, directly reporting to Tim Cook.

### **HDFC Life Reappoints Vibha Padalkar as MD and CEO**

- ★ The Board of Directors of HDFC Life Insurance Company Limited approved the reappointment of Vibha Padalkar as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for a further five-year term, effective 12 September 2026.
- ★ Vibha Padalkar is an experienced insurance sector professional with expertise in finance, risk management, and strategic planning.
- ★ She joined HDFC Life in 2008 as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and was later appointed as Executive Director (ED) and CFO in 2012.
- ★ She was elevated to the position of MD & CEO in 2018, strengthening the company's leadership structure.

- ★ She played a key role in the company's successful public listing in 2017, marking a major industry milestone.
- ★ She also led the acquisition of Exide Life Insurance in 2022, the first major merger and acquisition in India's life insurance sector.
- ★ She is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (since 1992) and also the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.
- ★ She has been recognised among the 'Most Powerful Women in Business' for five consecutive years (2021–2025).

### **NASSCOM Names Srikanth Velamakanni as Chairman**

- ★ NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) appointed Srikanth Velamakanni as its new Chairman for the 2026–2027 term.
- ★ He is the Co-Founder and Group Chief Executive of Fractal Analytics, an indigenous AI firm.
- ★ He succeeds Sindhu Gangadharan, Managing Director of SAP Labs India, who completed her term in April 2026.
- ★ The Vice Chairperson of NASSCOM Executive Council is Kishor Patil, who is the Co-founder, CEO & MD of KPIT Technologies.
- ★ Velamakanni previously served as Vice Chairperson of NASSCOM and was an Executive Council member for over six years.

### **Whole-Time Director and Executive Director of AU Small Finance Bank**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the appointment of Vivek Tripathi as Executive Director (ED) of AU Small Finance Bank.
- ★ He will serve a three-year term and assume charge as Whole-Time Director (WTD) effective April 24, 2026.
- ★ Vivek Tripathi is currently the Chief Credit Officer (CCO) and has been associated with the bank since 2014, bringing extensive experience in credit and banking operations.
- ★ He oversees enterprise-wide credit policy, underwriting, portfolio management, collections, and legal recovery under an integrated governance framework.
- ★ His leadership has strengthened risk management, process standardisation, and early-warning systems, improving portfolio quality and balance-sheet resilience.
- ★ He previously led commercial banking growth, focusing on disciplined credit expansion and liability mobilisation.
- ★ He has also driven innovation-led initiatives such as digital trade and remittance solutions, enhancing engagement with MSMEs and emerging businesses.
- ★ Vivek Tripathi has over two decades of experience and has worked with ICICI Bank, Reliance Capital, and Aditya Birla Group.
- ★ The move comes as AU Small Finance Bank has received in-principle approval to transition into a Universal Bank, preparing for its next phase of sustainable growth and expansion.

## **Brand Ambassador for Census 2027**

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) appointed renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik as the Brand Ambassador for Census 2027 to promote public awareness and participation in the nationwide census exercise.
- ★ The appointment has been made by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as part of preparations for the 16<sup>th</sup> National Census of India.
- ★ As Brand Ambassador, Sudarsan Pattnaik will use his sand art creations to spread awareness and encourage citizens' participation in the Census 2027.
- ★ Census 2027 will be the 16<sup>th</sup> Census of India and the 8<sup>th</sup> after Independence, conducted under the Census Act, 1948 by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.
- ★ The official mascots of Census 2027 are “Pragati” (female) and “Vikas” (male), symbolising progress and development.
- ★ Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases: House Listing (2026) and Population Enumeration (2027), making it the first digital census of India.
- ★ The reference date for population enumeration will be 1 March 2027, while for snow-bound regions (Ladakh, J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand) it will be 1 October 2026.
- ★ The census will be implemented under the supervision of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RGI) and is based on the Seventh Schedule (Union List, Article 246) of the Constitution.
- ★ Sudarsan Pattnaik is a Padma Shri awardee (2014) and a Guinness World Record holder (2017) for creating the world's tallest sandcastle (48 ft 8 in).
- ★ He is widely known for using sand art for social awareness campaigns including issues like climate change, COVID-19, and children's rights.
- ★ The Government has sanctioned an amount of ₹11,718.24 crore for conducting the Census 2027.

## **Dilip Kumar Assumes Role as CVO at Steel Authority of India Limited**

- ★ Dilip Kumar, a Senior Officer of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME), assumed charge as Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL).
- ★ He brings over two decades of experience in train operations, rolling stock maintenance, and human resource management within Indian Railways.
- ★ Prior to this role, he served as Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM) in East Central Railway and Chief Workshop Manager at Harnaut, Nalanda (Bihar).
- ★ He is credited with key innovations, including the first ISO 9001-certified train in ECR, in-situ wheel replacement techniques for wagons, and the Madhubani railway station beautification project.
- ★ Awards and Recognition: Recipient of the National Award for Outstanding Services (2016) and the Railway Board's Certificate of Excellence for Best Innovation (2018–19).
- ★ International Exposure: Completed advanced management programmes at INSEAD (Singapore) and ICLIF (Kuala Lumpur), and specialised training in wagon bogie design at American Railway Institute, USA.

## MoUs AND AGREEMENTS

### EaseMyTrip Partners with National Skill Development Corporation and Sanatan AI

- ★ Easy Trip Planners Limited (EaseMyTrip) has entered into a strategic collaboration with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Sanatan AI, and the Bhagva platform to launch an entrepreneurship initiative in India's spiritual services sector.
- ★ The initiative is titled "1 Panchayat – 1 Pandit – SANATANAI Shop on Wheels by EMT", aimed at promoting local spiritual entrepreneurship.
- ★ It plans to deploy EV-based mobile service units across up to 2 lakh Panchayats over a period of five years.
- ★ These units will function as mobile spiritual commerce hubs, providing services such as pooja bookings, pooja samagri supply, virtual darshan, religious events (kathas and jagrans), and pilgrimage travel planning.
- ★ The initiative targets Pandits, Pujaris, and Sanskrit-trained youth, enabling them to become certified micro-entrepreneurs.
- ★ It promotes skill development, structured training, and standardised service delivery to integrate traditional service providers into the formal economy.
- ★ Financial support for eligible participants will be provided through a Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)-linked framework, encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship.
- ★ EaseMyTrip will integrate religious and pilgrimage travel services into the ecosystem and expand its presence in the religious tourism sector through a decentralised franchise model.
- ★ The initiative reflects a broader effort to combine technology, spirituality, and entrepreneurship for rural economic development.

### India and Russia Signed MoU to Establish UAV

- ★ India and Russia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a state-of-the-art Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and Satellite Laboratory at Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), Kanpur.
- ★ The initiative is being implemented in partnership with: Geoscan Group, Indo-Russia Innopraktika Technology Hub and Kalam SPS Research Centre
- ★ The collaboration aims to promote drone design, UAV technology, and satellite applications through joint research, certification courses, and skill development programmes.
- ★ The initiative will support training of students, engineers, and researchers, contributing to the development of a skilled workforce in advanced aerospace and drone technologies.
- ★ Russian Ambassador to India Denis Alipov described the initiative as a landmark step in India-Russia technological partnership.
- ★ The collaboration focuses on applications of UAV and satellite technologies in: Agriculture, Defence and Disaster management
- ★ The MoU includes the launch of drone and satellite certification courses at the CSJMU campus.

- ★ The initiative forms part of the broader India–Russia technological partnership strengthened during the State Visit of Vladimir Putin to India in December 2025.
- ★ The partnership emphasises human resource development and talent pipeline creation for advancing bilateral technological co-operation between India and Russia.
- ★ The establishment of the UAV and Satellite Laboratory represents a significant milestone in strengthening academic collaboration, technology transfer, and innovation capacity between the two countries.

## **Deakin University and Government of Telangana Signed Memorandum of Understanding**

- ★ Deakin University and the Government of Telangana signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Hyderabad in April 2026 to strengthen collaboration in applied Artificial Intelligence through research, innovation, and skill development under Telangana’s Artificial Intelligence innovation ecosystem.
- ★ The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the Telangana State Secretariat by Iain Martin, Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University, and Phani Nagarjuna, representing Aikyam, Telangana’s Artificial Intelligence innovation hub.
- ★ As part of the collaboration, the Aikyam–Deakin Hub for Research in Intelligent Technology and Innovation will be established as a centre of excellence for Artificial Intelligence research and innovation, integrating global academic expertise with Telangana’s digital infrastructure.
- ★ The initiative aims to promote translational research, converting academic findings into practical Artificial Intelligence applications across multiple sectors.
- ★ The partnership will support large-scale skill development programmes to build an Artificial Intelligence-ready workforce, strengthening India’s competitiveness in the global digital economy.
- ★ The collaboration will also support Artificial Intelligence-based startup development by providing research access, mentorship support, and innovation infrastructure, strengthening Telangana’s position as a technology and startup hub.
- ★ The initiative will focus on development of ethical and scalable Artificial Intelligence solutions for improving smart governance systems, public service delivery platforms, and data-driven decision-making mechanisms.

## **India and Myanmar Sign Memorandum of Understanding for School Construction**

- ★ The India and Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the construction of a school in Nay Pyi Taw during the visit of Kirti Vardhan Singh, Union Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- ★ The initiative reflects India’s continued commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and supporting community infrastructure development in Myanmar.
- ★ The project aims to support early childhood development by improving physical, intellectual, and social learning environments for children.
- ★ The initiative is being implemented under India’s Small Development Projects framework.
- ★ The project reflects India’s commitment under its Neighbourhood First policy to strengthen ties with neighbouring countries through community-focused development initiatives.

- ★ During the visit, Kirti Vardhan Singh attended the inauguration ceremony of Myanmar's new President.
- ★ He also interacted with the Indian diaspora and Friends of India in Yangon, reaffirming India's commitment to enhancing bilateral co-operation and people-to-people relations between the two countries.

### **Doordarshan and Indian Council for Cultural Relations Sign MoU**

- ★ Doordarshan, under the aegis of Prasar Bharati, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to promote Indian art, culture, and heritage globally through enhanced collaboration in broadcasting and cultural exchange initiatives.
- ★ The agreement was signed by K. Satish Nambudiripad, Director General of Doordarshan, and K. Nandini Singla, Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, at Doordarshan Bhawan.
- ★ Under the agreement, Doordarshan will leverage its television, radio, and digital platforms to broadcast cultural content produced by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.
- ★ The collaboration includes coverage of cultural programmes organised by Indian Missions abroad and events conducted at Indian Council for Cultural Relations headquarters and regional offices.
- ★ The Indian Council for Cultural Relations will provide cultural content, while Doordarshan will ensure dissemination through television, radio, Over-The-Top platforms, and social media platforms.
- ★ The agreement provides for joint perpetual ownership of content rights, including digital rights, enabling long-term archiving and wider dissemination.
- ★ Doordarshan will also support pre-event publicity and cross-platform promotion of cultural programmes.
- ★ The Memorandum of Understanding will remain valid for three years, with provision for extension through mutual consent.

### **India and New Zealand to Sign Free Trade Agreement**

- ★ India and New Zealand are set to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on 27 April 2026 to strengthen bilateral economic ties, boost exports, improve market access, and enhance co-operation across multiple sectors.
- ★ The agreement is expected to attract nearly 20 billion United States dollars in investment over 15 years, marking a significant step in India's global trade strategy.
- ★ India will receive duty-free access on 100% of its exports to New Zealand, benefiting sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods.
- ★ India will reduce or eliminate tariffs on about 95% of New Zealand's exports, including wool, coal, wood, wine, avocados, and blueberries.
- ★ India has excluded sensitive sectors such as dairy products, edible oils, and certain agricultural goods to protect domestic farmers and industries.
- ★ The agreement is expected to double bilateral trade to 5 billion United States dollars within five years.

- ★ The FTA is projected to attract nearly 20 billion United States dollars in investment over 15 years.
- ★ The agreement will improve supply chains, export opportunities, and economic co-operation between the two countries.
- ★ Under the services sector provisions, New Zealand will provide temporary work visas to around 5,000 skilled Indian professionals per year with a stay duration of up to three years.
- ★ The agreement strengthens India's efforts to expand global trade partnerships and reduce dependence on limited export markets.
- ★ The FTA also enhances India's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region, promoting long-term economic growth and co-operation between the two countries.

### **DataKaveri Systems and ONESTRUCATION Inc. Sign MoU**

- ★ DataKaveri Systems, the commercial arm of Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ONESTRUCATION Inc.
- ★ The MoU aims to integrate construction data into Artificial Intelligence (AI)-ready urban data exchange systems across India and Japan.
- ★ The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the Japan-India Artificial Intelligence Strategic Dialogue held in Mumbai.
- ★ Under the MoU, both organisations will connect ONESTRUCATION's openIBM platform with Intelligent Universal Data Exchange (IUDX) developed by DataKaveri.
- ★ The Intelligent Universal Data Exchange (IUDX) platform is already operational across 55 smart cities in India, enabling large-scale urban data sharing.
- ★ The collaboration aims to ensure secure integration of construction data such as floor plans, utility layouts, and asset histories into city-level Artificial Intelligence applications.
- ★ Future plans include joint exploration of Artificial Intelligence use cases using integrated construction and urban datasets, along with pursuing bilateral funding opportunities.

### **India and New Zealand Sign Free Trade Agreement to Boost Trade and Investment**

- ★ India and New Zealand signed a Free Trade Agreement at Bharat Mandapam, led by Piyush Goyal and Todd McClay.
- ★ The agreement aims to reduce trade barriers, enhance market access, and strengthen bilateral economic co-operation.
- ★ 100% duty-free access has been granted for Indian exports to New Zealand, benefiting sectors like textiles, leather, footwear, engineering goods, and processed food, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- ★ India will open around 70% of its tariff lines, while protecting sensitive sectors like dairy, agriculture, and metals through safeguards such as tariff rate quotas.
- ★ The agreement provides market access in 118 services sectors, including Information Technology, education, finance, and tourism, along with visa pathways for 5,000 skilled Indian professionals.
- ★ New Zealand has committed to investment support of around 20 billion United States Dollars in sectors like infrastructure, renewable energy, and digital services.

- ★ The pact will simplify pharmaceutical approvals, enable faster customs clearance, and promote paperless trade systems.
- ★ It also supports agriculture, startups, and cultural co-operation, including promotion of AYUSH systems and organic products.
- ★ The agreement is expected to boost bilateral trade, exports, employment, and long-term economic partnership between both countries.

## SPORTS

### Sheetal Devi Named 'Para Archer of the Year 2025' by World Archery

- ★ Sheetal Devi was honoured with the 'Para Archer of the Year 2025' award by World Archery.
- ★ At the age of 19, the para-archer from Jammu and Kashmir received global recognition for her outstanding performances and inspiring journey in para-archery.
- ★ The award highlights India's growing dominance in para-sports at the international level.
- ★ Sheetal Devi created history by becoming the first female armless archer to win a gold medal at the World Para Archery Championships.
- ★ She achieved this milestone in the women's compound individual event held in Gwangju.
- ★ At the same championship, she won a complete set of medals, demonstrating exceptional consistency:
  - Gold – Women's compound individual event
  - Silver – Women's team event
  - Bronze – Mixed team event
- ★ She also secured a bronze medal in the mixed team event at the Paris Paralympics 2024.
- ★ Other major award winners in 2025 include:
  - 'Archer of the Year' – Emircan Haney
  - 'Young Archer of the Year' – Baptiste Addis
  - 'Best Team of the Year' – South Korea men's recurve archery team
- ★ World Archery was founded in 1931 and serves as the global governing body for Olympic and Paralympic archery.
- ★ Born without arms, Sheetal Devi mastered archery using her feet, and her journey continues to inspire athletes and persons with disabilities worldwide.

### Formula One Japanese Grand Prix 2026

- ★ 19-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team won the 40<sup>th</sup> edition of the Japanese Grand Prix 2026 held at Suzuka Circuit in Japan.
- ★ With this victory, he became the youngest driver ever to lead the Formula One World Championship, surpassing the record of Lewis Hamilton.

- ★ Oscar Piastri of McLaren (Australia) secured second place with 18 points.
- ★ Charles Leclerc of Ferrari (Monaco) finished third with 15 points.
- ★ George Russell of Mercedes secured fourth place.
- ★ Lando Norris of McLaren finished in fifth place.
- ★ Andrea Kimi Antonelli registered back-to-back victories in China and Japan, becoming the youngest championship leader in Formula One history.
- ★ The next race in the Formula One calendar is the Miami Grand Prix 2026 scheduled in May 2026, after cancellations of races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

### **Anahat Singh and Abhay Singh Named Asian Squash Federation Player of the Year 2025**

- ★ Anahat Singh and Abhay Singh were named Asian Squash Federation Player of the Year 2025 by the Asian Squash Federation in the girls' Under 19 category and men's category Dato Alex Lee Award respectively.
- ★ The awards recognise their outstanding performances during the 2024 to 2025 squash season at the continental level.
- ★ The official award ceremony is scheduled to be held during the Asian Junior Individual Championships in Panzhihua in May 2026.
- ★ The ASF Awards 2025 are presented to recognise excellence in squash across Asia, based on recommendations by the ASF Selection Panel and approval by the ASF Management Committee.
- ★ Satomi Watanabe of Japan won the Senior Women's Player of the Year award at the ASF Awards 2025.
- ★ The India men's national junior squash team received the Team of the Year award after securing a \*\*bronze medal at the World Junior Team Championships 2025 held in Egypt.
- ★ The Hong Kong China women's national junior squash team received the Women's Team of the Year award for their performance at the same championship.

### **Indian Athletics Series 2026**

- ★ Murali Sreeshankar won the men's long jump event at the Indian Athletics Series 2026, registering a jump of 8.15 metres.
- ★ The event was held at Kanteerava Stadium, where he was the only Athlete to cross the 8-metre mark.
- ★ This performance marked his season-best effort and strong comeback after knee surgery in 2024.
- ★ The injury had forced him to miss the Paris Olympics 2024, making this victory a significant milestone in his return to top-level competition.
- ★ After returning from injury, he also participated in the World Athletics Championships 2025, where he struggled to reach peak form.
- ★ His previous best jump last season was 8.13 metres, slightly lower than his current performance of 8.15 metres, indicating improving form and consistency.

- ★ In the men's long jump competition:
  - Murali Sreeshankar secured first place with 8.15 metres
  - Sunny Kumar finished second with 7.90 metres
  - Purushotham finished third with 7.87 metres
    - His winning jump came in the fourth attempt, demonstrating strong control and competitive consistency.
- ★ In the women's long jump competition:
  - Ancy Sojan won first place with 6.54 metres
  - Shaili Singh secured second place with 6.52 metres
  - Moumita Mondal finished third with 6.37 metres

### **World Para Archery Series Final 2026**

- ★ Payal Nag from Odisha created history by becoming the first quadruple amputee in the world to win an international gold medal in para-archery.
- ★ She won the gold medal at the 2026 World Para Archery Series Final held in Bangkok during her first senior international competition on 4 April 2026.
- ★ In the final match, she defeated Sheetal Devi with a score of 139–136 to secure the gold medal.
- ★ Payal Nag belongs to a village in Balangir district, where she was born into a financially weak family, with her father working as a daily-wage labourer.
- ★ At the age of eight years, she suffered a severe electric shock accident, resulting in the loss of both arms and both legs, after which she stayed in an orphanage and gradually rebuilt her life.
- ★ Her determination gained public attention when a video of her painting using her mouth became widely recognised, highlighting her resilience and talent.
- ★ Her sporting journey began after coach Kuldeep Kumar Vedwan identified her potential and trained her at the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Archery Academy, located in Katra.
- ★ She uses a specialised prosthetic support system, pulling the bowstring with the shoulder and mouth using a trigger mechanism, making her technique unique in international para archery.
- ★ Para Archery is governed globally by the World Archery Federation.
- ★ In India, initiatives such as the Khelo India Para Games play an important role in promoting para sports participation among youth.

### **Asian Wrestling Championships 2026**

- ★ India delivered a strong performance at the Asian Wrestling Championships 2026 held in Bishkek, where Sujeet Kalkal and Abhimanyou Mandwal won gold medals in freestyle wrestling, strengthening India's overall medal tally and demonstrating dominance at the continental level.
- ★ Sujeet Kalkal won the gold medal in the 65 kilogram freestyle category after defeating Umidjon Jalolov of Uzbekistan by 8–1 in the final.
  - He became the first Indian wrestler to win the 65 kilogram gold medal since Bajrang Punia in 2019.
  - He secured his third consecutive gold medal in 2026.

- He displayed strong offensive and defensive techniques throughout the competition.
- ★ Abhimanyou Mandwal won the gold medal in the 70 kilogram freestyle category after defeating Tulga Ochir of Mongolia by 5–3 in the final.
  - He defeated an Olympian opponent in the final match.
  - He demonstrated strong tactical awareness and resilience.
  - The victory marked a breakthrough moment in his international wrestling career.
- ★ With these victories, India secured a total of 14 medals at the Asian Wrestling Championships 2026, including: 2 gold medals, 4 silver medals and 8 bronze medals.
- ★ The Asian Wrestling Championships is one of the most competitive continental wrestling tournaments and features leading wrestlers from countries such as Iran, Kazakhstan, Japan, Mongolia, and India, reflecting the high level of competition in Asian wrestling.

### **Sawan Barwal Breaks India's 48-Year-Old Marathon National Record**

- ★ Himachal Pradesh long-distance runner Sawan Barwal broke India's longest-standing national marathon record at the NN Marathon Rotterdam held in Rotterdam, surpassing the previous record set by Shivnath Singh in 1978.
- ★ This historic achievement ended a 48-year-old national record, marking a major milestone in India's athletics journey and long-distance running history.
- ★ Sawan Barwal completed the marathon with a timing of 2:11:58.
- ★ He broke the previous national record of 2:12:00 set by Shivnath Singh in 1978.
- ★ The earlier record was the longest-standing national record in Indian athletics.
- ★ He finished 20<sup>th</sup> in the elite category at the Rotterdam Marathon.
- ★ The achievement reflects improved training standards and rising global competitiveness of Indian long-distance runners.
- ★ The record signals the growing strength of India's long-distance running ecosystem.
- ★ Sawan Barwal, aged 28, belongs to Joginder Nagar in Himachal Pradesh.
- ★ He has built his reputation through consistent performances in national and international competitions.
- ★ His achievement highlights the emergence of a new generation of Indian marathon runners on the global stage.

### **FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament 2026**

- ★ R. Vaishali won the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament 2026 organised by the Fédération Internationale des Échecs in Cyprus.
- ★ She became the second Indian woman after Koneru Humpy to qualify for the Women's World Chess Championship.
- ★ She will face reigning champion Ju Wenjun in the upcoming Fédération Internationale des Échecs Women's World Chess Championship.

- ★ Divya Deshmukh drew her final-round game against Bibisara Assaubayeva, which helped determine the final standings of the tournament.
- ★ After five rounds of the Fédération Internationale des Échecs Women's Candidates Tournament 2026, R. Vaishali was placed at the bottom of the standings before making a strong comeback with consistent performances in later rounds.
- ★ She moved into the top position from Round 10 despite facing a setback in Round 12.
- ★ R. Praggnanandhaa also participated in the Fédération Internationale des Échecs Candidates Tournament and finished in seventh place.
- ★ R. Vaishali was part of India's gold medal-winning team at the Chess Olympiad 2024 organised by the Fédération Internationale des Échecs.
- ★ She is a two-time winner of the FIDE Grand Swiss Tournament, demonstrating her consistent performance in international chess competitions organised by the Fédération Internationale des Échecs.

### **ICC Launches Inaugural Women's T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 in Rwanda**

- ★ The International Cricket Council (ICC) launched the inaugural Women's T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 in Kigali, Rwanda, starting to promote women's cricket among emerging cricket nations.
- ★ The five-nation tournament features Rwanda, Italy, Nepal, the United States of America, and Vanuatu, representing different International Cricket Council regions.
- ★ All matches are being conducted at the Gahanga Cricket Stadium.
- ★ The tournament follows a double round-robin format, under which each team plays against every other team twice, and it will continue until May 2, 2026.
- ★ The opening fixtures included Rwanda vs Italy and Nepal vs the United States of America, while Vanuatu began its campaign on April 19, 2026, against the host nation Rwanda.
- ★ The Women's T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 aims to strengthen associate member participation in women's cricket, provide international exposure to emerging teams, and create a structured pathway toward higher-level global tournaments.

### **Tashkent to Host World Para Athletics Championships 2027**

- ★ World Para Athletics announced that Tashkent, Uzbekistan will host the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Para Athletics Championships in June 2027.
- ★ The championship will be held at the Olympic City Main Stadium, a modern international-standard sports facility in Tashkent.
- ★ This will be the first time Central Asia hosts the World Para Athletics Championships, marking a significant milestone for the region.
- ★ The event is one of the largest global competitions for athletes with disabilities and is conducted under the International Paralympic Committee.
- ★ The championships serve as an important qualification pathway for the Paralympic Games and showcase elite para-athletic talent from across the world.

- ★ Asia previously hosted the championships in Doha (2015), Dubai (2019), Kobe (2024), and New Delhi (2025).
- ★ Tashkent's selection reflects Uzbekistan's investment in sports infrastructure and its commitment to promoting inclusive sports and international sporting events.
- ★ Hosting the event is expected to strengthen regional participation in para sports and expand the global reach of the championships.

### **Fédération Internationale de Football Association Selects India for Women's Development Programme 2026**

- ★ Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has selected India as one of 12 countries for its Women's Development Programme (Commercial Strategy 2026).
- ★ The selection follows a successful application and presentation by the All India Football Federation (AIFF).
- ★ The programme aims to enhance commercial viability, sustainability, and professional structure of women's football globally.
- ★ Participating countries include: Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Scotland, Canada, Mexico, Finland, Ghana, Jordan, Lithuania, Paraguay, and India.
- ★ The programme will be conducted from May to October 2026 in online mode, involving stakeholders from India's women's football ecosystem.
- ★ It will help prepare clubs, including those in the Indian Women's League, for the upcoming club licensing system by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).
- ★ The initiative is expected to strengthen governance, improve financial models, and promote professionalism in women's football in India.

### **P.V. Sindhu Elected Chair of Athletes' Commission**

- ★ P.V. Sindhu, Olympic medallist, has been elected Chair of the Athletes' Commission of the Badminton World Federation (BWF).
- ★ She has also secured a voting position in the BWF Council, the top decision-making body of global badminton.
- ★ She became an official Council member after completing the formal vetting process in late 2025.
- ★ She attended her first BWF Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Horsens, Denmark, representing athletes at the highest level.
- ★ As a voting Council member, she will:
  - Participate in policy-making and strategic decisions
  - Represent the interests of players globally
  - Contribute to development and governance of badminton
- ★ The appointment is significant as an active international athlete rarely holds a voting role in global sports governance.
- ★ It strengthens athlete representation and inclusion in decision-making bodies.

- ★ BWF President Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul welcomed the move, highlighting that athletes' voices are central to shaping the future of the sport.

## BOOKS & AUTHORS

### Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan Released Sudha Murty's Book

- ★ Vice President of India and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha C.P. Radhakrishnan released the book 'Tides of Time: Bharat's History through Murals in Parliament' authored by Sudha Murty, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, at Samvidhan Sadan, New Delhi.
- ★ The book was published by the Lok Sabha Secretariat and documents the visual archives of the Parliament of India, showcasing India's civilizational journey through parliamentary murals in an accessible format.
- ★ The book covers 124 mural panels, including 58 mural panels commissioned in 1954, tracing India's history from Indus Valley Civilization (Mohenjo-daro) to Independence in 1947.
- ★ The murals highlight India's traditions of dialogue, diversity and continuity, portraying Bharat as the 'Mother of Democracy', rooted in ancient democratic systems such as Vaishali and the Kudavolai system.
- ★ The book also explains the significance of heritage symbols such as the Sengol, reflecting the concept of "Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi", linking India's cultural traditions with modern governance practices.

### General Manoj Mukund Naravane Launches a New Book

- ★ Manoj Mukund Naravane (Retd), former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of the Indian Army, has launched his new book titled The Curious and the Classified: Unearthing Military Myths and Mysteries.
- ★ The book is published by Rupa Publications.
- ★ He served as the 28<sup>th</sup> Chief of Army Staff from December 2019 to April 2022.
- ★ He is also the author of The Cantonment Conspiracy (2025).
- ★ The book is a non-fiction work that explores military myths, traditions, and lesser-known stories of India's armed forces.
- ★ It highlights themes such as history, courage, culture, and the lived experiences of soldiers.
- ★ The book traces the origins of the popular military cheer "Chak de Phatte" to the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Sikh Army traditions.
- ★ It also explores the legend of Baba Harbhajan Singh, a revered figure in Indian military folklore.
- ★ The work provides insight into the cultural and historical narratives that shape the ethos of the Indian Armed Forces.

## APPS & PORTALS

### Costa Rica Launches ICP App for Identification of Venomous Snakes and Public Safety

- ★ Costa Rica has launched a free mobile application (ICP App) to help users identify venomous snakes and reduce risks of misidentification.
- ★ The app has been developed by the Clodomiro Picado Institute, Universidad de Costa Rica.
- ★ The main objective is to provide scientific and verified information for residents and tourists to ensure safer human-wildlife interaction.
- ★ The app addresses frequent public queries regarding snake identification, which previously led to confusion, panic, or harm to non-venomous species.
- ★ It replaces reliance on informal or inaccurate sources by centralising authentic scientific data.
- ★ The ICP App identifies 25 venomous snake species found in Costa Rica using visual comparison and descriptive details.
- ★ It also provides information on non-venomous species that are commonly confused with venomous snakes.
- ★ The app includes first aid guidelines for snake bites and information on antivenom production and research.
- ★ Users can also record geographic locations of snake sightings, which supports medical response and ecological tracking.
- ★ The initiative reflects the growing use of digital tools in biodiversity conservation and public health safety.
- ★ It enhances real-time decision-making by combining scientific research with user-friendly technology.
- ★ The app promotes environmental awareness, safety, and community engagement through digital innovation.

### European Union Launches Open-Source Age Verification App

- ★ The European Union (EU) has launched an open-source age verification app to confirm users' age online and regulate access to digital content for minors.
- ★ The initiative aims to establish a common standard for age verification as countries increasingly move to restrict minors' access to social media and harmful online content.
- ★ The app was announced by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.
- ★ It is designed as a free, easy-to-use digital solution that online platforms can adopt to prevent children from accessing illegal or inappropriate content.
- ★ The system requires users to verify their identity using official documents such as passports during the setup process.
- ★ The app will work across multiple devices including smartphones, tablets, and computers, ensuring cross-platform compatibility.

## **Central Bureau of Investigation Launches AI Chatbot “Abhay”**

- ★ The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will launch an AI-powered chatbot named “Abhay” to help citizens verify the authenticity of CBI-issued notices, aimed at combating digital arrest frauds.
- ★ The chatbot will be launched by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant during the 22<sup>nd</sup> D P Kohli Memorial Lecture organised by the CBI.
- ★ The system will allow the public to verify genuine CBI notices, helping prevent scams where fraudsters impersonate officials to commit cyber fraud and extortion.
- ★ The initiative addresses the rising cases of “digital arrest” scams, where victims are falsely detained online and forced to pay money using fake notices.
- ★ According to reports, cyber criminals have siphoned off around ₹54,000 crore in various scams, which the Supreme Court has described as “robbery or dacoity”.
- ★ The AI chatbot Abhay is designed as a public verification tool to enhance cyber security awareness and trust in law enforcement systems.
- ★ The D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture honours P. Kohli, the founding Director of CBI, established the agency on 1 April 1963 after heading the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE).
- ★ The lecture focuses on law enforcement, cybercrime challenges, investigative reforms, and judicial co-operation, bringing together experts from various fields.
- ★ The event also includes the conferment of 24 Medals for Meritorious Service.

## **SMILE–Beggary Survey Mobile App Unveiled at Chintan Shivir in Chandigarh**

- ★ The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE), Government of India, launched the SMILE–Beggary Survey Mobile Application during the Chintan Shivir held in Chandigarh (24–26 April 2026).
- ★ The application has been developed under the SMILE–Beggary Sub-Scheme (Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in the Act of Begging).
- ★ It aims to strengthen field-level implementation through real-time digital data collection, improved monitoring, and accurate reporting.
- ★ The app enables implementing agencies and district authorities to capture survey data digitally, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and timely updates.
- ★ The initiative addresses challenges such as delayed and inconsistent data reporting, enhancing real-time monitoring, data analytics, and performance tracking across cities.
- ★ The launch aligns with the Government’s vision of achieving “Bhiksha Vritti Mukta Bharat” (Beggar-free India).
- ★ It strengthens the overall monitoring framework of the scheme and promotes technology-driven governance solutions.
- ★ The Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to rehabilitating and reintegrating identified individuals into mainstream society, enabling them to live with dignity and self-confidence.

## **Union Minister Piyush Goyal Unveils Bharat Taxi Ride-Hailing App in Mumbai, Maharashtra**

- ★ Union Minister of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal launched Bharat Taxi, India's first co-operative-led ride-hailing platform, in Mumbai, Maharashtra to support auto-rickshaw and cab drivers.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance earnings and welfare outcomes of drivers through a co-operative-based ride-hailing ecosystem.
- ★ The Bharat Taxi app provides zero commission, no subscription charges, free insurance cover of ₹5 lakh, and access to MUDRA Loan facilities for drivers.
- ★ Bharat Taxi was established in June 2025 by eight national-level co-operative institutions under the Multi-State Co-operative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, and was officially launched on 05 February 2026.
- ★ The platform has achieved over 25,000 rides per day, reflecting rapid operational growth since launch.
- ★ It has onboarded 17 lakh customers, while more than 50 lakh users have availed the service, indicating strong adoption and outreach.

## **IMPORTANT DAYS**

### **United Nations International Day of Zero Waste 2026**

- ★ The United Nations International Day of Zero Waste 2026, also known as Zero Waste Day, was observed globally on 30 March 2026.
- ★ The day is observed to promote sustainable waste management practices and responsible consumption globally.
- ★ The theme for 2026 is "Food Waste".
- ★ On 14 December 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/77/161 titled "Promoting zero waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".
- ★ The first International Day of Zero Waste was observed on 30 March 2023.
- ★ The observance of the day is jointly facilitated by:
  - United Nations Environment Programme
  - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

### **National Maritime Day 2026**

- ★ National Maritime Day 2026 was observed across India on 5 April 2026 to recognise the contribution of the maritime sector and seafarers in facilitating India's trade and commerce globally.
- ★ The day is celebrated annually to honour seafarers who spend long durations at sea supporting India's international shipping and trade operations.

- ★ The observance commemorates the historic voyage of SS Loyalty, the first Indian-owned ship, which sailed from Mumbai to the United Kingdom on 5 April 1919.
- ★ The ship was operated by Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited, marking the beginning of India's modern maritime shipping legacy.
- ★ India became a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1959.
- ★ The International Maritime Organization is responsible for ensuring maritime safety and security and preventing marine pollution from ships at the global level.

### **International Day of Sport for Development and Peace**

- ★ International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDS DP) 2026 was observed globally on 6 April 2026 to highlight the role of sport in promoting peace, inclusion, equality, and sustainable development.
- ★ The theme for 2026 is "Sport: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers", emphasising sport as a powerful tool for unity, inclusion, and global co-operation.
- ★ The day was declared by the United Nations (UN) in 2013 and has been observed annually since 2014.
- ★ The observance of 6 April commemorates the opening of the first modern Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece in 1896, symbolising sport's long-standing role in promoting global unity.
- ★ The International Olympic Committee (IOC) plays a key role in promoting sport as a tool for social transformation through its Olympism365 strategy, which supports over 550 social impact programmes across 189 countries, benefiting millions of people worldwide.
- ★ A major sporting highlight of 2026 is the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, scheduled to be held from 31 October to 13 November 2026 in Dakar, Senegal.
- ★ The Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games will be the first Olympic event hosted in Africa, aimed at enhancing youth engagement and promoting regional development through sport.

### **International Romani Day**

- ★ International Romani Day is observed annually on 8 April across the world to celebrate Romani culture, heritage, and identity and to raise awareness about the social, political, and economic challenges faced by the Roma community.
- ★ The day was officially recognized on 8 April 1990 during the 4<sup>th</sup> World Romani Congress, held in Serock.
- ★ The observance commemorates the 1<sup>st</sup> World Romani Congress, held on 8 April 1971 in Orpington, United Kingdom, which marked the first global effort toward Romani unity and identity recognition.
- ★ The 1<sup>st</sup> World Romani Congress was organised by the Gypsy Council (United Kingdom) and Comité International Rom (CIR), Rome.
- ★ In 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) declared 5 November as the World Day of Romani Language, following a proposal by Croatia, to promote the preservation and development of the Romani language.

## World Homeopathy Day

- ★ World Homeopathy Day is observed annually on 10 April across the world to promote awareness about the Homeopathy system of medicine and its role in public health care.
- ★ The theme for World Homeopathy Day 2026 is “Homoeopathy for Sustainable Health”.
- ★ The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Samuel Hahnemann, the father and founder of the Homeopathy system of medicine, who was born on 10 April 1755.
- ★ The observance aims to:
  - Spread knowledge about Homeopathy.
  - Promote its role as an alternative system of medicine.
  - Highlight its contribution to patient-centred healing approaches.
- ★ Homeopathy is an alternative medical system based on the principle that natural substances in small doses stimulate the body’s self-healing response.
- ★ The day also recognizes the contribution of Homeopathy practitioners and highlights the importance of integrative and sustainable healthcare practices in improving global health outcomes.

## Central Reserve Police Force Valour Day

- ★ Central Reserve Police Force Valour Day, also known as Shaurya Diwas, is observed every year on April 9 across India to honour the bravery of Central Reserve Police Force personnel during the Battle of Sardar Post in the Rann of Kutch, Gujarat.
- ★ April 9, 2026 marks the 61<sup>st</sup> Central Reserve Police Force Valour Day.
- ★ On April 9, 1965, the Pakistan Army launched Operation Desert Hawk, deploying a full infantry brigade to attack Sardar Post.
- ★ A small unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force successfully repulsed the attack, eliminating 34 Pakistani soldiers and capturing 4 soldiers, while 6 Central Reserve Police Force personnel laid down their lives in the line of duty.
- ★ Since then, April 9 is observed annually as Central Reserve Police Force Valour Day to commemorate the courage, sacrifice, and dedication of Central Reserve Police Force personnel.

## National Safe Motherhood Day

- ★ India observes National Safe Motherhood Day every year on April 11 to raise awareness about maternal health, safe pregnancy, and access to quality healthcare services for mothers.
- ★ The day is observed on the birth anniversary of Kasturba Gandhi, spouse of Mahatma Gandhi.
- ★ The theme for National Safe Motherhood Day 2026 is “Equity in Maternal Healthcare: Leaving No Mother Behind”.
- ★ India became the first country to officially declare April 11 as National Safe Motherhood Day, following a proposal by the White Ribbon Alliance India, and the day was designated by the Government of India in 2003.

- ★ The observance focuses on improving maternal healthcare awareness, institutional delivery support, and access to medical services, which contribute to reducing maternal mortality in the country.

### **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Jayanti**

- ★ Every year 14 April is observed as Ambedkar Jayanti across India to commemorate the birth anniversary of R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect of the Constitution of India and a prominent social reformer, economist, and champion of the rights of socially disadvantaged communities.
- ★ B.R. Ambedkar is widely regarded as the principal architect of the Constitution of India.
- ★ He served as the first Law and Justice Minister of independent India.
- ★ In 1923, he founded the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha to promote education and socio-economic upliftment of marginalized communities.
- ★ He belonged to a socially disadvantaged community and faced discrimination during his childhood, which shaped his commitment to social justice and equality.
- ★ Despite social barriers, he excelled academically and became a leading intellectual and reformer.
- ★ In 1942, he served as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council during the British period.
- ★ After independence, he played a key role in drafting the Constitution of India, ensuring provisions for social justice, equality, and fundamental rights.
- ★ He consistently worked for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections of society throughout his life.
- ★ He emphasized that the problems of socially disadvantaged communities cannot be solved through political power alone but require social and educational empowerment.

### **World Hemophilia Day**

- ★ World Hemophilia Day is observed annually on 17 April to raise awareness about Hemophilia and other inherited bleeding disorders.
- ★ The theme for World Hemophilia Day 2026 is "Equitable access for all: recognizing all bleeding disorders".
- ★ The day aims to promote early diagnosis, better treatment access and improved care for people affected by bleeding disorders worldwide.
- ★ World Hemophilia Day was first observed in 1989 by the World Federation of Hemophilia.
- ★ 17 April was chosen to mark the birth anniversary of Frank Schnabel, founder of the World Federation of Hemophilia.
- ★ The observance highlights the importance of educating patients, caregivers and the general public about Hemophilia and related bleeding disorders.
- ★ The day is marked globally through awareness campaigns, community programmes and media outreach activities to improve understanding and treatment access.

## World Heritage Day 2026

- ★ World Heritage Day, also known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, is observed every year on 18 April, 2026 to promote awareness about the protection and conservation of cultural heritage worldwide.
- ★ The day is supported by the International Council on Monuments and Sites and recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- ★ Theme for World Heritage Day 2026: “Emergency Response for Living Heritage in Contexts of Conflicts and Disasters”.
- ★ The day aims to highlight the importance of safeguarding monuments, heritage sites, and cultural landscapes across the world.
- ★ The observance was proposed in 1982 by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).
- ★ It was officially approved in 1983 during the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- ★ The initiative promotes awareness about the diversity and vulnerability of heritage sites and encourages conservation efforts at global, national, and local levels.
- ★ Each year, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) announces a theme focusing on current challenges in heritage preservation.

## World Liver Day 2026

- ★ World Liver Day is observed every year on 19 April to raise awareness about liver health and encourage preventive care against liver-related diseases.
- ★ The theme for 2026 is “Solid Habits, Strong Liver”, highlighting the role of healthy daily lifestyle choices in protecting liver function.
- ★ The liver is the largest internal organ in the human body, located in the upper right part of the abdomen.
- ★ It performs over 500 essential functions, including metabolism, digestion, detoxification, and nutrient processing.
- ★ The liver converts carbohydrates into glucose, metabolises fats, and synthesises proteins required for body repair and growth.
- ★ It removes toxins from the blood, produces bile for digestion, and supports blood clotting and immunity.
- ★ The day raises awareness about liver diseases such as Hepatitis, Fatty Liver Disease, and Liver Cancer.
- ★ Health organisations worldwide promote early diagnosis, screening, and preventive lifestyle practices through this observance.
- ★ The initiative aims to reduce the global burden of liver diseases by encouraging healthy habits and awareness about liver care.

## National Civil Services Day

- ★ National Civil Services Day is observed every year on April 21 in India to recognise and motivate civil servants for their contribution to public administration and nation-building.
- ★ The civil services in India include the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and Central Group A and Group B services.
- ★ The day commemorates Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister of independent India, who addressed probationary officers at the All-India Administrative Service Training School, Metcalfe House, New Delhi, on April 21, 1947.
- ★ During his address, he described civil servants as the “Steel Frame of India”, emphasising their critical role in strengthening the administrative structure of the country.
- ★ The first National Civil Services Day function was organised at Vigyan Bhawan on April 21, 2006, after which the day began to be observed annually.
- ★ On this occasion, the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to recognise outstanding performance by civil servants and government organisations.

## World Earth Day 2026

- ★ World Earth Day is observed every year on 22 April to promote awareness about environmental protection and sustainability across the globe.
- ★ The theme for World Earth Day 2026 is “Our Power, Our Planet”.
- ★ The first Earth Day was initiated in 1969 by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson after witnessing the environmental damage caused by a major oil spill in Santa Barbara, California.
- ★ In 1970, thousands of colleges and universities across the United Nations member countries organized environmental protests supporting a healthy and sustainable planet.
- ★ In 1968, the United States Public Health Service organized the Human Ecology Symposium to discuss the impact of environmental degradation on human health.
- ★ In 1972, the United States Government established the Environmental Protection Agency and enacted the Clean Air Act to control air pollution and protect natural habitats.
- ★ In 1990, Earth Day became a global movement, with participation from more than 140 countries.
- ★ In 1995, Gaylord Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his contribution to the environmental movement through the Earth Day initiative.

## World Book and Copyright Day

- ★ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observes World Book and Copyright Day annually on 23 April to promote the importance of reading, publishing, and copyright protection worldwide.
- ★ The day honours authors, books, and the culture of reading, while also recognising the role of copyright laws in protecting the rights of creators.
- ★ The date 23 April was selected by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to pay tribute to renowned literary figures including William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.

- ★ The observance was officially established in 1995 during the General Conference of UNESCO to celebrate authors and books worldwide.
- ★ The idea of celebrating a book-related day originated from Dia del Llibre (Day of the Book) in Catalonia, where the tradition of exchanging books is followed every year on 23 April.
- ★ Copyright is a legal concept that provides authors and creators exclusive rights over their original works for a limited period, ensuring protection of intellectual property and encouraging creativity.

## World Malaria Day

- ★ World Malaria Day is observed annually on April 25 across the world to raise awareness about prevention, control, and elimination of Malaria.
- ★ The observance reinforces Global Fund Investment priorities such as: Advancing quality healthcare, Building health system resilience and Supporting global efforts toward ending malaria.
- ★ The day highlights that investments in malaria elimination: Save lives, Support economic growth, Strengthen preparedness for future health threats and Contribute to achieving a safer world.
- ★ World Malaria Day was first observed in 2008 and evolved from Africa Malaria Day, which had been observed since 2001 by African governments to assess progress in controlling malaria and reducing mortality.
- ★ In 2007, during the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization proposed changing Africa Malaria Day to World Malaria Day to recognise the presence of malaria across countries worldwide and to strengthen global awareness and co-operation in the fight against malaria.

## World Intellectual Property Day

- ★ World Intellectual Property Day is observed annually on April 26 to promote awareness about the role of intellectual property rights in innovation and creativity.
- ★ Theme for 2026: “Intellectual Property and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate”, highlighting the connection between sports, innovation, and intellectual property.
- ★ The day recognises the role of youth in developing innovative solutions that support a sustainable future.
- ★ It was launched in 2000 by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to promote and protect creative works including music, art, trademarks, inventions, and writings.
- ★ April 26 marks the establishment of the World Intellectual Property Organization Convention.
- ★ Celebrated globally through panels, exhibitions, outreach programmes, and educational initiatives.
- ★ Highlights the importance of intellectual property rights in economic growth, technological progress, and cultural development.

## World Day for Safety and Health at Work

- ★ World Day for Safety and Health at Work is observed every year on April 28 to promote the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases globally.

- ★ The day aims to raise awareness about workplace safety, ensuring healthy and secure working conditions for all workers.
- ★ It focuses on building a strong safety culture to reduce work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths.
- ★ The observance was initiated in 2003 by the International Labour Organization as part of its global strategy on occupational safety and health.
- ★ The initiative emphasizes prevention, social dialogue, and policy support to improve workplace conditions worldwide.
- ★ April 28 is also marked as the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers, observed by the trade union movement.
- ★ The day highlights the need to strengthen occupational health policies and ensure safe and dignified working environments across all sectors.

### **International Dance Day**

- ★ International Dance Day (World Dance Day) is celebrated every year on April 29 across the world to highlight the value, importance, and cultural significance of dance.
- ★ The day serves as a wake-up call for governments, institutions, and policymakers to recognize dance as an important art form and its potential for economic growth and social development.
- ★ The celebration is promoted globally by the International Dance Council.
- ★ It was first introduced in 1982 by the International Dance Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- ★ The date April 29 was chosen to mark the birth anniversary of Jean-Georges Noverre (born in 1727), who was a renowned French ballet master and reformer of modern dance.
- ★ The day is observed worldwide through performances, cultural programmes, workshops, and awareness initiatives, encouraging people to appreciate dance and its role in art, culture, and society.

## **OBITUTARY NEWS**

### **Padma Bhushan awardee Dr. Vijaypat Lala Kailashpat Singhania**

- ★ Padma Bhushan awardee Dr. Vijaypat Lala Kailashpat Singhania, former Chairman of Raymond Limited, passed away at the age of 87 in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ He was born on October 4, 1938, in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- ★ He was widely recognised for his contributions to the textile industry and for setting multiple records in aviation.
- ★ He served as Chairman of Raymond Limited for nearly two decades until 2000 and later transferred his entire 37% stake in the company to his son Gautam Singhania.
- ★ He was appointed Honorary Air Commodore by the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 1994 and served as the Sheriff of Mumbai in 2006.

- ★ In 1988, he gained global recognition by solo flying a microlight aircraft from London (UK) to Ahmedabad (Gujarat), covering over 9,000 kilometres.
- ★ He held a world record for the highest altitude achieved in hot air ballooning, reaching 69,852 feet in 2005 at the age of 67.
- ★ He was appointed Chairman of the Governing Council of IIM Ahmedabad (IIM-A) in March 2007 and served until 2012.
- ★ He authored an autobiography titled “An Angel in the Cockpit” (2005), documenting his microlight aviation journey.

### **Mohsina Kidwai, Veteran Indian National Congress Leader and Former Union Minister**

- ★ Mohsina Kidwai, a veteran leader of the Indian National Congress (INC) and former Union Minister, passed away at the age of 94 in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ She served as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the Lok Sabha (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>) representing the Meerut constituency from 1978 to 1989, marking her strong presence in national politics.
- ★ She was also a Rajya Sabha member from Chhattisgarh for two consecutive terms (2004–2016), continuing her active parliamentary role into her later years.
- ★ Mohsina Kidwai held key Union Cabinet portfolios under Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, including Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, Transport, Urban Development, and Labour.
- ★ She had the unique distinction of being a member of four legislative bodies – MLC, MLA, Lok Sabha MP, and Rajya Sabha MP, reflecting her extensive political career.
- ★ Her political journey began in 1960 when she became an MLC in Uttar Pradesh at the age of 28, later serving as a State Minister before entering Parliament in 1978.
- ★ Her 1978 by-election victory from Azamgarh marked her rise to national prominence, especially in the post-Emergency political phase, strengthening the Congress party.
- ★ She was also a member of the Congress Working Committee and Central Election Committee, playing a key role in party decision-making.
- ★ In 2022, she was among the proposers for Shashi Tharoor’s candidature in the Congress presidential election, highlighting her continued political relevance.
- ★ Her memoir, ‘My Life in Indian Politics (2024)’, captures her decades-long experience and contributions to Indian public life.

### **Jim Whittaker, First American to Climb Mount Everest**

- ★ James Warren Whittaker (Jim Whittaker), the first American to summit Mount Everest, passed away at the age of 97 in Port Townsend, Washington, United States of America (USA).
- ★ He was born on 10 February 1929 in Seattle, Washington, and became one of the most celebrated mountaineers in history.
- ★ He achieved global fame by becoming the first American to summit Mount Everest on 1 May 1963, along with Nawang Gombu, becoming the 10<sup>th</sup> climber ever to reach the summit.

- ★ His achievement came 10 years after the historic climb of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, and helped boost mountaineering popularity in the USA.
- ★ He was the first full-time employee and later CEO (1971–1979) of Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), expanding it into a major outdoor retail co-operative.
- ★ He led and participated in major expeditions, including the 1978 American ascent of K2, the 1965 Mount Kennedy expedition with Robert F. Kennedy, and the 1990 Everest International Peace Climb.
- ★ He also led unique initiatives such as guiding 10 differently-abled climbers up Mount Rainier in 1981, highlighting his commitment to inclusive mountaineering.
- ★ He received the prestigious Hubbard Medal from the National Geographic Society, presented by former US President John F. Kennedy.

### **Legendary Singer and Padma Vibhushan Awardee Asha Bhosle**

- ★ Asha Bhosle, legendary playback singer and Padma Vibhushan awardee, passed away at the age of 92 in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ Asha Bhosle was born on 8 September 1933 in Sangli, former princely state of Sangli (now in Maharashtra).
- ★ She is remembered as one of the greatest vocalists in modern Indian music history.
- ★ Asha Bhosle began her singing career in 1943 and sustained an extraordinary eight-decade musical journey.
- ★ She recorded over 12,000 songs in more than 20 languages, making her one of the most prolific singers in history.
- ★ She was known for unmatched versatility across film music, classical, ghazals, pop, cabaret, folk, bhajans, and Rabindra Sangeet.
- ★ In 2011, she was recognised by Guinness World Records as the most recorded artist in music history.
- ★ By the 1950s, she had established a strong identity in Hindi cinema and worked with leading music composers for decades.
- ★ Some of her famous songs include 'Abhi Na Jao Chhod Kar', 'In Ankhon Ki Masti', 'Dil Cheez Kya Hai', 'Piya Tu Ab To Aaja', and 'Duniya Mein Logon Ko'.
- ★ She gave voice to many leading actresses including Meena Kumari, Madhubala, Zeenat Aman, Kajol, Urmila Matondkar, Padmini, and Vyjayanthimala.
- ★ She was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan in 2008, which is India's second-highest civilian award, for her contribution to the field of Arts.
- ★ She received the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2000, the highest honour in Indian cinema.

## **Former Indian Olympic Association and World Squash Federation President N. Ramachandran**

- ★ Narayana Ramachandran (N. Ramachandran), popularly known as 'Rami', passed away at the age of 77 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ He was born in 1948 in Chennai and was one of India's most influential sports administrators.
- ★ He served as President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 2014 to 2017.
- ★ Earlier, he held key roles in IOA as Associate Vice-President (2001) and Vice-President (2005).
- ★ He also served as President of the World Squash Federation (WSF) from 2008 to 2016.
- ★ Additionally, he was the President of the Asian Squash Federation (ASF) from 2001 to 2009.
- ★ He played a major role in promoting squash globally and strengthening India's presence in international sports administration.
- ★ In 2000, he established the Indian Squash Academy (ISA) in Chennai to develop squash talent with world-class training facilities.

## **Brazil Basketball Icon Oscar Schmidt**

- ★ Oscar Schmidt, one of the greatest scorers in basketball history, passed away at the age of 68 after battling a brain tumor.
- ★ He had an extraordinary 30-year professional career, playing for clubs in Brazil and Europe, and retired in 2003 at the age of 45.
- ★ Oscar Schmidt represented Brazil in five Olympic Games and four FIBA World Cups, setting all-time scoring records in both tournaments.
- ★ He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013, recognising his outstanding contribution to the sport.
- ★ Known for his exceptional scoring ability, he held an unofficial world record of 49,737 career points (club + national team combined).
- ★ His scoring record was later surpassed by LeBron James in 2024.

## **Padma Shri Honouree and Bundeli Martial Arts Pioneer Bhagwandas Raikwar**

- ★ Bhagwandas Raikwar, famously known as "Dau", passed away at the age of 83 in Bhopal while undergoing medical treatment.
- ★ He was born on 2 January 1944 in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ Bhagwandas Raikwar was regarded as a pioneer and guardian of Bundeli Martial Arts, one of India's oldest weapon-based war art traditions.
- ★ He earned recognition for preserving the Akhada tradition, an ancient system of traditional wrestling and martial training.
- ★ His expertise included combat skills using traditional weapons such as lathi, talwar, bhala, dhal, and trishul.
- ★ In 1964, he established the Chhatrasal Bundelkhand Akhada in Sagar with his own personal resources.

- ★ He played a major role in bringing national and international recognition to Bundelkhand's traditional martial heritage.
- ★ The Government of India honoured him for his lifelong dedication to preservation, promotion, and training of indigenous martial arts.
- ★ He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2026, India's fourth-highest civilian honour, for contributions in Traditional Martial Arts.

### **Ex-Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nadendla Bhaskara Rao**

- ★ Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh, passed away at the age of 90 years in Hyderabad.
- ★ He was born on 23 June 1935 in Guntur, then part of the Madras Presidency (British India), now in Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ He served as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh from 16 August to 16 September 1984 (31 days), marking one of the shortest tenures in the state's history.
- ★ He assumed office during the absence of N. T. Rama Rao.
- ★ He was elected as an MLA from Vijayawada East in 1978 and served as a Minister (1978–1989) under Marri Chenna Reddy and Anjaiah.
- ★ He was a co-founder of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 1982 along with N.T. Rama Rao.
- ★ After the TDP's 1983 electoral victory, he served as the Finance Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

